

“ The holistic management of freshwater as a finite and vulnerable resource, and the integration of sectoral water plans and programmes within the framework of national economic and social policy, are of paramount importance for action in the 1990s and beyond.

*Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992*

## How to integrate IWRM and national development plans and strategies and why this needs to be done in the era of aid effectiveness

In all countries, a challenge for water advocates and water resource managers, as well as national policymakers and the broader development community, is to ensure that sustainable water resource management supports the achievement of national development goals.

Too often, the contribution of water to broad development goals is not well understood at the political level outside the water sector, and, as a result, actions needed to unlock this contribution are not identified and prioritised. To rectify this, the contribution of water to various sectors of economic and social life needs to be recognised and good water management needs to be given the appropriate priority by those sectors.

For this to occur, not only do water sector practitioners need to engage with national development planning processes but also managers of development planning processes need to ensure that water sector representatives are effectively drawn in.

For aid dependent countries, programmes to promote aid effectiveness provide an opportunity to better integrate water management into broader development initiatives. They may also make such integration a necessity, since they will make it more difficult to obtain extra-budgetary support for stand-alone water projects.

## The MDGS and beyond—water in its development context

It is widely recognised that effective water management will be required not just to reach the Millennium Development target on water supply and sanitation but also most of the other targets, notably those that relate to tackling poverty, hunger, health and gender issues.

Indeed, one of the challenges of managing water is that it supports many different social and economic activities as well as being an environmental resource in its own right. One consequence of this is that water policy and management issues are frequently addressed in separate sectors such as agriculture, industry, urban development and health as well as in the environment and natural resource sectors.

Even where water has a national champion, with some responsibilities for oversight of its management, the needs and approaches of other sectors are sometimes given higher priority on the national agenda. This is often the case with agriculture, particularly in poorer countries where it is still a dominant economic activity. Water management is also a long term challenge, and often more pressing, immediate issues in other sectors command greater attention.

The challenge for the promoters of better water management is to ensure that water is given adequate political priority and that actions necessary for its sustainable contribution to development are recognised and taken. For this, they need to understand the role of governments in water management and then how best to work with government at broader levels.

## The role of governments in water management

Because water occurs so widely and is used so diversely, governments alone cannot successfully manage it, whether at national or provincial/state level. There are many actions that can be taken locally, by private and community organisations and water users that contribute to the efficient and sustainable use of water in support of equitable livelihoods and development.

However, the framework for such actions is often set by national governments through legislation and the establishment of institutions as well as through direct intervention such as investment in public infrastructure to manage water. In countries with a federal constitution, the division of powers between national and state governments, and arrangements for cooperation between them are critical. Governments also have a specific role as custodians of the environment.

For the achievement of effective IWRM, engagement of governments is thus critical, whether they see their role as implementers and managers or simply as facilitators of development.

### Box 1. Linking water to national development priorities in Brazil

Balanced regional development is a high priority in Brazil, and the Secretariat of Hydraulic Infrastructure in the Ministry for National Integration has special responsibilities to identify opportunities through which water resources can contribute to Brazil's regional development.

The provision of water for both domestic needs and in support of production was identified as one strategy that could contribute to this goal and the important goal of poverty reduction. As a result, new programmes have been established at national level and substantial resources have been allocated to this activity.

In addition, the country's National Development Plan includes a series of water management activities to address poverty and development in different regions of the country.

## Policy, planning and budgeting

Planning and budgeting systems are an important channel for promoting effective water management. While policy should determine the priorities for national government, in many cases, planning serves as an intermediate process between policy and implementation, helping to evolve, and then to provide resources for, appropriate implementation strategies. Planning systems help to highlight priorities for action and resource allocation as well as to identify potential constraints. They also provide a framework within which tradeoffs can be made between different public objectives—such as the equity, efficiency and environment goals of IWRM.

A first step for effective IWRM advocacy is thus to engage in the processes of national development planning, an engagement that will be greatly facilitated—and legitimated—if it is undertaken using the language of development rather than that of water. Similarly, the (linked) budget process through which public resources are allocated needs to be informed by water challenges.

To achieve these goals, it is important to ensure that water advocates and managers are aware of, and prioritise participation in, development planning processes. It is also important that those responsible for the design of development planning processes ensure that they are structured in order to allow water sector engagement.

A second step is clarifying the objective of planning processes. If such processes are to be effective and not simply a competition for resources and attention, they should not be treated as just financial allocation processes. The most important contribution of effective strategic planning processes is usually the communication between different participants and their alignment around a common set of goals. Too often, however, the planning process is confused with the budgeting process. As a result, rather than an alignment process, it becomes a competition in which information is often hidden rather than shared.

