

FEATURE: ADVANCING INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT THROUGH GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS

It is estimated that water scarcity already affects more than 40 percent of the global population, with increasing drought and desertification likely to exacerbate the problem in the future. At the same time, climate change is causing more extreme rainfall events, resulting in flooding, erosion, and pollution of water supplies. Urgent and coordinated action is needed, right around the world, to promote sound and integrated water resources management, and ensure access to clean water for all.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and other global commitments offer substantial opportunities to promote cooperation on global priorities towards a more sustainable future. High-level endorsement of the GWP approach (for example in SDG target 6.5) has provided GWP with a global framework and specific entry points within which to structure its support to countries and regions. The GWP Strategy for the next six years is therefore anchored in three global priorities: the SDGs, efforts to advance transboundary cooperation on water, and the imperative to support climate change adaptation.



Water solutions for the SDGs

SDG 6 has focused global attention on the value of adopting an integrated approach to water resources management. Such high-profile endorsement has provided GWP with a global framework within which

to structure its support to countries and regions, with target 6.5 (and its associated monitoring activities) providing the entry point. By working with mandated national institutions, GWP fosters water governance reform through an integrated approach, involving stakeholders at all levels. In addition to supporting progress towards SDG 6, this work furthers the achievement of the SDGs relating to gender equality, food, energy, health, sustainable cities, and climate.

The SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme assists governments in designing their national responses to the implementation of integrated water resources management, as measured by SDG indicator 6.5.1. The Support Programme is administered by GWP and operated in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNEP-DHI Centre, and Cap-Net (see 'GWP and UNDP Cap-Net align their expertise' for more information on Cap-Net). Countries complete a self-assessment every three years, and this identifies governance challenges and opportunities. The role of GWP is to support these assessments through multi-stakeholder consultations, and to help design and implement the resulting action and investment plans, leading to measurable improvements in IWRM.

- ◆ **SDG 6:** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all



- ◆ **Target 6.5:** By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate



Global **progress towards target 6.5** is monitored through two indicators:

- ◆ **6.5.1:** Degree of implementation of IWRM
- ◆ **6.5.2:** Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation

The work is implemented predominantly by the Country Water Partnerships, and is structured in three stages: (1) convening multiple stakeholders to monitor and report on challenges; (2) formulating appropriate responses to water resource management challenges; and (3) implementing IWRM solutions, including mobilising funding.

In 2020, GWP provided support on government request to 61 countries to report on the status of SDG indicator 6.5.1. This support included hosting multi-stakeholder consultation workshops and providing guidance materials in different languages. GWP also helped to finalise six Stage 2 IWRM Action Plans, and supported implementation of another seven Stage 3 activities. The work included assisting India, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Nicaragua, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan to report on IWRM implementation for the first time. Stage 3 activities in Kazakhstan have encouraged the government to integrate the new IWRM Action Plan with the existing State 2030 Water Management Programme. Kazakhstan has also developed a new version of its Ecological Code, which embraces the recommendations of the IWRM Action Plan.

GWP has helped to secure financing of US\$0.5–1 million from the national treasury to implement actions identified in Kenya’s IWRM Action Plan. Around US\$200,000 was leveraged in UNDP funding for new Stage 3 projects in Armenia and Viet Nam.

A GWP online training course for workshop facilitators was applauded by participants, with 96 percent reporting the course as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Organisers of the national consultation were similarly impressed, providing a ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ score of 94 percent.

About IWRM monitoring

IWRM monitoring calls for a participatory approach in which representatives from across sectors are brought together to discuss and validate data, paving the way for coordination and collaboration beyond monitoring. Under the SDG umbrella, IWRM monitoring falls under the SDG 6.5 target, for which UNEP is the appointed custodian agency.

SDG indicator 6.5.1 tracks the degree of IWRM implementation by assessing the four key components of IWRM: enabling environment; institutions and participation; management instruments; and financing. It takes into account the various users and uses of water, with the aim of promoting positive social, economic, and environmental impacts at all levels, including the transboundary level, where appropriate.

