

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and Water Efficiency Plans

Proposed brief guide on preparation of IWRM Plans - A perspective of the Global Water Partnership - GWP

Background

This paper suggests a framework and a process for preparation of national IWRM and water efficiency plans (IWRM Plans) by 2005¹. It provides a guidance note to help decision-makers and water managers with the possible content and the steps involved in establishing such plans.

Many countries are facing ranges of challenges related to water that are strongly inter-related and therefore need to be dealt with in an integrated way. The sustainable management of water is critical to economic and social development extending beyond the provision of access to safe drinking water and sanitation of the presently unserved. It is key to meeting the challenges of rapidly growing urban water demands and wastewater discharges; to securing water for increased food production; to reducing vulnerability to floods and droughts; to reducing risk to human health and protection from diseases and hazards; to ensuring water for industry and other economic activities; and to protecting the resource base and vital ecosystems from negative impacts of these developments.

Meeting “water-demands” in an economically efficient, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable way is a daunting task that requires an integrated water resources management approach. IWRM explicitly challenges conventional water development and management systems. It starts with the recognition that the traditional top-down, fragmented and supply led approach to water management is unsustainable and imposes high economic, social and ecological costs on human societies and the natural environment.

The preparation of IWRM plans is thus fundamental to meeting the Millennium Development Goals; those related to social and economic development as well as those more directly related to domestic water and sanitation services.

What is a National IWRM and Water Efficiency Plan?

A national *IWRM Plan* sets out a national strategy that identifies the priority steps that must be taken to reform the water management system to meet IWRM principles. It may suggest changes to national policy, the legislative framework, financing structure, organisational framework, and a range of management tools. It should set out a sequence of actions over a specific time frame to transform existing practices to more sustainable ones.

Thus, an IWRM Plan is not a conventional investment plan or list of capital projects to meet development challenges related to water infrastructure, rather it sets out the changes that have to be taken to ensure the appropriateness and sustainability of such capital investment. It is thus complimentary to investment plans as it provides a strategy for transforming the water management system to face development challenges in an integrated way.

The process of preparing an IWRM and water efficiency plan

The below text outlines the actions it may take to put in place a National IWRM Plan. The number of steps and the depth of the work will depend fully on the individual countries

¹ Target agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, September 2003, Plan of Implementation, Clause 25 (needs to be checked).

present stage of progress towards IWRM. Some of the components may already be quite advanced.

- 1) *Raise awareness about IWRM and build political will and support for the process.* It is not easy to embark on an IWRM transformation process. As IWRM challenges existing ways of doing things, the first step is to build awareness and understanding of the needs for change among decision-makers and practitioners. Building a broad consensus and understanding about what reforms are needed and how they can be implemented is an essential part of the process. The Vision to Action process as well as the WSSD has helped to do this in many countries. Identification of a national “champion” or key senior person responsible for completing the plan and with adequate resources is an important first step in the process.
- 2) *Ensure a framework for broad stakeholder participation.* Partnerships and strong multi-stakeholder groups and fora for participation in the development of National IWRM Plans are essential partly due to the cross-cutting nature of IWRM. An IWRM plan should not be an isolated exercise of a water department. It has to involve all the important governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the water sector. Broad participation and communication with all stakeholders is essential in the process that builds understanding and mobilises the actors.
- 3) *Overview of on-going activities that the IWRM plan can build on.* Several important elements, useful activities and documents will be in existence already and preparing a plan is very unlikely to start from scratch. Among these could be Sector Reform Plans, proposals for legal reform, Water Action Plans, partnership development activities, ongoing capacity building at water institutions etc. The IWRM Plan process can greatly benefit from such related processes.
- 4) *Identify and prioritise the water resources management issues and challenges* to be dealt with, and establish a consensus and common understanding of these among the stakeholders. The types of issues to consider are the challenges mentioned in the introduction to this note. Balancing human livelihood and development needs with the sustainable use of the resources is the final aim of the process.
- 5) *Identify Water Resources Management Functions* required to deal with the priority issues. Functions could comprise, formulation of policies for international co-operation on transboundary waters, water allocation and wastewater discharge permits, water resources assessments, monitoring, enforcement, mediation, training and access to information
- 6) *Identify of management potentials and constraints* at all levels, central, local and community levels based on the functions required to handle the main water resources issues
- 7) *Prepare strategies and plans for the IWRM framework* in terms precise actions and processes needed to improve and supplement the policies, legislation and financing – the framework of rules by which water is managed, and the institutional roles and capacities of those who manage as well as, and the management instruments that they will use. For the delivery of water and sanitation services, set guides for balancing public/private sector involvement, amending regulatory frameworks accordingly and identifying financing and tariff options.
- 8) *Ensure adoption at the highest political level.* An IWRM plan will typically suggest an action that goes well beyond the resort area of a particular ministry or department,

and it may propose changes to central government institutions. It is therefore essential that it be adopted at the level where inter-ministerial co-ordination takes place.

- 9) *Initiate capacity building.* Once the IWRM framework has been planned, high priority areas for capacity development within existing institutions can be identified. The process of preparing plans should itself be seen as a capacity building learning-by-doing process and whilst external experts may be needed to provide support the process should be well founded within local expertise.
- 10) *Prepare portfolio of implementation projects and a financing strategy of the plan.* The planning has to be followed rapidly by implementation in order to become useful. The planned changes in institutional structures, human resource development, improved knowledge and a capability to use the appropriate management instruments will have to be implemented together with changes flowing from water services reforms. The Plans will have budgetary and legal implications and proposal documents setting out the required changes and likely costs should be included in the plan. This should allow budget allocations/changes to be made and help in the consideration of any support required from external funding agencies and donors.

Lessons learned from Burkina Faso

IWRM plans, largely following the steps in the above process have, for instance been prepared in Uganda 1993-94 and in Burkina Faso 1999-2002. These plans have been starting points of substantial improvements in water resources management and development capabilities. In the case of Burkina Faso, water policy reforms were initiated in 1995 and new policies were adopted in 1998. A more comprehensive IWRM process was started in 1999 with a 4 year time perspective and with international financial and technical assistance. The lessons learned from the process included, among others;

- Political will at highest levels should be established at an early stage
- The IWRM process should be firmly anchored in the responsible ministry and ministry staff should be involved in all activities
- The planning process should be supported by a communication strategy for involvement of stakeholders, technical and financial partners
- Institutional reform possibilities should be considered early in the process
- IWRM principles need to be studied and adapted to the national context
- Stakeholder groups need to be formed to discuss the plan and enough time should be given to get their comments and endorsement
- Decision makers at many levels should participate in the consultative processes
- Prioritisation of issues need to be based on rational methodologies
- Proposals and approaches need pilot testing in a basin where economic, social and environmental stakes are high

Content

The structure and content of a Plan will of course vary from country to country. Nevertheless, there are features common to all countries that assist those preparing plans in their work. The IWRM Toolbox developed by GWP can be seen as checklist for an IWRM Plan.