Ideally, the planning process should focus on identifying priorities and strategies for addressing them; once these have been agreed upon, they can guide government in allo-

### Box 2. IWRM plans and national development planning in Zambia

Zambia fully integrated better water management into its Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP), which in turn has informed the country's IWRM Plan.

Zambia's experience in meeting the international target on IWRM and Water Efficiency Plans was presented at World Water Week in Stockholm, not by a representative from the water ministry but by a senior finance and national planning official, J. S. Mulungushi, Director of Planning and Economic Management.

As he explained: "The IWRM/WE plan gives great significance to the FNDP whose focus is on pro-poor oriented sectors with the theme *'Broad Based Wealth and Job Creation through Citizenry Participation and Technological Advancement'*." He further explained how the approach taken in the water sector was designed to support the FNDP's key objectives which include:

- poverty alleviation,
- food security, and
- industrial development.

Source: National Integrated Water Resources Management Planning and Linkages with National Development Planning Process, By J. S. Mulungushi, Director of Planning and Economic Management, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Zambia. Presented at World Water Week, Stockholm, Sweden, August 2006.



cating the budget. By separating national planning from government budgeting, it becomes possible to draw a wider range of interests, including business and other civil society actors, into the process of prioritisation and strategising; this in turn helps to mobilise a wider range of partners to work with government to achieve what are now common objectives.

Another danger is that planning processes may be treated simply as opportunities for advocacy, where water agendas are promoted without linkages to other sectors and priorities. If government planners are given the impression that water advocates are not interested in meeting broad development goals, they will inevitably pay less attention to their proposals.

## **Planning systems in donor-dependent poor countries**

While in poor countries, the size and complexity of government is constrained by resources, their planning and budgeting processes are often more complex than in better off, sovereign countries because they are dependent on donors. As a result, in many cases, governments must meet the requirements of a plethora of organisations as well as their own national structures and politics.

In this way, external agencies have contributed to fragmented and uncoordinated action by virtue of their disparate demands on recipient governments. Thus, in addition to their normal annual budgets and national plans, countries are often expected to produce a range of externally defined planning instruments. These include (but are not limited to):

- Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers,
- Comprehensive Development Frameworks,
- Sustainability Plans,
- Climate Adaptation Plans, and
- sector plans in many areas relevant to water resource management including agriculture, industry, urban development, environment, and health and education.

Amongst all of these planning exercises, the preparation of IWRM plans, let alone their implementation, will be a relatively low priority in many countries. Yet most countries will depend on effective water management to achieve their goals.

## **Aid effectiveness processes**

In response to the multiple challenges facing poor countries in coherently managing budgets and aid flows, an initiative known as the Paris Aid Effectiveness Process is being promoted. This seeks to place increasing proportions of aid funds into national governments' own budgets based on prior agreements on policy goals and strategies. While this process is contentious, it appears to be gaining momentum and most donor countries have now formally committed themselves to support it.

The Aid Effectiveness process has important implications for water management in donor dependent countries and highlights the need to ensure that good water management is effectively promoted and integrated within government planning systems since it will, correctly, become increasingly difficult to obtain external support for water management initiatives as standalone projects. Water sector managers and advocates will have to become conversant with the demands of the new approach and to ensure that their activities are included within the framework of national government planning.

## Key water issues in national development planning

Although each country will have a different set of issues, some are common. In almost all developing countries, the provision of water services (water supply and sanitation) is a key concern, but its links to water resource management are often not well understood. Even where the availability of water resources is not a major challenge, helping to support the provision of services is often an entry point into broader issues.

Since agriculture is almost always the largest user of water, agricultural water use strategies are critical and need to be linked to broader agricultural initiatives.

Climate change will impact many countries principally through water resources, and water resource management structures must be able to cope with the pressures that will occur. National adaptation strategies are an obvious point of intersection with water resource management, and disaster mitigation and management planning is an area in which water resource management already has extensive linkages.

### Box 3. Using water management challenges as an entry point in India

More than half of India's population, over 500 million people still depend on agriculture for their livelihood. The introduction of mechanised pumping equipment has enabled many farmers to tap the country's extensive groundwater resources which initially provides some guarantees against drought and enables them to intensify their production. However, as a result, groundwater levels have fallen dramatically in many areas threatening the long term sustainability of whole rural communities. Since much of the pumping relies on subsidised electricity, this over-exploitation is in effect being encouraged by the state. Because of the huge social and political implications, coordinated action between agriculture, water, energy and economic ministries is crucial.

