

# Towards Water Security: A Framework for Action



Global Water Partnership

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*Towards Water Security: A Framework for Action*, has been prepared for presentation at the Second World Water Forum – convened by the World Water Council – and Ministerial Conference – convened by the Dutch Government – at The Hague, the Netherlands, 17 to 22 March 2000. It is presented together with, and in support of, the World Water Vision, which was prepared under the guidance of the World Water Commission. The Framework for Action, prepared by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) is a basis for taking action to achieve the Vision.

The Vision to Action process was designed to be as broad-based as possible and the building blocks for the development of the Vision and Action were constructed through consultations with principal stakeholders in the major regions of the world. Through regional meetings and workshops this consultation process brought many stakeholders together – government agencies, key water practitioners, UN organisations, donors, the private sector, and others – to establish a shared view of appropriate strategies, mechanisms for implementation, and priorities for immediate action and investment. The participatory nature of the whole process will deliver new hope for sustainable water management in the new millennium.

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The World Water Commission has prepared a Vision for Water, Life and the Environment in the 21st Century encapsulated in the statement: 'Water is life. Every human being, now and in the future, should have enough clean water for drinking, appropriate sanitation, and enough food and energy at a reasonable cost. Providing adequate water to meet these basic needs must be done in an equitable manner that works in harmony with nature.'

Achieving the desired Vision implies drastic changes in the manner in which water is managed and a move toward creating water security at all levels – local, national and global.

In preparing this document – *Towards Water Security: A Framework for Action* – the Global Water Partnership has set out the overarching structure for action, together with the initial steps and milestones, as a process towards achieving the Vision. This document is intended as a launching pad for all kinds of action at local and country levels with active, strategic supporting roles for regional and international players. To achieve a balanced approach through partnerships and coalitions of all stakeholders, complementary and mutually supporting bottom-up and top-down approaches will be essential.

As the name suggests, the Framework for Action provides a basis on which future action can be built. It is for debate and discussion and represents only the starting-point of a long-term programme of concerted actions to transform the present unsustainable water scenario into the water future everyone wants.

Thousands of people from all over the world have contributed to this Framework for Action and it brings together the outcomes of the sectoral consultations – Water for People, Water for Food, Water and Nature and Water for Rivers – and the numerous regional consultations.

The GWP's seven regional Technical Advisory Committees and other *ad hoc* groups have co-ordinated inputs from people in their regions. These regional contributions to the FFA are especially important as many critical water problems can only be tackled at the regional and national level.

Many of the examples for action focus on the work of GWP's partners;

however, throughout this report all concerned parties are invited to pledge themselves to act to achieve the Vision.

Ultimately, the message to convey is that averting a world water crisis is everybody's responsibility and demands a new way of thinking about water. This thinking must be based on integrated water resources management, participatory approaches to governance, and recognising the economic and social aspects of managing water, with emphasis on the role of women. Full cost pricing offset by targeted subsidies for the poor will be needed. Everyone has a role to play: governments as enablers and regulators, with communities and the private sector acting as engines of transformation on the ground.

Sadly, crisis only merits attention when it becomes catastrophe — the slower, gradual, process affecting water is not yet international news. Hopefully, the Vision and Framework for Action will prevent this happening.



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# Contents

## Foreword 3

### Mobilising political will to act 11

- Vision to Action 11
- Water security as a common goal 12
- Promoting change 14
- Themes for action 17
- The way forward 18

### Themes for action 19

- Making water governance effective 23*
  - Putting integrated water resource management into practice 24
  - Promoting transparency and participation 26
  - Reform and development of institutional frameworks 31
  - Realigning economic and financial practices 35
- Generating water wisdom 41*
  - Raising awareness of water issues 41
  - Investing in people 45
  - Promoting research, development and demonstration 48
  - Improving information generation and sharing 51
- Tackling urgent water priorities 55*
  - Protecting and restoring water resources and eco-systems 56
  - Achieving water-food security 58
  - Extending sanitation coverage and hygiene education 64
  - Meeting the challenge of urbanisation 68
  - Improving the management of floods 71
- Investing for a secure water future 75*
  - Assessing investment needs 75
  - Meeting the resource challenges: bridging the gap 77
  - Measures to support financial flows 83

### The way forward 87

- Developing mechanisms for action 87
- Completing the FFA mandate 87
- Implementation: country and local level 92
- Implementation: international and regional level 94

### Annexes 101

### Acknowledgements 111

An Executive Summary of the *Framework for Action* is available as a separate document.



