

Increasing Water Security

Shah, Tushaar, *Increasing Water Security: The Key to Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*, Global Water Partnership (GWP), Stockholm, Sweden, <http://www.gwp.org>, Background Paper No. 22, 2016.

http://www.gwp.org/Global/ToolBox/Publications/Background%20papers/GWP_TEC_22_web.pdf

The new UN Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 embodies universal aspirations for achieving a better, more just, equitable, peaceful, and sustainable future and invites us to accept and embrace comprehensiveness and interconnectedness.

The Agenda fully recognizes that water is embedded in all aspects of development – food security, health, and poverty reduction – it is essential for economic growth, and it sustains the natural ecosystems on which everything else depends. The inclusion of the ‘water goal’ (SDG6) puts responsibility for water management and increasing water security in the hands of the water and water using sectors. The Agenda champions the need for an integrated approach to water resources management and provides a ‘green light’ to countries to implement their IWRM plans.

This GWP Technical Committee Background Paper is a timely response to the SDGs. It reviews the IWRM approach and its evolution over the past 25 years towards increasing water security – its successes and disappointments. It is essentially a simple idea which has gradually gained international acceptance, yet putting it into practice has not proved to be easy. IWRM has not been without its critics. Those who have tried to operationalize it have often applied a ‘one-size-fits-all package’ which does not recognize the unique nature of physical, social, economic, political, and environmental circumstances which determine how a country puts IWRM into practice. So it is not surprising that the outcome was often disappointing.

But there are also successes and based on these experiences this review concludes with some strong proposals for successful implementation. It suggests a framework to guide implementation based on the stage of a country’s economic and social evolution with each stage requiring different inputs and actions that are appropriate to a nation’s needs and capabilities. It also suggests a balance is needed between learning from rich countries and adapting to local conditions. The next step is to provide more detailed guidance for wise implementation of IWRM and in turn SDG6.