

Box 1. Definition of IWRM

Box 2. Guiding principles from the Dublin Statement

Principle No.1: Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.

Principle No.2: Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.

The participatory approach involves raising awareness of the importance of water among policy-makers and the general public. It means that decisions are taken at the lowest appropriate level, with full public consultation and involvement of users in the planning and implementation of water projects.

Principle No.3: Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

Principle No.4: Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.

Based on: The Dublin Statement on water and sustainable development, 1992.

www.wmo.ch/web/homs/documents/english/icwedece.html

The 'integrated' and 'management' parts of IWRM warrant some further introduction. 'Integrated' management aims to minimise the negative impacts that might be created by the actions of one particular sub-sector, stakeholder or time, on others. It seeks to avoid inefficiencies and conflicts that are a feature of less-integrated approaches. IWRM thus implies a move away from traditional sub-sector foci that address domestic water supply, wastewater, irrigation, industry and the environment separately (often within different agencies or government departments) to a more holistic approach. This does not mean that all actions have to be fully integrated and handled by a super-agency that replaces the many actors in water, rather it is about finding ways to coordinate and address coordination problems.

Management is sometimes very narrowly interpreted, but here we take it to have a broad meaning to cover all aspects of intervention in the water cycle including planning, systems of water rights and allocation of water resources, development of infrastructure and monitoring.

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processes (Harmonicop, 2005). Multi-stakeholder platforms have been a popular way to encourage related dialogues (Warner, 2006).

Alternatively, or in combination, participation may be by representation of different types. People may be represented in catchment agencies by their democratically elected bodies, such as local government, who may be allocated a seat in the decision-making organs of the agency (for example, in South Africa). Or catchment agencies may set up their own structures for water management to represent different types and groups of stakeholders, including platforms at different levels (catchments, sub-catchments etc). In some countries there is a mix of these types of representation, and frequently, contestation over roles, for example local governments taking over or sidelining catchment agencies.

The problems

There has, until recently, been a pre-occupation with the river basin or large catchment as being the most sensible unit for IWRM. While certainly some functions are best handled at this scale, the second Dublin principle speaks of acting at the lowest appropriate level, and much water management has to happen at far more local levels (Blomquist et al., 2005). Administrative units also prove to be better scales for much decision-making and implementation.

A further major criticism of much IWRM activity is that it ignores politics (Gyawali et al., 2006; Wester et al., 2003) which is one of the main mechanisms in society for organising participation. The water crisis is arguably more a function of unfair distribution than an absolute shortage of resources, and politics is the main process that determines how water (among other) resources are shared between potential uses. Real participation, as opposed to token participation, is always political because it implies a real sharing of power in decision-making.

Many attempts to encourage participation in IWRM score poorly when assessed (W9r

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While basin-level IWRM by representative bodies in which all stakeholders are fully and fairly represented is a good target, or endpoint, a strength of the IWRM paradigm is that real and significant improvements in water management can be made at all levels – from the household to the international basin – by individuals and institutions applying the Dublin principles in the context

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