Data on 6.5.1 is collected through a questionnaire and responses are consolidated through consultations between relevant stakeholders. These include national and subnational line ministries and institutions involved in water resources management, and other stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, international organisations, and businesses. Through the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme, GWP has assisted UNEP by facilitating two rounds of multi-stakeholder consultations (in 2017 and 2020).

SDG 6 IWRM SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Assists government and other stakeholders

STAGE

1

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES
Bring together stakeholders



to understand the status of water resources management in the country

STAGE

2

DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS
Define areas of opportunity



to turn them into country-led investment projects that improve water resources management

STAGE

3

IMPLEMENTING SOLUTIONS
Carry out the Action Plan



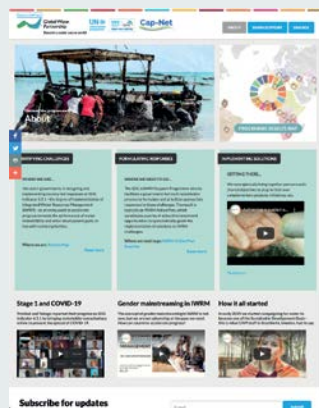
to ensure measurable progress on SDG 6.5.1 and other SDG targets, feeding back into the reporting process (stage 1)

SDG 6 IWRM support programme materials produced in 2020



SDG 6 IWRM Stage 1 Support Package:

Produced to support the second round of reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.1 in 2020, this includes a process guide and annexes to support specific aspects, e.g. stakeholder inclusion and online facilitation. Available in English, French, and Spanish.



SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme minisite:

Provides a range of resources, including videos, infographics, interactive map, and a database of actions on IWRM.



Transboundary water cooperation

River basins spanning two or more countries account for around 60 percent of global freshwater resources, with 2.8 billion people relying on

shared waters. Transboundary water cooperation is therefore critical to GWP's mission to advance the governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development.

Regional dialogues and knowledge-sharing

Regional dialogues can facilitate more open discussions than meetings focused on specific water bodies. By looking at solutions, they also help to identify entry points for cooperation. GWP experience shows that regional dialogues are effective in leading stakeholders towards basin-level cooperation on water management. For example, in 2020, GWP worked with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development to organise a second regional dialogue. This was held in parallel with a high-level meeting of government ministers from Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama, allowing the ministers to participate in the dialogue. All participants welcomed the dialogue as a valuable tool for coordination. They pledged to continue the collaboration by developing regional guidelines for the management of transboundary waters across Central America.

At the regional level, GWP has provided annual pan-African training events on water governance and international water law since 2015. In 2020, the impact of these events was enhanced and further cooperation was built by adopting a more structured approach to knowledge dissemination and sharing. A survey was sent out to gather feedback from past participants,

with the results published as a short report: [Transforming Transboundary Water Governance in Africa](#). The report and a proposed new capacity-development programme were presented in November to more than 50 people, including African Union officials, managers from the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), and members of river basin organisations. In addition to widening the reach of the training, the new approach will help to build a more extensive network of water professionals and decision-makers.



Basin-level cooperation

Building on discussions over several years, in 2020 the riparian countries of the Drin river basin (Albania, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia) jointly developed and signed a strategic programme outlining more than 100 actions to overcome obstacles and promote sustainable water resources development.

In Southern Africa, GWP helped to mobilise €5 million from the Global Environment Facility for a new project on managing competing water uses and protecting ecosystems in the Buzi, Pungwe, and Save river basins, which are shared by Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Building on a close pre-existing collaboration with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on enhancing transboundary collaboration in the region, GWP provided technical backing to ECCAS to submit eight transboundary water projects for funding under PIDA. This programme is backed by the African Union and aims to accelerate the development of key water infrastructure projects.

