2025:13A

Sida Decentralised Evaluation

NIRAS Sweden AB

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Strategy 2020-2025

Final Report

Sida

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Strategy 2020-2025

Final Report
December 2025

Francesca Cook
Sabine Blumstein

Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2025:13a
Sida

Authors: Francesca Cook, Sabine Blumstein

Sida Decentralised Evaluation 2025:13a

Commissioned by Sida

Date of final report: 2025-12-01

Art. no. Sida62831en

urn:nbn:se:sida-62831en

This publication can be downloaded from: www.sida.se/en/publications

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY

Visiting address: Rissneleden 110, 174 57 Sundbyberg
Postal address: Box 2025, SE-174 02 Sundbyberg, Sweden
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: sida@sida.se Web: sida.se/en

Table of Contents

Stand alone Volumes:

Volume II provides additional evaluative chapters, namely the case studies, survey results and assessment of learning and adaptive management

Volume III provides annexes required by the Terms of Reference, and by Sida

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIP	Africa Investment Programme
AMCOW	African Ministers' Council on Water
APFM	Associated Programme on Flood Management
AU	African Union
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative
CCAD	Central American Commission on Environment and Development
CoP	Community of Practice
CWP	Country Water Partnership
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD)
DarWaRP	Dar es Salaam Water Resilience Programme
DCG	Drin Core Group
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK)
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FRM	Flood Risk Management
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GCCA+	Global Climate Change Alliance Plus
GoZ	Government of Zambia
GWL	Global Water Leadership Programme
GWP	Global Water Partnership
GWPO	Global Water Partnership Organisation (the intergovernmental legal entity)
GWPSA	Global Water Partnership Southern Africa
IDMP	Integrated Drought Management Programme
IMS	Information Management System
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JVS	Jalsrot Vikas Sanstha (GWP-Nepal partner organisation)
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
KM	Knowledge Management
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan of Action
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning
MoIWR	Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resources
MoWE	Ministry of Water and Environment

MoW	Ministry of Water
MoUs	Memoranda of Understanding
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Platform
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NbS	Nature Based Solution
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution (under the Paris Agreement)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RuWASA	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency
RWP	Regional Water Partnership
RBO	River Basin Organisation
SAP	Strategic Action Programme
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SWA	Sanitation and Water Agency
TanWIP	Tanzania Water Investment Programme
TEC	Technical Committee (GWP)
ToC	Theory of Change
UfM	Union for the Mediterranean
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP-DHI	UNEP-DHI Centre for Water and Environment
UNESCO-IHP	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation – International Hydrological Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-Water	United Nations inter-agency coordination mechanism for freshwater-related issues
WECS	Wind Energy Conversion System
WEFE	Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystem (Nexus)
WMO	World Meteorological Organization
WRM	Water Resources Management
ZanWIP	Zambia Water Investment Programme
ZIP	Zambia Water Investment Programme
WACDEP-G	Water, Climate and Development Programme – Gender

Preface

This report presents the findings of the independent evaluation of the Implementation of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Strategy 2020-2025, funded by Sida. The evaluation was conducted between May and November 2025.

The evaluation was conducted by:

- Ms. Francesca Cook, Team leader; and
- Ms. Sabine Blumstein, Deputy team leader

Ms. Katarina Lundblad managed the evaluation process at NIRAS. Mr. Graham Haylor provided quality assurance advice. Ms. Maria Vink managed the evaluation at the Sida department for Globala/Klimat.

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank all of those who gave their valuable time to contribute to the evaluation.

Executive Summary

The Global Water Partnership

The Global Water Partnership is an **intergovernmental organisation** established in 1996, dedicated to advancing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) to achieve a water-secure world. Its mission aligns with global frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Organisational Structure and Governance: It operates through a decentralised organisational model: the Global Water Partnership Organisation (GWPO) headquartered in Sweden (until May 2026); 13 Regional Water Partnerships (RWPs); 77 Country Water Partnerships (CWPs); 2800 partners. Its governance structure ensures strategic oversight, fiduciary accountability, and intellectual leadership.

Financial and Operational Model: GWPO employs a **hybrid mixed financing** model designed to reflect and reinforce its decentralised, subsidiarity-based operational framework. During the 2020–2025 strategy period, it received core financial support primarily from Sweden[1] (MFA and Sida), Austria and the Netherlands. Programmatic, thematic and earmarked contributions are provided through additional financial partners and donors. RWPs and particularly CWPs autonomously mobilise resources from various sources to complement GWP-provisions, reinforcing local ownership and institutional sustainability.

Strategic Framing and Theory of Change (2020–2025): GWP's 2020–2025 Strategy, "Mobilising for a Water Secure World," encompasses three thematic anchor areas:

- Water Solutions for the SDGs (IWRM, practical water solutions)
- Climate Resilience through Water
- Transboundary Water Cooperation

Cross-cutting themes include gender equality, youth empowerment, and private sector.

The Theory of Change focuses on three core functions—*We Mobilise, We Act* and

[1] Sida's core support ended in 2023. This was replaced in part by programmatic support for 2024 and for 2025. Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided rent and tax compensation (core support) but this will end once the country host agreement terminates in May 2026.

We Learn—operationalised through a set of seven contribution pathways.

The Evaluation Approach

This independent evaluation assesses GWP's performance against its 2020–2025 Strategy. It does not cover matters pertaining to internal steering and control, governance or finance. It was guided by three core evaluation questions and provided evidence-based insights into GWP's effectiveness, relevance and coherence, and sustainability of results.

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods, theory-based, and contribution-oriented approach. Contribution analysis was central to understanding GWP's role within complex, multi-actor systems and processes. Data collection methods included document review, semi-structured interviews, multilingual online stakeholder survey, and six geographically diverse case studies structured against GWP's anchor areas.

The Evaluation Findings

Effectiveness

Overall, GWP has advanced systemic change and investment mobilisation across its three anchor areas:

Anchor Area 1: Water Solutions for the SDGs

GWP has significantly advanced water governance and IWRM through strategic interventions like the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme, the IWRM Action Hub, and the Global Water Leadership Programme. Its work has effectively contributed to improved national water governance frameworks and strategic investment planning, demonstrating strong alignment with Sida's sub-objectives on governance and institutional capacity-building. Technical Solutions for Water in the Mediterranean region illustrated successful integration of practical innovations into municipal and national policy frameworks, providing scalable models for greywater reuse, stormwater management, and aquifer replenishment.

Anchor Area 2: Climate Resilience through Water

GWP has strategically positioned water centrally within climate resilience frameworks by strengthening investment readiness, mobilising climate finance, and facilitating the development of bankable projects and investment pipelines. Its work has focused on addressing critical gaps such as the scarcity of bankable projects and operationally viable financial frameworks, essential for unlocking public and private investment flows. GWP's interventions have significantly improved the enabling environment for climate-resilient water investments, although challenges remain in translating strategic readiness into fully financed and implemented projects at scale. Continued focus on structured finance mobilisation and clear integration of financing strategies is essential to sustain these impacts.

Anchor Area 3: Transboundary Water Cooperation

GWP has effectively advanced transboundary water governance by fostering multi-country dialogues, creating strategic planning frameworks, and strengthening institutional structures. Its long-term neutrality and technical expertise have significantly contributed to trust-building and institutional continuity in politically sensitive transboundary basins, aligning strongly with Sida's strategic priority on conflict prevention and cooperation. Stakeholders highlight GWP's global reach, credibility, and neutrality, making it a crucial actor in sensitive political transboundary contexts, suggesting that deeper engagement in transboundary cooperation could further enhance regional stability and sustainable resource management.

Cross-Cutting Themes: Inclusion and Learning

GWP has advanced gender inclusion in consultations – including through initiatives such as WACDEP-G, which have supported gender analysis and action plans to inform budgets and planning – and has promoted youth participation and, in some contexts, the involvement of marginalised groups and Indigenous Peoples. However, these cross-cutting priorities are not consistently embedded in formal decision-making, budget allocations or accountability frameworks, so further institutionalisation of inclusion remains a strategic priority. GWP's learning platforms – notably the IWRM Action Hub, Cap-Net trainings and thematic Communities of Practice – have contributed to systemic improvements in water governance, especially where linked to national planning and accountability systems, but deeper integration of learning mechanisms into national and regional processes is still needed. Overall, GWP's effectiveness is underpinned by its neutrality, technical capacity, strategic acumen, multi-stakeholder convening role and investment facilitation, which align closely with Sweden's Strategy for global development cooperation in sustainable social development, while sustaining and scaling results will depend on embedding inclusion and learning more firmly and mobilising finance in a more structured way.

Relevance and Coherence

Overall, stakeholder perspectives affirm GWP's high relevance and coherence, particularly in its ability to bridge policy ambition with practical governance and investment outcomes.

Relevance and Alignment with National and Regional Priorities

Stakeholders consistently report that GWP's support closely aligns with national and regional water governance and climate resilience priorities. Its emphasis on locally driven, context-specific interventions and responsiveness to capacity gaps is viewed as highly relevant, and its inclusive consultation and adaptive management approaches further enhance its relevance across diverse contexts.

Coherence with Institutional Systems and Capacities

Stakeholders indicate strong coherence between GWP interventions and existing policy frameworks, institutional mandates, and national planning cycles. This is reinforced by GWP's deliberate strategy to embed its support within existing governance structures

rather than creating parallel systems, which is seen as enhancing institutional ownership and prospects for sustainability. Deep local networks and the ability to convene diverse stakeholders are considered important assets for maintaining this coherence.

GWP's Perceived Added Value

Stakeholders highlight GWP's unique combination of neutrality, global reach, broad network mobilisation, contextual understanding, technical competence, and strategic capability as key sources of added value, particularly in politically sensitive and transboundary water governance contexts where its convening role and credible technical support are highly valued. International actors, including UN agencies, Multilateral Development Banks, bilateral donors and global water organisations, likewise recognise GWP's distinct contribution to the international water governance landscape. At the same time, stakeholders see room for GWP to enhance its added value by strengthening its vertical coherence , adopting more systematic approaches to investment frameworks, regulatory environments and project pipelines (including for private sector participation), and more fully integrating gender, youth, marginalised groups and Indigenous Peoples into formal decision-making processes and budgets.

Sustainability

GWP has made meaningful progress in supporting the sustainability of water governance and climate resilience outcomes under its 2020–2025 Strategy, primarily through institutional embedding of IWRM and related matters, structured approaches to finance mobilisation and investment frameworks that strengthen prospects for long-term results.

Institutional Ownership and Continued Use of Governance Arrangements

GWP has effectively supported partner countries and regions to embed water governance improvements into statutory plans, basin agreements, national policy documents, and SDG 6.5.1 reporting and planning. Stakeholders confirm that this institutional embedding enhances continuity beyond GWP's direct engagement. However, they also point to ongoing dependence in some contexts on external technical and facilitative support, underscoring the need for clearer and earlier-defined transition and handover strategies in settings with variable institutional capacities.

Financial Viability and Resource Mobilisation

GWP has contributed to strengthening the enabling environment for financial sustainability through structured investment frameworks, financing readiness assessments and preparation of project pipelines, while helping governments integrate water security and climate resilience into domestic budgets and financial planning. It has also acted as a strategic bridge and helped countries to connect to multilateral funds, financial mechanisms and banks by addressing key preconditions for financing. Nonetheless, domestic budget constraints, uneven progress in developing fully bankable projects and regulatory environments that are not yet conducive to increased private sector and multilateral engagement continue to limit actual disbursements to

countries and regions – reinforcing the need to further develop robust regulatory and financial frameworks.

Replicability and Scaling

GWP has demonstrated replicable and scalable governance and financing models, notably through the Africa Water Investment Programme, AIP Scorecards and various Technical Solutions for Water. Replication has been strongest where regional or continental governance frameworks provide political legitimacy and accountability. However, scalability is constrained by differing institutional capacities, inconsistent regulatory frameworks and the need for more structured knowledge transfer and adaptive approaches by countries themselves, with stakeholders emphasising stronger resource mobilisation capacities for CWPs and RWPs as critical to scaling.

Organisational and Financing Constraints

The evaluation finds that CWPs and RWPs face persistent challenges in securing sufficient and predictable resources to sustain their operational effectiveness. Their reliance on donor-funded projects and local resource mobilisation creates funding variability and risks to institutional continuity, even though diversification is central to GWP's operational model. At the same time, GWP faces anticipated reductions in core and programme funding and the planned relocation of its Headquarters, with potential implications for the predictability and sustainability of GWPO support to regional and country entities. Taken together, these constraints underline the importance of more innovative funding models and diversified resource mobilisation strategies to maintain GWP's operational capacity and strategic relevance.

Evaluation Lessons

Strategic Positioning and Comparative Advantage: GWP's role as a neutral convener and knowledge broker generates political traction and national ownership, and its impact is greatest where its comparative advantages are clearly communicated, including to emerging actors and agenda-setters.

Systems Strengthening and Systemic Change: Continual, context-adapted institutional support that works through existing national and regional systems is more effective for IWRM than stand-alone projects, particularly when learning and feedback mechanisms are embedded directly into planning and decision-making cycles.

Anchor Areas: Experience across the three anchor areas shows that their relative significance varies by country and region, and evolves over time as IWRM principles, planning and reporting become more embedded in national systems. Where IWRM is more firmly institutionalised, the need to secure investment finance that links water security and climate resilience increases the importance of structured investment frameworks and deliberate scaling strategies. In transboundary water cooperation, GWP has learned that its ability to add value as a neutral, locally anchored facilitator is contingent on political interest and willingness, and on national and regional capacity and resources to establish and sustain basin organisations and agreements; progress is strongest where support is timed to political windows of opportunity and aligned with

existing regional institutions. Demonstration projects and technical solutions across the anchor areas are most influential when embedded in this wider systems and financing logic, backed by early engagement with finance ministries and investors and replication frameworks grounded in national and local capacities.

Inclusion: Partnerships with multilateral development banks and private sector actors are most effective when they are structured early around clear roles, risk-sharing mechanisms and standardised processes, enabling scalable and more inclusive investment in water governance and climate resilience.

Integration of the priorities and needs of women, youth, marginalised groups and Indigenous Peoples into water-budget processes and institutional mandates at the national level is key to strengthening the legitimacy of their voices and long-term sustainability of developments in the water and climate sectors.

Learning and Adaptive Management: Adaptive management is strongest when monitoring, evaluation and learning are institutionalised across GWP's operations and embedded in country and regional frameworks, enabling evidence-driven adjustment and more resilient programming in the face of political and climatic shocks.

Sustainability and Replicability: Long-term sustainability and replicability of GWP-supported reforms depend on legal anchoring, clear institutional roles and dedicated budget lines, combined with deliberate pathways from demonstration and investment readiness to operational delivery, regulatory enforcement and sustained domestic and blended financing.

Global Influence: GWP's experience since 2020 shows that an international network can drive systems change by using global presence to co-define norms, indicators and methodologies, convene political and technical coalitions, and co-design investment architectures that link national practice to high-level climate and finance decision-making. A key lesson is that this systems-shaping influence is most effective when global roles and platforms (such as the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme, the Africa Water Investment Programme and emerging G20-linked water investment mechanisms) are grounded in country and regional evidence, aligned with UN-led and regional processes, and investor imperatives, and explicitly used to leverage multi-actor investment pipelines rather than stand-alone projects.

Evaluation Conclusions

Overall Conclusion

The evaluation concludes that the Global Water Partnership, operating as a global decentralised partnership, has substantially delivered its ambitious 2020–2025 Strategy, effectively contributing towards the strategic vision of a "water secure world". Its multi-dimensional, decentralised approach has had transformative systemic impacts, significantly surpassing what would be achievable through individual, isolated interventions. Its contributions have advanced the governance and management of water resources by leveraging a multi-pronged approach spanning water solutions for the SDGs, climate resilience, and transboundary cooperation. Strategic and institutional

innovations during the period have enabled GWP to be more responsive, accountable, and effective in addressing global water priorities. However, challenges remain, particularly in achieving the full depth of gender and youth mainstreaming and in embedding innovations across all partner countries.

Effectiveness

GWP has contributed to systemic transformation across seven mutually reinforcing dimensions: water governance systems; financial architecture for water and climate; technical water solutions; transboundary water cooperation; inclusive, participatory systems; knowledge and learning systems; and international processes. By convening and aligning diverse actors, GWP has helped embed more integrated and participatory decision-making, strengthen national and regional water governance frameworks, and lay foundations for investment-readiness and finance mobilisation for water- and climate-related priorities. Its promotion of technical solutions, including nexus-based approaches, has supported more coherent and sustainable water management, while its facilitation of transboundary dialogue and institutions has advanced cooperative management of shared basins. GWP's facilitative role has consistently enhanced trust, collaboration, and policy reform.

At the same time, GWP's knowledge and learning work and its influence on global water agendas have helped reframe water as central to climate resilience and economic stability. However, these systems changes remain uneven: further effort is needed to embed inclusion, learning and risk management into mandates, budgets, indicators and accountability mechanisms at country level. Taken together, these contributions underpin GWP's strategic value as a credible systems actor, while pointing to the importance of consolidating and scaling these transformations in the next strategy period.

Relevance and Coherence

GWP's programming remains strongly relevant and coherent with national and regional priorities, particularly because of its decentralised operational framework and emphasis on local ownership. Stakeholders consistently regard the partnership as uniquely valuable in advancing water governance outcomes that would be challenging to achieve through alternative mechanisms. However, the breadth of GWP's strategic focus poses a challenge in relation to available resources, underscoring the need for prioritisation and greater alignment between ambition and financial/human capacity. There is strong alignment with Sweden's water-related imperatives as laid out in its Strategy and Sida's priorities on governance, participation, and institutional capacity.

Sustainability

GWP's emphasis on local capacity and ownership has promoted sustainability in outcomes, with durability most pronounced where interventions are legally and institutionally embedded in statutory plans and budgets. Long-term sustainability, however, depends on further strengthening finance pathways. Network capacity

remains uneven, influencing the sustainability and effectiveness of outcomes across different regions.

Organisational Resilience Through Decentralisation

GWP's decentralised governance structure has demonstrated notable organisational resilience, sustaining programme delivery during a period of significant turbulence at headquarters level and underlining the strengths of a networked model in absorbing shocks. This resilience is, however, closely dependent on sustained and predictable multi-year funding, with flexible core support underpinning GWPO's convening, learning and fiduciary functions, and complementary programmatic/thematic funding enabling donors to sharpen priorities and, where appropriate, allowing GWPO to be more directive in driving results. The expectation that regional and country partnerships mobilise their own resources helps sustain local ownership and relevance, but also exposes them to volatility in a context of tightening aid budgets and some climate finance fatigue. Significant reductions or uncertainty in donor funding can cascade through the network and erode capacities that are costly and time-consuming to rebuild. so enhanced predictability from major donors is critical to protecting the value of long-term institutional investments and safeguarding both organisational and reputational resilience.

Learning and Adaptation

The evaluation finds that GWP's robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning system contributes to organisational adaptive capacity and supports performance tracking. While the Theory of Change is deemed fit for purpose, it would benefit from more explicit articulation of assumptions, behavioural change indicators, and feedback mechanisms. The MEL system provides a strong accountability foundation, but there is scope to reinforce linkages between learning and strategic adaptation.

Theory of Change

GWP's Theory of Change, structured around "*We Mobilise – We Act – We Learn*", is broadly sound, fit for purpose and aligned with GWP's institutional positioning. The contribution pathways help explain how GWP initiates results and supports systems-level change. Further strengthening the Theory of Change will require clearer articulation of key assumptions and more explicit description of GWP's contribution pathways, including how different modalities and levels of engagement combine over time to influence policies, institutions, finance and practice.

Recommendations

Clarify and Refine Theory of Change: Refine and more explicitly structure the Theory of Change and results framework. Make the contribution pathways and underlying change assumptions more explicit. This clarified logic would help communicate GWP's modus operandi.

Scale and Systematise Successful Models: Develop and codify replication processes for models like the AIP Scorecard, IWRM planning tools, and Technical Solutions for

Water pilots. Create adaptable operational toolkits and document success factors, so that enabling conditions for scaling are clear and transferable across regions.

Position collaborative water projects—such as the Kifissos aquifer replenishment—as scalable funding and delivery models and expand partnerships with corporate stewardship initiatives, investors, and fora. Share technical and methodological expertise beyond GWP-Med through standardised processes.

Strengthen Frameworks to Finance Pathways: Further consolidate GWP's role as a strategic enabler for investment mobilisation; formalise ties with project preparation facilities, transaction support mechanisms and blended finance platforms. Develop internal investment planning and financial structuring skills to reinforce credibility as a bridge between policy frameworks and finance.

Reinforce Support to Transboundary Water Cooperation: Explore how to adapt successes here more broadly whilst planning for implementation handovers to domestic institutions —with embedded financial and governance provisions—to strengthen local ownership and sustainability.

Deepen Institutional Learning: Strengthen MEL-programme linkages by systematically tracking use, uptake and feedback related to knowledge products, trainings and Communities of Practice. Monitor how learning leads to behavioural and institutional change to improve design and accountability.

Advance Gender, Youth, and IPs: Accelerate institutionalisation of inclusion by clarifying roles, promoting the allocation of dedicated resources in national water budgets, support the adoption of measurable indicators, and help partners identify and address institutional barriers. Engage targeted partnerships for Indigenous Peoples and marginalised groups, supporting their systemic participation in planning and decision-making and building appropriate accountability frameworks.

Communications and Visibility: Continue to invest in clear, outcome-oriented communications strategies, aggregate results for global audiences and develop concise impact snapshots from MEL data for specific partners. Participate strategically in global fora by highlighting aggregated outcomes to showcase GWP as a bridge between policy and practical delivery.

Safeguard Decentralised Delivery: Reinforce the value of decentralised, regionally and nationally grounded models, maintaining resilience and responsive delivery as core assets. Ensure coherence through light-touch coordination (shared priorities, peer learning, concise reporting), so decentralisation does not dilute strategic alignment.

Continue Financing and Delivery Innovations: Sustain incentive mechanisms that reward network engagement, innovation, and co-financing as core support transitions to more decentralised or partner-driven models. Continue developing streamlined, accountable financing and delivery architectures, e.g., Technical Support Hubs and pre-qualified partner rosters, to ensure agile and quality implementation under evolving funding conditions. Proactively communicate the evaluation’s findings to financing

and strategic partners, emphasising the urgency of securing predictable core funding for GWPO.

Consolidate Legacy Support: Sweden and other sponsoring partners can justifiably take pride in the legacy created through long-standing support in a complex and increasingly important field. Sweden is encouraged to enhance the visibility of its contributions to water by communicating its legacy of support to GWP. Sweden could consider future constructive relationships through alternative modalities, such as:

- Thematic or project-based collaboration in areas aligned with Sweden's priorities.
- Knowledge partnerships or secondments, whereby Sida or Swedish institutions contribute expertise to GWP-led initiatives or joint learning endeavours.
- Participation in strategic dialogues and international fora where GWP's convening role and Sweden's policy leadership can remain mutually reinforcing.

Such engagement would allow Sweden to build on the strong foundation it has helped create, and continue to leverage GWP's network for broader policy influence.

Reflections on New Strategy – GWP 2026–2030

The forthcoming strategy retains clear continuity with GWP's historic strengths—serving as a convener, knowledge broker, and facilitator of governance reforms—while actively building on lessons to address persistent barriers in finance, governance and capacity. GWP's core focus on IWRM principles, gender equality, youth engagement, and civil society participation remains central, with a pronounced shift toward facilitating climate-resilient water investments at national and regional levels. This evolution is positioned as a response to the need for scaled-up investment mobilisation, systemic change, and blended finance—an area where GWP aims to add unique value.

The strategy positions GWP to play a catalytic role in water governance and financing, provided it maintains clarity of role, reinforces messaging about its distinctive strengths, and ensures the practical, technical support needed for countries to be investment-ready. Realising the ambition of turning available capital into sustainable, contract-quality cash flows will require a careful balance of innovation, strengthened national systems, safeguarding comparative advantages and building the capacities necessary to operate at scale.

1 The Global Water Partnership

Chapter 1 briefly introduced the Global Water Partnership, including its organisational architecture and strategic management approach; its strategic areas of focus; and its Theory of Change and Pathways to Contribution.

1.1 GWP ORGANISATIONAL ARCHITECTURE AND STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT APPROACH

1.1.1 Origins and Mandate

The **Global Water Partnership** (GWP) is an intergovernmental organisation and global multi-stakeholder action network established in 1996 by the World Bank, UNDP, and Sweden to promote integrated water resources management (IWRM) as a pathway to water security. The **Global Water Partnership Organisation** (GWPO) was formalised in 2002 under Swedish law and has served as the legal entity for the network. GWP's **mission**, reaffirmed in the 2020–2025 Strategy, is to mobilise for a water-secure world, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement[2], and the Sendai Framework[3]. Sweden is the GWPO's host country and a major founding and sponsoring partner.

---

[2] The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 195 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. It entered into force on 4 November 2016.The Paris Agreement relates to water by recognising its critical role in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The agreement's goals of limiting global warming depend on sustainable water management, such as improved agricultural practices, flood protection, and water conservation, as well as the development of new, water-efficient clean energy technologies. Conversely, climate change itself, a consequence of not meeting the agreement's goals, negatively impacts water resources through droughts, floods, and altered rainfall patterns. unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement.

[3] The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 addresses water by advocating for understanding water-related disaster risk, integrating water management into disaster risk reduction strategies, and building resilient water infrastructure. It promotes using water data for early warning systems, managing resources sustainably, and fostering international cooperation on shared water resources to mitigate both water-related disasters and the broader impacts of climate change. It was adopted by UN Member States in March 2015 and is a 15-year global agreement (2030).

1.1.2 Governance Structure and Secretariat

The **Sponsoring Partners** are the countries and international organisations that formed the GWPO (by signing and formally approving, through parliamentary or other similar actions, a Memorandum of Understanding in 2002). They are the ultimate governing body for GWPO. The Sponsoring Partners appoint the GWP Chair, the members of the GWP Steering Committee, and the GWP Auditor. The Sponsoring Partners are: Argentina, Chile, Denmark, Hungary, Jordan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Sweden (host country), the World Bank (until 31 Jan 2025), and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The **GWP Steering Committee** is equivalent to a Board of Directors, overseeing all GWPO and network operations and reviewing annual reports for final approval by the Sponsoring Partners. The Committee meets formally twice per year, with many additional meetings called as needed. The Committee appoints the GWPO Executive Secretary and CEO, who leads GWP's strategic development and oversees operations. The **Executive Secretary & CEO** is a non-voting member of the Steering Committee and reports to the Steering Committee Chair.