## Mobilising political will to act







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## Mobilising political will to act

### Vision to Action

Floods along the Yangtze river, drought in Africa, national disputes over the Jordan and the Nile, nitrates in groundwater in Western Europe, industrial wastes in the Volga and the Danube, cholera in Brazil, riots over irrigation in Gujarat, illegal water connections in Manila, subsidence in Mexico City: water-related problems take different shapes and forms in different corners of the world. Taken together, these problems add up to a looming water crisis, for which the World Water Vision exercise has accumulated a wealth of evidence. The myriad components of these water-related problems, as manifestations of interconnected pressures on one fragile global water pot, need to be addressed by governments and peoples acting together. Without such action, our children and our children's children, may confront a planet running dry.

Awareness is growing that water is a scarce and precious resource, which must be carefully managed if frightening future water crises are to be avoided. Everyone agrees that water is vital to all life and is therefore central to all efforts to eliminate poverty. The world has recognised that secure livelihoods, strong economies, and sustainable ecological systems depend on the availability of water, and principles for its management have been internationally agreed. The urgent challenge that remains is to translate these agreed principles into practice.

In 1997 at the first World Water Forum, professionals from around the world agreed that a mass mobilisation and awareness campaign was needed to alert people and politicians to the fragile status of the world's water resources. This led to the development of a long-term vision for Water, Life and the Environment – an initiative of the World Water Council. Many people from all walks of life contributed to this World Water Vision, which was guided by the World Commission on Water for the 21st Century.

The World Water Vision and the actions needed to achieve it are the focus of the 2nd World Water Forum to be held in The Hague in March 2000. In preparation for The Hague, the Global Water Partnership (GWP) was asked by the Commission to organise inputs from all over the world to prepare an outline of the actions which would contribute to achieving the Vision. The Framework for Action (FFA) presented here is the result.

The Framework is inspired by the Dublin Principles (see Annex I), Agenda 21, chapter 18 of UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the various internationally ratified conventions relevant to water. Although many countries and organisations have begun to put into practice some of the principles of these international agreements, the degree of commitment and level of action has varied considerably from place to place. The present level of commitment is inadequate to cope with the growing stress on water resources and poor service provision as illustrated by the business as usual scenario of the Vision. Much more needs to be done, and at a faster rate, to respond to the critical water insecurity which threatens many parts of the world.

Over the next 25 years the 'Vision to Action Process' aims to change attitudes and mobilise people and resources toward the goal of water security for all. If people see this as a top priority, it will engender political commitment backed by financial and political pledges to implement the Framework for Action to achieve the Vision.





“There are still over a billion people living without access to safe water supplies, sanitation is minimal for half the planet and 800 million people are malnourished. Surface and groundwater resources are stressed in many places by over abstraction and pollution. Freshwater ecosystems are unhealthy almost all over the world.”

Vision Staff Report

## Water security as a common goal

To tackle the global water crisis, the world must work towards ‘water security’ as an overarching goal, as endorsed by the World Water Commission. Water security, at any level from the household to the global, means that every person has access to enough safe water at affordable cost to lead a clean, healthy and productive life, while ensuring that the natural environment is protected and enhanced. Those using and sharing river basins and aquifers must manage their water sustainably, balancing water use for human development with protection of vital eco-systems and the ecological services they provide.

The term ‘water security’ aims to capture the complex concept of holistic water management and the balance between resource protection and resource use. Water security needs to be considered at local, national and regional levels. Together with improvements in health, education, energy and food security, increased water security can avoid threats from pollution and support the overall goal of poverty alleviation, improved human well-being, productivity and capacity alongside environmental sustainability.

Fulfilling the World Water Vision will require achieving water security at all levels, with a special emphasis on extending services to the unreached. At every level, the challenge will be to find the right balance between protecting the resource itself – ground and surface waters – while meeting social needs and promoting economic development. It will also be essential to find and apply examples of good practices, and good tools and methods and resources that help to achieve the balance, and promote wise decisions and actions from all levels ranging from the poorest village home to the highest seat of government.