Sharing transboundary water management knowledge

GWP has a well-established capacity-building programme in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, developed with a wide range of partners and targeted at practitioners and legislators involved in transboundary water management. At the global level and working with key partners in the transboundary water space, GWP and the Global Environment Facility International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network developed a massive open online course (MOOC), [Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security](#). The course opened at the end of August 2020 and, as of April 2021, more than 2,000 learners from 145 countries have participated. The MOOC was also featured in a pan-Asian online workshop on monitoring SDG indicator 6.5.2 in response to participants' requests for capacity-building support.



Climate resilience through water

Water is the key to the world's ability to cope with climate change. Water scarcity and extreme flood events

adversely affect food security, employment, economic growth, energy production, and health. GWP has achieved significant results in building climate resilience around the world through its work to leverage investment and increase access to climate finance. This work revolves around support to countries to achieve their goals and targets under the Paris Agreement. The new strategy period brings an increased focus on incorporating gender equality into all national adaptation planning processes and climate investments.

Climate planning and access to finance

In 2019, GWP was appointed as a delivery partner by the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and became the go-to organisation to help countries access funding through the GCF Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme. In 2020, GWP received formal requests for proposal development support from nine countries (Burundi, Central African Republic, Eswatini, Libya, Montenegro, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Zambia). The total value of GCF projects currently in the pipeline exceeds €25 million. The goal of these proposals is to further develop and implement national climate resilience

commitments, including National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), in line with the Paris Agreement. Since a number of countries have missed the original deadline for completion of NAPs (2020), GWP will continue to play a significant role in furthering progress in this area.

NDCs lay out the priorities for national climate action, and have the potential to guide efforts to build climate resilience. NDCs can be developed into country-level strategies and/or approaches for mobilising finance for climate-resilient infrastructure projects, and for enhancing supportive policy and regulatory frameworks. GWP is providing practical support to countries to develop NDCs through the NDC Partnership, which has granted funding of almost €1 million to finance GWP support to five countries (Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, Somalia, and Sudan).

In April 2020, GWP launched the [Continental Africa Water Investment Support Programme](#) on water, climate, development, and gender. This promotes a gender-transformative approach to development, which means ensuring gender equality becomes a cornerstone in all planning, decision-making, and institutional development towards climate-resilient water management. The project team has completed gender analyses (including a literature review, online surveys, consultations, and focus groups) for each of the pilot countries (Benin, Cameroon, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia).

Mitigating risk from floods and droughts

GWP is playing an increasing role in incorporating the topic of water management into the global debate on disaster risk reduction. In 2020, this included providing input to the High-Level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters (HELP) [Draft Principles to Address Water-related Disaster Risk Reduction under the Covid-19 Pandemic](#). This was followed up with an Asia-wide consultation meeting with more than 100 participants, which gathered thoughts and opinions on how to implement the principles in practice. The meeting also provided a platform where decision-makers, experts, and practitioners could exchange views on how to enhance preparation for combined water and health emergencies.

GWP has a long history of collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), including the joint programmes on flood and drought management that champion an integrated, cross-sector approach to the management of extreme events. In 2020, both

programmes organised a series of virtual meetings to help their partners to continue sharing knowledge during a time of social distancing. The Integrated Drought Management Programme worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Cap-Net on the development of knowledge products, as well as providing input to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Special Issue on Drought (to be published in 2021).