The **GWP Technical Committee** (TEC) is a "knowledge engine" of GWP, and keeps GWP at the forefront of new ideas and challenges in integrated water resources management and related topics by providing insights based on cutting-edge knowledge from world experts. It is composed of international professionals serving in their personal capacity. The committee provides intellectual leadership, technical support, knowledge and information generation, and advises on emerging issues and strategic positioning. The TEC has evolved to work more inclusively and collaboratively with the GWP Network, which allows for mutual learning and co-creation of knowledge.

GWP's **Financing Partners Group** meets twice a year to engage in a strategic dialogue with GWP on the water priorities that need to be addressed, and the criteria for providing financial assistance. Core and Programmatic Funds have been provided by the European Commission, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

GWP's governance model therefore operates through four interconnected layers. The Steering Committee is the highest decision-making body, setting overall policy, approving workplans and budgets, and ensuring compliance with statutes. The Sponsoring Partners' Meeting has fiduciary oversight responsibilities and appoints the Steering Committee Chair and GWP Executive Secretary. The Consulting Partners' Meeting, open to all accredited partners, is the annual forum for strategic dialogue. The Technical Committee (TEC) provides intellectual leadership through thematic publications, peer review, and guidance on IWRM.

This is complemented by the annual global General Assembly "Network Meeting". This brings GWP partners together to focus on key common issues, comment on annual and financial reports, and provide key insights to, for example, the new Strategy 2026-2030. GWP staff participate as observers. These are sometimes accompanied by

associated events. For instance, in 2025 the High Level Leaders Water Dialogue (in the context of the G20) followed the General Assembly.

The **GWPO Secretariat**, led by the GWP Executive Secretary (CEO), provides backbone services to the network: fiduciary oversight and compliance, strategic communications, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (MERL or MEL), and facilitation of global advocacy and partnerships. Secretariat operations are framed by principles of transparency, agility, and responsiveness to regional priorities. During the 2020–2025 strategy period, governance innovations included an informal Executive Council and Operational Council to strengthen cohesion and responsiveness. Since February 2025, Alex Simalabwi is Executive Secretary and CEO. He is also the President of the Global Water Investment Programme, launched by the G20 Johannesburg Summit 2025 and accompanied by the Global Water Investment Platform, to facilitate and secure investment for water projects.

1.1.3 Networked Delivery

GWP's operating model is intentionally decentralised, structured explicitly to foster subsidiarity, local ownership, and sustainability. Through a **decentralised, subsidiarity-based operational framework** structure of **Regional Water Partnerships** (RWPs) and **Country Water Partnerships** (CWPs). GWP strategically prioritises embedding its actions within local, national and regional processes rather than creating parallel or externally driven mechanisms. This intentionally decentralised design enables GWP to reinforce local and national capacities and systems, ensuring relevance, contextual alignment, and sustainable outcomes.

RWPs are semi-autonomous entities accredited by the GWP Organisation (GWPO) and governed by regionally representative Steering Committees aligned with GWP's global statutes. Regional secretariats are hosted independently through host agreements and are responsible for regional programming, resource mobilisation, and partnership facilitation. Currently, there are 13 RWPs: Central Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, Central America, South America, Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Caucasus, China, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Mediterranean.

CWPs function as **nationally anchored, multi-stakeholder platforms, legally registered in many instances as NGOs** to provide credibility, legal recognition, and facilitate local operations. CWPs convene governments, civil society, academia, and private-sector actors around shared water governance priorities. Currently, there are 77 CWPs globally.

Collectively, this decentralised approach allows GWP's global strategy to be flexibly adapted to diverse regional and national contexts, working intentionally within local institutional structures to leverage approximately 2,800 partner organisations across 180 countries, providing neutral, inclusive platforms for dialogue, policy advice, and collective action.

1.1.4 Financial Model

GWP employs a **hybrid mixed financing model** designed to reflect and reinforce its decentralised, subsidiarity-based operational framework. During the 2020–2025 strategy period, GWPO (global headquarters) received core financial support primarily from a limited group of partners, notably Sweden[4], Austria and the Netherlands. Thematic and earmarked contributions from additional financial partners, including the UK and other donors, supported specific global initiatives and thematic areas such as climate resilience, core integration, and transboundary cooperation.

While RWPs are responsible for regional programming, resource mobilisation, and partnership facilitation, their staffing and administrative support tend to draw on a mix of regional revenues and centrally coordinated oversight or support. Regional secretariats are hosted by **independent institutions** under host agreements, allowing flexibility in institutional arrangements.

In line with its subsidiarity principle, GWPO intentionally mostly does not directly finance CWPs, although some seed funding or capacity-building support is channelled through RWPs to CWPs. CWPs are mostly autonomous in mobilising their own financial resources from national governments, regional institutions, development banks, foundations, and private sector. This deliberate decentralisation of funding responsibility underscores GWP's strategic commitment to building regional and national financial sustainability, institutional ownership, and long-term capacity.

During the evaluation period, GWP's annual budgets (GWPO and RWPs) ranged from EUR 12.8 to 20.6 million, with approximately 65–70% of this for regional and country-level programmes and activities, reflecting prioritisation of local-level delivery and results.

Annual external financial audits of GWP have had positive ratings. Various reviews and audits also took place during the evaluation period (see footnote).[5]

---

[4] Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has core supported GWPO with rent and tax compensation. Sweden's aid agency, Sida, traditionally provided core support (approx 30 MSEK/annum). In 2023, Sida's core support ended. Since then it has provided programme support, which is more earmarked and requires separate reporting (approx. 25 MSEK/annum).

[5] European Commission Pillars Assessment (2021); FCDO Due Diligence Assessment (2021); Sida Efficiency Audit (2021); Swiss Cooperation Agency Efficiency Audit (2021); UNDP Micro Assessment (2022); Sida Spot Audit (2023); GWP Governance Reform Project phase 1 - Review (November 2023); UNDP HACT audit (annual – incl. 2025); Green Climate Fund Financial Management Capacity Assessment for the Readiness Preparatory Support (2025).

1.1.5 Operational Planning Cycle

GWP utilises an **integrated results-based planning architecture** designed to ensure strategic coherence, adaptive management, and accountability. The GWP strategic anchor areas are operationalised through rolling three-year business plans, supported by annual work plans developed by RWPs and GWPO-led global programmes. Planning coherence and quality assurance are reinforced by standardised templates, annual planning workshops, and coordination mechanisms, including Anchor Area Working Groups and Communities of Practice.

A **rigorous monitoring, reporting, and evaluation system** aligns with outcome mapping principles and includes standardised indicators, regular learning loops, and adaptive management processes informed by annual progress reports and external evaluations. Results from national SDG 6.5.1 self-assessments directly inform country-level operational planning, strengthening national ownership and responsiveness to local contexts.

Governance oversight throughout the planning and implementation cycle is provided by the Steering Committee, Sponsoring Partners Meeting, and the Consulting Partners Meeting, which collectively ensure fiduciary accountability, strategic alignment, and compliance with organisational statutes. Regular independent third-party financial and operational audits, published transparently, further inform strategic oversight and accountability.

1.2 GWP STRATEGY 2020–2025: MOBILISING FOR A WATER SECURE WORLD

GWP's 2020-2025 Strategy is structured around a strategic vision, mission and framing and accompanied by a Theory of Change. These are briefly captured below.

1.2.1 GWP Strategic Vision and Framing

Vision: A water secure world.

Mission: To advance the governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development.

Framing:

GWP's 2020–2025 Strategy, the primary subject of this evaluation, frames GWP's endeavours. The strategy is structured around three clearly defined thematic anchor areas designed to leverage GWP's comparative strengths and deliver tangible results aligned with global priorities. They are:

> **Water Solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** - especially SDG 6.5 on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

This anchor area accelerates implementation of SDG 6, specifically target 6.5 on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), alongside related water targets and practical water solutions. GWP supports countries in holistically planning and

governing their water resources through strengthened enabling environments, robust institutional frameworks, and effective management instruments, establishing a governance backbone critical for sustainable water management and cross-sectoral coordination. Complementing policy support, practical, field-level interventions—such as rainwater harvesting, greywater reuse, and smart irrigation—demonstrate immediate, tangible gains in water security. These interventions are strategically designed for scalability, replication, and deep integration within local governance structures, effectively linking grassroots innovations with national policies and enhancing community resilience.

Climate Resilience through Water - align with Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework.

Recognising water as a primary channel through which climate impacts are experienced, this area embeds water considerations firmly into climate adaptation planning and financing, while strengthening local resilience to extreme climate events like droughts and floods. GWP assists partner countries in integrating water into national adaptation strategies, strengthening disaster risk management capacities, and mobilising climate finance from global sources such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF). In doing so, GWP strategically positions water management at the heart of broader resilience efforts across food security, energy, ecosystem management, and sustainable livelihoods.

Transboundary Water Cooperation - support diplomatic, basin-wide and multi-level governance processes.

Given that more than 300 river and lake basins and 600 aquifers cross international boundaries, GWP promotes regional collaboration, dialogue, and joint management of shared water resources to mitigate conflicts and foster cooperation. This anchor area supports multi-country dialogue platforms, strengthens basin-level planning processes, and facilitates regional agreements and institutional cooperation mechanisms. By proactively addressing transboundary water management, GWP contributes to stability, shared prosperity, and sustainable, equitable resource use across regions.

Collectively, these anchor areas capitalise on GWP's comparative advantage in mobilising its vast partner network for bridging governance reform, facilitating regional and cross-border cooperation, promoting technological innovation, and strengthening climate resilience, all of which collectively accelerate progress towards achieving SDG 6 and broader interconnected targets within the 2030 Agenda.

Cross-cutting Themes

Cross-cutting themes—gender equality, youth empowerment, and private sector mobilisation—are integrated into each anchor area to inform programming, partnerships, and knowledge products, with the aim of ensuring that inclusion and equity considerations directly shape processes and outcomes.

1.2.2 Theory of Change (ToC) and GWP's Value Proposition

Theory of Change

Grounded in its role as a neutral convener and enabler of systemic change in water governance, the ToC frames three interdependent or interlinked functions that characterise its *value proposition*. This is laid out below:

A. ***We Mobilise*** bringing stakeholders together, building trust, and generating political and institutional commitment

GWP engages governments, river basin authorities, civil society, youth, women, the private sector, and international agencies to:

- Build trust and collaboration among stakeholders.
- Create or strengthen multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) for water governance.
- Promote dialogue on shared water challenges and development priorities.
- Mobilise political leadership and institutional ownership of reform processes.

Outcome: Stakeholders are connected in processes of shared responsibility for water governance and investment readiness.

B. ***We Act*** providing technical support, facilitating policy design, preparing investment pipelines, and supporting IWRM implementation.

GWP enables integrated and participatory decision-making through:

- Technical support, process facilitation and co-design of policies and strategies.
- Preparation of bankable climate-resilient water investment programmes.
- Support to IWRM implementation, including SDG 6.5.1 reporting and planning.
- Pilot initiatives, innovation incubation, and basin cooperation processes.

Outcome: Institutions adopt or implement improved policies, plans, investment strategies and governance frameworks.

C. ***We Learn*** documenting and sharing lessons through platforms, communities of practice, and knowledge products to enhance system resilience.

GWP's work is underpinned by:

- Documenting and sharing lessons across its global network
- Communities of Practice hosted on the IWRM Action Hub
- Knowledge curation, tools, publications and learning events
- Thematic leadership from the GWP Technical Committee, including AI, gender, systems change, and WASH–IWRM integration

Outcome: Institutional learning and scaling of successful practices improve system resilience and inform future programming.

Contribution Pathways

Recognising GWP's network-based, facilitative model—where direct attribution of results solely to GWP is rarely feasible (nor desirable), the evaluation team identified

seven contribution pathways (CP) through which GWP delivers results. Developed collaboratively by the evaluation team and validated by GWP and Sida, these pathways complement and enhance the evaluability of GWP's formal Theory of Change as they articulate explicitly how GWP contributes to behavioural, institutional, and systemic change and help assess GWP's influence on observed outcomes. This analytical approach strengthens methodological transparency and may enhance GWP's ability to clearly communicate its strategic contributions and value to donors and stakeholders.

- **Neutral Convening and Multi-stakeholder Facilitation** (Trusted facilitator of policy dialogues and basin cooperation platforms). (CP1)
- **Technical and Institutional Capacity Strengthening** (Supports planning, institutional design, and legal reform processes). (CP2)
- **Catalysing Investment and Financing Pathways** (Prepares investment readiness, project pipelines, enables GCF access, de-risks investment). (CP3)
- **Policy Influence** (Works with partners at national and regional level to help ensure policies are conducive to appropriate water governance support.) (CP4)
- **Knowledge Brokering** and **Learning Architecture** (Curates tools, facilitates Communities of Practice, and builds a learning culture).(CP5)
- **Inclusion Advocacy** (gender, youth, IPs, marginalised groups) (Promotes gender equality and youth participation as institutional change strategies).(CP6)
- **Normative Signalling and Agenda Framing** (Shapes discourse through leadership in global /regional coalitions; Shapes implementation of frameworks and transboundary protocols).(CP7)

The above pathways correspond directly to the core functions laid out in GWP's Theory of Change—*We Mobilise*, *We Act*, and *We Learn*—but also extend and refine them:

- Pathways 1 and 6 reinforce *We Mobilise* by elaborating on inclusion and legitimacy as drivers of political will.
- Pathways 2, 3, and 4 deepen *We Act* by distinguishing between institutional readiness, policy adoption, and investment mobilisation.
- Pathways 5 and 7 strengthen *We Learn* by anchoring feedback loops in agenda framing and adaptive reflection.

These pathways clarify how GWP moves from **enabling conditions** and **outputs** to **outcomes** (behavioural change etc) and **actual systems impact**. This strengthens the results logic of the Theory of Change by explaining how to frame the contributions that GWP makes to these multi-actor processes in which direct attribution or direct cause-effect tracing is problematic. The pathways offer a set of lenses through which to assess GWP's effectiveness in complex systems.

Pathways are significant in the following way: Through its role as a **neutral convener** and **trusted facilitator**, GWP delivers outputs such as multi-stakeholder dialogues, policy roundtables, and technical facilitation that bring together government, civil society, and private actors around shared water challenges. These processes lead to **outcomes** in the form of strengthened trust, enhanced capacity and reach, better coordination, and governance reforms – such as the adoption of more integrated

policies, basin cooperation frameworks, or investment plans that embed i.a., participation and inclusion principles. Over time, these contribute to **impacts** at the system level: more transparent, collaborative, and climate-resilient water governance that advances integrated water resources management, transboundary cooperation, and sustainable development.

Compared with previous strategies, the 2020–2025 framework marks a deliberate **strategic shift** from broad advocacy towards facilitating practical implementation, mobilisation of investments, towards concrete, measurable impacts. This strategy underscores GWP's roles in:

- Acting as a trusted, neutral convener across diverse stakeholder groups.
- Bridging high-level global frameworks and normative commitments with concrete local actions and outcomes.
- Explicitly linking governance reforms to clear, actionable financing pathways.
- Catalysing systemic change through enhanced policies, strengthened institutional frameworks, and improved strategic planning capacities.

2 The Evaluation Approach

2.1 CONTEXT, PURPOSE AND SCOPE

2.1.1 Evaluation Context

Global water governance continues to face **persistent challenges**: institutional fragmentation, climate-driven variability, socio-political and environmental pressures on transboundary basins, underinvestment, and limited progress on SDG 6.5 (IWRM). These conditions underscore the need for coordinated approaches to water that bridge sectors and scales.

The GWP was created to address these sorts of challenges, by providing a global multi-stakeholder platform to promote IWRM and strengthen governance capacity. Its networked model of regional and country water partnerships was set up to **combine global visibility with local legitimacy and locally networked partners**; with tools that help translate principles into practice; and with technical and convening functions intended to support, amongst other things, the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme[6].

Over time, GWP's original "niche" has become more crowded, with UN agencies, MDBs, regional river basin organisations, NGOs, and knowledge networks stepping into or enhancing various water-functions. To continue to address needs and challenges in real-time, GWP has evolved its niche from awareness-raising towards more catalytic, technical and operational roles: emphasising climate-resilient governance, transboundary cooperation, and practical support for systems change. The GWP Strategy 2020–2025 **reflects this repositioning** whilst aligning with global climate and water agendas. The forthcoming Strategy 2026–2030 equally continues to build on this trajectory and represents a deliberate effort to refine GWP's comparative advantage, consolidate lessons, and adapt to a shifting donor and governance environment.

The period under evaluation (2020-2025) was marked by the rise and fall of the Covid-19 pandemic; a gradual decline in overall development assistance; and major OECD donors shifting away, in general, from core funding towards programme and project-based support. During this period, GWP experienced major leadership turnover[7] - primarily at headquarters level. GWP also experienced, possibly partly as a consequence, a series of internal management challenges and internal complaints made

[6] For further information go to: www.gwp.org/en/sdg6support/about/about-support-programme/

[7] Current Executive Secretary and CEO Alex Simalabwi (since 2025). Previous ES/CEOs: Monika Weber-Fahr (left June 2020); Dario Soto-Abril (2021 - 2023); Alan AtKisson (2024).

to internal and external audiences[8]. It is important to note that, as requested by Sida, this evaluation **did not review** internal steering and control, governance, organisational or financial management as these points are covered in the Sida Spot Audit (2023) and GWP Governance Reform Project phase 1 review (2023) special audit. Also as previously mentioned, a series of organisational reviews and audits took place during the evaluated period (see footnote 5). Mandated annual audits of GWPO consistently reported positive financial audit ratings and findings.

Challenges were compounded when Sweden, a founding partner, a major funding partner, and the country host made a series of decisions: in 2023 Sida shifted from core support to programmatic support with approximately 8% financial reduction, with this support due to end in December 2025; in 2024, Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced its intention to end the GWP host country agreement; followed by a Swedish Parliamentary decision in May 2025 to formally end it, effective May 2026. The evaluation thus took place from within a complex context and at a pivotal moment.

2.1.2 Purpose, Scope, and Evaluation Questions

The evaluation **object** is the whole *Global Water Partnership*. The **scope of the evaluation** covers the current GWP Strategy 2020–2025 (in its final year) and includes the three strategic anchor areas: Water Solutions for the SDGs, Climate Resilience through Water, and Transboundary Water Cooperation. The **primary users** of the evaluation are: Sida's Unit for Climate and Environment (KLIMAT), Department for Global Operations; and GWP Management. Additional users include GWP's Steering Committee, other major donor-partners, regional and country-level partners, the wider community of partners engaged in global water governance and with GWP.

The **primary purpose** of this independent evaluation is to assess the performance delivery of the GWP 2020–2025 strategy, through policy, institutional, and governance contributions to its three strategic anchor areas by providing an evidence base that can help deepen reflections on progress and help guide future implementation and decision making processes. The evaluation is not, however, intended as input into the delineation of the new GWP Strategy as this process was launched well before, and finalised during, the evaluation. The evaluation is also not intended to cover matters pertaining to internal steering and control, governance or finance.

Using DAC evaluation criteria, the **specific objectives** are to generate strategic insights and actionable recommendations by responding to three **Evaluation Questions**:

[8] This was partly due to poorly functioning grievance mechanisms for personnel contracted by GWPO, an issue that has since been addressed with appropriate mechanisms in place, according to GWP and its Board.

Evaluation Question 1 (**Effectiveness**): "*To what extent has GWP delivered on the outcomes and results identified in its Strategy 2020–2025 [strengthening water governance, mobilising investment, transboundary water cooperation, and enabling systems change — across its three anchor areas: water solutions for the SDGs (IWRM, Action Hub, Technical Solutions for Water), climate resilience through water, and transboundary water cooperation] and in support of SDG 6.5; and relevant Sida strategy sub-objectives*?"

The relevant sub-objectives outlined in Sida's water strategy are notably:

- **Sub-objective 1**: Supporting water resources management through capacity development, governance reform, and policy influence. (*directly relevant*).
- **Sub-objective 5**: Strengthening cooperation across shared water systems and transboundary contexts. (*directly relevant*).
- **Sub-objective 2**: Efficient water use and climate resilience through infrastructure improvements and demand-side management. (*relevant to some extent*).
- **Sub-objective 4**: Protecting freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity. (*relevant to some extent*).
- **Sub-objective 3**: Pollution reduction and source-to-sea integration (*relevant to an extent*).

Evaluation Question 2 (**Relevance** and **Coherence**): "*According to GWP stakeholders' perspectives, how relevant and coherent is GWP's support to national and regional efforts to achieve SDG 6 – particularly Target 6.5 on integrated water resources management — in line with national planning priorities?* "

Evaluation Question 3 (**Sustainability**): "*To what extent are the results of GWP's contributions likely to be sustained in terms of institutional ownership, financial viability, and the continued use of governance arrangements, knowledge, and partnerships established through its work? (What is the replicability of the approaches?)*"

2.2 DESIGN, METHODS AND SOURCES

2.2.1 Design, Principles, Methods and Tools

The evaluation **design** applies a contribution-oriented, and theory-based approach and includes accountability and learning objectives in order to provide Sida, GWP and other stakeholders with evidence on coherence, relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability.

The evaluation adhered to **principles** of independence, impartiality, and methodological rigour. It was participatory and utilisation-focused, engaging GWP staff, partners, donors, and external stakeholders throughout to retrieve responses to the evaluation questions, test findings, enhance ownership, and ensure relevance and quality of the analysis. Context sensitivity was particularly important, given GWP's global reach and diverse modalities of engagement. Ethical guidelines consistent with Sida's evaluation standards and "do no harm" were observed, including informed

consent for interviews, confidentiality assurance in survey responses, and secure data handling. Transparency was maintained through continuous dialogue with Sida and GWP, including with its Steering Committee, with emerging findings shared at key junctures to validate accuracy and ensure utility.

GWP's organisational and operational model is intended to enable and co-create change together with others and it is therefore neither within its mandate nor consistent with its core purpose to claim sole responsibility for outcomes or impacts that are, by design, jointly achieved and locally driven and owned.

Recognising this facilitative nature of GWP's work and the fact that GWP's influence and contribution pathways are non-linear, multi-actor and emergent, the **methodology** therefore emphasised a **contribution-analysis** logic because linear **attribution** is neither feasible nor appropriate in this circumstance. Evidence therefore consistently sought 'plausible contribution' with triangulation, and the methods emphasised GWP's contribution pathways to shed light on how its actions might plausibly have contributed to observed outcomes and the objectives detailed in its strategy.

The evaluation applied **mixed-methods**, systematically combining qualitative and quantitative methods aligned with an **evaluation matrix**[9] linking specific questions, indicators, methods, and data sources. The analytical framework enabled the team to test claims of influence and to assess how GWP had facilitated change through its networks, partnerships, and knowledge products. Key methods and tools included:

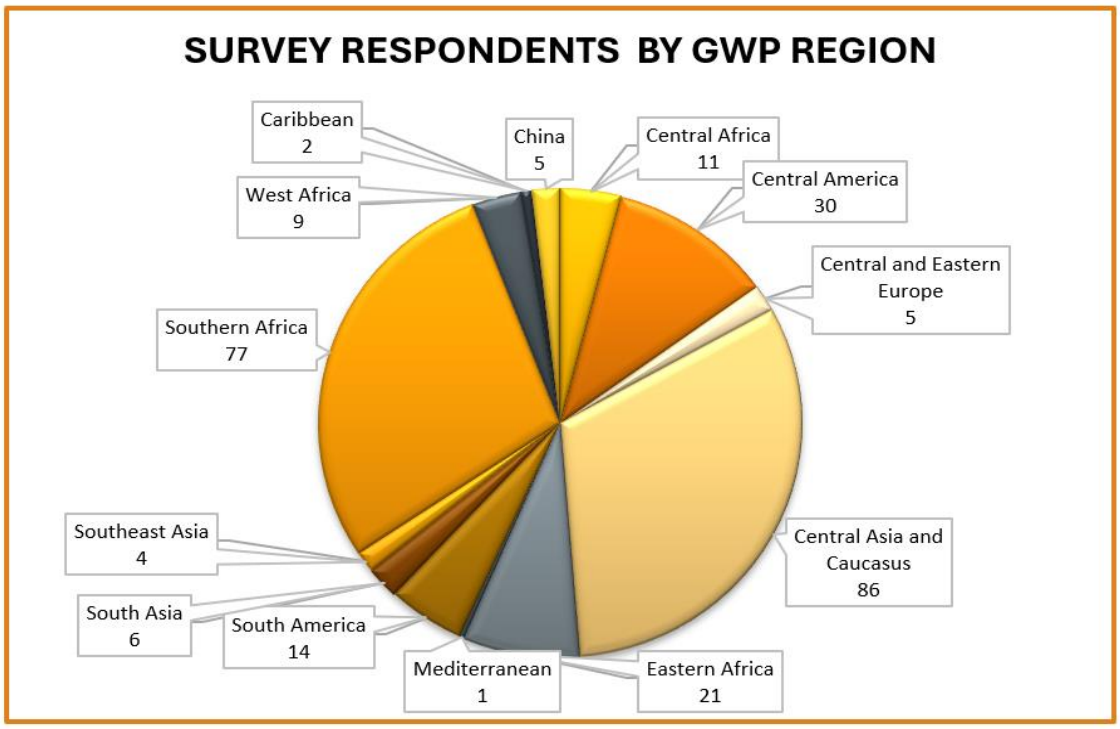
Document and data review: The evaluation involved an extensive review of primary documents, including agreements and Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) as well as secondary data, encompassing internal GWP documentation (annual and progress reports, regional case studies, thematic briefs, and previous external evaluations) and relevant external materials (including stakeholder briefs, AIP progress reviews, SDG monitoring reports, partner publications, independent studies, and web-based resources).

Semi-structured interviews: Virtual semi-structured interviews were conducted with approximately 70 key informants drawn purposively from global, regional, and country-level stakeholders. Respondents were selected to ensure balanced representation across GWP's strategic anchor areas and geographic regions, and in particular in relation to the deep dives conducted by the evaluation. Interviews generated insights regarding GWP's strategic positioning, influence, effectiveness, and sustainability. Interviews were guided by semi-structured interview questionnaires specific to each anchor area, country and region.

[9] The full results of the Survey are available in Volume II.

Survey: A confidential online stakeholder survey, available in English, French, Spanish and Russian, gathered broader perceptions regarding GWP's relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability. The survey responses, a total of 271 from across the GWP network, complemented and validated qualitative insights obtained from stakeholder interviews.

Figure 1 Survey Respondent by GWP Region



Survey participation: Survey participation covered all 13 GWP regions, though with variation in response volumes. The largest shares came from Central Asia and the Caucasus (86 respondents) and Southern Africa (77 respondents), together representing just over half of all responses. Other regions contributed smaller numbers, including Central America (30), Eastern Africa (21), South America (14), and several regions with fewer than ten responses. These differences primarily reflect variation in survey outreach and respondent accessibility, and to a smaller extent, the engagement level of the regional partnerships. Overall, the distribution nonetheless provides a broad cross-section of perspectives across the GWP network.

