

Water security for development: Insights from African partnerships in action

Working together for better water management planning

The world's vital water resources are under pressure and there is an urgent need to improve the ways in which water is managed. Policy-makers must ensure that water resources are used to support the livelihoods and economic development of the poorest populations.

During the past five years, 13 African countries have been engaged in a Global Water Partnership (GWP) programme, and all have taken great strides towards water security by developing national IWRM plans, integrating water into poverty reduction strategies, and developing finance instruments to support water development.

Through this work, the value of multi-stakeholder partnerships in water management planning and the broader development agenda have been proven. The resulting policy recommendations, main achievements and key lessons learned are summarised here.

Integrated water resources management (IWRM) is a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of ecosystems and the environment.

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The Programme for IWRM Planning in Africa

This involved 13 countries in four regions: Central Africa (Cameroon), East Africa (Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya), Southern Africa (Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zambia) and West Africa (Benin, Cape Verde, Mali and Senegal).

Its goal was to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction through using an IWRM approach and offering support in four main areas:

- Achievement of the target set at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development for the preparation of national IWRM plans
- Development of existing, new and emerging partnerships
- Integration of water into poverty reduction strategies
- Increasing understanding of, and potential access to, a broader range of financing instruments.

A summary of the main achievements

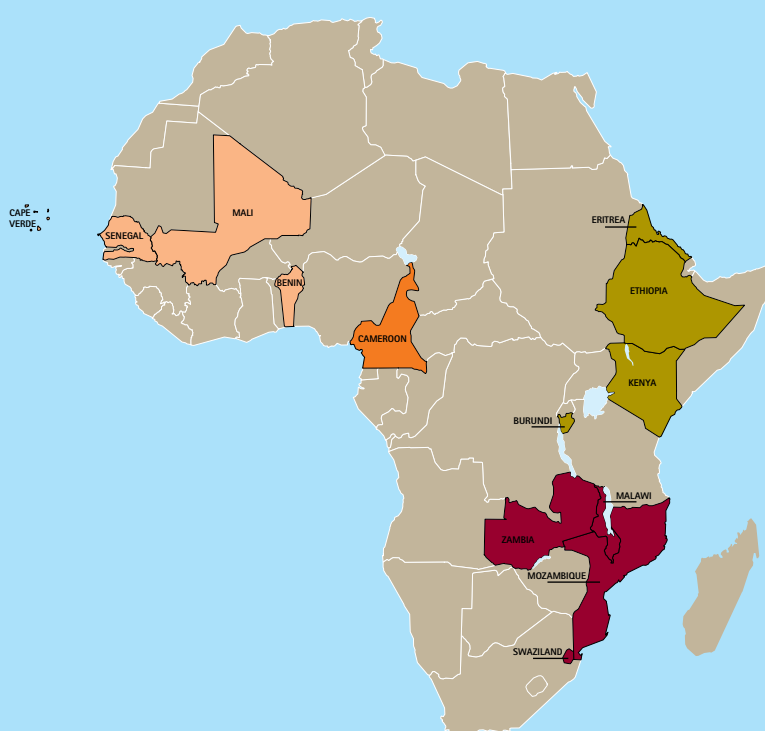
The IWRM planning programme helped provide a voice for a wide range of stakeholders to define actions for improving water management for development. Each participating country now has a considerably enhanced enabling environment for water security. National IWRM plans have been finalised and adopted by governments in seven countries and, at the time of writing, a further five plans are in the process of approval or at advanced stage. Evidence suggests that implementation of IWRM plans in some of the countries is already underway.

IWRM has been integrated into national development plans and poverty reduction strategies in Benin, Malawi, Mali and Zambia; while Benin, Eritrea, Swaziland and Zambia have drafted and updated their water policies. In addition, Benin has drafted improved water legislation, Cape Verde has developed a new legal framework for the administration of water resources, and Eritrea has introduced water quality guidelines and water-use regulations.

Policy Recommendations

Integrated approaches to water management and other development interventions should:

1. Be undertaken as part of the broader national development planning process. Cross-sectoral coordination and responsibility for integration should be anchored in a government institution with capacity to influence and mobilise other sectors. Higher-level government bodies such as ministries of finance and economic planning, the cabinet and the prime minister's or vice president's office are good locations for facilitating integration.
2. Be aligned with high-priority national development processes with broad cross-sectoral and stakeholder support, even if these are outside the water sector.
3. Be flexible, realistic and structured as a continuous process rather than individual projects.