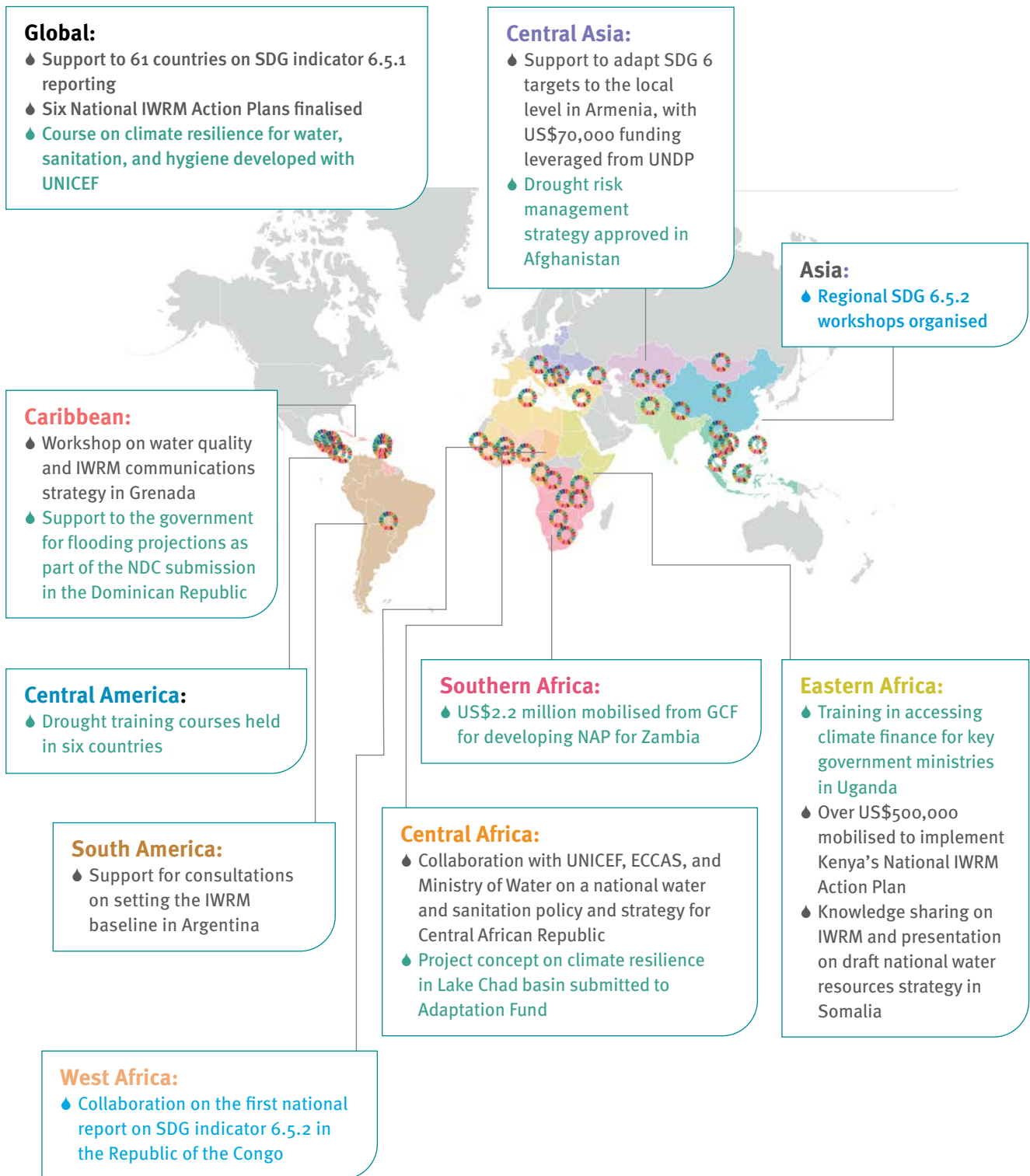
Regarding resource mobilisation, GWP Central Africa is working with the Lake Chad Basin Commission and WMO to develop a concept note for submission to the Adaptation Fund for strengthening flood and drought early warning systems. Another submission aimed to boost the resilience of Mekong river communities by improving decision-making networks for better disaster risk management, agricultural productivity, and hydropower generation.



In 2020, GWP mobilised around €17.5 million to support ongoing initiatives in climate change and transboundary cooperation.

Vehicles try to drive through a flooded street in Dhaka, Bangladesh, July 2020

GWP SUPPORT FOR SDG MONITORING AND CLIMATE ACTION: HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020



- ◆ Support for monitoring SDG 6.5.1 (IWRM)
- ◆ Support for monitoring SDG 6.5.2 (transboundary cooperation)
- ◆ Support for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction