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GWP Impact in the last 30 years
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My personal association with GWP goes back 25 years when I joined the organisation as the Deputy Executive Secretary in 2001. Since then I have from time to time been asked to assist or provide support to GWP. It has been a true pleasure to have had such a long association with the organisation.

The GWP was set up in 1996 to promote and help countries implement Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). The concept and principles were established at a meeting of water experts in 1992 in Dublin.

In 2002 GWPO was established as an intergovernmental organisation by 8 countries and two international organisations. The role of GWPO was to support the global network of Regional and country water partnerships around the world.

At the UN world Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002, global leaders agreed that all countries should develop and implement National Integrated Water Resources Management Plans. It was of course a natural and obvious task for GWP to help countries to do this. GWP prepared funding proposals to support countries to prepare these plans. Many donor countries stepped forward and committed financing. In a relatively short time we had secured 15 million USD supporting a large number of countries to prepare national IWRM plans.

GWP also undertook the first survey of the status of implementation of IWRM in countries around the world. I remember we presented the status in three shades of grey instead of green, amber and red as it was perceived as sensitive to put a strong spotlight on poor performers. The current tracking of the SDG 6.5.1 indicator builds on this initial work.

Major impacts of GWP over the last 30 years

1. Mainstreaming Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

Maybe the biggest contribution of GWP has been promoting the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management globally. GWP helped translate the “Dublin Principles” into practical governance frameworks used by governments, river basin authorities, and development agencies worldwide.

Through technical guidance, training programs, and policy dialogue, GWP helped countries:

- develop national water policies and legislation,
- improve river basin governance and transboundary cooperation
- coordinate water, agriculture, energy, and environmental planning,

Today, IWRM is embedded in many national water strategies and in UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 and in particular goal 6.5.1 which tracks the degree of implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

The principles and approach of IWRM are now adopted by most countries around the world. The job has been done! But, the challenge facing us now is to address the rapidly escalating impact of climate. This will be done using the work undertaken on IWRM as a platform.

2. Building global, regional and country water partnerships

GWP created a decentralized and collaborative global network comprising:

- 13 Regional Water Partnerships,
- 77 Country Water Partnerships,
- and over 2,800 institutional partners across over 180 countries.

The collaborative partnership model became influential because it brought together governments, civil society, communities, researchers and academic institutions, and the private sector in the same forums.

Everyone sit around the table to find solutions to water resources challenges that work for all. This is what we refer to as a multi-stakeholder platform. GWP today has a strong convening power and is seen as a neutral convenor. People and groups who previously had no influence on decision making are now part of decision making processes.

3. Supporting transboundary water cooperation

GWP has helped mediate and facilitate cooperation in shared river basins and aquifers, particularly in regions where water tensions could increase conflict risks. Its role has often been as a neutral convenor supporting dialogue between countries, local authorities, and stakeholders.

This work has become increasingly important as climate change has intensified droughts and water scarcity globally and competition for water resources.

4. Influencing global water policy and SDGs

GWP has been closely linked with:

- United Nations water initiatives,
- climate adaptation frameworks,
- and implementation of SDG 6.

The partnership has contributed expertise to global forums on water governance, resilience, and financing. UN-Water describes GWP as “a major convening platform trusted for multi-stakeholder engagement and cross-country coordination.”

5. Capacity building and knowledge sharing

GWP’s training tools, publications, workshops, the IWRM Toolbox, Water Knowledge Hub which is a global knowledge platform designed to support practitioners, policymakers and institutions in implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) has benefitted thousands of water professionals and institutions.

Significant impact include:

- strengthening institutions and improving institutional capacity,
- helping governments design water laws and regulations,

- and strengthening technical expertise in water management.

6. GWP achievements in numbers

- Since 2014 GWP has directly and indirectly supported investments of over EUR 2 billion in water management, infrastructure policies and strengthened institutions
- Since 2020 GWP has supported 200+ water related policies, laws, institutions, instruments and financing mechanisms.

7. Advancing climate-resilient water investments

Especially, over the past decade, GWP's focus has shifted toward climate adaptation and water security financing. GWP and partners have worked to mobilize billions of euros in climate-resilient water investments across Africa and other regions.

Examples include:

- drought preparedness programs,
- flood risk management,
- watershed restoration,
- and adaptation to climate change.

GWP's Flagship initiative Africa Water Investment Programme, which is under implementation, aims to help influence over €30 billion in water and climate investments by 2030.

8. Broader significance

The last 10 years have seen water move to a major geopolitical, economic, and climate-security concern. Recent reports warn of "global water bankruptcy," worsening droughts, and severely increasing water stress worldwide.

In that context, GWP's long-term impact has been:

- helping establish water governance as a global development priority,
- promoting integrated management instead of fragmented sectoral approaches,
- and building international cooperation mechanisms as the current global water crisis intensified.

In a recent report WMO concludes that the cost for countries to deal with extreme weather events corresponds to up to 9% of GDP. Total damage and losses caused by Hurricane Melissa that devastated Jamaica in October 2025 is equivalent to over 50% of 2024 GDP of Jamaica according the Jamaican government. Instead of investing in socio-economic development, communities and countries are forced to divert funds to handle the impact of floods and droughts.

In order to deal with the impact of extreme weather events there is a need for water investments. The WB talks about 140 USD billion per year. The European Investment Bank estimates that USD 280 billion is needed annually. These are investments in infrastructure, policy development, institutional strengthening, capacity building and knowledge and experience sharing.

To help countries raise much needed water Investments is the current and future focus of GWP.

9. Independent evaluation of GWP's impact

In 2025 an independent evaluation, commissioned by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, was undertaken of the implementation of the GWP Strategy for the period 2020-2025. It concluded that GWP:

- has delivered on its mandate
- driven “systemic change” in water governance,
- strengthened climate resilience,
- improved transboundary cooperation,
- and remained highly relevant to national priorities,
- GWP occupies a distinctive, unique position within the global water governance landscape that is difficult to replicate

10. Forward looking impact

A concluding statement from the independent evaluation was that “Sweden and other sponsoring partners can justifiably take pride in the legacy created through long-standing support in a complex and increasingly important field.”

Maybe there is one other country that can take even more pride today. And that is Namibia for becoming the new host country of the Global Water Partnership and providing funding to the organisation.

This initiative is historic, groundbreaking and future looking and represents leadership in establishing new relationships between countries and international organisations, new models for international cooperation, a new world order.

We can begin to sense the significance of this action already today but the full impact will only be seen and understood in years to come. So I suggest we talk more about that impact when we meet again in 30 years time to celebrate the next 30 years of the Global Water Partnership.

Finally, GWP will continue to be active in Sweden in the future as a member of Water Sweden, an organisation recently established in Sweden. I would now like to invite Julia Schalk, Director Policy and Programme Partnerships at Water Aid, Sweden, to say a few words about Water Sweden.

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