4. Take into account country differences and accommodate variations of scope and budget, based on the country's development context.
5. Embed water-related climate change adaptation into water resources management plans and not treat it as a separate issue, in order to avoid duplication and fragmentation. The capacity of local institutions must be built to address climate change adaptation as part of the water security agenda in development planning and decision-making processes, in line with national development priorities.
6. Develop economic arguments for financing water resources management. Opportunities for accessing adaptation funds for financing water resources management must be explored.

Most countries have defined improved institutional roles and coordination arrangements; they have also enhanced water management capacity leading to better understanding of the water resource situation and constraints to national development.

Water financing has been improved, with financial resources mobilised from local and international sources. For example, Benin has secured €1.6 million from the Netherlands and nearly €20 million was pledged (by various donors) for Mali's IWRM plan. National water sector funding was increased by an estimated 64 percent by Malawi's treasury in the 2005/06 financial year. The World Bank's Joint Assistance Strategy for water in Zambia has been developed to provide support to the implementation of the programmes in the IWRM plan. The Zambian Government is using the IWRM plan as a basis for preparation and disbursements of annual budgets for water programmes.

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The programme also contributed to improvements in people's livelihoods by enhancing water security at a local level. Water was secured for the 200,000 inhabitants of Benin's third largest city and, in Swaziland, 9,600 people gained access to clean water. Furthermore, water-related conflicts have been addressed and access to water enhanced in Ethiopia's Berki River Basin.

While it is significant that so many national plans were developed and immediate impacts realised, the real achievement of the IWRM programme lies in the way in which this happened. Local participants engaged deeply with the planning process, while external consultancy-driven pressures were minimised. Very different approaches were taken to drafting the plans in different countries because an attempt was made to integrate water management planning with other development activities. Hence, the approach in each country reflected its broader institutional environment and had stronger national ownership than previous, externally driven plans.



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Learning from water management planning: Lessons for development

The IWRM programme offers considerable insights into the factors that helped the planning processes succeed. These insights drawn from the water sector are equally applicable to development processes in other sectors. Nine elements (grouped into four clusters) were identified as essential:

1. Development context

- Entry point: a suitable entry point within the existing national development context adds value and minimises duplication.
- Champions: committed and respected individuals can drive the process forward and speed up bureaucracy.

2. Strategic road map

- Integration with development priorities: all interventions should address national priorities and align with government frameworks.
- Institutional arrangements for coordination and financing: management processes should build on existing institutional arrangements.
- Roles and responsibilities: key players' roles and responsibilities should be agreed at the outset.

3. Ensuring sustainability

- Institutional memory: specific steps are needed to avoid the loss of institutional memory over time as key people move on.
- Stakeholder platforms: an inclusive and neutral stakeholder platform facilitates dialogue on contentious issues.



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4. Strengthening functions

- Capacity development and knowledge management: developing the capacity of all stakeholders, especially government institutions, helps strengthen interventions and enhances sustainability.
- Communication and advocacy: the goals, progress, challenges and achievements need to be continuously communicated to stakeholders.

Despite the remarkable progress made towards the goal of water security, there is considerable work still to do. These policy recommendations and lessons, if applied, will help support future efforts for better water resources management planning as well as broader development interventions. GWP would like to use the IWRM programme experience to advance the agenda on water security by supporting national governments to incorporate climate change adaptation into development processes.

The Global Water Partnership is an intergovernmental organisation with a worldwide network of 13 Regional Water Partnerships, 74 Country Water Partnerships and more than 2,000 Partner organisations in 153 countries. The GWP network is committed to building a water secure world and is supported financially by Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. For the work described here, additional support was provided by the Netherlands Directorate-General of Development Cooperation (DGIS) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) under the Partnership for Africa's Water Development programme. GWP is grateful to its many stakeholders, Partners and Country and Regional Water Partnerships who contributed to the outcomes and knowledge generated by this multi-year process of IWRM planning and implementation.

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