Case studies: Six in-depth case studies ("deep dives") were conducted in Nepal, Tanzania, Zambia, Zanzibar, the Drin Basin, and the Mediterranean region to examine GWP's contributions across its strategic anchor areas. Cases were purposively selected with Sida to capture thematic comprehensiveness, regional diversity, and evaluability. Each case included detailed document analysis complemented by targeted key informant interviews, providing robust evidence and nuanced insights into contextual factors and achieved results. These were also intended as "proxies" for validating GWP reporting credibility overall.

Sampling strategy: A mixed sampling approach was used. The online survey employed an open, self-selected sampling strategy to capture a broad range of stakeholder perspectives. In contrast, interviews and case studies applied a purposive sampling strategy to ensure balanced representation across regions, anchor areas, organisational affiliations, gender, and roles. This combination allowed for both breadth and depth of insights.

Gender and inclusion analysis (youth, Indigenous People): Data collection tools were designed to integrate gender, youth and Indigenous Peoples dynamics allowing evaluative insights on these dimensions across GWP.

Contribution Analysis: To understand and document GWP's role within broader outcome pathways and to identify and understand GWP's causal influence or contribution to outcomes, clearly distinguishing between attribution and contribution, contribution analysis was applied.

Theory of Change and Contribution Pathways: In order to full integrate the GWP's Theory of Change as an integrated element of the contribution analysis the evaluation team developed seven explicit contribution pathways agreed by Sida and GWP to articulate how GWP delivers and facilitates results, to clarify the nature of GWP's contributions and their specific mechanisms. Employing these contribution pathways within the analysis helped distinguish GWP's role from other influencing factors and allowed the evaluation to systematically probe enabling and constraining conditions. This analytical approach allowed the evaluation to credibly and transparently test the validity of assumptions and plausibly demonstrate GWP's specific contributions to observed results. This analytical clarity is particularly valuable given GWP's deliberate strategic approach, which emphasises strengthening local actor ownership and embedding interventions within existing processes rather than creating externally driven parallel mechanisms—an approach aligned with donor commitments to sustainable, locally-owned development outcomes.

Data quality assurance: Survey instruments were reviewed for clarity and relevance. Interviewers followed interview protocols to maintain consistency and comparability of responses.

Triangulation and analysis: Data and evidence from document reviews, stakeholder interviews, and the online survey were systematically triangulated. This approach validated findings, identified areas of convergence and divergence among stakeholder perspectives, and enhanced the overall robustness and credibility of evaluative conclusions. Given resource constraints, deep-dive case studies, targeted thematic documentation reviews, and structured stakeholder interviews (focused in large part around the deep dives), served as methodologically rigorous proxies for assessing GWP's wider performance and results. This approach allowed credible inferences about the effectiveness, sustainability, and broader relevance of GWP's actions beyond the directly evaluated cases.

A more detailed presentation of the design, methodology and evaluation matrix is available in Volume III.

2.2.2 Sources

The evaluation drew upon diverse primary and secondary data sources. Primary sources comprised data from key informant interviews and responses from the global stakeholder survey. Secondary sources encompassed internal GWP documentation, documentation from partner organisations, governmental reports, relevant independent evaluations, UN monitoring reports on SDG indicator 6.5.1, relevant web-based sources, and pertinent academic and policy literature. Wherever feasible, independent external validation was pursued to corroborate the reliability and accuracy of GWP's reported achievements. A source analysis is provided in Volume III. Findings and conclusions draw on triangulated evidence drawn from sources.

2.2.3 Advantages, Limitations and Constraints

The evaluation benefited from several **favourable conditions** that enhanced overall methodological quality and credibility. Constructive, regular engagement with the Sida and GWP management helped maintain relevance and ensured continuous quality assurance. The production of six case studies ("deep dives") provided detailed thematic and contextual diversity. The flexibility of the methodology—exemplified by the addition of a deep dive on Zanzibar—allowed adaptation to evolving evidence needs, resulting in a comprehensive empirical basis to identify patterns, variations, and mechanisms relevant to the evaluation's objectives. Extensive reporting at all levels, from GWP but also from partners, combined with key informant interviews and surveys enabled meaningful assessment of GWP overall performance and its reporting systems. Overall, the evaluation process was able to triangulate findings and was considered to be sufficiently robust and credible.

The evaluation acknowledges, however, several **methodological and contextual limitations** common to assessments of global, network-based partnerships such as GWP. While these limitations do not invalidate the findings, they should be considered when interpreting conclusions. The evaluation systematically applied mitigation strategies to address these limitations.

Attribution vs Contribution: Given GWP's facilitative, collaborative model emphasising partner-driven and locally-owned outcomes, direct attribution of achievements solely to GWP is not feasible. *Mitigation*: The evaluation adopted contribution analysis and systematically triangulated evidence from multiple sources, including stakeholder perceptions to clarify GWP's role in broader outcome pathways.

Institutional Turbulence, Funding Uncertainty and Stakeholder Response Bias: The evaluation period was marked by significant internal management changes within GWP, including multiple leadership transitions culminating in a new CEO appointed

in 2025[10]. Additionally, these challenges were compounded by a series of Swedish decisions (please refer to section 2.1.1) which reduced funding and introduced uncertainty and institutional instability for GWP and its partners. Nevertheless, GWP successfully maintained programme delivery throughout the period under review, including in large part due to its decentralised operational structure and deep commitment. In this context, some stakeholders may have hesitated to participate in interviews, or might have hesitated to express critical views, whereas some (former) staff and (former) partners might have exhibited overly gloomy or critical perspectives. *Mitigation*: Confidentiality assurances, targeted outreach to diverse stakeholder groups, snow-balling, systematic triangulation, and return conversations with some key informants effectively helped ensure the evaluation team was able to interpret potential bias and to relativise it. Interviews generally provided candid engagements and frank and balanced stakeholder comments. Also, the evaluation added an extra case study (Zanzibar) to create better comparability, and the team employed an anonymous global survey with over 10% response rate, to complete its triangulation approach. The survey results confirmed, generally, key informant interview results.

System Complexity and Network Diversity: GWP's decentralised structure comprises 13 Regional Water Partnerships and 77 Country Water Partnerships, working with over 2000 partner entities. These partnerships operate in very different institutional contexts and with varying levels of capacity. As GWP's model is built on locally owned and driven partnerships, levels of activity and engagement naturally varied across the Network. Some countries and regions perceived a greater need to engage closely with GWP, whilst others required less interaction. This created an evaluation challenge given the size of the GWP and the modest evaluation resources, and complicated direct comparability. *Mitigation*: The evaluation applied a purposive approach to using carefully selected and representative "deep dives" as proxies for GWP more broadly, with carefully selected stakeholder interviews - relevant to the deep dives and/or to broader GWP strategic contributions. This helped ensure sufficient geographic and thematic diversity, supporting both context-specific and cross-case analyses. GWPO reporting linked to the areas reviewed carefully by the evaluation team was deemed accurate and credible, as was the GWPO MERL system. The team assumed that GWPO reporting overall was, hence, on the whole reliable and useable.

Positivity Bias in Documentation: Much of the available documentation originated from GWP and its partners, potentially introducing positive framing biases. Independent or critical external documented reviews were comparatively limited. *Mitigation*: The evaluation explicitly complemented internal documentation with cross

[10] Current Executive Secretary and CEO; Alex Simalabwi since February 2025. Previous ES/CEOs: Monika Weber-Fahr (left June 2020); Dario Soto-Abril (2021 - 2023); Alan AtKisson (2024).

checks in independent external data sources, and cross-checking claims through interviews and multilingual surveys (English, French, Spanish, Russian).

Virtual Data Collection Constraints: Almost all interviews were conducted virtually, potentially limiting contextual understanding and excluding stakeholders with limited connectivity, or "unplanned" chance encounters and interviews that typically occur during field visits. *Mitigation*: The evaluation employed flexible scheduling across time zones and languages and used various digital platforms to maximise accessibility. Complementary documentary analysis further filled contextual gaps.

Timing at the End of Strategic Period: Conducting the evaluation near the Strategy's conclusion limited assessment of longer-term outcomes for ongoing or recently initiated initiatives (combined with pandemic consequences in terms of longer length-to-outcome rates). *Mitigation*: The evaluation focused explicitly on identifying early indicators of change; and evidence of institutional uptake and sustainability.

Implicit Assumptions in the Theory of Change: GWP's strategic approach emphasises strengthening local actor ownership and embedding interventions within existing processes rather than creating externally driven parallel mechanisms—an approach aligned with donor commitments to sustainable, locally-owned development outcomes. GWP's Theory of Change implicitly assumes a sufficient degree of institutional willingness and political openness to reform, conditions that can be challenging, particularly in fragile or politically complex contexts. At the same time, it does not explain the pathways used to deliver. *Mitigation:* To rigorously assess these assumptions and vectors, the evaluation team developed seven explicit contribution pathways, agreed by Sida and GWP. These pathways articulated how GWP delivers and facilitates results, clarifying both the nature of GWP's contributions (i.a., policy influence, convening stakeholders, knowledge dissemination, capacity strengthening) and the specific mechanisms by which these contributions occur.

Breadth of Strategy and Assessment Challenges: An in-depth evaluation of GWP's broad set of strategic ambitions accompanied by its extensive global, regional and local presence (13 Regional Water Partnerships, 77 Country Water Partnerships and 2800 partners) would have required resources significantly exceeding those allocated to this evaluation. The evaluation was necessarily *selective* in its focus and did not attempt to comprehensively assess each region and country nor to exhaustively document GWP's extensive portfolio of activities and results. *Mitigation*: To address these constraints, the evaluation strategically utilised six deep-dive case studies selected with Sida as proxies and illustrative examples to help assess how GWP functions in diverse contexts and helps deliver meaningful, sustainable results; and complemented these with targeted reviews of global, regional and thematic documentation, reports, websites and extensive stakeholder interviews, and a global, multi-lingual survey. It also delved into the MERL system managed by GWPO, and concluded it was extremely robust. These measures together allowed the evaluation team to reasonably extrapolate broader insights, underscoring that the case studies showed that GWP annual reports were on the whole accurate and reliable. While explicitly acknowledging these evaluative boundaries, the evaluation applied rigorous contribution analysis and triangulation of

evidence to credibly infer broader organisational patterns and to underscore plausible contributions that GWP makes towards sustainable outcomes. The MERL system is used by GWPO to triangulate the results and provide its annual reporting. General "public communications" by region and country are devolved, not centrally managed by GWPO. This is distinct from internal results reporting to GWPO.

Despite these constraints, the evaluation team concludes that the assembled evidence base is sufficiently robust, triangulated, and credible to substantiate the findings, lessons, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report.

The next three chapters present the findings of the three evaluation questions. The focus is on understanding how GWP contributes to strategic influence, systemic change and enabling conditions for water governance and climate resilience, not direct attribution.

3 Effectiveness (EQ1)

Evaluation Question 1 (**Effectiveness**): "To what extent has GWP delivered on the outcomes and results identified in its Strategy 2020–2025 [strengthening water governance, mobilising investment, transboundary water cooperation, and enabling systems change — across its three anchor areas: water solutions for the SDGs (IWRM, Action Hub, Technical Solutions for Water), climate resilience through water, and transboundary water cooperation] and in support of SDG 6.5; and relevant Sida strategy sub-objectives?"

This chapter presents the findings and evaluative analyses in response to the first Evaluation Question. These draw on the triangulated results of document and data review and analysis, case studies, interviews and survey responses.

Evaluation Question 1 examines the **effectiveness** of GWP's contributions towards achieving the outcomes and results identified within its **Strategy 2020–2025**. The evaluation assesses how effectively GWP has delivered on its strategic commitments across **three interlinked anchor areas**: (i) Water Solutions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), the IWRM Action Hub, and Technical Solutions for Water; (ii) Climate Resilience through Water; and (iii) Transboundary Water Cooperation. Emphasis is placed on assessing the extent to which GWP's interventions have contributed to tangible changes aligned with SDG target 6.5—specifically the implementation of IWRM at all levels, including transboundary cooperation—and with relevant sub-objectives outlined in Sida's water strategy.

The evaluative focus is on GWP's effectiveness in delivering its strategic outcomes, *not* on the performance of countries or regional institutions themselves. The analysis therefore centres on how GWP's specific activities, support and contributions—including facilitation, convening power, technical expertise, institutional support, strategic alignment, capacity building, stakeholder inclusion, and resource mobilisation—**have enabled progress and contributed to systemic improvements**. The analysis draws on evidence from detailed case studies conducted in Nepal, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Zambia, the Mediterranean region, and the Drin River Basin, alongside broader evidence from reporting, interviews, and surveys.

ANCHOR AREA 1: WATER SOLUTIONS FOR THE SDGS

3.1 INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (IWRM) AND THE ACTION HUB

Integrated Water Resources Management remains the central organising logic of GWP's approach to water governance and a core channel through which it has delivered contributions to SDG 6.5.1. Under GWP's 2020–2025 Strategy, the **IWRM Support Programme**, and **Action Hub** have operated as complementary mechanisms: the former providing countries with technical and procedural support to assess, plan, and advance IWRM implementation; the latter serving as a global knowledge infrastructure and peer-learning platform.

This work is directly aligned with Sida's Sub-objective 1 (supporting water resources management through capacity development, governance reform and policy influence), and has supported elements of Sub-objectives 4 and 5 by incorporating biodiversity and environmental protection outcomes into planning (e.g., in basin action plans) and contributing to cooperation across shared water systems. The effectiveness of GWP's contribution under this anchor area is generally strong.

Under its 2020–2025 strategy, GWP has effectively positioned IWRM as a critical approach to achieving water-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 6.5. **GWP's strategic effectiveness in this area is evident at global, regional, and national levels, and significantly advanced policy coherence and practical implementation**.

3.1.1 Global Contributions: Enabling a Shared Policy and Learning Architecture

The **SDG6 IWRM Support Programme** (driven by GWP, UNEP, UNDP Cap-Net) was launched late 2017, with a pilot phase 2018-2019. The period 2020-2025 saw its full scale up. Through its lead coordinator and technical roles, GWP used its network to support countries in: implementing IWRM (i.e., develop national IWRM action plans; monitoring and implementation; advancement of specific water-relevant themes such as food security, gender, youth, indigenous knowledge); integrating water management in climate-related planning; and in building capacity through tools and training.

Since 2020, GWP has supported over 60 countries to update SDG 6.5.1 baselines, conduct multi-stakeholder assessments, and formulate national IWRM Action Plans. These plans are developed through a sequenced, UN-endorsed methodology, helping countries prioritise governance reforms and ensure alignment with international goals. The process has become increasingly embedded in national policy dialogues and has helped significantly elevate the political profile of water governance in several countries and embed water in structural planning processes and policies.

Globally, GWP also redeveloped the IWRM Toolbox into a global knowledge platform the "**IWRM Action Hub**". Launched and scaled during the 2020-2025 strategy period,

the Action Hub complements the IWRM support work and its establishment represents a substantial achievement. This hub serves as an essential platform, providing countries with high-quality training materials, practical tools, and peer-learning opportunities. Its significance lies in the tangible capacity improvements observed amongst participating countries, particularly through enhanced national abilities to develop and implement comprehensive IWRM frameworks aligned with global standards. By 2024, it had over 3,600 registered users across 169 countries, 20+ active Communities of Practice, and new features including a Platforms Catalogue and integration with FAO AquaLex. These tools are designed to support policy teams in legal drafting, basin planning, and investment alignment.

The Hub has emerged as a centralised resource for practitioners and national focal points engaged in 6.5.1 reporting and reform processes. According to stakeholders (namely technical staff and consultants working with institutional planners, water or finance ministries), the hub offers access to useful and practical high-quality knowledge products, training materials, and peer dialogue opportunities in order to prepare advice or input for policies, budget planning cycles, regulatory decisions, or sector reviews.

The **Global Water Leadership Programme** (2021-2024) (GWL) was a global initiative in 7 countries led by GWP and co-implemented with other partners (UNICEF, WHO, Water Aid), and funded by UK FCDO. The GWL Programme facilitated the identification of key barriers to IWRM (i.a., low investment, lack of political will, weak coordination, and enforcement, capacity), and focused support towards development and implementation of government-validated climate-resilient water policies, action plans and finance strategies. It emphasised holistic integration of approaches and solutions for IWRM, health, water, and sanitation. In Malawi it facilitated stakeholder regional and national consultations to identify key barriers to progress. In Nepal, Palestine, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda the GWL successfully developed **government-validated national response and finance strategies** to identified barriers and challenges. (These ranged from the absence of integrated planning tools and performance management systems to lack of gender-transformative mechanisms, to gaps in tools to integrate IWRM, WASH and health services, to limited cross-sectoral coordination and inefficient agricultural water use, or electricity distribution). In CAR, the strategy launch was accompanied by a roundtable focused on resource mobilisation for its implementation. This helped lead, for example, to promising developments. These included: the launch in August 2025 by the AfDB (African Development Bank Group) of an ambitious programme to develop water resources in the Ubangui River basin (new pumping stations, water treatment plants, extension of distribution). GWP has helped to reinforce the ability to work with GCF procedures in order to mobilise of GCF funds. The CAFI (Central African Forest Initiative) launched a $10 million pilot project in 2024, thanks in part to GWP.

These **outcomes are strategically important**, as they provide a **robust foundation** for effective governance reforms and facilitate accelerated progress toward SDG 6.

Findings that draw on the deep dives conducted by the evaluation on IWRM in Nepal and Tanzania are presented below. These are also available in more detail in Volume II.

3.1.2 Key GWP Contributions in Nepal

GWP, through its accredited partner JVS, played a pivotal role in shaping Nepal's water governance landscape, and its policy and legal framework, notably by supporting the development of the National Water Resources Policy (2020) and the Water Resources Act (2025). These represent critical milestones because they established the comprehensive governance foundation required for comprehensive water governance reform and aligned Nepal's water sector with integrated resource management principles, critical for long-term water security and resilience. GWP's facilitation of extensive, inclusive, multi-stakeholder consultations substantially increased stakeholder ownership and legitimacy, essential for sustainable policy implementation. While these mark significant advancement towards inclusive planning and strengthened vertical communication, the integration of IWRM measures within provincial budgeting and implementation frameworks has been limited. Stakeholders highlighted several constraints faced by provincial governments, including insufficient technical expertise, limited fiscal capacity, and a lack of structured incentives. Consequently, although strategic achievement at the national level is robust, ability to roll out implementation at provincial levels remains inconsistent and fragmented.

GWP/JVS (including through the GWL Programme) **successfully facilitated strategic and financial planning**, which included convening extensive, inclusive multi-stakeholder consultations towards the development of Nepal's Response Strategy for Water Resources Management for Nepal (Action Plan and Finance Plan) (2024). This explicitly identified priority water actions and financial needs linked directly to national development and climate strategies. This provides a clear and practical roadmap for action, linked resource mobilisation and strategic alignment. At the same time, major mobilisation of resources has not yet materialised.

GWP established and formalised (including thanks to the Action Hub) a national **Community of Practice** (CoP) with over 30 institutions participating. This was in part a result of seven multi-stakeholder, inclusive consultations carried out to help prepare the Response Strategy cited above. This significantly enhanced institutional collaboration and reduced duplication. According to stakeholders, the CoP is strategically important as it potentially will foster greater coherence and collective action, institutional collaboration and reduced duplication and fragmentation - all essential for effective and sustainable water governance.

GWP/JVS supported the formulation of the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (2020). Developed with GWP's technical guidance this laid the groundwork for more gender-inclusive gender considerations in Nepal's water governance processes, and augments the potential that Nepal will address critical equality gaps with more inclusive policy outcomes and greater legitimacy of women's roles. Practical measures implemented have included conducting gender analyses of water policies and embedding gender-sensitive approaches into programming.

Furthermore, **Nepal's Nationally Determined Contributions** (NDCs) explicitly promote women's equal participation at all decision-making levels within climate and water governance. Nevertheless, budgeting for water and climate resilience remains predominantly "gender-blind", with stakeholders highlighting an urgent need to enhance attention in this area.

A parallel challenge exists regarding youth inclusion. **GWP South Asia facilitated the commendable establishment of the "Youth and Young Water Professionals' Platform for South Asia"**. This represents a meaningful, strategically valuable contribution to ensuring a skilled "next generation" of water governance professionals through its focus on youth empowerment, capacity building, and leadership. This is key for long-term sustainability. This was partly in response to the observation that despite advocacy efforts, youth involvement predominantly takes the form of participation in consultative processes rather than in defined entry-points into decision-making structures, clear mandates or budget allocations. Similarly, Indigenous Peoples/local communities, although widely acknowledged for possessing crucial knowledge relevant to water management and climate resilience, continue to lack meaningful representation or influence in decision-making forums, despite some participation. These observations from Nepal are reflected, to varying extents, in experiences from Tanzania as well.

GWP facilitated critical provincial dialogues aimed at capturing local priorities and improving Local Adaptation Plans, though practical implementation remains limited by sub-national institutional and resource constraints (as discussed earlier). Despite this limitation, these dialogues significantly enhanced provincial engagement and improved local visibility of water resource issues, according to stakeholders.

GWP provided extensive technical assistance, training, and knowledge products, significantly enhancing both local and national capacities for effective water governance and implementation of IWRM. These capacity and knowledge transfer efforts have significantly increased Nepal's institutional capability and technical readiness to manage water resources sustainably.

Overall, despite these robust efforts and results, practical implementation at sub-national levels remains constrained, highlighting critical areas **where Nepal's efforts must still be strengthened to fully realise national governance reforms**.

3.1.3 Key GWP Contributions in Tanzania

In Tanzania, GWP's support to IWRM has been instrumental in aligning national water governance and investment priorities. Notably, GWP played a central role in the development of the 2024 **Response Strategy and Finance Plan** (under the GWL programme). This Strategy, created through a robust multi-stakeholder process, identified priority actions and financing needs to enhance climate resilience and water management, becoming a key national reference integrated into broader frameworks such as the Tanzania Water Investment Programme (TanWIP). The Strategy clearly links strategic water resource management with national and international financing mechanisms, significant because it provides a structured approach to mobilising resources, enhancing Tanzania's investment readiness

Complementing this strategic initiative, GWP Tanzania supported the development and implementation of the detailed **Wami–Ruvu IWRM Action Plan** (2021–2022) through a collaborative, participatory approach. It explicitly addressed critical issues such as water resource management, irrigation efficiency, and ecosystem protection. This detailed basin-level planning was **strategically important** as it operationalised national water governance priorities at the local level, and provided a structured approach directly aligned with national planning frameworks, notably the Tanzania Water Investment Programme and the broader Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP).

GWP facilitated a **landmark economic valuation of Tanzania's water resources** through the influential **"Valuing Water" study** in 2024 (published by Tanzania's Ministry of Water). The study quantifies water-intensive sectors' contribution to GDP at 3.31%, significantly elevating the economic and political prioritisation of water management within national policy and budget discussions. This contribution markedly **enhanced recognition of water as a strategic national asset** and considerably **strengthened advocacy for increased water sector financing**, facilitated critical budget negotiations with the Ministry of Finance, while emphasising water governance and climate resilience as national investment priorities in line with SDG 6.5.1.

GWP Tanzania's role in convening the **National Multi-Sectoral Forum** (NMSF) **further advanced sectoral coherence**. By bringing together ministries, Basin Water Boards, development partners, civil society, and private sector representatives, the Forum effectively reduced duplication of efforts and established a shared understanding of key bottlenecks—particularly around financing, irrigation efficiency, and governance mandates. This **coordination significantly improved strategic coherence and sectoral planning and integration**.

Moreover, GWP facilitated Tanzania's early and strategic participation in the **AIP Water Investment Scorecard**. Discussed further in the report in section 3.1.1, the scorecard is a structured benchmarking and diagnostic tool to inform investment readiness and highlight critical governance and financing gaps. It has enabled the country to start to benchmark governance performance, identify clear investment readiness gaps, and improve potential for accountability at both national and basin levels. Its structured diagnostics have been **instrumental** in generating high-level political commitment and have provided a platform for Tanzania to communicate investment needs more effectively to international partners.

GWP successfully supported the piloting of **innovative financing mechanisms**, including sub-national green bond proposals, broadening Tanzania's national dialogue on sustainable water finance and **significantly contributing** to the exploration of alternative finance mechanisms.

Participation of women, youth, and civil society in national dialogues and basin-level governance processes was **actively fostered** by GWP as a step towards increasing legitimacy and voice in water governance processes. Despite this however, water budgets and governance frameworks and structures in Tanzania have not yet

systematically integrated clear mandates, dedicated financial resources, or defined entry points for **gender, youth,** or **vulnerable, marginalised groups**.

The Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Programme (GCCA+) is an EU initiative that provides technical and financial support to vulnerable countries to help them address climate change. Under it, GWP supported practical **climate-resilient water management pilot initiatives** —such as solar-powered groundwater systems and the Mvuha Water Information Hub—demonstrating tangible, scalable solutions for climate-resilient water management, and concrete outcomes at community and basin levels. These pilots were strategically significant, providing practical evidence and replicable models for broader implementation.

However, translating these achievements into fully funded projects and comprehensive regulatory reforms remains an ongoing task for Tanzania. Capacity constraints within government, fragmented donor financing, and the need for dedicated funding mechanisms for IWRM implementation are areas requiring sustained attention. Persistent efforts to enhance institutional capacity, strengthen project preparation, and deepen structural inclusion continue to be the focus of GWP, intent on helping ensure that Tanzania's strategic foundations effectively convert into long-term, sustainable water governance outcomes.

Overall, GWP's strategic contributions to IWRM have significantly advanced both global policy coherence and national governance frameworks. The significance of these achievements lies in GWP's capacity to set the stage for systematic improvements in water governance and stakeholder participation. Nonetheless, continued effectiveness will depend substantially on addressing current gaps between robust upstream frameworks and their downstream implementation—particularly in strengthening sub-national institutional capacities, securing structural inclusion (gender, youth), and mobilising sustained financial resources.

3.1.4 Other Country Illustrations

Many other illustrations of GWP IWRM related work are possible. Here we simply include a regional example and a national example, as additional illustrations.

Central Africa

In Central Africa (the region), language diversity, fragmented water governance across multiple agencies, external disruptions (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) weakened coordination and implementation capacities. Over the 2020-2025 period, GWP's regional water partnership in Central Africa (GWP Central Africa) had reduced staff (due to diminished GWP funding) and grappled with GWP-related reputational challenges (at Headquarters) which constrained to a degree, its operational engagement and momentum capacity and reduced the effectiveness of regional coordination and follow-up on opportunities. **Nevertheless**, between 2020 and 2025, **GWP Central Africa recorded tangible progress**. Regional teams supported the development of national IWRM plans and the establishment of climate resilience strategies in collaboration with national ministries in Cameroon, Chad, and the Central African Republic. GWP-CAf (under the GWL programme) and national partners helped the

Central African Republic to **launch its National Response Strategy for Resilient Water Resource Management** in 2024 and held high-level dialogues to mobilise climate finance and attract Green Climate Fund accreditation for national banks. The region also facilitated the Adaptation Fund–approved Early Warning System for Climate Resilience in the Lake Chad Basin, a major transboundary initiative enhancing flood and drought preparedness. These efforts, though hindered by limited financial flexibility, demonstrated growing regional ownership and cross-border cooperation capacity, facilitated in large part thanks to GWP efforts.