### International Development Targets

The following international development targets cannot be achieved without addressing problems of water resource management and use:

- 1 The proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries should be reduced by at least one-half by 2015 (World Summit on Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995)
- 2 The mortality rate for infants and children under the age of five years should be reduced in each country by two-thirds of the 1990 level by 2015 (UN International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 1994)
- 3 There should be a current national strategy for sustainable development, in the process of implementation, in every country by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015 (UN Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 1992)
- 4 Reduce by half the number of undernourished people on earth by 2015 (World Food Summit, Rome, 1996)

Achieving water security is a key component in meeting agreed international development targets related to reducing absolute poverty, improving health and maintaining environmental resources. One of the key steps in translating the Vision into action will be universal adoption of specific water security targets at various levels. Indicative global water security targets are set out below. These targets are based on the priority issues identified in the regional and sectoral Vision to Action reports and establish water’s critical role in achieving the broader international development targets.

### Indicative global water security targets

- 1 Comprehensive policies and strategies for IWRM in process of implementation in 75% of countries by 2005 and in all countries by 2015
- 2 Proportion of people not having access to hygienic sanitation facilities reduced by half by 2015
- 3 Proportion of people not having sustainable access to adequate quantities of affordable and safe water reduced by half by 2015
- 4 Increase water productivity for food production from rainfed and irrigated farming by 30% by 2015
- 5 Reduce the risk from floods for 50% of the people living in floodplains by 2015
- 6 National standards to ensure the health of freshwater ecosystems, established in all countries by 2005, and programmes to improve the health of freshwater ecosystems implemented by 2015

Following the Forum and Ministerial Conference, Governments are invited to establish their own national water security targets based on these global targets. These targets need to be clearly defined, indicators developed, and a monitoring system established so that progress can be measured. This is discussed further in *The Way Forward*. These targets are not complete in themselves, for example sub-sets of targets are needed on hygiene education, valuation, pricing, and shared waters. Some sector Vision reports give more detailed sub-sets of targets and goals.

Meeting these targets will be a tough challenge, but they are achievable if the commitment is made and the resources provided. Even meeting these targets will not solve all the problems but if the momentum can be maintained this should be possible by 2025. It is estimated that this would require a doubling of the present investment in water to some US\$180 billion per year – an impressive but not unrealistic requirement (see further *Investing for a secure water future*).



## Promoting change

Action must be taken by everyone and at all levels, with households and governments playing key roles. People must adopt water-friendly practices and governments must define and implement water and water-related policies that address their unique circumstances. While all countries are seeking water security, the richer and more industrialised countries, most of which enjoy a temperate climate, are much better able to address their water management and service challenges than most countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. These countries need international financial support, capacity building and advice if they are to meet the much greater challenges they face; the Framework for Action therefore focuses on their more urgent needs. However, the industrialised countries also need to face up to the challenges of water security – particularly with respect to pollution and overexploitation of resources.

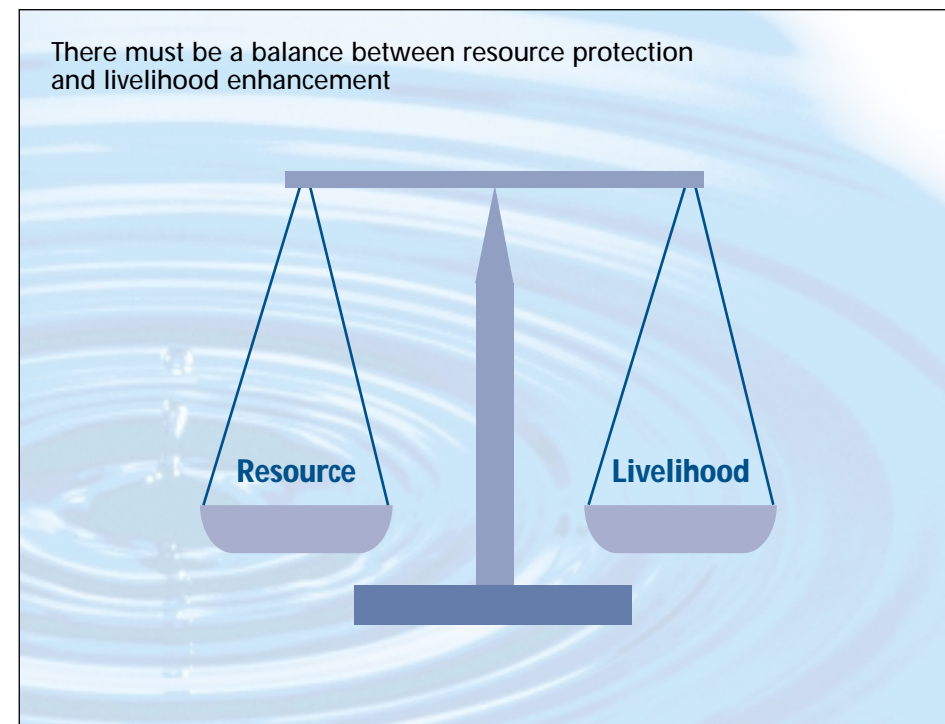
Independently of differences in wealth, the world is very diverse and climatic variations significantly affect the water strategies to be adopted by different countries. Water also plays a part in the belief system of all cultures, and societies have enshrined particular values and developed customs associated with its use. In all countries gender asymmetry is an obstacle to development. With growing scarcity, conventional attitudes and beliefs need to be reviewed, and a modern, holistic approach developed commensurate with cultural values. The political will to change to a new approach to water is a vital precursor to major action.

