

WELCOME TO GWP IN ACTION 2020

Message from the Chair



Welcome to GWP in Action 2020, our latest annual report. Here, we showcase some of our achievements over the past year. It was certainly a year of unprecedented challenges, with major disruptions to many aspects of daily life and work that we had previously taken for granted.

The coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic presented a particular hurdle to GWP, an organisation with networking and communication at its heart. Travel restrictions effectively put a stop to all face-to-face meetings, requiring GWP to rapidly adjust its planned approach ‘to mobilise, to learn, and to act’, as outlined in the 2020–2025 Strategy. Based on experience gained through hosting online annual Network Meetings over the past two years, we immediately mobilised our staff and partners to operate virtually so we could deliver on our 2020 commitments to the greatest extent possible.

This worked. We successfully continued our support to countries in their efforts to achieve the water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDG 6 integrated water resources management (IWRM) Support Programme assisted the governments of 61 countries to organise stakeholder consultations on IWRM implementation, with the majority of events taking place virtually, or with a mix of online and face-to-face engagement. We also launched the new GWP–Global Environment Facility massive open online course on governance for transboundary freshwater security. You can read more about these initiatives in the following pages.

Looking ahead, GWP will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2021. Our convening power and experience of mobilising stakeholders gained over the past quarter of a century – including through virtual communication channels – underlines the fact that no other organisation in the world has the reach of GWP in the water sector. We can offer something that the sector generally lacks: a coherent view and vision of how to move towards a more water secure world and achieve SDG 6. As we emerge from the global pandemic, GWP will continue to be a node for building coherence through a sustained focus on strengthening partnerships, building bridges, and mobilising action across the globe.

Howard Bamsey

COVID-19 and the GWP response

The pandemic presented an unprecedented challenge to GWP operations, with common problems including shifts in the focus of mandated actors (e.g. government ministries) leading to delays in targeted governance processes; communication problems in areas with poor internet provision; inability to move field visits and other community engagement activities to virtual formats; and delays in finalising local funding agreements.

GWP responded to the global pandemic by reorganising and repositioning the means by which it provides support. Specific examples include:

- ◆ The Working in Virtual Environments (WiVE) initiative provided training and support for global, regional, and country staff to strengthen their skills in organising and facilitating virtual events.
- ◆ GWP provided guidance to the network on where to focus attention under the rapidly changing circumstances via an internal paper entitled GWP Positioning in a COVID-19 World.
- ◆ Regular conference calls with Regional Coordinators helped to prioritise needs and responses.
- ◆ GWP supported regional assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on the water sector; for example, working with the Southern African Development Community and Regional Technical Committee in the Caribbean.
- ◆ Savings on the travel budget were reallocated to Network-strengthening activities.

A word from the Interim Executive Secretary



We began 2020 with an ambitious three-year business plan and an annual workplan to operationalise our 2020–2025 Strategy: Mobilising for a Water Secure World. This included launching new initiatives on gender equality and Network strengthening, as well as building on our existing programmes relating to the SDGs, transboundary water management, and climate resilience through water. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that we unexpectedly had to rethink and adapt our business to the unprecedented circumstances.

I am pleased to say that we were able to rapidly develop our organisational capacity, skills, and tools to operate virtually, with most planned activities continuing and substantial results being achieved despite the limitations imposed by not being able to travel or meet in person.

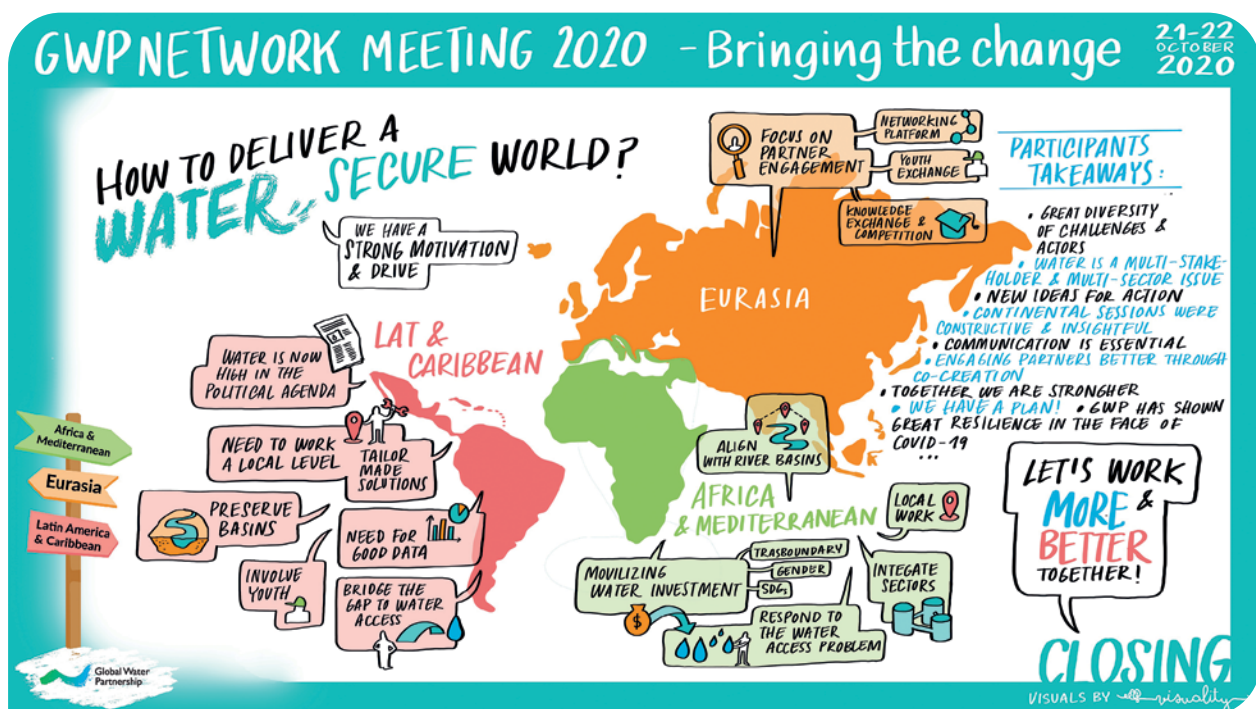
One highlight was the Working in Virtual Environments (WiVE) initiative, launched as soon as the pandemic restrictions became apparent. Through WiVE, we rapidly built capacity across the GWP Network to organise and facilitate workshops, meetings, and consultations through virtual media, thereby continuing our valuable work to deliver global and regional activities.