More sustainable groundwater management is just one of the challenges. India's 2020 Vision recognizes the link between water management and economic progress and thus identifies several key water-related challenges for the country's development:

India is not poor in water resources. What it lacks is the ability to efficiently capture and effectively utilise the available resources for maximum benefit. The government policy needs to be revised to provide incentives for efficient use of water, including appropriate water pricing and more effective institutional mechanisms for water management. Enormous potential exists for increasing the productivity of water in agriculture by methods to raise crop productivity combined with better water management. Both urban and rural water resources can be substantially enhanced by widespread adoption of rain-water harvesting techniques, designed to capture run-off water during the monsoon season and channel it to recharge both surface water and underground aquifers. These methods need to be applied throughout the country on a massive scale, both in rural and urban areas.

*- Report of the Committee on India Vision 2020.  
Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, December, 2002.*

The actions outlined in the Vision were translated into more specific programmes during the preparation for India's 11th National Development Plan. As relevant—and encouraging for water managers—is the way in which water has been woven into plans for urban development, meeting basic needs, power, industry and agriculture.

Source: Towards Faster and More Inclusive Growth: An Approach to the 11th Five Year Plan, Delhi, June 2006.

## From development priorities to water management —some examples

As highlighted throughout this brief, in order to promote the adoption of good water management through an IWRM approach, it is important to consider national development priorities—how water fits into them and how better water management could support them. The key recommendation for water sector managers and advocates is to understand both their national development planning system and the priorities within it. Each country will have different priorities and planning systems, and therefore different entry points, from which better water management can and should be promoted. These are demonstrated by examples from different countries:

- In Brazil, the Ministry of National Integration's activities include key water resource programmes that support the national goal of balanced regional development (see Box 1).
- Singapore, given its very limited water resources, has set as a national priority the development of a strategy for water security. This has led to the development of new recycling and desalination initiatives as well as to a comprehensive stormwater runoff management system.
- The Democratic Republic of the Congo has an opportunity to use the hydroelectric potential of the Congo River to both address its internal electricity needs as well as to contribute to regional electricity development requirements. At the same time, the river is a vital transport artery. The management of the Congo River is thus a high priority for national development and has become the focus of extensive regional cooperation.
- India's government is concerned about the need to increase the productivity and sustainability of its agriculture. The National Planning Commission has thus identified improving water efficiency in agriculture as a priority (see Box 3).
- China has identified the development of its inland areas as a priority to balance the intense economic development taking place in its coastal areas. Water transport is an important component of strategies to achieve this priority. At the same time, the need to improve flood protection and increase the production of renewable forms of energy has resulted in major water resource management and development programmes on the Yangtze River.
- In Zambia, the Department of Finance recognised that the availability of water for social and economic development was a major constraint. As a consequence, it took the initiative to integrate water management interventions into the National Development Plan (see Box 2).
- Water scarce South Africa identified water resource constraints and opportunities as part of its national spatial development framework. As a result, growth and development plans of a number of provinces have been altered to focus on activities that make optimal use of the limited water resources available.



## Relation to other development processes

The challenge of integrating good water management into broad development planning and ensuring that broad development priorities are reflected in water management is not unique. Other cross-cutting goals, notably environmental protection as well as the poverty reduction objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have to be promoted in a similar context.

The approaches that have been taken in pursuit of those goals are of importance to the water sector not just as examples but because better water management is an intrinsic part of both environmental protection and sustainable development as well as the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. A number of the guides that have been produced in other sectors can thus usefully be applied in the water sector (see for instance, DAC Guidelines: “Strategies for Sustainable Development: Guidance for Development Co-operation”, Paris 2001).

## Key lessons

- If IWRM is not seen to be relevant to national development goals, it will be difficult to gain the attention and support of policymakers and Ministers of Finance. Similarly, policymakers need to be encouraged to consider how better water management can contribute to achieving their larger objectives.
- The credibility of a “water advocate” will often be determined by whether the advice given relates to national priorities and whether the linkages between water management proposals and the achievement of national goals and objectives are clearly explained.
- National development planning processes are an important arena in which to promote better water management. It should be recognised, however, that they are not the only arena and community level work, public advocacy and education and related activities will all be important to the achievement of the goal—better water management in support of a better life for current and future generations.

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- **Policy Brief 1.** Unlocking the door to social development and economic growth: How an integrated approach to water can help.
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This brief was prepared under the direction of the Global Water Partnership Technical Committee with Mike Muller as lead author. It complements a series of policy and technical briefs designed to help countries accelerate their efforts to achieve the action target for the preparation of IWRM and water efficiency strategies and plans set by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The briefs as well as a related publication, *Catalyzing Change: A Handbook for Developing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Efficiency Strategies* can be downloaded from [www.gwpforum.org](http://www.gwpforum.org) or hard copies can be requested from [gwp@gwpforum.org](mailto:gwp@gwpforum.org).