Access to safe water is acknowledged as a basic right in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and is promoted in the Water for People Vision 21 report. Similarly, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes food requirements as part of the basic right to a standard of living for health and well-being. What is needed now is the political will to convert these paper 'rights' into tangible benefits, and acceptance of the responsibilities that go with rights.

### Integrated water resources management

The philosophy underlining the translation of the Vision into action is integrated water resources management (IWRM). This important concept is explained in detail in a special GWP IWRM paper. IWRM is enshrined in the first Dublin principle, which says that as water sustains life, effective management demands a holistic approach, linking social and economic development with protection of natural eco-systems and links land and water uses across the whole catchment area or aquifer. A holistic approach requires balancing the competing demands on the resource – domestic, municipal, agricultural, industrial, and environmental. Without applying IWRM, water services, whether to rich or poor, may not be sustainable. Management of water resources and services needs to reflect the interaction between these different demands, and must therefore be co-ordinated between and across boundaries and sectors. Worldwide, people who care for the resource base or manage or develop its physical and social structures are beginning to adopt these principles into their thinking.

*People must adopt water-friendly practices and governments must define and implement water-related policies that address their unique circumstances.*



IWRM holds that if water is managed holistically, a more equitable, efficient and sustainable regime will emerge. Instead of fragmentation and conflict, competing sectoral interests and responsibilities for the whole water domain can be resolved within a single integrated framework. This will not be easy. Clearly, some users have greater political or economic leverage than others. Inevitably it is the poorest and least powerful who are worst-off in terms of access to resources and water services.

A key message of the Vision is that provision of basic domestic water services for the poor is a high value use and has significant health benefits as well as improving the quality of life. Since the quantity of water used for domestic purposes is small in most countries it does not normally pose a conflict with other uses. However there are many conflicts to be resolved, for example between high quantity uses – agriculture and industry – and the environment, and between water use for urban and rural areas. These allocation issues are a critical element of IWRM and must be resolved at a local, country and sometimes regional level. Capacity building, participation, transparency and institutional development can help in wise water allocation. Putting IWRM into practice is a major theme of *Making water governance effective*.

*"IWRM is a process which promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximise the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital eco-systems."*

Global Water Partnership





*Resistance to change by existing players will only be overcome by enlightened leadership from the top and the participation of all stakeholders.*

### Managing change

Moving from Vision to Action will require major changes at many levels. A holistic approach to water management can only be implemented sustainably by entities and institutions willing to change. That willingness to change must be created in the face of adherence to established beliefs by the elaboration of arguments acceptable to all affected parties. The benefits of change may not all be self-evident; aspects may bring immediate and obvious problems and offer only intangible and uncertain future benefits. Overcoming short-term expediency means that the advocates of change have to make twice as much effort as might intuitively be thought necessary.

A need for change must be known about before it can be wanted. Awareness building comes first, and the Vision can help with this. Wanting a change requires understanding its benefits. Some changes at the larger level, such as water pricing, water law, or gender mainstreaming may not readily be seen as locally desirable. The awareness raising messages need to make clear the benefits of change at all levels

After a change is known about and wanted, resources must be found to put it into operation. Finding and allocating resources is a political process. The players in the contentious process of resource allocation are usually not the same people who are advocating change, and are likely to resist the necessary institutional reforms. Resistance to change by existing players will only be overcome by enlightened leadership from the top and the participation of all stakeholders.