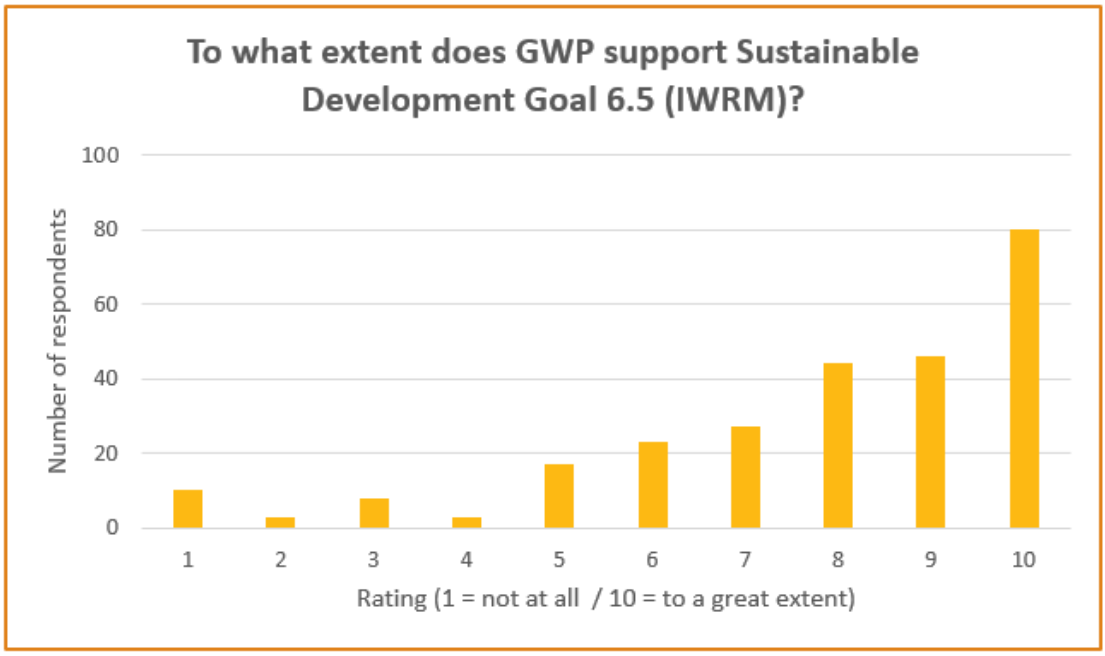
China

From 2020 to 2025, GWP China achieved broad policy and technical success, particularly in the areas of **IWRM, legal reform, and climate resilience**. Through its policy advisory role to the National Development and Reform Commission, it acted as a national think tank for water management, contributing directly to government policies such as the National Wastewater Recycling Strategy and the revision of China's Water and Flood Control Laws. This led to the adoption of the "**Guiding Opinions on Promoting the Utilisation of Wastewater Resource**s". GWP China also led sectoral studies on groundwater overexploitation control in North China and contributed to revisions of the Water Law and Flood Control Law, which **improved the legal foundations for IWRM implementation**. These are effectively significant achievements towards SDG 6 realisation.

3.1.5 Evaluative Analytical Synthesis for Integrated Water Resources Management

GWP's work in advancing IWRM has **demonstrated substantial effectiveness in shaping policy, legal frameworks, and multi-stakeholder engagement platforms at global, national, and local levels**. In particular, GWP has successfully positioned IWRM as a central mechanism for achieving water-related SDGs, notably advancing progress towards achieving SDG 6.5 on IWRM implementation, through significant policy advocacy, strategic alignment, and capacity development. This was also confirmed by the global survey, with a large majority of respondents stating that GWP has significantly contributed to advancing SDG 6.5.

Figure 2: Survey Ratings on How Strongly GWP Supports Implementation of SDG 6.5



The cases above illustrate **GWP's capacity to drive significant institutional and policy shifts**, from the formulation of landmark national water resources policies and legislation to the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms such as Nepal's Community of Practice (CoP) and Tanzania's National Multi-Sectoral Forum (NMSF). These platforms have notably enhanced institutional coordination, stakeholder ownership, and alignment of water management priorities with national climate and development strategies.

However, the effectiveness of these contributions **remains constrained** by persistent gaps in practical implementation and structural integration. While GWP's efforts in promoting inclusive stakeholder engagement—especially involving women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and civil society—have significantly expanded legitimacy and awareness, deeper structural integration into budgetary processes, clear institutional mandates, and defined decision-making entry points have yet to be fully realised.

Table 2 Alignment with Sida's Water Strategy Sub-Objectives

Sida Sub-Objective	Evidence of GWP Contribution	Evaluation of Contribution Strength
1. Water resources management via governance, advocacy, and capacity-building	Strong support to SDG 6.5.1 planning, national IWRM action plans, Communities of Practice, law/policy alignment (e.g. Nepal, Tanzania, Indonesia)	Strong
4. Protection of freshwater ecosystems, biodiversity, and Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Basin planning includes ecological flows and WEFE/Nexus elements in some countries (e.g. Lebanon, Morocco, Wami–Ruvu); Action Hub promotes NbS tools	Moderate (enabling)

5. Transboundary cooperation and conflict prevention	Indirect contribution: IWRM plans in some regions support basin cooperation (e.g. BUPUSA, Limpopo) and source-to-sea dialogues (Med)	Moderate to indirect

Key priorities to enhance future effectiveness include:

- Strengthening the capacity of sub-national institutions to implement IWRM actions at provincial and local levels.
- Systematically integrating gender, youth, and local marginalised groups (IPs) into water budgets and governance frameworks, ensuring clear mandates and dedicated resources.
- Enhancing monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) frameworks in country systems to measure outcomes systematically, to help embedded "learning mind-sets" and facilitate adaptive management.
- Accelerating resource mobilisation to operationalise strategic frameworks and ensure sustained implementation.

GWP's comparative advantage in IWRM lies in its ability to convene diverse stakeholders, shape robust national frameworks, and facilitate strategic alignment, accompanied by robust tools and methods. Realising the full potential of these frameworks, however, requires a concerted effort by all partners to bridge upstream policy effectiveness with downstream practical implementation, thereby ensuring sustainable and equitable water governance outcomes.

3.2 TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS FOR WATER

A subcomponent of GWP's "Water for the SDGs" Anchor Area

3.2.1 Strategic Rationale and Context

Technical Solutions for Water are a distinct but complementary strand of GWP's delivery under its 2020–2025 Strategy. Unlike the IWRM Support Programme, which focuses on governance and planning, the Technical Solutions for Water portfolio emphasises practical, often site-based interventions that demonstrate **how water resilience, ecosystem protection, and climate-smart infrastructure can be implemented at local or sub-national levels**. These solutions—many of them anchored in the Mediterranean—combine technical interventions (e.g., flood management, greywater reuse, aquifer replenishment) with governance innovation, community engagement, and, increasingly, private sector co-financing.

While modest in scale relative to national investments, GWP's technical solutions for water work is relevant for Sida's water strategy priorities. Specifically, it contributes to:

- Sub-objective 2: Efficient water use and climate resilience, through infrastructure retrofits and demand-side solutions.
- Sub-objective 3: Pollution reduction and source-to-sea integration.
- Sub-objective 4: Freshwater ecosystem protection and biodiversity, often through nature-based and circular water solutions.

The evaluation finds this intervention—especially in the Mediterranean—have provided credible models of multi-stakeholder delivery and generated early examples of leveraging private sector funding in the water sector. However, the scaling and institutionalisation of these solutions was mixed in the period under review. Their impact relies heavily on whether municipalities, utilities, and whether national systems are equipped to replicate, sustain, or finance them beyond the project cycle.

Findings that draw on the evaluation's deep dive into technical solutions for water in the Mediterranean Region are elaborated below, briefly. These are also available in more detail in Volume II.

3.2.2 Technical Solutions for Water in Practice: Flagship Cases from the Mediterranean Deep Dive

Three flagship cases were assessed in detail as part of the 2025 evaluation deep dive in the efforts of the GWP in the Mediterranean Region (GWP-Med):

1. Alter Aqua (Malta)

Active since 2011 and currently in its fourth phase, Alter Aqua is a national programme on non-conventional water resources (NCWR), implemented by GWP-Med with funding from the Coca-Cola Foundation and in partnership with Malta's Energy and Water Agency. It involves the rehabilitation of cisterns and greywater systems in schools and sports facilities, paired with education campaigns and digital tools like the "Reservoir Trail" app[11].

The initiative is embedded in Malta's National Water Management Plan and complements the country's reliance on desalination. Its outcomes include enhanced water security at facility level, broader societal awareness of reuse, and policy influence: Maltese authorities credit the programme with helping to normalise NCWR in national planning.

This case illustrates a **successful blend of technical innovation, public education, and policy integration.** It also demonstrates a pathway to sustainability: multi-phase design, local co-ownership, and modest O&M demands make replication and scale-up viable in similar small island or urban contexts.

2. Trikala Flood Pipeline (Greece)

Implemented in 2024 in the Thessaly region, the Trikala pipeline project **doubled stormwater drainage capacity in a flood-prone urban area** following Storm Daniel. GWP-Med acted as the broker between the municipality, local water utility (DEYAT),

[11] Please access the application at alteraqua.stqry.app. The app provides an interactive, self-guided tour that navigate visitors through 12 historical reservoir locations in Birgu, Malta. Its purpose is to educate visitors about Malta's water heritage, the role of these reservoirs in the past, and the importance of sustainable water management practices for the future.

and the Coca-Cola Foundation. The intervention was based on a pre-existing municipal master plan but had originally been de-prioritised due to funding constraints. A follow-up educational component (starting in Q4 2025) targeting primary school children aims to build awareness of flood resilience and water conservation, embedding the project's lessons within local civic culture.

By fast-tracking the project and ensuring transparent procurement and co-financing, GWP-Med helped the municipality convert planning into delivery. The infrastructure is now fully embedded in city O&M budgets. It also opened the door for the municipality of Trikala to participate as a **pilot city** under the EU-funded Horizon "Spunk Works" initiative for nature-based urban resilience.

While modest in financial terms (~€500,000), the project demonstrated effective convening, governance embedding, and rapid delivery. Stakeholders particularly valued GWP's role in facilitating private funding for public investment outcomes.

3. Kifissos Replenishment Project (Athens)

This pilot was the **first corporate water replenishment partnership** facilitated by GWP-Med and is still in an early stage of implementation. It involves substituting deep aquifer water with flows from Hadrian's Aqueduct to irrigate the Olympic Athletic Centre of Athens (OACA). The project is financed by Microsoft under its global water stewardship targets, with technical design from the Athens water utility (EYDAP) and GWP-Med acting as matchmaker and stewardship translator.

The project applies the Volumetric Water Benefit Accounting (VWBA) methodology and will secure independent verification. It combines tangible volumetric outcomes to offset Microsoft's water use in the same basin with reputational benefits for all parties and sets a precedent for similar private–public water stewardship projects. While its replication is context-dependent, it **demonstrates GWP's capacity to facilitate blended financing through a stewardship lens**.

3.2.3 Governance, Finance and Policy Contributions

Across the technical solutions for water portfolio, GWP-Med has played a distinctive role as a neutral convener, technical translator, and public–private matchmaker. Key contributions include:

- **Embedding technical solutions in municipal or national plans**, as seen in Malta and Trikala, where projects aligned with pre-existing development priorities.
- **Securing co-financing and private sector engagement**, particularly where GWP-Med translated technical requirements into formats aligned with corporate accounting and CSR priorities.
- **Leveraging demonstration projects for policy influence**, with Malta, in particular, crediting Alter Aqua for shifting public attitudes and policy toward NCWR.
- **Creating visibility for nature-based or circular solutions**, linked to broader regional frameworks such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Water Agenda and the draft Mediterranean WEFE Nexus Strategy.

These contributions are directly aligned with Sida's emphasis on integrated, inclusive, and scalable technical solutions that support both resilience and sustainability.

3.2.4 Evaluation of Systems Contribution

The evaluation finds that **GWP's technical solutions work delivers value through five principal channels** as illustrated in the bow below.

Table 3: Value Delivery Channels

Contribution Area	Observed Strengths	Key Limitations / Risks
Convening, matchmaking & trust building	Strong appreciation of GWP acting as neutral, credible bridge between different stakeholders, brokers roles, permits and data sharing. Transparent, EU-compliant procurement procedures build confidence with public authorities and funders.	Replicability outside the Mediterranean region may be constrained by variable regional capacity and fewer ready partners.
Demonstrating tangible technical solutions	Converts policy goals into visible pilots with measurable outcomes (e.g., operational flood pipeline, groundwater saved through alternative resource use). Proof-points helps decision-makers and communities "see" what IWRM looks like in practice.	Projects can remain one-offs if they are not tied to a follow-up project or are embedded in broader policy context.
Private Sector Engagement	Corporate-public collaboration brokered (Kifissos) by designing a project that is credible, verifiable, and embedded in public systems. Could create a replicable new financing model that ties corporate targets/reporting (replenishment) to public sector funding needs. Meets Sida's interest in stewardship models and private sector engagement.	Still at early stage of implementation, with no other projects in pipeline. Some evidence pointing to need for faster, and more standardised development processes to meet corporate timelines. Uneven regional capacity and short corporate funding cycles may further replication and cost efficiency.
Social Legitimacy	Strong emphasis on co-design with local stakeholders builds ownership; education components normalise reuse and resilience practices, improving acceptance and long-term implementation.	
Institutional learning & replication pathways	GWP-Med has produced step-by-step guidance, supported inter-regional mentoring and pilots are recognised by different EU consortia – all signalling credibility and opening doors for scale.	Replication capacity uneven across GWP regions (procurement, engineering, deal-making); without a more formal global mechanism, learning may diffuse and scale remain limited.

Scaling is the principal constraint. While all three flagship projects demonstrate clear benefits, they rely heavily on facilitation by GWP-Med and specific donor or corporate partnerships. Institutional anchoring within national investment programmes, procurement processes, or public-private funding frameworks is rare. Stakeholders themselves acknowledged this gap, suggesting that the next step is to move from "demonstration" to "replicable governance and finance models".

This includes designing structured pathways from pilot to scale, with support for:

- Establishing local project preparation facilities to accelerate design and permitting.
- Strengthening national blended-finance and partnership frameworks for water investment.
- Building internal GWP capacity—at global, regional, and country levels—to design, package, and broker stewardship-aligned investment proposals; and
- Developing monitoring frameworks that quantify ecosystem and resilience co-benefits.

3.2.5 Evaluative Analytical Synthesis for Technical Solutions for Water

GWP's technical solutions work has proven capable of delivering tangible, high-visibility results that combine infrastructure, education, and governance in a way few actors in the water sector can match. The Mediterranean portfolio in particular shows how small-scale, co-funded, and **locally owned technical interventions can serve as demonstrators for broader policy and financing reform**.

That said, these contributions remain fragile unless ensuring systematic replication or institutionalisation (which is already happening to some degree). Their sustainability depends on continued donor or private sector support, and their systemic value depends on bridging the gap between demonstration and mainstream investment. Moving forward, the following are key priorities:

- Develop a more agile and structured mechanism for preparing, designing, and brokering joint water investments between municipalities, utilities, and corporate partners. This includes streamlined workflows, standard templates for concept notes, feasibility assessments, and governance arrangements that can be rapidly deployed across regions.
- GWP could establish replicable, stewardship-aligned financing models that link corporate replenishment metrics with public water governance and infrastructure priorities. Standardisation - e.g. covering cost recovery, co-benefit valuation, and verification protocols.

GWP's comparative advantage in this space lies in **creating the enabling environment—technical, financial, and political—for catalytic interventions** that can be taken to scale by others. With regard to corporate-public projects like the one in Kifissos, GWP has proven abilities to translate public governance priorities into investable, co-benefit-driven projects that support corporate water targets and get financing. This is a field that is highly in demand right now as more and more companies, especially in the software and IT sector, are looking for investable projects to offset water consumption of their production site in priority locations. Table 4 below succinctly illustrates alignment with Sida's water strategy sub-objectives.

Table 4 - Alignment with Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives

Sida Sub-Objective	GWP Example Contributions Under	Evaluation of Contribution Strength
2. Efficient water use and climate resilience	Greywater reuse (Malta), flood resilience infrastructure (Trikala), urban leakage reduction (Zero Drop), groundwater conservation (Kifissos)	Strong
3. Pollution reduction / source-to-sea	Mediterranean NbS and wastewater reuse; WEFE–Med and WEFE4MED CoP; urban drainage planning	Moderate (enabling)
4. Ecosystem and biodiversity protection	Projects linked to environmental co-benefits; nature-based infrastructure pilots; UfM strategy alignment	Moderate (not consistently tracked)

ANCHOR AREA 2: CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH WATER

3.3 CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH WATER

3.3.1 Strategic Framing

Effective public private partnership strategies for water infrastructure can lower investment risk and accelerate project delivery by prioritising robust frameworks, disciplined preparation, and operational quality before seeking financing. Competitive regulation and combining concessional funds with guarantees can scale capital mobilisation and ensure sustainability even where tariffs are insufficient. Projects that focus on clear revenue models, standardised contracts, and careful risk-sharing to attract institutional investors can, in theory, find capital. Capital is available, but truly bankable, contract-backed cash flows often remain elusive. While investors express strong appetite, evidence suggest that weak revenue frameworks, and institutional uncertainty continue to constrain bankability.

During the 2020-2025 period, the main gaps have included too few "bankable projects," but also, importantly, due to fragmented risk environments, a scarcity of operationally bankable structures—many deals stall due to suboptimal revenue design, poor upfront preparation regulatory volatility, and weak preparation capacity. Investors may well be ready and private capital or global financial funds may well be searching for opportunities, but only a tiny fraction of deals reach scale due to limited viability.

GWP's climate resilience portfolio is centred on the premise that **integrated water governance is foundational to climate adaptation**. Over the 2020–2025 Strategy period, GWP has positioned water more prominently within national adaptation and investment dialogues, supported access to international climate finance, and helped articulate national and regional climate-resilience focused investment programmes. It has emphasised development of project preparation facilities, transaction advisory support, and policy reform in the enabling environment. Innovations such as project aggregation (bundling smaller projects for scale), standardised payment and risk-

sharing mechanisms, and fostering blended finance platforms are all methods used to enhance operational bankability and attract institutional capital. These efforts are concentrated in Africa through the Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP) and the GCF-funded Readiness tracks, but extend globally through engagement with NAP processes, the UNFCCC, and initiatives like the Water and Climate Coalition. This is generating a pipeline of viable projects and also addressing the structural bottlenecks that consistently inhibit project finance at scale

This work speaks directly to **Sida's sub-objectives** on climate-resilient water management (2), upstream governance and capacity (1), and, in some cases, ecosystem and biodiversity protection (4), where water security and adaptation intersect. However, while GWP's contributions have been catalytic at the planning and mobilisation stages, the translation of frameworks into funded, disbursing, and operational programmes is still partial and uneven across contexts.

Findings that draw on the evaluation's deep dives into GWP's AIP related work in Zanzibar and Zambia are elaborated below, briefly. These are also available in more detail in Volume II.

3.3.2 Continental and Regional Positioning: AIP as a Platform for Political and Investment Coordination toward Climate Resilience

At continental level, GWP's most visible climate-related contribution has been the Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP). Ideated and created by GWP it was then formally endorsed by and transferred to the African Union. GWP acts as the AIP Secretariat. The AIP provides a structured platform that links political leadership (via the AU and AMCOW), technical governance reforms, and financing mechanisms.

The Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP)[12] adopted by the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government in 2021 (as part of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) Priority Action Plan) seeks to transform the investment outlook for water security and sustainable sanitation across the continent. It aims to mobilise an additional USD 30 billion annually by 2030 for water and climate resilience investments and accelerate progress towards the Africa Water Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goal 6, including through job generation. (CN-Agenda-COP29-Launch).

AIP was designed in response to entrenched systemic challenges that have long undermined water infrastructure development in Africa. These include: insufficient high-level political leadership to drive investment decisions; siloed planning and decision-making across water, health, energy, and food systems; inadequate integration of gender-transformative approaches into investment processes; slow preparation of

[12] This section draws from information available at: www.aipwater.org

bankable projects, especially at transboundary level. To address these, the AIP structured its interventions around five interlinked priorities:

- **Mobilise high-level political leadership** on water investment through the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa.
- Develop and roll out the AIP-PIDA **Water Investment Scorecard** to track finance flows and mutual accountability.
- **Enhance** country and regional **capacity** to formulate **climate-resilient water investment programmes** and to ensure governance structures are anchored credibly (i.e., increase likelihood to be considered "investment ready")
- Promote **public–private partnerships** and innovative financing mechanisms.
- Embed **gender equality and social inclusion** across water investment processes.

In 2024, the AIP joined the "Paris Pact for People and the Planet[13]" (4P) and launched the "**AIP International Blended Water Investment and Knowledge Facility**", further anchoring GWP's position as a systems convener for climate-water financing.

The AIP's emphasis on investment preparation, climate-resilient infrastructure, and gender-transformative programming has helped shift discourse away from reactive project funding toward long-term, programmatic investment mobilisation.

The GWP also heavily contributed to the development of the **AIP-PIDA Scorecard** and piloted it in several countries (i.a., Zambia, Zanzibar, Tanzania, Uganda and beyond). The Scorecard is a structured benchmarking and diagnostic tool to inform investment readiness and highlight critical governance and financing gaps. Its structured diagnostics **have been instrumental in generating high-level political commitment** and have provided a needed platform to communicate investment needs more effectively to international partners. First complete Scorecard reports will be provided to the AU Summit in early 2026 by at least 30 countries. This adds a mutual **accountability mechanism** and has been viewed by national stakeholders as extremely useful in identifying bottlenecks and aligning finance with strategic water goals, as well as a driver of focus on concrete outcomes.

[13] The Paris Pact for People and the Planet (4P) is a political consensus to reform the international financial system to support both poverty reduction and climate action. Launched in June 2023, it is a coalition of 70+ countries that seeks a fairer and more effective financial architecture to address climate change, development and nature, based on the principle that no country should have to choose between fighting poverty and saving the planet. It is distinct to the Paris Agreement, the 2015 international treaty to limit global warming.

The strength of this platform lies in its legitimacy, scale, and policy coherence. However, operational uptake depends on how well national institutions can integrate the Scorecard results within decisions made related to budget cycles, planning instruments, and institutional mandates—a process still emerging and variable across contexts.

3.3.3 National Contributions: Facilitating Climate-Resilient Investment Frameworks

Diverse country illustrations reinforce the imperative expressed by the GWP 2020-2025 Strategy that water must be seen as integral to building climate resilience, that **climate-resilience finance mobilisation must therefore integrate and highlight water**, and that **vast gaps remain between IWRM plans and ability to implement change**, in large part due to **lack of consistent, long-term financial resourcing**. Hence GWP's multi-pronged focus on enhancing capacity to identify constraints, supporting multi-stakeholder planning, and ensuring investment "ready" environments able to produce credible, bankable proposals for financial and other investors. The evaluation findings both confirm the validity of these focused multi-pronged strands and the worth of GWP efforts to support them. This is illustrated in detail below.

Zanzibar Water Investment Programme (ZWIP)

The Zanzibar Water Investment Programme 2022–2027 (ZWIP) is one of the **clearest examples of GWP's contribution to the development of a national, climate-resilient investment programme**. Developed in close coordination with the Government of Zanzibar, the Programme aligns with the Blue Economy Policy and Vision 2050. It includes a multi-year investment envelope and a designated domestic budget line—still modest, but symbolically significant. International partners (AfDB, JICA, India Exim Bank) have expressed interest, and ZWIP is now used as a formal reference point in national adaptation discussions.

GWP's support, according to stakeholders, was **instrumental in shaping the programme's content**, sequencing the pipeline, and ensuring alignment with AIP methods. Stakeholders also highlighted the programme's **inclusive design**, noting that gender and youth consultations were conducted at the outset. The AIP–PIDA Scorecard was introduced in 2024 to enhance tracking and prioritisation. However, stakeholders cautioned that conversion-to-disbursement remains work in progress, and that utility-level capacity constraints (e.g., non-revenue water, weak billing systems) are a major bottleneck to translating investment *plans* into measurable resilience *outcomes*.

Zambia Water Investment Programme (ZIP)

The Zambia Water Investment Programme 2022–2030 (ZIP) is another **credible illustration of GWP's upstream and midstream facilitation**. The Programme is aligned with Zambia's Vision 2030, the 8th National Development Plan, and the country's National Adaptation Plan. In 2024, the Government of Zambia adopted a **Resource Mobilisation Strategy** to advance ZIP implementation, and began using the AIP–PIDA Scorecard to identify readiness gaps and constraints.

GWP played key facilitation, advocacy, and technical assistance roles in these processes and output. GWP's role extended, for example, to direct support for pipeline development, coordination with the Ministry of Water, and facilitation of investment dialogues. Government stakeholders credited GWP's neutrality and long-term presence as **key** to mobilising cross-sectoral support. At the same time, though ZIP's integration into Zambia's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and provincial planning systems is still at an early stage, the National Water Security and Sanitation Programme (NWSSP) includes a and Social Inclusion sub-component, showing movement from including women and youth in consultations towards institutionalisation of their needs, including some budget dimensions.

The difference in ambition and institutional maturity between ZWIP and ZIP shaped the delivery trajectories GWP chose in working with them. While Zanzibar has moved further on budget alignment and Scorecard adoption, Zambia presents a more ambitious but still consolidating model. These divergences illustrate the flexibility—but also the fragility—of the AIP across diverse governance contexts and how the GWP approach (working through a combination of regional water partnerships (i.e., GWP Southern Africa) and country water partnerships (Zambia CWP) allows it to fine-tune and adapt delivery to each context.

Regarding **gender equality**, GWP Zambia collaborated with government bodies, the World Bank, UNICEF, and other partners to advance gender equality within the water sector. One key initiative in this area is the Africa Water Investment Programme—Gender Transformative Water, Climate, and Development Programme (AIP WACDEP-G), under the aegis of GWP and funded by Austria. Zambia was one of the first five WACDEP-G regional pilot countries for advancing gender-responsive climate adaptation. The others were Benin, Cameroon, Uganda, Tunisia. It aimed to foster **gender-transformative approaches** so that climate-resilient water investments and institutional development strategically advance gender equality through a gender-transformative approach to policy and action. It delivered a **national gender analysis** and **action plan** for climate-resilient water investments, and helped ensure a sub-component for social inclusion and gender in the national water security programme.