More than 300 GWP Partners signed up for the annual Network Meeting, with additional stakeholders watching on the Facebook live feed. The theme Bringing the Change encompassed both the new GWP Strategy (2020–2025) and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the difficult new reality, discussions were generally positive about the future. Many Partners mentioned the emergence of new opportunities, such as virtual meetings, which allow greater inclusion in discussions and deeper interregional collaboration.

In 2020, GWP and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) increased their collaboration on Cap-Net and continued their strategy of integration. This global water management capacity-building network is implemented by UNDP and has been administered by GWP since early 2019. Specific 2020 activities included joint SDG project preparation, organisation of a webinar series on climate and water policy, and development of a training-of-trainers course on managing multi-stakeholder consultations.

Finally, I would like to thank all participants in the GWP Network who have applied effort and commitment to exploring alternative means of supporting key stakeholders, facilitating consultations, delivering workshops, and engaging partners around the world. Not only has this ensured that the 2020 workplan has been implemented to a large extent, but it has also laid strong foundations for innovative new ways of working that will reduce convening costs and cut the carbon footprint of the organisation in the post-pandemic world.

Peter Repinski



Visual summary of the closing session of the [GWP 2020 Network Meeting](#)

From the Chair of Regional Chairs



Effective operation of the GWP Regional and Country Partnerships is the key to achieving the ambitious goals enshrined in the new GWP Strategy. The networks need to mobilise capacity, relationships, and human and financial resources to ensure effective programme implementation.

In many ways, the implications of the coronavirus pandemic have been most marked at the regional and country levels. While at the global level it has been possible to complete many planned activities virtually, this has not always been the case in the regions, where there has traditionally been a need for travel and in-person activities to deliver results due to the challenges of poor internet connectivity. Even so, with help from the GWP WiVE team, we were able to hold a wide range of virtual events, including a project launch in eastern Africa, transboundary negotiations in southern Africa, and a pan-Asian consultation on SDG 6 monitoring.

In 2020, GWP launched a Network strengthening initiative to support implementation of the new Strategy. The Strengthening Regional Operational Network Growth (StRONG) programme builds on previous GWP successes, aiming to enhance the capacity of the Regional and Country Water Partnerships to deliver results in a consistent, reliable, and agile way. Its three pillars – based around leadership and skills, institutional set-up, and network effects – will unlock the barriers to further progress posed by a lack of capacity, finance, institutions, knowledge, and network connectivity. We have made an excellent start, despite COVID-19 restrictions, holding a number of online training events and workshops, revamping the GWP ToolBox knowledge-sharing platform, overseeing the Water ChangeMakers awards, and mobilising stakeholders to access climate funding through a series of webinars.

In early June, we organised the annual Regional Days meeting, which convenes all 13 Regional Water Partnerships and GWP head office staff. For the first time, this was organised entirely online, providing new opportunities to explore virtual learning. The event used participatory online platforms to ensure as many participants as possible could engage fully, interact person-to-person, and air their diverse views. As a result, many participants will be taking these techniques and tools forward, using them in other relevant activities.

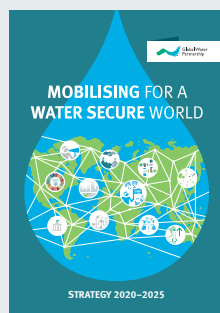
Trevor Thompson

New Executive Secretary



GWP has appointed Mr Dario Soto-Abril as its new Executive Secretary. Dario, a native of Colombia, took up his position on 1 March 2021. After spending the first part of his career as a corporate lawyer, he worked

for 14 years as the Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of The Trust for the Americas, the non-profit affiliate of the Organization of American States. During this time, he led the Trust's expansion from 3 to 22 countries, building coalitions and public-private partnerships around free trade, workers' rights, and human rights. He therefore brings to GWP extensive experience from a network with similar dynamics, and has a proven track record of successful resource mobilisation and motivating staff across different continents.



The [GWP Strategy 2020-2025](#) aims to leverage global policy frameworks to build momentum and change complex systems (see [GWP in Action 2019](#) for details on the strategy and how it was developed).

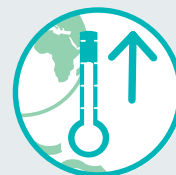
There are **three anchor areas**:



Water solutions for the SDGs



Transboundary water cooperation



Climate resilience through water

And **three cross-cutting areas**:



Contributing to gender equality



Mobilising youth



Engaging the private sector