Everyone must become part of a global 'water movement' that follows, and indeed becomes a part of, the 'environment movement' that has been growing and strengthening over the past decade. Freeing women, often both the poorest and the least represented constituents, from social constraints can inject a new energy and enthusiasm into solving many water problems. Such movements come to involve all sections of society, including politicians, business people, religious and professional people, children, students, teachers, urban and rural female and male workers. These points are elaborated in *Generating water wisdom*.

### Launching a water movement

Although there are some signs of increasing awareness of the problems of water scarcity around the world, water has some way to go before it gets to the top of the political agenda in most places. Bringing it to political and public prominence requires the engagement of many stakeholders. We must overcome the present syndrome of water as 'many people's concern, but often nobody's business'.

Water-related problems primarily manifest themselves at a local level but often require national or even international solutions. To achieve the goal of water security for all, therefore, action to raise political consciousness is needed at both the local and the global level.

Politicians are constantly juggling priorities, and the start of the 21st century sees many urgent issues competing for attention. It will take the pressure of the combined concerns of everyone from householders to farmers and business people, each with their specific problems and preferred solutions, to move water up the political priorities chart.

At The Hague in March 2000, people concerned with water from around the world are coming together to debate the issues and recommendations set out in this and many other reports. They are meeting in sessions of the Second World Water Forum, in a Ministerial Conference and at a World Water Fair. The Hague meeting therefore presents the ideal opportunity for the launching of a 'water movement', building on past achievements, emerging as both a forceful voice for change, and a springboard for co-ordinated action.

Much of the current awareness of water problems comes from specialists and the dimensions of these problems have not been conveyed to the public in terms that are well understood. Water is of such overriding importance to human life that it needs a movement of its own. Also, the overall environmental movement, which has gained significant momentum over the past decades, should embrace water issues more fully.

The Forum includes special sessions that bring people from all walks of life together into the global water community. These sessions, which will involve young people, NGOs, business representatives and many more, are where the seeds of the water movement will be sown. Water specialists and scientists alone can never change the attitudes of the public and their politicians. The role of the young is of special importance, since their concern for the future of the planet makes them the natural proponents of a water movement.

A successful launch of the water movement requires that the momentum gained through the Vision to Action process is maintained and strengthened after The Hague. Everyone at the meeting will be asked to embrace common goals and to make a commitment to action.

### Themes for action

The Vision to Action process and the many meetings all over the world have yielded the themes for action that are outlined in the next sections of the Framework for Action. Details can be found in the regional and sector vision reports and other World Water Forum papers. The FFA has grouped the themes into four broad areas:

#### ***Making water governance effective:***

The water crisis is mainly a crisis of governance. Working towards effective water governance requires an enabling environment and appropriate institutional structures that allow stakeholders to work together for effective water management. Financial practices must be realigned to support the sustainable use of water resources.

*"Change is a political process. If innovators are to have any impact they have to recognise that stakeholders have to know about a proposed innovation or approach. They next have to want it and secure the means to have it and finally the resources to operate it."*

Framework for Action Unit



*How to get things done and who does them: these are often the most sensitive and neglected parts of any action programme.*

***Generating water wisdom:***

Water wisdom means applying all useful experience and knowledge in pursuit of sustainable water resources management and raising awareness of its importance. Innovative solutions are of critical importance, particularly technical innovation as proposed in the Commissioner's report. Water wisdom embraces concepts from many disciplines in developing a globally accepted comprehensive and holistic approach to water.

***Tackling urgent water priorities:***

Five priority areas, common to much of the world, emerged from the regional meetings. These are: protecting and restoring water resources; achieving water-food security; extending sanitation coverage; meeting the challenge of urbanisation; and improving flood management. Among these, sub-regions and countries will identify their own urgent needs.

***Investing for the water future:***

The various investor groups – domestic and international; individual and institutional – will be called upon to play their part in financing a secure water future. New sources of investment must be developed.

The Themes for Action are intended to reflect issues arising from the extensive Vision consultation process. They are not prescriptive; from them, international, national and local stakeholders can choose a mix tailored to their particular circumstances, existing resources, and needs.

## **The way forward**

What action to take is only part of the answer. How to get things done and who does them is often the most sensitive and thus usually neglected part of any action programme. Mechanisms for action are proposed throughout the report and in *The way forward*. The roles of the different players are presented, with requests for people and organisations to pledge themselves to act for the good of all. The chapter includes a brief look at the immediate post-Forum process, designed to ensure that the Vision to Action process truly becomes a reality.