3.3.4 Other Country Illustrations

Somalia: The **Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness project (Somalia)**, implemented by GWP, and concluded in 2024, took a structured and innovative approach to water, focusing on climate-resilient water security through a combination of financing mechanisms and project guidelines. It financed projects for water conservation, efficiency and reuse, hydrological observation, early warning systems, and integrated water management, including climate-resilient WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene).

GWP locally facilitated processes on the ground that led to Somalia's first GCF Country Programme and the development of a National Climate Finance Policy. The policy proposed the establishment of a National Climate Fund. GWP assistance helped to: create an operational manual to guide activities of the NDA (national designated authority - the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change); draft investment concept

notes in order to build a project pipeline for future funding; promote advocacy; build better investment readiness and technical programming. This helped lead to the approval, in 2024, of a substantial USD 94.9 million GCF financed project on climate-resilient agriculture (with FAO as AE for FP246). While implemented by FAO, the upstream support to the NDA and strategic prioritisation process was directly credited by stakeholders to GWP in helping to enable this outcome.

GWP works with the GCF in various countries since GCF aims to attract private investment through innovative financial instruments and considers water a key asset for both climate adaptation and mitigation. While its intentions are aligned with GWP, these two actors play vastly different yet complementary roles.

Nepal: The 2024 Response Strategy and Finance Plan (US$52.9 million) demonstrate how GWP's IWRM and climate resilience work intersect. The plan aligns national climate and water priorities and includes costed actions. However, vertical coherence with provinces is still mixed, and absorption capacity remains a concern.

Tanzania: GWP supported the "Valuing Water" study in 2024 to inform prioritisation of climate-related water investments. The study's findings are being used in dialogue with national planning and finance actors. However, project preparation ecosystems to convert these insights into fundable proposals remain underdeveloped.

3.3.5 Evaluation of Systems Contributions

An important dimension of the evaluation is the extent to which GWP has helped to effect systems change. The evaluation findings underscore that GWP's strategic value in this anchor area lies in **facilitating investment-enabling environments**. Its support consistently includes:

- Positioning water as **a priority sector** in national adaptation and development agendas.
- Supporting **institutional readiness** (e.g., NDA capacity building, multi-stakeholder coordination platforms).
- Enabling **access to climate finance** through (i.a.,) GCF Readiness efforts and pipeline project preparation.
- **Structuring investment programmes** with long-term visibility, fiscal realism, and alignment with development visions.

The evaluation findings demonstrate that these contributions are relevant, timely, and catalytic, especially in contexts where ministries seek external facilitation and technical accompaniment. However, conversion from planning and action plans to disbursing investments **remains partial**, often constrained by national gaps that include:

- **Limited project preparation** and transaction ability (especially for blended finance).
- **Incomplete integration** into national budget cycles.
- Persistent **dependence on donor alignment** and external co-financing.
- **Capacity constraints** at utility and local government levels, particularly in translating frameworks into infrastructure and service delivery.

In both Zambia and Zanzibar, gender and youth consultations were conducted, and learning instruments such as the Scorecard were piloted. However, stakeholders noted that increased inclusion and gender awareness, and gender pilots, (and gender action plans in Zambia's case), resulted in limited budgetary allocation or structural embedding thus far. Similarly, learning loops at national levels are still being formalised and have not yet translated into routine visible adaptive management processes. So that, while GWP efforts have contributed to changes at the systems level in some instances, findings illustrate the limits of these efforts in some areas.

GWP's investments in knowledge tools, such as the Scorecard and Cap-Net-facilitated trainings, were widely appreciated by stakeholders. At the same time, findings show that their impact on programme course correction and adaptive budgeting will depend on **deeper integration into national MEL systems—an area where further support for follow-through by GWP may be needed**.

3.3.6 Evaluative Analytical Synthesis of Climate Resilience through Water

Over the 2020–2025 Strategy period, GWP has made credible, visible contributions to climate resilience through water. Its work has elevated the role of water in national adaptation strategies, structured investment frameworks, and positioned countries for climate finance access. The Somalia GCF project, the development of ZIP and ZWIP, and the institutionalisation of AIP and the Scorecard mechanism are all important achievements.

However, the pathway from planning to disbursement is not automatic. The evaluation findings show that:

GWP is effective in creating enabling conditions but must now work with others to strengthen the delivery ecosystem.

- **Scaling the use of Scorecards** and other accountability tools will require budgetary and institutional integration, not just technical uptake. The agreement to report annually on the scorecards starting in 2026, with an estimated 30 country reports expected, will provide national incentives towards this, that GWP will support.
- Climate resilience outcomes will depend **on how well water investment pipelines are prepared**, structured, and **aligned with co-financing modalities**.

Long-term sustainability will hinge on the **depth of domestic budget commitments** and the **operational capacity** of national and sub-national institutions and while this is mostly out of GWP direct purview/scope, it does point to a **focus area it can provide advocacy for** - namely the link between national decisions and capacities at central level and those at sub-national or provincial levels. For climate resilience these are key areas for strengthening in the same ways GWP has helped at central levels.

As donor flexibility tightens and the focus shifts toward national systems and co-investment models, **GWP's comparative advantage** will likely depend on its ability to **support national actors through the full investment cycle**—from priority-setting and pipeline preparation to financing, implementation, and learning.

The alignment with the sub-objectives of Sida's water strategy are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5 - Alignment with Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives

Alignment with Sida's Water Strategy		
Sida Sub-Objective	**GWP Contributions Under Climate Resilience Anchor**	**Evaluation of Contribution Strength**
1. Governance, policy influence, capacity-building	AIP platform, Scorecard methodology, support to NDAs and national investment planning (e.g. ZIP, ZWIP)	Strong
2. Climate resilience and efficient water use	Strategic support to NAP/NDC integration; GCF project mobilisation; climate finance readiness	Moderate to strong
4. Ecosystems and biodiversity	Indirect contribution via SAPs (Drin), NAPs, and investment planning frameworks with environmental co-benefits	Moderate (enabling)

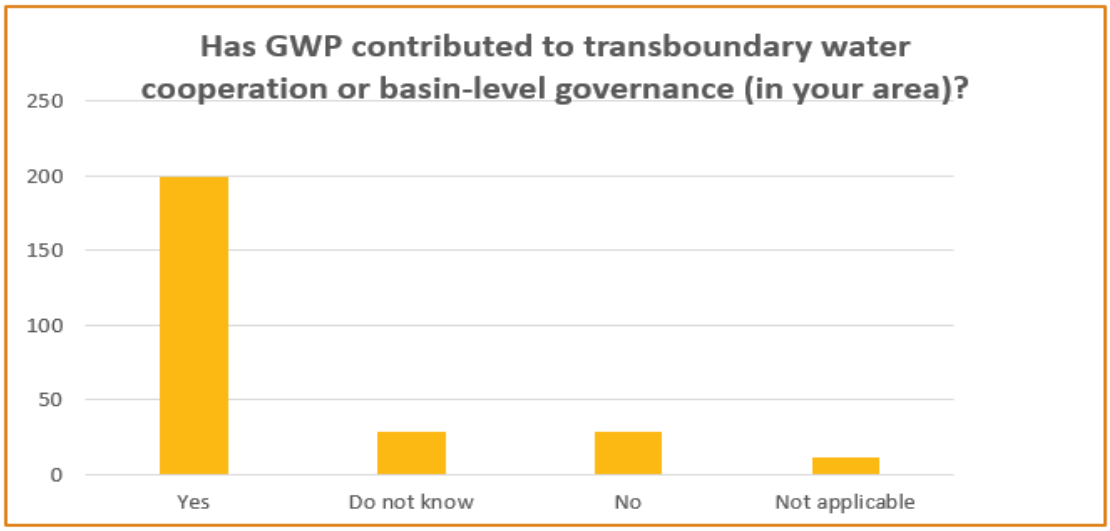
ANCHOR AREA 3: TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

3.4 TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION

3.4.1 Strategic Framing

GWP's contributions to transboundary water cooperation during the 2020–2025 Strategy period have taken place against the backdrop of mounting political, environmental, and financing pressures in shared basins across Africa, Southeast Europe, Latin America, and Central Asia, to name a few. **The evaluation finds that GWP has positioned itself as a trusted facilitator, technical convenor, and connector between basin processes and broader regional or global commitments** (e.g., UNECE Water Convention, AU frameworks, EU accession processes). While GWP does not hold formal mandates over transboundary basins, **its long-term partnerships and capacity to engage politically sensitive spaces have allowed it to enable cooperation where it might otherwise stall.** As illustrated in Figure 3 , a large majority of survey respondents confirmed that GWP has contributed to transboundary water cooperation or basin-level governance in their respective regions, underscoring the credibility of its facilitation role across diverse political and institutional contexts.

Figure 3: Perceived GWP Contribution to Transboundary and Basin-Level Governance by Survey Respondents



This work aligns closely with Sida's Sub-objective 5 – promoting transboundary cooperation and contributions to conflict prevention – and also supports Sub-objective 1 by strengthening regional governance mechanisms and facilitating inclusive stakeholder engagement. **The evaluation finds that GWP's most durable contributions occur when political momentum is matched by structured planning processes, funding pathways, and long-term institutional anchoring**.

Below the results of the evaluation's deep dive into the Drin Basin is briefly elaborated. These are also available in more detail in Volume II.

3.4.2 Drin Basin

The Drin Basin in South-East Europe spans five riparian countries (Albania, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia) and is marked by complex political dynamics and post-conflict legacies which are broadly unfavourable for transboundary cooperation. The basin has been a long-term focus of GWP-Med's work, in partnership with other organisations including UNECE, UNDP, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The evaluation finds that GWP-Med's role **has been indispensable in setting up and institutionalising cooperation in the Drin Basin over the past two decades**. **Stakeholders** consistently **credited GWP-Med's long-term involvement** as **decisive** for keeping the mechanism alive despite many challenges.

At the same time, the evaluation finds that the effectiveness of GWP's facilitation has depended heavily on its role as the Drin Secretariat. While this has ensured continuity and coordination, it has also fostered a degree of dependency that risks delaying the establishment of a fully riparian-owned and financially autonomous Drin Commission. This **suggests a potential role for GWP** at some future point in relation to potentially **facilitating negotiations towards a joint transboundary agreement**, considering the feasibility potential of a permanent RBO and/or the establishment of a riparian-led and

(at least partially) funded secretariat. This and other points are explored in more detail in the below.

The main delivery modalities used by GWP-Med in the Drin Basin include:

Facilitation of Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues

GWP-Med **effectively facilitated the South-East Europe Regional Dialogue** (initiated in 2006), significantly fostering trust and creating an enabling environment for the signing of the 2011 Drin Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This foundational dialogue has been instrumental in establishing political cooperation and conditions necessary for developing joint basin management frameworks across the Drin Basin riparians.

Institutional Anchoring and Governance Structures

GWP facilitated the **establishment and continuous operation of the Drin Core Group** (DCG), which functions as an interim coordination body for the Drin Basin riparians. The DCG brings together representatives of the 5 riparian countries, regional organisations, and international partners, with GWP-Med serving as its Secretariat. This contribution has provided essential continuity, stability, and institutional memory, enabling sustained transboundary cooperation despite frequent political changes and regional sensitivities.

Technical and Strategic Framework Development

GWP coordinated and facilitated the comprehensive Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA, 2018) and the Strategic Action Programme (SAP, 2020). These frameworks are **strategically significant** because they provided clear, evidence-based, and politically validated strategic planning instruments, critical for guiding basin-wide cooperation, resource mobilisation, and effective implementation.

Resource Mobilisation and Investment Readiness

GWP successfully mobilised substantial international resources, notably through the **GEF Drin Project funding** and an **Adaptation Fund** financed project on flood risk management. These resources explicitly operationalised priorities identified in the TDA and SAP, **significantly enhancing** the basin's readiness for transboundary water investments and linking technical assessments directly to concrete financing and implementation activities.

Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

GWP delivered **extensive technical assistance**, **supported pilot projects** on water quality, biodiversity, and sediment transport and **facilitated capacity-building** workshops, training sessions in international water law and diplomacy. These efforts **significantly strengthened** riparian countries' institutional capacities and technical readiness, essential for sustainable and collaborative water management.

Accountability Mechanisms

GWP encouraged **the use of** and **helped to implement GEF instruments** (innovative diagnostic and planning tools such as the methodologies underpinning the TDA and

SAP processes) in some of basins it works with. These provided **structured accountability mechanisms**, significantly enhancing **governance transparency**, legitimacy, **strategic coherence**, and enabling **effective performance tracking** across the basin.

Stakeholder Inclusion and Engagement

GWP ensured **extensive consultative processes involving civil society, academia, local stakeholders, and underrepresented groups**, significantly expanding ownership and inclusiveness of governance processes. This broad stakeholder engagement **increased legitimacy and effectiveness**.

3.4.3 Additional Illustrations

i. Southern Africa

In Southern Africa, GWP-SA has **facilitated key steps** toward transboundary cooperation in several basins, often under the SADC Water Governance Framework[14].

BUPUSA System (Buzi, Pungwe, Save Rivers)

GWP Southern Africa, with partners, supported the development of a **Tri-Basin Strategic Action Programme** and institutional arrangements across Mozambique and Zimbabwe. In 2023, this culminated in the **formal establishment of the Buzi-Pungwe-Save Watercourses Commission (BUPUSACOM)**, followed by the endorsement of a 10-year SAP in November 2024. Stakeholders confirmed that the **TDA–SAP–institutionalisation sequence** benefited from **sustained technical accompaniment** and ministerial engagement, backed by regional frameworks.

Limpopo River Basin

In the Limpopo basin, GWP effectively contributed to updated planning instruments, including flood and drought response frameworks and protocols for data sharing and early warning. These efforts complemented SADC's broader support to LIMCOM (Limpopo Watercourse Commission) and illustrate how **GWP provides thematic and technical reinforcement to basin organisations without supplanting their mandate**.

[14] The SADC Water Framework is primarily embodied in the 2006 **SADC Regional Water Strategy**, is a strategic framework for shared and coordinated water resource management through the sustainable, integrated, and coordinated development, utilisation, and protection of water resources in the SADC region. It is intended to foster socio-economic development and regional integration.

ii. China

GWP China promoted IWRM-based approaches in the region through integrated basin management pilots in the **Yangtze and Yellow River basins**, applying technical water solutions for groundwater restoration and water-efficiency optimisation.

These initiatives, which focused on groundwater restoration and water efficiency optimisation, have established what are considered to be, by stakeholders, *replicable models for basin-level innovation*. The region's proactive engagement with the **Lancang–Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Centre**—specifically in strengthened transboundary data sharing, flood and drought forecasting, and coordinated research—further advanced regional transboundary water cooperation and risk management, in an area of high contention.

GWP China **collaboration with provincial water partnerships (PWPs) catalysed over 30 local projects**, improving community water access, advancing climate-resilient infrastructure, and piloting progressive water rights and market reforms, advancing carbon neutrality, and basin management, in applying technical solutions that improved efficiency and inclusion. The targeted application of technical solutions in partnership with PWPs **generated clear gains in both efficiency and social inclusion**, underscoring GWP China's effectiveness in policy advocacy and in aligning national policy momentum with effective local action resulting in notable advancements toward SDG 6 and climate-resilient development. This reach out towards the regions is notable **in contrast to** the difficulties posed by provincial reach out in (i.a., Nepal, Zambia and beyond).

iii. Central Africa

GWP-Central Africa strongly facilitated the Adaptation Fund–approved Early Warning System for Climate Resilience in the Lake Chad Basin, a major transboundary initiative enhancing flood and drought preparedness. These efforts, though hindered by limited financial flexibility, demonstrate **growing regional ownership and cross-border cooperation capacity**, and illustrate the **value-added** of GWP Central Africa role and efforts.

3.4.4 Evaluative Analytical Synthesis of Transboundary Cooperation

GWP's contributions to transboundary water cooperation are among its most diplomatically sensitive and strategically important. Its added value lies in its ability to build trust across jurisdictions and stakeholder groups, facilitate dialogue, co-ideate new approaches, provide credible technical and planning support, and accompany partners through (very) long and often (very) slow pathways of institutional evolution.

GWP's strategic contributions to transboundary water cooperation in the Drin River Basin have demonstrated **substantial effectiveness** in political facilitation, institutional governance, strategic framework development, and resource mobilisation for integrated basin management. Its key strengths include fostering foundational trust among riparians, supporting robust strategic frameworks (TDA/SAP), and establishing structured accountability mechanisms and multi-stakeholder coordination.

While overall effectiveness has been strong, **some gaps remain**. The transition from strategic planning (TDA/SAP process) to implementation of priorities defined in the SAP has been slower than anticipated, reflecting procedural complexity, donor-driven requirements, and frequent political turnover that erode continuity and delay delivery. Several interviewees noted that the pace of project execution has not always kept up with shifting national priorities.

Across these regions, GWP's contributions to transboundary water cooperation follow a **relatively consistent pathway order** to maximise GWP added value:

Neutral facilitation →joint evidence base (e.g., TDA) →strategic planning (SAPs or similar) →political endorsement →project pipeline development and/or institutionalisation. The table below summarises how GWP added value typically evolves along its pathway.

Table 6 - GWP Added Value Pathways

GWP Added Value	
Contribution Dimension	Assessment of GWP's Added Value
Facilitation and trust-building	Strong: GWP is seen as credible, neutral, and long-standing — especially valuable in politically complex settings.
Technical and planning inputs	Robust: TDAs, SAPs and nexus assessments are widely regarded as technically sound, participatory, and instrumental in building consensus.
Project pipeline development	Emerging: GWP has begun translating basin strategies into implementable investment concepts and pilot projects, but financing remains largely donor-driven and episodic. While some in-kind contributions and small national allocations exist, riparian co-funding is minimal, and no structured mechanism yet links project preparation to sustainable, jointly financed investment pipelines.
Institutionalisation	Mixed: some basins (e.g., BUPUSA) have moved to formal commissions, while others (Drin) remain in interim or facilitation phase.

From the evaluation findings, four cross-cutting insights emerge:

1. **Credibility** grows when planning delivers tangible outputs. In Drin and BUPUSA, small-scale implementation (pilots, EWS, SAP execution) has reinforced trust and created the momentum needed to formalise institutional arrangements. GWP's ability to connect planning with visible outputs has added value.
2. **Legal and budgetary anchoring** are decisive. In contexts where GWP helped facilitate basin-wide agreements (BUPUSA Commission), progress was strongest when legal mandates and resource-sharing mechanisms were under discussion. Where these remain aspirational, implementation tends to rely on donor projects with limited long-term sustainability (Drin MoU).
3. GWP is not a financial institution, but its role in **shaping pre-investment conditions** for finance and investment attractiveness is valuable and often seen

as indispensable. Stakeholders acknowledged that while GWP does not finance infrastructure, its contributions to joint planning, fiduciary readiness, and donor coordination are seen as essential steps toward transboundary investment mobilisation.

4. **GWP focus on inter-regional learning** and replicability of models from one region or country to another **is an area that has been under-emphasised**. This is strongly confirmed by stakeholders.

In addition **alignment with Sida's water strategy sub-objectives is robust**, as captured in the Table below.

Table 7 Alignment Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives (Transboundary Anchor)

Alignment Sida Water Strategy		
Sida Sub-Objective	GWP Contributions in Transboundary Cooperation	Evaluation of Contribution Strength
1. Governance, capacity-building, policy influence	Long-term support to TDAs, SAP processes, and establishment of basin institutions (e.g. BUPUSA, Drin Core Group)	Strong
5. Transboundary cooperation and conflict prevention	Structured dialogues, legal frameworks, joint planning, data-sharing protocols, EWS pilots	Strong
4. Ecosystems and biodiversity	SAPs and nexus plans often include ecosystem restoration, pollution control, and habitat resilience	Moderate (enabling)

The evaluation findings demonstrate that:

- GWP's work in the Drin and BUPUSA basins represents **a mature facilitation model**, grounded in continuity, shared evidence, and pragmatic planning.
- The dialogue process - TDA–SAP–institutionalisation sequence has proven replicable, but depends on political will, regional scaffolding (e.g. SADC, UNECE), and sustained resourcing.
- Where **external incentives exist** (e.g., EU accession process, SADC protocols), **institutionalisation** tends to be incentivised and **move more quickly**.
- **Project finance** for joint infrastructure and implementation **remains episodic**, and the transition from grant dependence to sustainable cost-sharing frameworks – and from GWP-Med secretariat facilitation to riparian-led management – remains under negotiation in most basins. In BUPUSACOM riparians contribute to the secretariat's core budget - but - as for most RBOs across the continent, projects are almost entirely funded by donors.
- Effectiveness to date, in the Drin Basin, has benefited from GWP-Med's Secretariat role, which ensured continuity and coherence. However, this dependence also highlights the **need for a gradual transition** toward riparian-led coordination and management structures.

- GWP's role is most impactful when **coupled with operational pilots** and when joint plans are linked to concrete investment or regulatory actions. Pilots were widely cited as giving visibility and legitimacy to cooperation

GWP's comparative advantage in this space remains strong, especially where long-term presence, political neutrality, and capacity to convene diverse actors are required. Stakeholders also emphasised the value of GWP's knowledge-sharing, training, and peer-learning activities (e.g., exchanges with the Danube and Sava Commissions), which helped align national approaches and strengthen technical capacities. Its facilitative role has contributed meaningfully to Sida's objectives on cooperation, governance, and upstream peacebuilding.

Looking forward, the sustainability of transboundary cooperation outcomes will hinge on:

- **Continued support for legal and financial arrangements** among riparians.
- Strengthening the **link between SAPs** and **national budget cycles**.
- **Using pilots** to reinforce institutional legitimacy.
- Investing in **stable national coordination capacity** and knowledge retention to offset high staff turnover (at country-level).
- **Ensuring that participation is formalised** — including gender and community representation — within emerging basin commissions.
- Maintaining **visibility and inclusiveness** of the basin processes to keep cooperation moving forward.

GWP's **comparative advantage in this space remains strong**, especially where long-term presence, political neutrality, and capacity to convene diverse actors are required. Its facilitative role has also contributed meaningfully to Sida's objectives on cooperation, governance, and upstream peacebuilding (see Table 7 above).

3.4.5 Cross-Cutting Inclusion: Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Private Sector

Strategic Framing

GWP's Theory of Change places **inclusive governance** at the heart of sustainable water management. By mobilising diverse stakeholders — women, youth, marginalised vulnerable groups/Indigenous Peoples/local communities, GWP aims to deepen the legitimacy of decision-making, increase uptake of governance instruments, and ensure that policies reflect the realities and rights of marginalised groups. This inclusive orientation supports GWP's delivery model across all three anchor areas and underpins its contribution pathways for stakeholder legitimacy, social sustainability, and systems change, though its emphasis on ensuring that budgets are 'gendered budgets' or that they "tag" resources towards inclusion objectives (youth, women, marginalised groups) has been, to date, minimal.

While the evaluation **finds credible progress in embedding gender and youth perspectives** into strategy documents and consultations, facilitation of strategies and action plans, and gender-pilots, the **extent to which inclusion has translated into mandated roles, costed actions, and institutionalised systems varies considerably**.

In terms of **integrating sustained private sector engagement**, the findings confirm that **this focus is emerging**, particularly in relation to mobilisation of resources for implementation of action plans and in co-ideating and financing technical solutions for water.

These **cross-cutting orientations by GWP are directly relevant to the sub-objectives of Sida's water strategy**, and GWP has moderately contributed inclusion related dimensions to these, notably sub-objective 1: Strengthening governance and institutional participation; sub-objective 4: Ensuring biodiversity and ecosystem protection is inclusive and equitable; and sub-objective 5: Fostering cooperation and conflict prevention through inclusive basin-level and national processes.

These dimensions are developed more fully in the sub-sections that follow.

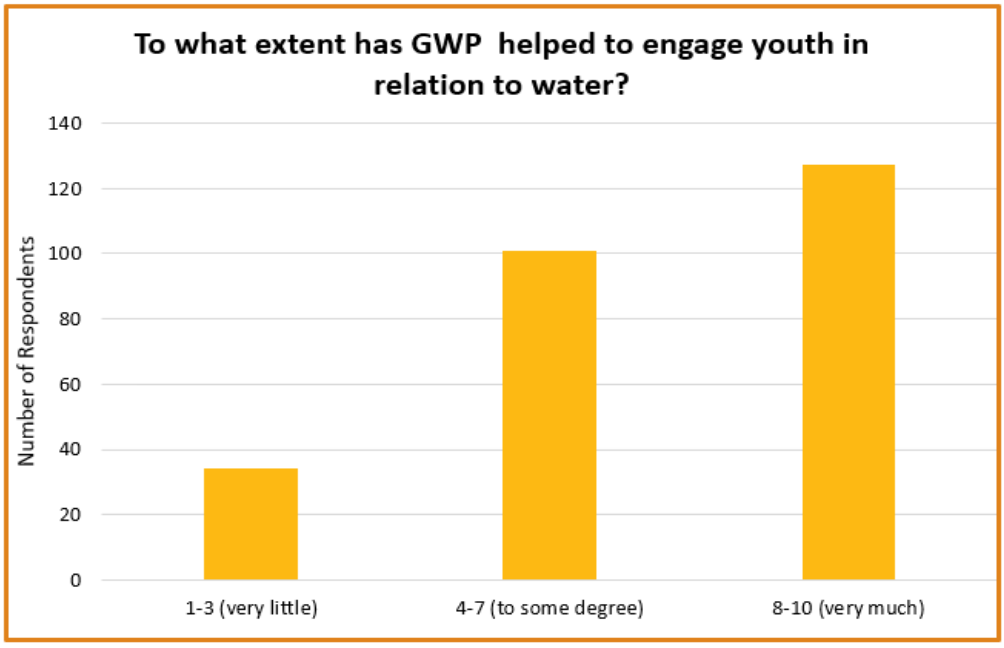
Gender and Youth: From Participation to Partial Institutionalisation

GWP has developed a clear policy framework and tools for gender inclusion, supported by updated guidance and the integration of gender strategies into or through key programmes (e.g., WACDEP-G, the Gender Action Piece, Gender & IWRM training tools). In the Africa Water Investment Programme, gender transformation is positioned as a pillar of resilience. Zambia provides a notable example of movement from principle to **budgeted design: the National Water Security and Sanitation Programme (NWSSP) includes a Gender and Social Inclusion sub-component** with roles and indicators evidenced under Institutional Support and Capacity Building.

At the implementation level, gender and youth participation was visible in stakeholder consultations for investment frameworks and SDG 6.5.1 planning exercises, including in Nepal's seven provincial dialogues feeding into the 2024 Finance Response Strategy; in Tanzania's multistakeholder consultations for the Wami–Ruvu IWRM Plan; and in Zanzibar and Zambia, stakeholders described inclusive consultation processes as a key factor in stakeholder ownership and visibility.

