

Global Water Partnership submission to the UNFCCC with respect to the Review of the Adaptation Fund

Intensified water resources management as a concrete adaptation programme

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Review of the Adaptation Fund in accordance with decision 1/CMP.3 of the Parties. This was:

“ to undertake, at its sixth session, a review of all matters relating to the Adaptation Fund, including the institutional arrangements, with a view to ensuring the effectiveness and adequacy thereof ... (paragraph 32).”

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) is an InterGovernmental Organisation with a particular interest in this matter, and a concern regarding the definition of “concrete adaptation projects and programmes” which exists within the current Operating Guidelines of the Adaptation Fund.

The mission of GWP is to support the sustainable development and management of water resources at all levels, in line with UN resolutions to support integrated water resources management and development. GWP does this through a global Network of 13 regional and over 70 country water partnerships which have been established over the past 13 years to promote and implement better water resources management. The GWP’s 2,000-plus Partners come from government institutions, NGOs, professional associations, academic and research institutions, and the private sector.

GWP’s Network provides a rich resource of practical experience of the challenges of sustainably managing water resources in many local, national and regional contexts. This experience leads GWP to make the present submission, highlighting two key issues that should be considered in the review process, namely:

- 1. the definition of concrete adaptation projects and programmes used in the operational policies and guidelines for Parties to access resources from the Adaptation Fund (paragraphs 10 & 11); and**
- 2. the important role of water resources management in climate adaptation.**

It is important to start by noting that water and its effective management is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals specifically and poverty reduction generally. Water is also critical in promoting and sustaining economic development. Furthermore, effective water resources management is necessary to sustain biodiversity and for the achievement of broader environmental sustainability.

In the course of GWP’s work, it has become increasingly clear that water is the medium through which many of the impacts of climate change will be felt. Because of this, water resources management will have to be significantly strengthened to ensure that affected communities are able to adapt to such change.

This finding is in accord with the conclusions of the IPCC Technical Paper VI - Climate Change and Water [WGII 3.8] which noted that:

“Water resources management clearly impacts on many other policy areas (e.g., energy projections, land use, food security and nature conservation). Adequate tools are not available to facilitate the appraisal of adaptation and mitigation options across multiple water-dependent sectors, including the adoption of water-efficient technologies and practices. In the absence of reliable projections of future changes in hydrological variables, adaptation processes and methods which can be usefully implemented in the absence of accurate

projections, such as improved water-use efficiency and water-demand management, offer no-regrets options to cope with climate change.”

GWP draws the attention of the Parties to some of these impacts and to the way that they will be transmitted. Direct impacts are predicted to occur as a result of floods and droughts and other extreme events. These will impact human security, food security and fresh water supplies. Extreme events will compound the impact of more general changes in the pattern of rainfall and temperature which are expected to contribute to increased aridity and impact on both demand for and availability of water.

In addition, climate change is predicted to have many indirect water-related impacts, which include:

- The additional infrastructure investments required to protect human settlements and industrial activities both from extreme events and increased variability in rainfall and river flows;
- the salinisation of groundwaters as a result of rising sea levels;
- the aggravation of water quality problems affecting urban, industrial and agricultural water users as a result of reduced river flows and dilution capacity; as well as
- health impacts caused by increased activity of water-related disease vectors in many regions.

In response to many of these impacts, local communities, national governments and, in the case of transboundary rivers, regional organisations will have to give increased attention to:

- the monitoring of water resources availability in time and space (e.g., by enhancing hydro-meteorological networks);
- improving the understanding of the variability and reliability of such resources (e.g., by enhancing water resources assessment and research);
- infrastructural development and other interventions required to address increased climatic variability and to improve the reliability of supply and protection;
- monitoring water use and the efficiency and effectiveness of such use;
- the allocation of water between different users and the mechanisms that are used to achieve a balance between the goals of efficiency, equity and environmental sustainability in such allocations;
- the monitoring of water resource quality and its regulation and management through permitting and other mechanisms;
- the planning of water resources management, development and use with particular emphasis on the linkages between water use and economic and social development, including climate change mitigation strategies.

As illustrated by this list, water resources management comprises an extremely diverse set of activities, which require a high level of professional skill and a range of specific monitoring and regulatory infrastructure and institutions. It also requires extensive ongoing engagement with both high level decision-makers and managers in water using sectors such as agriculture, industry and urban municipalities as well as with communities of water users themselves.

The cost of measuring and monitoring water use and availability is already high as is the cost of training and employing professionals who can interpret the information and recommend action. In addition, investments are required to build the infrastructure to store and transport water to cope with existing rainfall variability and river flows. These activities will have to be intensified to cope with the increased uncertainty, variability and intensity of extreme events that are predicted to occur by most

climate change models. Given the diversity of contexts in which water resources are managed and used, and the difficulty of making reliable predictions of how climate change will impact on each, GWP has concluded that a general intensification of these water resources management activities constitutes an important adaptation strategy in itself. Better water resources management is inherently adaptive, building societal resilience to uncertainty and change.

GWP is concerned, however, that in terms of the current definitions of “concrete adaptation projects” and “concrete adaptation programmes”, such intensification of water resources management would not be recognised as an appropriate activity for adaptation funding.

While the scope defined for adaptation projects to “be implemented at the community, national, and transboundary level” is appropriate, the requirement that they should concern “discrete activities with a collective objective(s) and concrete outcomes and outputs that are more narrowly defined in scope, space, and time” may be seen to exclude the general strengthening of water resources management that will be necessary if countries are to adapt to climate change.

In addition, while the concept of an “adaptation programme”—“a process, a plan, or an approach for addressing climate change impacts that is broader than the scope of an individual project”—is helpful, it may also lead to the exclusion of measures designed to strengthen water resources management if measured in terms of same “concrete outcomes.”

To address this danger, GWP proposes that the Parties consider two key recommendations:

- 1. That it be recorded that the strengthening of water resources management in order to enhance the resilience of a community, country or transboundary area is explicitly recognised as an example of a “concrete adaptation programme” and thus an appropriate activity for adaptation funding.**
- 2. That a concrete adaptation programme be defined as “a programme of activities designed to increase the resilience of a community, country or transboundary area to the impacts of climate change and to strengthen its ability to adapt to such change.”**

GWP trusts that these proposals, which derive from the experience of practitioners in many countries and economic and social contexts, will be acceptable to the Parties. GWP remains available to engage in further discussions on this matter.

Submitted by the Global Water Partnership
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