Despite this progress, across these and other settings, **gender and youth inclusion remain more procedural than institutionalised**. Most engagement is in the form of consultation and advisory input rather than decision-making power or resourced programme components. Monitoring frameworks rarely track gender-differentiated results, and budget lines for follow-through are largely absent outside of selected cases such as Zambia and the other WACDEP-G pilots. While most survey respondents agreed that **youth** has to some degree or even very much been engaged, stakeholders interviewed confirmed that while inclusion is welcomed, its sustainability and impact depend on being embedded into policy instruments, institutional mandates, and investment frameworks.

Figure 4: Perception of Youth Engagement by Survey Respondents



Marginalised Groups of the Population: Limited but Emerging Visibility

GWP's global and regional frameworks acknowledge the **importance** of participation by **marginalised groups** of the population (including where relevant, Indigenous Peoples), and localised populations, especially in basin governance contexts. In Southern Africa, safeguards such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) were applied in contexts such as the Cuvelai–Kunene basin; stakeholders involved in the tri-basin planning process flagged FPIC as essential for legitimacy and compliance, particularly where various groups' territories overlapped with planned infrastructure or conservation areas. Elsewhere, however, it appears that **IPs or marginalised groups are often subsumed under "local communities", with sparse reference to distinct rights, governance roles, or customary knowledge**. National instruments (e.g., IWRM Action Plans, NAPs) *rarely* reference marginalised groups/IPs explicitly—a missed opportunity in some fragile, climate exposed settings. Whilst the decision to do so is, clearly, entrenched in national politics, this may still be an area in which **innovative conceptualisation** and **advocacy** from GWP could be helpful. Again, as for other issues (such as transboundary cooperation) **increased learning across regions** and countries might be helpful here.

Private Sector Engagement: Emerging

Private sector engagement has become more visible through GWP's work on investment planning and technical solutions for water. The Kifissos replenishment project (Greece), the Trikala urban flood pipeline, and Alter Aqua nonconventional water resources initiative in Malta show GWP's ability to broker public–private collaboration with tangible water/climate outcomes and to influence narratives on stewardship and reuse. In Zambia and Zanzibar, private sector actors participated in ZIP/ZWIP investment dialogues, and ministries noted the growing relevance of partnering with the private sector as a resilience financing strategy.

Private sector engagement is emerging and growing rather than systemic. GWP-facilitated efforts are steadily converting towards bankable project pipelines, and long-term financing partnerships while efforts continue to embed governance safeguards and in-depth reviews of regulatory frameworks (to ease cooperation with private actors while safeguarding national priorities). Stakeholders noted clearer articulation of incentives, roles, and risk-sharing mechanisms — as prerequisites for scaling private involvement sustainably.

Institutionalisation Illustrations

Across all inclusion domains, the evaluation found a concrete set of examples of institutionalised or emerging practices. These include:

- **Zambia NWSSP**: gender and social equality as a budgeted component with indicators and assigned roles; thanks in large part to **WACDEP-G**: a programme level model for gender-transformative design informing regional frameworks.
- **WEFE Nexus dialogues**: structured decision spaces with private sector participation.
- **Drin Basin SAP and BUPUSA Commission**: local stakeholder engagement has been integrated into planning processes, though participation of women, youth, and local communities/Indigenous Peoples remains largely consultative and not yet costed or role-based.

Inclusion in most other contexts is valued but remains contingent on external facilitation, with few structural hooks to ensure continuity, accountability, or scaling.

Evaluative Synthesis on Inclusion and Systemic Change

GWP's commitment to inclusion is strategically consistent across governance, investment and learning. Gender and youth participation are increasingly standard; private sector engagement is growing and investment dialogues and FPIC in selected transboundary basins show rising awareness of the rights of marginalised groups/IPs. Principles are well articulated, but mandates, budgets and monitoring are unevenly structurally embedding gender or youth or groups. Inclusion has bolstered legitimacy and visibility, but has not yet transformed power dynamics or resourcing.

From a *systemic change perspective*: where inclusion is institutionalised (e.g., Zambia NWSSP), equality is embedded into delivery structures and financing, strengthening sustainability prospects; where inclusion is facilitation-dependent, effects are episodic and resilience hinges on external actors. Inclusion in most other contexts is valued but remains contingent on external facilitation, with few structural hooks to ensure continuity, accountability, or scaling.

The evaluation finds that GWP does advocate relevant points in order to move inclusion from principle to practice. At the same time some key areas receive less attention or are not systematically addressed and this may explain slower than desired progress. For example, ensuring ties to mandates, budget lines, and accountability systems; supporting tracking indicators; expanding work with indigenous or local knowledge systems and supporting their legal recognition; clarifying and structuring frameworks

for private sector cooperation towards better financial resilience, including through co-financing.

Table 8 below captures how GWP efforts towards inclusion align with the sub-objectives of Sida's water strategy.

Table 8 - Alignment with Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives (Inclusion)

Alignment with Sida Water Strategy		
Sida Sub-Objective	GWP Contributions on Inclusion	Evaluation of Contribution Strength
1. Governance and participation	Gender and youth consultations; inclusive planning processes; NWSSP budget component	Moderate to strong
4. Biodiversity and equity	FPIC safeguards in selected basins; WACDEP-G gender models; cultural shifts in reuse	Moderate (partial institutionalisation)
5. Conflict prevention/ cooperation	Inclusivity in transboundary SAPs and platforms (e.g. Drin, BUPUSA)	Moderate (fragile, requires deeper mandates)

3.4.6 Learning Architecture, Innovation and Scaling

Strategic Framing

Learning ("*We Learn*") is one of GWP's three core contribution functions and an essential mechanism by which it aims to generate systems change, influence governance outcomes, and accelerate scaling of water solutions. **GWP urges a "learning mind-set" both across GWP and with and within its partner institutions**. GWP's learning architecture spans country-level facilitation (e.g., SDG 6.5.1), regional exchanges (e.g., Communities of Practice, AIP–PIDA), and global platforms (e.g., the Action Hub, and Cap-Net). It combines diagnostic tools, training content, peer learning, and outcome tracking — serving not only to disseminate knowledge, but to shape how water governance is understood, operationalised, and monitored.

This learning focus **directly contributes** to **Sida's sub-objectives**: 1: Supporting inclusive governance, capacity-building, and adaptive management; 2: Promoting efficient and resilient water systems, including through innovation and practice diffusion; 5: Enabling cooperation and conflict prevention through shared knowledge, common frameworks, and dialogue platforms.

The evaluation finds that **GWP's learning tools are widely valued by stakeholders** and have supported knowledge acquisition and sharing, process standardisation, creative ideation, innovation framing, and peer exchange. The degree to which they have influenced decision-making, budgeting, or implementation practices varies. Learning is strongest where specific processes (e.g., communities of practice; training

mechanisms) are embedded in formal systems; when it is externally driven and financed, this can affect the learning-to-policy-change functions.

Components of GWP's Learning Architecture

GWP's learning architecture comprises a diverse but interconnected suite of platforms and tools, including:

- The IWRM Support Programme (SDG 6.5.1): A standardised national process combining diagnostics, stakeholder engagement, action planning, and implementation monitoring. Over 60 countries participated during the 2020–2025 Strategy period.
- The IWRM Action Hub: Launched in 2020, this is GWP's central online platform for knowledge sharing and peer exchange. By end-2024, it had 3,600+ registered users from 169 countries, 20+ active Communities of Practice (CoPs), and a curated repository of tools, platforms, and legal databases (e.g. FAO's AquaLex).
- Transboundary Water Cooperation MOOC: An online course on Transboundary Water Cooperation[15] developed under GWP's global knowledge and capacity-building work in partnership with the UNECE Water Convention, GEF IW:LEARN and the University of Geneva (and is hosted at the SDG Academy Platform). By 2024 the course had reached more than 3,800 registered users from 167 countries.
- Cap-Net: Fully integrated into GWP's structure in 2024, this UNDP-linked initiative delivers capacity development and training for water professionals globally. Between 2020–2024, the Cap-Net/GWP partnership trained over 28,000 people through nearly 300 learning activities.
- Communities of Practice (CoPs): These thematic learning groups (e.g. on gender, drought, nexus, youth) facilitate horizontal exchange among practitioners, often connected to regional or national dialogues. The WEFE Nexus CoP for instance, emerged from the Regional WEFE Nexus Dialogue in the Mediterranean.
- The AIP–PIDA Water Investment Scorecard: Introduced in 2023–2024 as part of GWP-facilitated AU Africa Water Investment Programme. The Scorecard is a tool for AU member states to benchmark progress on mobilising water and sanitation investment, identify governance and financing bottlenecks, and reinforce political commitment and mutual accountability. Following its introduction in 2023–2024, operationalisation is under way with capacity development support; 30+ countries are expected to submit first Scorecards to AU Heads of State in early 2026. GWP served as the Secretariat for

[15] SDGAcademyX: Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security | edX

development and provided technical support via GWP Africa, facilitating collaboration with AUDA-NEPAD, AMCOW and the AfDB. Interest in adaptation beyond Africa is emerging.

- Knowledge Products: These include guidance notes (e.g., Gender & IWRM), Sourcebooks (e.g., Multi-Stakeholder Platforms), technical briefs, and toolkits integrated into the Action Hub and CoPs.

Stakeholders consistently value these tools for structuring processes, enabling peer exchange, and providing a common language and cadence for reform. However, influence on budgeting and delivery still varies by context: learning has the greatest traction where it is embedded in formal decision systems. An example of embedded learning in formal decision-making is the IWRM Action Planning Framework[16], developed by GWP. This **guides countries in using a multi-stakeholder process to develop IWRM action plans based on their own needs**, with support from GWP and partners like Cap-Net. This framework turns a learning process—identifying challenges, learning what solutions might be available and how these have worked and what challenges they presented, and then creating a context-relevant plan—into a formal decision system where the results of the learning phase become the basis for future government decisions (the action plan) and resource allocation, directly supporting official SDG monitoring and reporting processes. Where externally driven, it is used episodically and risks fading with project cycles or staff turnover. For example, the Transboundary Water Cooperation MOOC – while having reached a significant global profile - has not yet evolved into a structured, ongoing learning platform with regular updates, impact tracking, or integration into GWP's broader learning architecture.

Evidence of Contribution to Systems Change and Innovation

Standardising Governance and Investment Processes

The 6.5.1 Support Programme and the Scorecard **are widely seen as having improved the consistency, quality, and transparency of water governance processes**. In Nepal, the 6.5.1 process supported the development of a costed IWRM Action Plan that aligned with the Water Resources Policy and informed the 2024 GWL Finance Plan. In Tanzania, the Scorecard and Valuing Water study are informing dialogue with the

[16] An IWRM Action Planning Framework is a tool for coordinating the management of water, land, and related resources to achieve economic and social goals while ensuring sustainability. This framework involves defining goals, listing specific tasks, assigning responsibilities, establishing timelines, allocating resources, and setting up a monitoring and evaluation process. It is a flexible and holistic planning approach that brings together professionals from various sectors to find coordinated solutions for interconnected water challenge.

Ministry of Finance on IWRM prioritisation. In Zambia and Zanzibar, Scorecard pilots helped diagnose pipeline bottlenecks and informed the design of ZIP and ZWIP.

These tools helped move governments from ad hoc reform to structured sequencing and shared baselines, improving **cross-sector coordination** and the quality of investment planning. Institutionalisation into budget cycles and regulatory systems is still uneven.

Enabling Innovation and Adaptation

GWP's learning architecture helps to foster **methodological and institutional** innovation:

- The AIP model itself represents **an innovation in framing water** as a continental **investment priority** aligned with **climate goals**.
- The Scorecard functions as both a **benchmarking tool** and a mutual **accountability mechanism**, increasingly used in AU dialogues.
- The WEFE4MED CoP supports **innovation in technical solutions** (e.g., source-to-sea, reuse, circular economy).
- Cap-Net training, CoPs, and guidance tools contribute to **cross-sectoral awareness and institutional learning** on issues like equity, resilience, and blended finance.

In many cases though, these innovations remain at the framing stage — they have shaped discourse and prioritisation, but not yet transformed implementation modalities or regulatory routines. For example, the evaluation finds that the learning architecture's impact is often **strongest at the policy and planning stages**, but its influence on **resource allocation, implementation modalities, or systematising adaptive feedback** remains underdeveloped. The main limitations include:

- Learning was not always embedded in formal decision-making systems (e.g., sector reviews, MTEFs, regulatory assessments). This is out of the purview of GWP.
- Tracking the use of these knowledge products, seeking feedback from users and how they have used the learning - or tracking the ways these have integrated into the broader GWP architecture - or beyond in national frameworks etc. -is patchy. Work in Africa with the Scorecard has addressed this set of issues, but as it is in early stages, difficult to assess the extent of impact it will have, though signs are promising.

Stakeholders expressed appreciation for learning tools but noted that their value would be multiplied if they **became integral to national systems** — including performance reviews, planning instruments, and investment monitoring.

Supporting Scaling and Diffusion

The evaluation found **credible evidence of horizontal diffusion of governance methods** and good practices:

- The SDG 6.5.1 Support Programme and Action Hub have standardised action planning approaches across 60+ countries.

- The AIP and Scorecard are being adopted in multiple countries with AU oversight.
- CoP materials are being adapted by water ministries, basin organisations, and CSOs in Africa, Asia, and MENA.

Scaling is strongest where regional or continental platforms exist (e.g., AU, SADC, UfM). In the absence of such scaffolding, scaling often depends on project-based replication and remains vulnerable to institutional churn and financing gaps.

Alignment with Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives

The strength of GWP learning contributions to Sida's Water Strategy sub-objectives are captured in Table 9 below.

Table 9- Alignment with Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives (Learning)

Alignment with Sida Water Strategy		
Sida Sub-Objective	GWP Contributions on Learning	Evaluation of Contribution Strength
1. Governance, capacity-building	SDG 6.5.1 process, Scorecard, Action Hub, Cap-Net integration	Strong
2. Innovation and efficiency	AIP model, CoPs, Scorecard diagnostics, WEFE4MED tools	Moderate to strong
5. Cooperation and conflict prevention	Learning platforms support dialogue and harmonisation in transboundary contexts	Moderate (context-dependent)

Evaluative Analytical Synthesis on Learning, Scaling, and Systemic Change

GWP's learning architecture has been a strategic and widely valued contribution, supporting global standardisation of water governance processes, increasing access to technical knowledge, and enabling shared accountability. Platforms like the Action Hub and Scorecard, and programmes like Cap-Net, reflect a commitment to long-term systems strengthening, and governments, national agencies and others have underscored that these have helped them to create change and improve decision making processes.

From a systemic change perspective, the **findings demonstrate that where learning is embedded in national or regional frameworks** (e.g., Scorecard in AU dialogues and national dialogues), **it contributes directly to sustainability and adaptive management.** Where learning is externalised, its influence fades has a greater chance of fading with project cycles or staff turnover (e.g., Transboundary Water Cooperation MOOC). It is clear that impact is sustained when:

- Learning tools are embedded in formal planning and budgeting processes.
- The use and influence of knowledge products are tracked systematically.
- Partners (especially ministries and basin authorities) are sufficiently equipped and motivated to use tools independently and apply the results.

- CoPs and Hub content are linked directly to investment preparation ecosystems in order to promote, for example, learning-to-finance pipelines.

GWP's learning function remains central to its identity and impact. A challenge ahead is to convert that learning from an enabling environment to an operational one — where knowledge, innovation, and practice are institutionalised and sustained.

3.4.7 GWP Presence in International Arenas

Since 2020, GWP has remained a visible contributor to the international water architecture, particularly on global norms and investment coalitions. At the normative level, it co-coordinates the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme with UNEP-DHI, under UNEP's custodianship of SDG indicator 6.5.1. Official 6.5.1 metadata and progress reports explicitly acknowledge GWP's role in methodology, data and analysis. The IWRM Data Portal is maintained jointly by UNEP-DHI, UNEP and GWP. The Support Programme's three-stage approach (monitoring, action planning, implementation), rolled out in 96 countries, has made GWP procedures and the IWRM Action Hub a reference point for water governance reform and SDG 6.5.1 reporting. In parallel, GWP's partnership with UNICEF on the Strategic Framework for WASH Climate-Resilient Development has been taken up in Green Climate Fund Water Project Design Guidelines, so risk-assessment and option-appraisal tools co-developed by GWP now influence how climate funds expect water and WASH proposals to be prepared.

By contrast, GWP's influence on global transboundary water governance has been more indirect and coalition-based. Its role has largely been to contribute basin-level examples, participate in multi-stakeholder coalitions and co-sign policy briefs, rather than to shape the main legal frameworks or custodial arrangements, which remain driven primarily by UNECE, UNESCO and others. GWP is, however, an "integral member" of the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition launched at UNESCO in 2022 and a co-signatory of coalition briefs on transboundary cooperation and climate action. At the UN 2023 Water Conference it convened discussions on "defining the way forward" for transboundary cooperation.

GWP has been more visibly instrumental in global coalitions and UN summits at the water–climate interface. It is a founding partner of the Water and Climate Coalition (launched in 2020 by ten UN entities and GWP) created to operationalise the UN-Water SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. At the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York, GWP led or co-led several official side events, including "Rewriting the Rules for Partnering – New Models for Water Action", which showcased its multi-stakeholder collaboration models as pathways to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals. Through these, GWP has helped normalise the treatment of water as both a climate resilience issue and a cross-sectoral governance challenge.

A particularly visible expression of GWP's convening and investment influence is the Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP) and associated high-level processes under African Union leadership. The AU–AIP Africa Water Investment Summit 2025 (convened by the African Union Commission, South Africa, AUDA-NEPAD, the AU-AIP International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa and GWP) showcased a large portfolio of climate-resilient water and sanitation projects and consolidated a preliminary investment pipeline of roughly USD 10–12 billion per year, endorsed in the Cape Town Declaration as a basis for scaling investments across Africa

and elevating water in the G20 agenda. A prominent outcomes was the launch of the Global Outlook Council on Water Investments as a G20 Presidential Legacy Initiative of South Africa – a platform to champion water globally, align finance with climate and development priorities, and track commitments towards the 2026 UN Water Conference. As host of the AIP Technical Support Unit and long-term AU partner on water investments, GWP is recognised as a core architect and Secretariat partner in the new council.

These African processes fed directly into the 2025 G20 Social Summit and G20 Leaders' Summit in South Africa. The Social Summit on "Water as a social service and an economic enabler" framed water as a global economic, social and security priority and called for scaling global water investment. Ahead of the Leaders' Summit, the Final Report of the AU–AIP Africa Water Investment Summit was released in Johannesburg, with GWP highlighting it as an input to the G20 process. In this context, the G20 Presidential Legacy Initiative – comprising the Global Outlook Council on Water Investments and the Global Water Investment Platform (GIP) – was presented as a mechanism to mobilise and implement water investments worldwide. GIP builds on the AU–AIP model and is envisaged as a vehicle for comparable regional programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions. In effect, GWP's role in the African water investment architecture is now translated into G20-branded global mechanisms.

Beyond G20 processes, GWP's influence operates through climate finance and public–private partnerships that underpin many water investments. It is an official delivery partner for GCF readiness support, co-organising technical workshops on project preparation for climate-resilient water projects in Africa and Asia and helping countries and regional bodies to structure water-related GCF readiness support. The UNICEF–GWP Strategic Framework for WASH Climate-Resilient Development and associated briefs are cited as core references in GCF water sector guidance and in UNICEF's own programme guidance, reinforcing GWP methodologies as part of multilateral climate-finance "good practice". In 2025, GWP and AquaFed (International Federation of Private Water Operators) signed a Partnership Framework to strengthen public–private engagement on water investments and governance, signalling a deliberate move to embed private operators systematically in climate-resilient water investment pipelines.

The scale of this influence is visible in GWP's reporting and forward agenda. It reports that it "directly influenced over €100 million in new investments" and helped unlock additional catalytic GCF financing for a multi-country programme with the African Union, alongside facilitating dozens of water-governance reforms. The Global Transformation Agenda on Water Investments, endorsed by GWP's General Assembly and set out in its 2026–2030 Strategy and the June 2025 "United Call for Global Water Investment", commits to mobilising at least EUR 500 million for GWP's own Global Water Investment Programme and fostering the leverage of USD 15 billion in climate-resilient water investments by 2030, in partnership with G20 countries, multilateral development banks, climate funds and regional economic communities. These figures are broadly corroborated by AU, UNEP and UNICEF sources that reference GWP's frameworks, coalitions and technical tools in their own investment initiatives and progress reports.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that GWP's global influence since 2020 lies in three interlocking functions: (i) co-defining indicators, methodologies and frameworks

that underpin SDG monitoring and climate-resilient WASH; (ii) convening and technically underpinning summits and coalitions – notably the UN 2023 Water Conference side events, the Transboundary Water Cooperation Coalition, the AU–AIP Africa Water Investment Summit 2025 and the 2025 G20 Social Summit – where water is framed as a global economic, social, climate and security priority; and (iii) co-designing investment architectures such as the AIP, Global Outlook Council on Water Investments and the Global Water Investment Platform, which multilateral funds and regional bodies are now using to mobilise multi-billion-dollar pipelines. This positions GWP/GWPO as a system-shaping intermediary between country-level water governance practice and high-level political and financial decision-making, rather than a traditional implementing agency.

3.4.8 Overall Response to EQ1

This sub-section draws on the findings and evaluation team's analysis of the triangulated results of interviews, document and data reviews, and survey responses.

GWP's 2020–2025 Strategy set out to deliver three interlinked outcomes:

- Strengthen water governance, including at transboundary level.
- Mobilise investments through improved planning, prioritisation, and pipeline development.
- Enable systems change, by shifting how institutions, policies, and partnerships support sustainable water management and foster technical solutions for water.

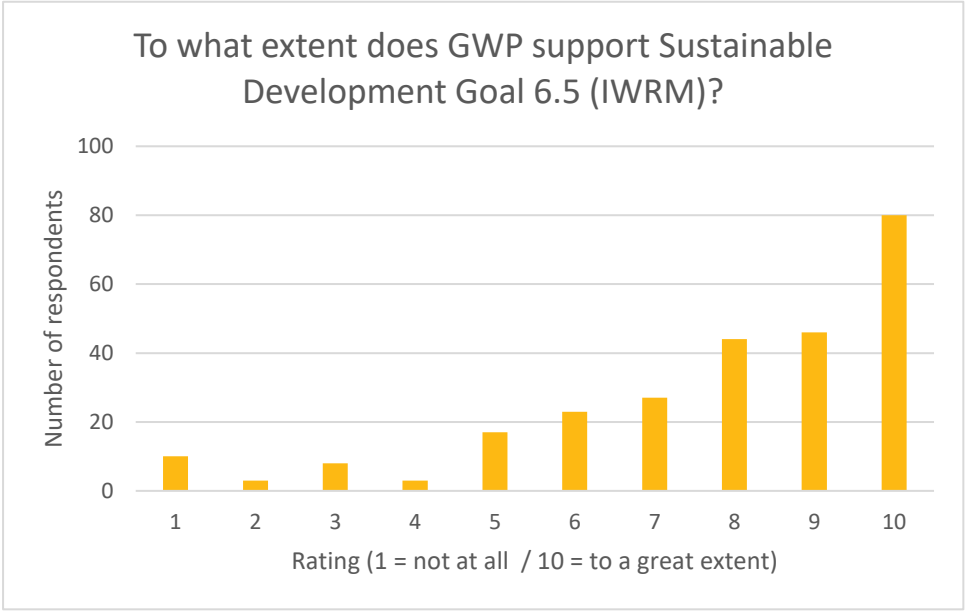
These aims were effectively pursued across three anchor areas (Water Solutions for the SDGs, Climate Resilience through Water, and Transboundary Water Cooperation), with strong alignment to Sida's water strategy objectives, and underpinned by clear contribution pathways such as neutral convening, technical support, learning, inclusion, and investment facilitation. The combination of these contribution pathways were often seen, by stakeholders, to showcase GWP's unique position and roles.

Overall, GWP has **demonstrated strong upstream effectiveness through governance strengthening, investment mobilisation readiness, and systems change facilitation**, as briefly summarised below.

1. Water Solutions for the SDGs

GWP has contributed strongly to **establishing IWRM as central to water governance**. It has provided globally recognised methodologies, facilitated SDG 6.5.1 monitoring in over 60 countries (with support to action planning in a sub-set) and contributed overall to improved alignment between SDG 6.5.1 and national water governance systems. GWP successfully launched the IWRM Action Hub and Communities of Practice which have enabled shared learning, though their institutionalisation in government systems remains incomplete. GWP efforts on Technical Solutions for Water in the Mediterranean have illustrated **innovative, visible models of municipal infrastructure, nature-based solutions, and private sector engagement** — with clear co-benefits, but still limited replication pathways.

Figure 5 Stakeholder Perspectives on support for SDG 6.5



The Technical Solutions for Water initiative in the Mediterranean provides a practical example of successful governance integration, though their scaling potential currently remains limited.

2. Climate Resilience through Water

Through the Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP), **GWP has elevated water as a central component of national adaptation and investment planning**. Water investment frameworks developed in large part with GWP advice, show how GWP enables governance reform towards investment readiness and pipeline development. However, conversion to implementation remains dependent on transaction support, budget anchoring, and subnational capacity — areas GWP influences but does not control. The AIP–PIDA Scorecard has created a promising mutual accountability mechanism that is gaining traction and should, in theory, build investor confidence.

3. Transboundary Water Cooperation

GWP's long-standing role in transboundary river basins (e.g. Drin, BUPUSA, Lake Chad, Limpopo) has led to the development of MoUs, basin knowledge products and planning documents, as well as, in some cases, formal basin commissions. GWP's neutrality and political sensitivity and - importantly - its continuity are widely credited with sustaining cooperation during political transitions. Institutionalisation and co-financing remain in progress, and sustained progress depends on legal frameworks and regional scaffolding. GWP's contribution to Transboundary Water Cooperation has been particularly effective in sensitive political contexts, exemplified by their longstanding support in the Drin and BUPUSA basins. GWP's neutral facilitation role has been instrumental in the establishment of cooperative frameworks, including formal basin commissions and strategic action programmes.

4. Inclusion and Learning as Cross-Cutting Enablers

GWP's work on gender, youth, and private sector engagement has grown more visible and structured and a standard part of GWP's planning processes. Gender and youth are regularly consulted; private sector roles are emerging technical solutions for water and investment dialogues; though marginalised groups and, where relevant, IP inclusion remains more limited. Progress is strongest where inclusion is budgeted and monitored (e.g., Zambia NWSSP). The **challenge remains to translate inclusive participation and gender action plans and pilots into sustained institutional roles, mandates, and budgets**. Private sector engagement, while emerging positively, requires clearer integration into long-term financing structures and may require regulatory framework reviews.

GWP's learning architecture (6.5.1 support, Action Hub, CoPs, Scorecard) is considered by stakeholders as a global public good — highly valued, though still largely external to government MEL or investment systems. At the same time, to realise their full potential, tools would benefit from being better integrated into national planning and accountability systems, moving beyond project-bound applications.

5. Contribution to Systems Change

Across its portfolio, GWP has contributed to system-level changes in water governance — including:

- The standardisation of IWRM planning and monitoring.
- New national investment frameworks with budget signals.
- Cooperative planning frameworks in shared basins.
- Uptake of diagnostic and learning tools at continental and regional levels.

However, these **contributions are strongest upstream and midstream**. The final mile — from strategy to disbursing finance, regulatory enforcement, and infrastructure delivery — is the area of greatest focus now. Key enablers of systems change (budget anchoring, MEL integration, transaction support) require stronger partnerships and institutional embedding beyond GWP's immediate span of control but to a degree within its influence.

6. Contribution to Sida Water Strategy Sub-Objectives

Overall, through the Anchor Areas and related actions, contributions to Sida's strategy objectives are captured in Table 10 below.

Table 10 Alignment overall contributions to Sida's water strategy sub-objectives

Overall Alignment of Contributions to Sida's Water Strategy		
Sida Sub-Objective	Overall Summary of GWP Contributions	Evaluative Summary
1. Governance, participation, capacity	Strong alignment: SDG 6.5.1 support, investment planning, institutional dialogue, learning platforms	Strong
2. Climate resilience and efficiency	Investment readiness and adaptive planning under AIP; GCF mobilisation; valuation tools	Moderate to strong
3. Pollution control / source-to-sea	Partial: governance frameworks support pollution and reuse strategies (e.g., Med), but GWP is not an implementer	Moderate (enabling)

4. Ecosystems and biodiversity	Present in SAPs, WEFE, and Technical Solutions for Water; not systematically costed or monitored	Moderate (upstream only)
5. Transboundary cooperation	MoUs, SAPs, TDA facilitation, basin commissions, EWS; high legitimacy in politically sensitive settings	Strong

7. Analytical Reflections and Implications

GWP has contributed significantly to strengthening water governance, mobilising investment readiness, and enabling systemic change — particularly in planning, institutional frameworks, and regional cooperation. It has also contributed in important wats at the international/global level. Its most visible added value lies in:

- **Providing neutral, trusted facilitation** where inter-ministerial or inter-riparian cooperation is politically sensitive.
- **Creating shared methodologies and platforms** (IWRM support, Scorecard, CoPs) that help countries and regions align policy and financing.
- **Supporting countries to move from advocacy to investment pipeline** structuring.
- **Linking inclusive participation with planning processes**, though institutionalisation is still nascent.
- **Promoting adherence to, and integration of, key water principles and approaches** (i.e., IWRM) and helping to ensure that global conversations on water, on climate change, and on the SDGs maintain and deepen focus on water and mechanisms for investing in water.

However, the evaluation finds that GWP's contributions — while strategic and legitimate — are **most impactful when embedded within broader institutional ecosystems**. Where governments, regions, or financiers adopt GWP tools into their own processes (e.g., AU, AMCOW, SADC, MoF planning systems), results are more sustainable. Where tools remain external or project-tied, uptake is more fragile.

The challenge now, rather than technical clarity, is delivery depth. To fully enable systems change, GWP and its partners will need to deepen current focus on how to:

- Strengthen the connection between learning and budget processes.
- Build linkages between inclusion and implementation authority.
- Broaden partnerships with financial actors and delivery agencies.
- Prioritise institutionalisation of Scorecards, CoPs, and learning loops in national and regional systems.

These findings point to a strategic inflection: GWP has built the governance and knowledge infrastructure. The next frontier is even deeper institutional embedding, budget integration, and replication at scale — to ensure that GWP's upstream strengths translate into downstream impact, resilience, and results. At the same time, much of this is dependent on factors (national, regional, economic, political) that are not the direct remit of GWP itself.

Finally, the evaluation finds that GWP's typical iterative approach is effective, it:

- **mobilises** (maps stakeholders, frames the problem, convenes multi-stakeholders);
- **co-designs** (uses diagnostics; identifies options; defines roles; (co)drafts policy/legislation/plans/instruments);
- **adopts** and **operationalises** (national endorsement, mandates assigned);
- **promotes** a sustainable **finance pathway** (pipeline preparation, key tracking tools such as the Scorecard, or a road map and concept notes);
- **encouraging the embedding of learning and adaptive management** (communities of practice, tools); and
- **scales** and **replicates** (where conditions hold; and where they don't it adapts).

Equally importantly, the evaluation finds that multi-stakeholder mechanisms were established/strengthened and *used* for decisions. Policies/plans/legal instruments were *adopted* or revised; basin or transboundary arrangements were *established* or *operationalised*. Investment pipelines were *prepared/advanced*; budget lines or climate finance were *approved*. There was evidence of inclusion *shaping* decisions (gender/youth/private sector) to a degree. And finally, learning products/platforms were clearly *used* and *influenced* practice to a degree.

Summary Table 11 – Effectiveness and Strategic Contributions

Dimension	Key Insights
Overall delivery	GWP has made demonstrable contributions across its three anchor areas — with most traction in upstream governance, investment planning, and regional cooperation.
Anchor Area 1 (Water Solutions)	IWRM support and Action Hub have shaped monitoring in 60+ countries and subsequent planning in a sub-set of countries. Technical Solutions for Water pilots show promise but are not yet scaled. Work with private sector is scaling up.
Anchor Area 2 (Climate Resilience)	AIP, ZIP, ZWIP, and GCF-related support reflect GWP's growing investment facilitation role. Conversion to finance and service delivery remains a work in progress.
Anchor Area 3 (Transboundary Cooperation)	GWP's facilitation is trusted; SAPs, TDAs, and institutional structures (e.g. BUPUSA, Drin) show real impact when coupled with pilot projects and legal arrangements.
Equality and Inclusion	Gender and youth inclusion is visible in consultations but still needs institutional roles, budgeting, and accountability mechanisms. Marginalised local groups and IPs are less visible.
Learning and Scaling	Tools like the Scorecard, CoPs, and Cap-Net are valued but need to be embedded into national systems and MEL cycles to support sustained outcomes.
Contribution to Sida Objectives	Strong alignment with Sida's sub-objectives on governance, transboundary cooperation, and climate resilience; partial contribution to equity and ecosystems.
Overall Conclusion	GWP's contributions are strategic, enabling, and increasingly institutionalised — particularly at upstream levels. Delivery depth now depends on partner uptake and finance.

4 Relevance and Coherence (EQ2)

Evaluation Question 2 (**Relevance and Coherence**): "According to GWP stakeholders' perspectives, how relevant and coherent is GWP's support to national and regional efforts to achieve SDG 6 — particularly Target 6.5 on integrated water resources management — in line with national planning priorities? "

This chapter presents the findings and evaluative analyses in response to the second Evaluation Question. These draw on the triangulated results of document and data review and analysis, case studies, interviews and survey responses. As emphasised in the evaluation Terms of Reference: **stakeholder insights and perspectives on relevance and coherence** are the key focus.

4.1 STRATEGIC FRAMING AND EVALUATION FOCUS

This evaluation question responds to Sida's request for an analysis grounded in **stakeholder perspectives** — rather than organisational self-assessment. It examines how GWP's contributions across its three anchor areas **have been experienced, interpreted, and valued (or not) by national and regional partners**. The focus is on the relevance of GWP's **support to real-world needs and ambitions**, and the coherence of that support with planning frameworks, institutional mandates, and governance systems.

While the quality and strategic intent of GWP's **contributions are generally well regarded**, stakeholders were able to identify **where value was added**, where gaps remained, and under what conditions GWP's support was most useful. This reinforces the **value of treating relevance and coherence as contextual, relational, and evolving** — not static attributes of programmes or tools.

4.2 RELEVANCE AND ALIGNMENT WITH NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PRIORITIES

Across most countries and regions assessed, **stakeholders expressed a clear view that GWP's support aligned with their stated priorities**. In some cases, GWP's support helped define or sequence those priorities more clearly. In others, it filled recognised gaps in facilitation, technical design, or cross-sectoral dialogue. That said, the depth of alignment — and the ability to sustain it — varied across contexts and levels.

4.2.1 Water Solutions for the SDGs

In both Nepal and Tanzania, national authorities and development partners described **GWP's IWRM support as timely and aligned with evolving national water**

strategies. In Nepal, stakeholders confirmed that the IWRM Action Plan and subsequent Finance and Response Plan responded directly to gaps in inter-ministerial coordination and finance readiness, and complemented existing climate adaptation and development planning efforts. In Tanzania, the Wami–Ruvu IWRM Plan and Valuing Water study were seen as addressing real policy challenges related to evidence-based prioritisation and basin-level planning. In both cases, stakeholders noted that GWP's tools (6.5.1 process, Hub, CoPs) helped standardise reform sequencing and align with SDG commitments.

In Southern Africa, GWP's work was reported to **support the Water Sector Development Programme III (WSDP III) and national policy reforms**, with **stakeholders noting relevance both in technical assistance** and in structuring **inclusive consultation** processes. In Indonesia, GWP's relevance was acknowledged at the technical level but seen as **diluted due to limited in-country presence** and competition with other international actors.

Survey results support findings from the interviews, as most respondents perceive GWP's activities to **be strongly aligned with national and regional priorities**. Ratings cluster at the upper end of the scale, with the majority scoring between 8 and 10 and a clear peak at 10, suggesting high perceived relevance. Only a small number of respondents rated alignment below 5, indicating relatively few cases of limited resonance with local priorities. This overall pattern reflects GWP's ability to position its work within country and regional policy frameworks, though evaluators acknowledge that some regional variation likely exists. Annex II provides the Survey results in full.

4.2.2 Climate Resilience through Water

In Zanzibar and Zambia, national authorities viewed GWP's support **as highly relevant to their investment planning and climate adaptation goals**. The ZWIP and ZIP frameworks were both aligned with national development visions (Vision 2050 and 2030 respectively), and stakeholders noted that GWP's support provided **structure**, **legitimacy**, and **mobilisation** momentum. The use of Scorecards to diagnose gaps was seen as a practical tool. However, in both contexts, stakeholders also noted that relevance is not sufficient unless **matched by follow-through** and national integration — particularly in terms of public finance and service delivery mandates. This is happening at different paces.

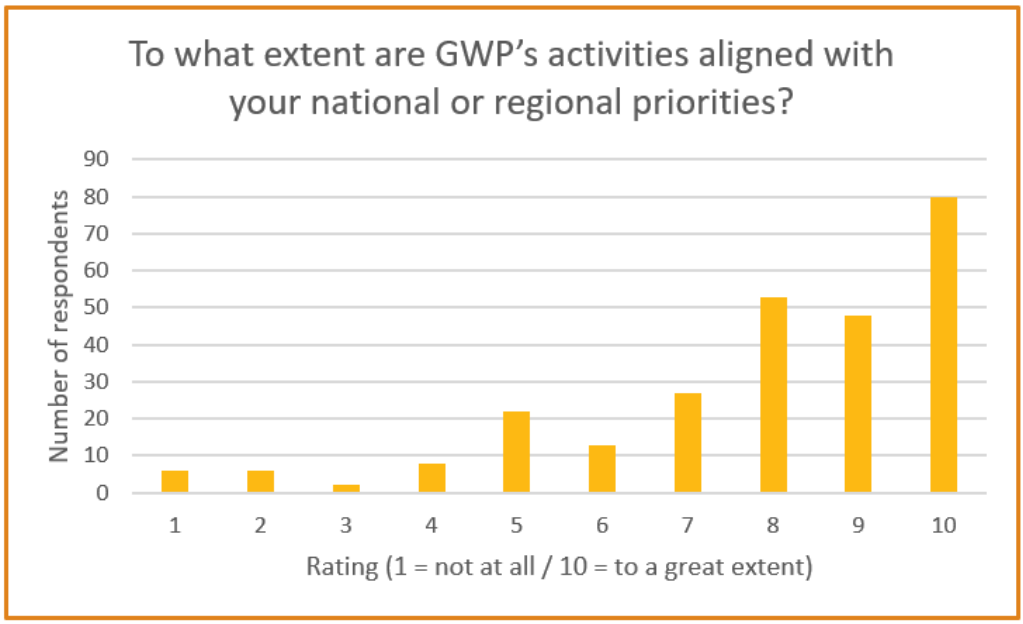
In Somalia, GWP's support to the GCF country programme was **seen as catalytic by UN and government interlocutors**, who cited the programme's contribution to framing the country's first GCF-approved project. GWP was perceived as **useful** in **aligning adaptation priorities** with **climate finance modalities** — an area where national capacity was limited.

In Nepal, the GWL process — integrating water, climate adaptation, and financing — was **appreciated by national stakeholders** for helping consolidate previously fragmented efforts. Provincial stakeholders were less familiar with GWP directly but acknowledged the usefulness of the Response Strategy developed under its facilitation.

4.2.3 Transboundary Cooperation

In the Drin Basin, riparian government representatives and regional bodies expressed a consistent view that GWP-Med's role in the Drin Core Group and SAP process was **highly relevant to both environmental objectives and regional cooperation frameworks**. The SAP was aligned with riparian national plans and EU Water Framework Directive obligations, and GWP's long-standing presence helped anchor cooperation amid political change. In Southern Africa, SADC-affiliated stakeholders described GWP's role in BUPUSA and LIMCOM processes as aligned with both regional protocols and country-specific objectives. However, in some basins, stakeholders indicated that national ministries with **limited decentralised authority** were **less familiar** with GWP's specific role, particularly where coordination with line agencies was inconsistent. Figure 6 below shows survey results on perceived coherence and relevance.

Figure 6 Alignment with National Priorities



The positive pattern (and upward curvature of the quantum of survey responses to queries on a point scale) is a feature of most of the response graphs in this evaluation document (and presented in more detail in Volume II). This provides a strong representation of the consistency of response (as opposed to simply a peak somewhere, in a response to one or two queries).

4.3 COHERENCE WITH AND RELEVANCE TO INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS AND CAPACITIES

Stakeholders in all regions highlighted that GWP's work was coherent as it was primarily embedded within existing policy, planning, and institutional cycles —or helped to clarify those cycles. The perceived coherence of GWP's support was closely

linked to its **ability to work with, not around, government systems**, and to support ministries and basin bodies to navigate internal coordination challenges.

- In **Zambia** and **Zanzibar**, stakeholders noted that GWP's support was relevant and coherently embedded in ministries' own investment frameworks, and this coherence was strengthened when GWP helped facilitate multi-actor processes that cut across water, climate, and finance sectors. In Zanzibar, the coherent alignment of ZWIP with the Blue Economy Policy and Vision 2050 was seen as both intentional and well-executed; and GWP support as strongly relevant.
- In **Nepal**, the GWP support was viewed as highly relevant; and coherent particularly at national level. At the same time, stakeholders pointed to a gap in vertical coherence — where national planning benefited from GWP support, but support for (and focus on) stronger sub-national uptake and operational integration across provinces remained uneven.
- In **China**, relevance and coherence were viewed as strong. The partnership between the Ministry of Water Resources and GWP China ensured policy alignment, while collaboration with Provincial Water Partnerships maintained local responsiveness. The model's inclusiveness was seen to enhance relevance ad coherence across regions and sectors, linking governance innovation with practical implementation of water and climate goals.
- In **Tanzania**, coherence with WSDP III and the Ministry of Finance's valuation interests was acknowledged as good. However, some stakeholders noted that technical studies (like Valuing Water) were not yet institutionalised in budget cycles, raising questions about how GWP could support stronger domestic ownership so as to increase relevance of its support.
- In the **Mediterranean Region**, stakeholders emphasised that local technical interventions did not only respond to local infrastructure gaps, and were therefore highly relevant, but were also widely viewed as coherent with local, national and regional frameworks as well as global agendas.
- In the **Drin basin**, coherence was widely viewed as strengthened by GWP's role in the long-standing SAP process, which was seen as aligned with EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) integration pathways and national environment ministries. This alignment offered (and offers) a clear incentive for riparian countries to maintain and deepen cooperation, as it supported (and supports) their EU accession pathways and national water policy commitments.
- In **Southern Africa**, coherence with SADC frameworks (e.g., RSAP, LIMCOM) was frequently cited as a strength. GWP's ability to complement rather than compete with formal RBOs or regional bodies was viewed as aligned with needs and context. In contrast, in Central America, stakeholders noted that while GWP supported regional dialogue, coherence with national regulatory systems was weaker and dependent on project-specific relationships.
- In **Central Africa**, GWP facilitated programmes were considered relevant to regional water and climate priorities, directly addressing resilience, policy coherence, and adaptation capacity. The SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme was coherent with national and continental development frameworks. However,

coherence in the region itself continued to be affected by the multiplicity of institutions and linguistic diversity across countries in the region, which reduced harmonisation of policies and pace of implementation, and pointed to particular challenges in the region of Central Africa.

4.4 STAKEHOLDER VIEWS ON GWP'S ADDED VALUE

4.4.1 Strengths and Distinctive Contributions

Across diverse contexts, stakeholders consistently identified key strengths in GWP's work. These included its **neutrality and convening capability** in politically complex environments, robust technical accompaniment particularly where local governmental capacity was limited, and its strategic ability to structure sequencing—from planning and readiness to mobilising investments. Stakeholders particularly valued GWP's inputs into costed action plans, readiness assessments, and pipeline development, often describing them as instrumental in "shaping the logic" of investment dialogues.

GWP was recognised for **promoting knowledge-sharing, dialogue, and institutional learning.** Its contributions to enhancing transboundary cooperation and its willingness to "host" secretariats to embed and sustain processes were highlighted positively.

Stakeholders across a wide range of partners—including MDBs, UN entities, regional bodies, NGOs, national governments, and local entities—emphasised **GWP's unique combination of deep networks, credible technical and strategic assistance, facilitative dialogue, and collaborative innovation**. One representative succinctly summarised: "*Yes, MDBs all have water departments, but we do not have the reach, credibility, and adaptive management know-how at the local level that GWP offers*."

Neutral Convening in Politically Sensitive Contexts

Stakeholders from politically complex basins (e.g., Drin, Buzi-Pungwe-Save (BUPUSA), Limpopo) consistently emphasised **GWP's long-standing neutrality** and **convening legitimacy** as **crucial** in maintaining **trust** and **cooperation** amidst sovereignty sensitivities, historical tensions, and fragmented donor initiatives. For instance, stakeholders in Somalia noted GWP's **timely role** in structuring strategic interactions with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), significantly addressing **readiness gaps**. Similarly, in Zanzibar, government officials credited GWP's facilitation of the Zanzibar Water Investment Programme (ZWIP) for achieving **heightened visibility** and effective partner coordination.

Robust Technical Support in Low-Capacity Contexts

In countries like Nepal, Zambia, and Tanzania, stakeholders highlighted GWP's targeted technical support—covering action plan design, costing, valuation, and investment sequencing—as **highly valuable**. In Zambia, stakeholders specifically

acknowledged GWP's role in translating water sector aspirations into structured, actionable investment programmes (e.g., Zambia Investment Programme - ZIP) and embedding water issues firmly within broader climate and development portfolios. Similarly, in Nepal, stakeholders valued GWP's contribution to **aligning fragmented efforts** across Integrated Water Resources Management (**IWRM**), Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (**WASH**), and **climate adaptation**.

Investment Readiness and Sequencing

One of GWP's most praised aspects was its ability to guide governments effectively through structured planning and investment preparedness stages. Stakeholders involved in ZIP and ZWIP noted that GWP's strategic advice significantly enhanced alignment between national priorities, climate financing mechanisms, and donor expectations. Contributions to **readiness assessments and pipeline framing** were particularly appreciated for facilitating productive dialogues around investment mobilisation.

Knowledge, Dialogue, and Visibility

Stakeholders consistently valued GWP's knowledge management tools, including the Action Hub, Communities of Practice (CoPs), training resources, and guidance products. These resources **facilitated widespread access to good practices and dialogue**. Initiatives such as the Africa Infrastructure Programme–Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (AIP–PIDA) Scorecard were recognised as promising benchmarking tools, though stakeholders noted that it was too early to definitively assess their long-term impact.

4.4.2 Areas Identified for Improvement and Enhanced Impact

Stakeholders also identified key areas for improvement to enhance the durability, inclusiveness, and reach of GWP's interventions:

- Vertical coherence: While alignment at national levels (e.g., Nepal and Zambia) was often strong, stakeholders observed difficulties in translating national plans into actionable steps at provincial and district levels. This limited vertical engagement posed a risk to implementation and sustainability. Strengthening support and capacity-building at sub-national levels was thus identified as an important priority.
- Inclusivity: Although gender and youth inclusion were regularly addressed in GWP support, stakeholders felt GWP could more strongly encourage clear measures governments can take to increase their concrete influence (unclear mandates or insufficiently structured roles) and to track how national measures track budgetary allocations towards women and youth related results.
- Private sector engagement: Private sector engagement, while often promising, was described as uneven, depending heavily on context-specific political,

regulatory, and capacity factors. Stakeholders recommended developing tailored approaches for deeper and more consistent private sector collaboration.

4.4.3 Operational Resilience Amid Internal Changes

Stakeholders also commented on internal challenges linked to significant staff turnover at GWPO during 2020-2025. Despite acknowledging budget constraints and operational disruptions at the headquarters level, stakeholders underscored that GWP's decentralised management structure substantially mitigated negative impacts. RWPs and CWPs maintained credible implementation and reporting, thereby preserving GWP's overall reputation and trust among partners.

4.5 EVALUATIVE ANALYTICAL SYNTHESIS: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON RELEVANCE, COHERENCE, AND ADDED VALUE

In summary, the evaluation finds that **stakeholders across regions broadly perceive GWP's support as relevant, coherent, and catalytic**, especially where systems face coordination bottlenecks, capacity constraints, or fragmented governance. GWP's value is most visible at the interface between policy ambition and institutional delivery — helping frame priorities, align planning processes, and mobilise actors. Stakeholders were clear about GWP' value added overall and the unique position it occupies globally.

Relevance and **coherence** was widely seen as strong because GWP support has:

- Aligned with multistakeholder goals and responsive to constraints and gaps.
- Embedded in international and national cycles and scaffolded within the frameworks provided by regional bodies.
- Responded to counterpart requests for external structuring and support.
- Addressed concrete policy and reporting requirements.
- Embedded within locally owned and driven processes and helped reinforce this "local ownership" as opposed to creating parallel processes.

Added value was consistently described in terms of:

- Trust and credibility (an adaptive partner, neutral)
- Convening (neutral space for cooperation and inter-ministerial coordination).
- Sequencing (concept to costed plan to finance mobilisation to implementation).
- Capacity (technical design and knowledge sharing).
- Visibility (positioning water in national and regional investment priorities).
- Support provided to reinforce and enhance locally owned and driven processes.
- Strategic vision (water as integral to SDGs, climate resilience, sustainable growth).

5 Sustainability (EQ3)

Evaluation Question 3 (**Sustainability**): To what extent are the results of GWP's contributions likely to be sustained — in terms of institutional ownership, financial viability, and the continued use of governance arrangements, knowledge, and partnerships established through its work? (What is the replicability of the approaches?)

This chapter presents the findings and evaluative analyses in response to the third Evaluation Question. These draw on the triangulated results of document and data review and analysis, case studies, interviews and survey responses

5.1 STRATEGIC FRAMING

Sustainability and replicability are central to GWP's Theory of Change. As a facilitative actor, GWP's role is to catalyse changes in governance, investment readiness, and cooperation — with the aim that these will be taken forward by mandated institutions. **Sustainability**, in this context, refers to whether results — such as governance reforms, plans, cooperation processes, platforms, and tools — are maintained and used after GWP support concludes. **Replicability** refers to whether GWP's approaches can be adapted and scaled in other contexts — by other actors or through systemic diffusion.

This evaluation assesses sustainability and replicability across four dimensions:

- **Institutional ownership**: Are governance arrangements (e.g., plans, platforms, data protocols) embedded in formal structures or routines?
- **Financial viability**: Is there committed funding, cost recovery, or integration into national/regional budgets?
- **Functional use**: Are tools and processes (e.g., Scorecards, SAPs, investment platforms) being used without external facilitation?
- **Replicability**: Are GWP's methods being adopted or adapted in other geographies or sectors?

5.2 INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP AND CONTINUED USE OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

GWP-supported processes — including IWRM plans, investment frameworks, transboundary water cooperation, WEFE roadmaps, and data protocols — are being used or institutionalised in several regions and countries, particularly where GWP had a multi-year presence or worked through formalised platforms. These cases demonstrate that institutional **sustainability depends not only on the quality of**

planning instruments but on whether they are embedded in mandates, policy cycles, and budget routines.

5.2.1 National and Sub-National Plans

Zambia: Water Investment Programme (ZIP) embedded in government-led resource mobilisation; aligned with the National Adaptation Plan and the Vision 2030 strategy; actively used by Zambian authorities to guide prioritisation and pipeline development. Ministry of Finance and Green Economy launched strategy in 2024 to raise USD 3.4 billion annually.

Zanzibar: Water Investment Programme (ZWIP) similarly remains in use; national stakeholders report that Ministry of Water applies the investment framework as a structuring tool for development partner engagement and planning processes.

Nepal: the IWRM Action Plan and the 2024 Finance Response Plan are formally aligned with the 16th National Development Plan. The passage of the Water Resources Act (2025) codified IWRM principles into law and created mandates for River Basin Organisations. However, stakeholders noted that institutional uptake is primarily concentrated at the federal level, and provincial and municipal systems remain under-resourced and unclear on their mandates.

5.2.2 Transboundary Governance Instruments

In the Drin Basin, the Drin Core Group (DCG), supported by secretariat support functions of GWP-Med, has provided institutional continuity and maintained regular dialogue and cooperation between all five riparian countries. The mechanism has proven resilient through multiple political transitions. While GWP's secretariat role has sustained momentum, stakeholders also emphasised the need for a binding legal framework and permanent commission and a phased transfer of the Secretariat functions to a riparian-led structure, strengthening ownership and reducing reliance on external facilitation. In BUPUSA, the 2024 endorsement of the SAP, Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA), and Environmental Flow Monitoring Plan — all facilitated by GWP — was a major milestone. These have now been signed by riparian ministers and are in use, including through a newly operational Flood Forecasting and Early Warning System (FFEWS), handed over to the Mozambique-based Regional Centre for Floods and Drought.

In the Limpopo Basin, the SAP and TDA processes are being used to inform the next generation of planning and investment. However, the IWRM plan for 2024–2028 remains pending, partly due to overlap between regional and national priorities, and challenges in data sharing among member states.

5.2.3 Data Sharing and Monitoring Tools

The LIMCOM Data Sharing Protocol and the LIMIS (Information Management System) are under development. Stakeholders described these as positive steps toward long-term institutionalisation, though synchronisation of formats and frequency remains a barrier to fully automated exchange.

In BUPUSA, the Basin Eflow Configuration Model has been institutionalised through formal transfer and capacity-building within national agencies. Stakeholders confirmed that the model continues to be used without GWP facilitation, representing one of the clearest examples of technical tool ownership and post-project use.

In the Drin Basin, water quality monitoring pilots and modelling tools introduced under the TDA/SAP process are still applied in national water agencies, though often limited to externally funded initiatives. Continued use is subject to budgetary priorities and the availability of trained staff, raising questions about long-term sustainability.

In the Mediterranean, under the Trikala flood infrastructure project, local authorities fully integrated the expanded stormwater pipeline into the municipal budget and O&M systems. Stakeholders confirmed that the infrastructure is now part of city resilience planning and used as a reference case in national dialogues on urban NbS and flood management. This example illustrates how technical water solutions, when well-aligned with local plans and supported by cost-benefit logic, can be sustained.

5.2.4 Multi-Stakeholder Platforms and Legal Anchoring

Country Water Partnerships (CWPs) are now nationally registered and operational in at least four countries in Southern Africa (Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi), and are cited as platforms used for ongoing policy dialogue, GCF consultation, and planning engagement. Their long-term sustainability depends on their ability to raise operational resources for the long-term continuity of country office led efforts.

In China, sustainability is significantly reinforced by GWP China's legal status and host arrangement within the Ministry of Water Resources, which guarantees institutional longevity. Its strong policy integration and long-term technical expertise improve financial and operational stability. The main sustainability gaps remain the resource disparities amongst PWPs, which affect balanced growth and continuity in certain provinces.

In LIMCOM, the 2024 revised agreement formalised the Council of Ministers and included stakeholder engagement provisions. The legal anchoring is a positive development, but the stakeholder structures are still under development, and sustainability will depend on how deeply they are integrated into LIMCOM's core governance routines.

In Morocco and Lebanon, WEFE–Med dialogues convened by GWP-Med led to multi-stakeholder platforms that continued beyond project closure. In Tangier–Tetouan, for example, the Nexus Roadmap is used by planning authorities to guide cross-sectoral investment, and stakeholders confirmed that the process informed provincial coordination even after GWP's facilitation ended. In Lebanon, the inter-ministerial water–energy–environment committee continues to operate with national coordination, drawing on outputs from the GWP-supported process.

In summary, **institutional ownership is strongest where GWP's support has been embedded in legislation, national planning instruments, or operational systems** (as in ZIP, ZWIP, Trikala, BUPUSA, and the Drin SAP). It is more fragile where uptake

remains project-based, or concentrated in Capital-level central agencies (as in parts of Nepal). A common thread is that ownership requires not only use, but mandate, capacity, and continuity — conditions that GWP can help enable, but not fully control.

5.3 FINANCIAL VIABILITY

5.3.1 Financial Viability in the Long-Term

Financial viability in the long-term has two components for GWP. On the one hand, **GWP has invested a great deal in enabling financial viability through addressing concrete gaps at country level** to encourage better resource mobilisation - including through efforts to enhance investment readiness, create viable financing strategies and costed action plans, improve the quantity, and quality of relevant and bankable projects in the national pipeline, and encourage institutional convergence around national goals for climate resilience including water security. GWP has helped move the needle towards financial viability, including by improving the "commitment to disbursement" trajectory and this hinge will continue to be crucial as GWP moves into its new strategy 2026-2030.

On the other hand, **in line with its subsidiarity principle, GWPO intentionally mostly does not directly finance CWPs**, although some seed funding or capacity-building support is channelled to these. GWP at country level is therefore mostly autonomous in mobilising their own financial resources from project financing, and other sources. This deliberate decentralisation of funding responsibility underscores GWP's strategic commitment to building regional and national financial sustainability, institutional ownership, and long-term capacity. At the level of country water partnerships however, maintaining relevant engagement and coherence under **tightening financial environments demands innovative resource mobilisation** by the CWP/RWP for the CWP/RWP. The capacity for this varies. In addition, some CWPs and RWP are dependent on third-party host structures with high management fees and insufficient cost recovery mechanisms. These challenges and uncertainties translate into institutional and financial sustainability as key challenges limit flexibility and ability to effect long-term planning in some cases. Reviewing resource allocations and financial models across the GWP family are widely seen as important considerations moving forward.

The next sub-section provides some illustrations of finance mobilisation.

Budgetary Anchoring of Investment Frameworks

In **Zambia**, the Water Investment Programme (ZIP) has received political backing and is integrated into the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework. The Government launched a Resource Mobilisation Strategy in 2024, aiming to raise over USD 3 billion annually from a mix of domestic and international sources. While most implementation is still donor-financed, the inclusion of ZIP in the Ministry of Finance and Green Economy’s strategy signals a degree of domestic buy-in and budget visibility.

In **Zanzibar**, the ZWIP has a dedicated budget line, albeit small. The framework is used by the Ministry of Water for development partner coordination. Government stakeholders described it as a reference tool for prioritising requests to AfDB, India Exim Bank, and others — although domestic fiscal space remains constrained, and public sector financing for water lags behind ambition.

In **Somalia**, GWP's upstream support led to the approval of a USD 94.9 million GCF project — a major success. However, the project is managed by FAO, and there is no ongoing GWP role in implementation. The financial success reflects GWP's catalytic contribution but also raises questions about long-term ownership and follow-up where GWP's handover strategy is not defined.

In **Nepal**, the GWL Response Strategy and Finance Plan (USD 52.9 million) is being used for dialogue with development partners, but no evidence was found of specific budget allocations at national or provincial level. Provincial governments expressed interest but flagged that no line-item budgeting had yet occurred, and limited clarity on resource mobilisation tools persists.

In the **Mediterranean region**, the budgetary integration of technical pilots has emerged as a key determinant of their long-term sustainability. In Trikala (Greece), the stormwater pipeline financed under the Technical Solutions for Water Programme was absorbed into the municipal budget and maintenance cycle, providing an example of domestic fiscal uptake at the local level. This stands in contrast to several other pilots that remain dependent on donor funds or CSR contributions without long-term financing mechanisms. The longevity of Alter Aqua Programme in Malta also illustrates the advantages of policy embedding and multi-cycle programming.

In **Tanzania**, the Valuing Water study but had not yet resulted in revised allocations or prioritisation within the national budget.

In the **Drin Basin**, while the SAP outlines funding needs for a set of priority actions, riparian countries have not yet committed shared budgets. Implementation relies on (limited) individual country-led investments and on project-based donor funding.

Co-Financing and Development Partner Uptake

There are promising cases where GWP-supported frameworks have helped unlock development finance:

The **AIP model** (and its **Scorecard**) is entirely adopted by the African Union and increasingly recognised by development partners as a platform for pipeline preparation and co-financing alignment. The AIP–PIDA Scorecard is being used to identify bottlenecks and readiness gaps, and several AU member states have linked Scorecard findings to discussions with AfDB, GCF, and bilateral donors towards increased commitments.

In the Mediterranean, co-financing from Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and national partners (e.g., EYDAP utility in Athens) sustained implementation of pilot projects — including the Kifissos aquifer replenishment and greywater reuse projects. In Malta, the Alter

Aqua Programme has moved through four phases of blended funding and is now embedded in the national water strategy.

These examples suggest that **co-financing and multi-partner alignment are feasible and replicable** — but typically require long-term relationships, credible delivery histories, and technical preparation. Where these are absent, even well-designed GWP-supported plans risk stalling due to lack of financial follow-through.

5.3.2 Ongoing Vulnerabilities

Despite these gains, the evaluation also finds recurring financial sustainability challenges:

- Operational budgets for basin organisations and CWPs remain donor-dependent in most countries.
- National investment frameworks, while technically strong, often lack transition strategies or financing partnerships beyond plan launch.
- Utility-level uptake of water governance tools is limited by revenue constraints and weak cost recovery.
- Private sector involvement is still limited to pilot financing or one-off CSR support, not yet structured within PPP frameworks or cost-sharing agreements.

Overall, GWP's contributions have created multiple on-ramps to financing, but the road to sustainable funding remains uneven. **Sustainability is strongest where plans are linked to domestic budgets, co-financing strategies, and regional accountability platforms.** Where GWP's role ends at plan development — without accompanying resource mobilisation or institutional absorption — financing traction is more fragile.

5.4 EVALUATIVE ANALYTICAL SYNTHESIS: SUSTAINABILITY OF GWP CONTRIBUTIONS

The evaluation finds that **many of GWP's contributions are likely to be sustained and expanded**. While sustainability is strong in principle, sustainability is not uniform, and depends significantly on political continuity, institutional absorption, and the presence of financing and delivery ecosystems. Successful scaling require more than a good model. The evaluation finds that the following conditions shape sustainability:

- **Political buy-in is essential**, especially where cross-sectoral cooperation or shared resource mandates are needed.
- **Resourcing and transaction support are often the weakest link** — converting a GWP-supported plan into funded implementation depends on broader finance ecosystems (in which GWP has made strong in roads).
- **Technical handover and monitoring systems are needed** to ensure tools like the Scorecard or Action Hub are updated and used without external facilitation.

However, the evaluation also observed that in several contexts, sustainability remains partial or vulnerable:

- Where action plans have yet to mobilise disbursements (as opposed to commitments).
- Where platforms lack formal mandates or resourcing (e.g., interim basin coordination mechanisms without legal mandate (e.g., the Drin Core Group).
- Where tools are used episodically, without being integrated into regular governance routines or decision-making systems.

These risks are not specific to GWP, but they do affect the durability of its contributions. What distinguishes GWP is its ability to work upstream, across mandates, and over time — a key comparative advantage, but one that must now be paired with structured handover strategies and more systematic engagement with financiers and delivery partners.

Overall, GWP's results are **partially but promisingly sustainable**, and **many are clearly replicable**. Where its tools, platforms, and frameworks have been embedded in local, national or regional systems — and matched with resources, mandates, and follow-through — they continue to deliver value and shape water governance.

GWP's facilitative model works best when it catalyses and then transitions — leaving behind planning instruments, platforms, and capacities that are owned by those with long-term delivery mandates. Its strength lies not in direct delivery, but in enabling the conditions under which delivery becomes possible, affordable, and coherent.

The future challenge is to **consolidate** this enabling role by: strengthening handover planning from the outset; embedding pilot project, tools and knowledge platforms in routine governance systems; supporting the maturation of national and regional financing ecosystems; promoting cross-regional adaptation of its most successful models, including the AIP and (time will tell) its scorecard.

In this sense, GWP's legacy lies in both the plans it helps create — and in the systems it strengthens, the capacities it leaves behind, and the replicable approaches it contributes to global water governance. Below, the condensed points on sustainability and replicability are provided.

6 Lessons

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter synthesises key strategic and operational lessons learned from the evaluation of GWP's implementation of its 2020–2025 Strategy. These lessons provide insights into how GWP has leveraged its unique comparative advantages and navigated operational challenges, and they set the stage for the subsequent conclusions and recommendations. Lessons explicitly draw upon evaluation questions and are framed within the context of Sida's strategic objectives, informing actionable future directions for GWP and its partners.

6.2 LESSONS ON SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

GWP's three anchor areas—Water Solutions for the SDGs, Climate Resilience through Water, and Transboundary Water Cooperation—were strategically devised to address **key elements of systemic change comprehensively**. A critical lesson is that the concomitant delivery of these anchor areas has enhanced GWP's ability to address governance, investment, and knowledge constraints simultaneously, promoting holistic water management improvements. Another lesson is that **realising systemic change requires strong partnerships and consistent engagement with actors** who have operational and financial mandates, underscoring the necessity for clearly articulated partnership strategies and joint accountability mechanisms, things that GWP successfully delivered. A third lesson here is that GWP's systemic contributions are maximised when **its convening power is leveraged** to align multiple stakeholders around shared visions and objectives.

6.3 LESSONS ON STRATEGIC POSITIONING AND COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGES

GWP's position as a trusted, neutral convener is central to its effectiveness. A key lesson is that its legitimacy stems from consistent neutrality and historical continuity, coupled with its technical credibility, its strategic intelligence, and its multi-anchored approach. This facilitates sensitive multi-stakeholder dialogues, including in politically challenging or fragmented contexts. However, local ownership—though critical for sustainability—can render GWP's contributions "invisible", complicating the attribution of outcomes directly to GWP. This highlights the importance of nuanced communication strategies to clearly articulate GWP's contribution pathways and its added value to stakeholders and strategic partners, ensuring visibility without undermining local ownership.

6.4 LESSONS ON CONTRIBUTION PATHWAYS AND THEORY OF CHANGE

The explicit articulation of Contribution Pathways significantly enhanced understanding of how GWP delivers results and move from outputs to outcomes. A clear lesson is that more **precisely defined pathways**, such as neutral convening, technical accompaniment, and investment readiness, **facilitate a better appreciation of GWP's catalytic role** and how its outputs to outcomes to impact happen. Pathways related to learning and scaling require clearer operationalisation, particularly in terms of embedding learning within national systems and planning cycles. Strengthening feedback loops from learning activities to adaptive management decisions is crucial for demonstrating tangible contributions to systemic change.

6.5 LESSONS FROM ANCHOR AREAS

6.5.1 Water Solutions for the SDGs (IWRM and Technical Solutions for Water)

Transitioning from traditional advocacy to actionable investment frameworks is critical for tangible results on the ground. GWP's Technical Solutions Programme has shown that **pilots** — from irrigation efficiency in Tunisia to reuse and replenishment systems in Greece and Malta — **are powerful vehicles for linking governance with measurable impact**. A significant lesson is that while demonstrations provide valuable proof of concept, scaling these initiatives requires structured financial instruments and replicable governance frameworks, reinforcing the importance of early engagement with finance ministries and investors.

In addition, findings demonstrate that effective national and regional coordination hinges on harmonised institutional arrangements and sustained capacity investment to overcome fragmentation. Cooperative and interactive learning, communities of practice and South–South exchange foster scaling of successful IWRM and climate-resilient practices

6.5.2 Climate Resilience through Water

A central lesson from GWP's climate-resilient water interventions is the importance of **anchoring water in the broader climate-resilience narrative**. GWP achievements here have provided a clear lesson on the importance of doing this. It also points to the importance of having clearly defined pathways from strategic investment planning to implementation. While investment readiness frameworks such as ZIP (Zambia) and ZWIP (Zanzibar) are critical milestones, sustainability is contingent upon domestic budget alignment and implementation capacities at sub-national levels. This emphasises the need for comprehensive follow-through strategies, including sustained institutional capacity building and mechanisms to bridge readiness and disbursement gaps.

6.5.3 Transboundary Water Cooperation

GWP's work in transboundary settings demonstrates that long-term, politically sensitive dialogues benefit significantly from a combination of soft diplomacy and concrete deliverables. The Drin and BUPUSA basin experiences underline the importance of maintaining a balance between dialogue facilitation and tangible outputs, such as institutional structures, joint basin plans and pilots on the ground. A key lesson is that **legal anchoring and dedicated financial mechanisms significantly strengthen sustainability**, reducing dependency on external funding and facilitation.

6.6 LESSONS ON INCLUSION

Inclusion yields substantial benefits for sustainability and legitimacy, particularly when structurally embedded in roles, budgets, and accountability mechanisms. Inclusive governance integrating women, youth, and indigenous stakeholders enhances social ownership. A critical lesson from the evaluation is that p**rocedural inclusion alone** (e.g., consultation without subsequent empowerment) **limits transformative impact**. Gender and youth inclusion have advanced significantly, particularly through structured interventions like WACDEP-G and pilots. However, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised groups require deeper integration into institutional frameworks. Including cross-cutting issues such as women's participation, voice for youth, including local groups or Indigenous Peoples, yields substantial benefits for sustainability and legitimacy, particularly when structurally embedded in roles, budgets, and accountability mechanisms.

6.7 LESSONS ON WORKING WITH FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

GWP's experience demonstrates clear value in effectively engaging financial institutions and private sector actors. Collaborations with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) have highlighted GWP's unique comparative advantage: its deep local networks and access to grassroots actors, which MDBs typically lack. This complementarity enables MDBs to structure investments and programmes with enhanced local ownership, legitimacy, and contextual sensitivity.

Similarly, engagements with private sector actors, particularly in Technical Solutions for Water and WEFE Nexus initiatives, shows the potential of structured, impact-measured partnerships to mobilise new financing sources. The experience demonstrates that clear partnership frameworks, transparent role division, and shared risk models are prerequisites for scaling from pilots to systemic private sector participation. Broadening its network into corporate and water stewardship fora and transferring GWP-Med's technical know-how and experience in VWBA and partnership facilitation to other regions would further scale these activities.

6.8 LESSONS ON LEARNING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Effective adaptive management is strongly linked to the **institutionalisation of learning mechanisms and monitoring tools**. Adaptive programme planning is critical for realistic implementation in volatile or resource-limited settings. Tools such as the IWRM Action Hub, AIP–PIDA Scorecard, and various Communities of Practice have successfully facilitated data collection, knowledge dissemination and horizontal exchange. A core lesson is that **maximum value from learning tools is realised when they inform formal national processes** such as sector reviews, budget cycles, and regulatory frameworks. Embedding learning (and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms) systematically within national decision-making and performance management structures clearly contributes towards effectiveness and sustainability because it allows adaptive management based on reasonable intelligence insight.

6.9 LESSONS ON SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is most robust where **GWP-supported frameworks benefit from clear mandates, legal underpinnings, and reliable source of core funding**. Key lessons underscore the importance of early-stage financial planning, explicitly tied to both domestic and international funding streams. Sustained technical support and targeted financing readiness initiatives are critical for enhancing programme delivery and institutional resilience. Moreover, proactive reputation and risk management are fundamental to maintaining institutional trust and long-term sustainability, requiring the development of effective plans and strategies to address emerging challenges.

GWP's effectiveness and efficiency increase significantly when a **replicable partnership framework is codified**—clearly defining roles, establishing data-sharing standards, and clarifying cost and risk allocation, all while maintaining the organisation's neutrality. Where these elements are present, transaction costs have reduced, transparency has increased, and alignment between partner investments and public water security priorities has improved.

Replicability of GWP's models is significantly enhanced by **regional and continental frameworks that ensure political legitimacy and accountability**. GWP's Technical Solutions for Water also exhibit strong potential for replication, particularly where there are established modalities for private-sector cooperation/engagement and blended finance mechanisms are enhanced by regional and continental frameworks that provide political legitimacy and accountability structures. Several GWP models illustrate these principles.

Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP): Its endorsement by the African Union and support from continental platforms, such as Scorecards and blended finance facilities, underpin high replicability across Africa. Extending the approach beyond Africa would depend on the presence of comparable regional authorities and supportive development banks. Replication potential is enhanced where regional development banks and political coordination platforms align with AIP-type investment logics.

SDG 6.5.1 IWRM Support Programme: This programme is already globally replicated, underpinned by UNEP and UNDP, and driven by country demand. Its effectiveness is greatest where national institutions can absorb and act on strategic guidance, and where investment planning and financing planning is integrated as a key component from the outset.

Action Hub and Communities of Practice: These platforms have global applicability, with their impact rising as they are increasingly linked to national and local decision-making.

AIP–PIDA Scorecards: These tools are replicable where there is a clear political or institutional anchor, operating most effectively when governments treat them as drivers for better planning resource mobilisation and accountability.

Technical Solutions for Water: These are highly replicable in contexts with strong cross-sector governance frameworks, such as the Mediterranean or China. Their wider adoption will require GWP to foster platforms for engaging with private sector and to consolidate early successes into comprehensive replication packages, including regulatory framework /governance needs, finance, and scaling tools.

6.10 LESSONS ON GLOBAL PRESENCE

GWP's experience since 2020 shows that an international network can drive systems change less by traditional project implementation and more by using global presence to co-define norms, indicators and methodologies (e.g. SDG 6.5.1 and climate-resilient WASH), convene political and technical coalitions, and co-design investment architectures that link national practice to high-level climate and finance decision-making. A key lesson is that this systems-shaping influence is most effective when global roles and platforms (such as the SDG 6 IWRM Support Programme, the Africa Water Investment Programme and emerging G20-linked water investment mechanisms) are grounded in country and regional evidence, aligned with UN-led and regional processes, and explicitly used to leverage multi-actor investment pipelines rather than stand-alone projects.

6.11 LESSONS FOR SIDA AND OTHER FINANCING PARTNERS

GWP's alignment with Sida's strategic priorities is strong, particularly in governance reform, transboundary cooperation, and climate resilience. A significant lesson is that Sweden's backing of GWP as an international global partnership network, through a country host agreement and major financial support, reinforced GWP's credibility, neutrality, and legitimacy in global and regional engagements. This contributed notably to GWP's global reach and facilitated its ability to operate effectively across diverse and politically sensitive contexts. It also underscores the importance and value of sustained strategic and financial core support from Sweden (including from Sida) and other partners. Such support has been instrumental in maintaining GWP's operational neutrality and its effectiveness at the global level.

Experience over 2020–2025 suggests that sustained and predictable multi-year funding, anchored in credible results reporting, is essential for an intermediary such as GWP to maintain legitimacy and play a systems-shaping role. A key lesson is that core and programmatic/thematic funding are complementary: flexible core support underpins GWPO's convening, learning and fiduciary functions and provides a degree of stability for RWPs and CWPs, while programmatic and thematic funding targeted at specific anchor areas or regions enables donors to sharpen priorities and, where appropriate, allows GWPO to be more directive in driving results. At the same time, GWP's decentralised model, which expects country and regional partnerships to mobilise part of their own resources, helps sustain local ownership and relevance but exposes them to volatility in a context of tightening aid budgets and some climate finance fatigue; significant reductions or uncertainty in donor funding can cascade through the network and erode capacities that are difficult to rebuild. The lesson for Sida and other funding partners is that a balanced mix of modest but reliable core support, combined with predictable multi-year programmatic and thematic funding aligned to GWP's contribution-based mandate and long-term systems-change timelines, is more likely to preserve and enhance the partnership's added value than fragmented or short-term projectised funding.

6.12 OVERALL REFLECTIONS

The strategic and operational lessons outlined above provide **critical insights** into GWP's comparative advantages, operational realities, and areas requiring reinforcement. Understanding these lessons facilitates **clearer framing** of GWP's contributions and prepares a foundation for the subsequent Conclusions and Recommendations chapters. The lessons might help effectiveness of future strategies.

Table 12: Summary Key Takeaways – Strategic Lessons and Replicability

Key Takeaways on Lessons	
Dimension	Key Insights
Political traction and anchoring	GWP is effective at generating high-level commitment; the next step is translating this into budgets, mandates, and sub-national delivery.
Investment readiness	GWP's role in structuring national frameworks (e.g. ZIP, ZWIP) is clear; however, project-preparation and blended finance tools are needed to ensure conversion.
Learning and decision-making	Tools like Scorecards and CoPs are widely used. Their value is maximised when embedded in decision cycles — e.g., sector reviews, budgeting, and regulatory processes.
Operationalising inclusion	Gender, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and private sector engagement must be institutionalised (roles, indicators, budgets) to move from participation to power.
Transboundary cooperation	Tangible outputs (institutions, pilots, tools, SAPs) reinforce trust and sustainability; replicability requires legal/institutional follow-up.
Scaling technical solutions	Corporate–public collaboration models piloted in the Mediterranean (e.g. Trikala, Kifissos) show strong potential. Although based on different funding modalities – foundation grants and corporate sustainability investments – scaling in both cases requires structured governance and finance frameworks.

Replicability enablers	Strongest where regional incentives, political platforms, and costed national plans exist (e.g. AU, EU, national investment frameworks).
Strategic principles for scaling	Anchor before scaling; focus on readiness-to-disbursement conversion; embed learning; make inclusion operational; build cooperation with the private sector for Technical Solutions for Water.
Overall conclusion	GWP's approaches are replicable and valued. Strategic replication requires not just demand but enabling conditions and structured models for conversion and sustainability.

7 Conclusions

7.1 OVERALL CONCLUSION

Overall, based on the findings and evaluative analysis, the evaluation concludes that GWP, as a global decentralised partnership network stretching across most regions and countries, has delivered well on its 2020–2025 Strategy. It has effectively contributed in significant ways to advancing countries and regions towards its **vision** for a "water secure world" by concretely advancing its **mission** to "advance the governance and management of water resources for sustainable and equitable development". This has been through a **credible, multi-pronged approach** applying its contribution-pathways across three inter-related anchor areas: water solutions for the SDGs, climate resilience through water, and transboundary cooperation.

The 2020–2025 strategy period also **embedded several strategic and institutional evolutions** designed to ensure **better responsiveness** to emerging **global priorities**, **increased accountability**, and organisational effectiveness:

Mainstreaming Youth and Gender: GWP promoted effective gender pilots, and urged the inclusion of gender equality analysis and youth empowerment focus within governance structures, programming, and decision-making, and this helped to deepen the processes (and in some instances the budgeting) needed for better inclusivity, and sustainability and ownership of outcomes; but there is still some way to go before countries fully embed these dimensions, in particular budget dimensions.

Climate Resilience and Finance Mobilisation: Emphasising climate adaptation and resilience-building, GWP expanded its strategic and operational focus on climate finance, notably achieving accreditation as a GCF readiness partner. This strengthened GWP's capacity to facilitate direct access to global climate finance mechanisms by partner countries which has helped to shift financial architectures and potentials.

Digital Transformation: GWP invested significantly in digital innovation and knowledge dissemination, exemplified by the comprehensive relaunch of its IWRM Toolbox[17] and establishment of new interactive digital learning platforms[18]. These

[17] Home | Water Knowledge Hub

[18] For example, the Youth Water Academy South Asia, Caribbean, Southeast Asia; the SSWM Toolbox https://waterknowledgehub.org/platform/sustainable-sanitation-and-water-management-toolbox; Youth and Young Water Professionals Platform https://www.gwp.org/en/gwp-SAS/WE-ACT/themes/youth/yypp/

efforts enhanced accessibility, learning, and knowledge transfer across its global partnership network, and, the evaluation concludes, allowed to move the needle on anchoring reform and co-ideation in shared, up-to-date knowledge.

Performance-based Funding and Institutional Assessments: Introduction of performance-based funding modalities, complemented by the institutional capacity assessment tool FINCAP, strengthened transparency, accountability, and capacity within regional and national entities.

Balancing Normative and Operational Roles: GWP balance between its normative role in thought leadership and advocacy with operational responsibilities involving direct programme support, concrete project implementation, and investment mobilisation enabled GWP to reinforce its relevance, responsiveness, and effectiveness at local and global scales.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS ON EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation concludes that during the 2020–2025 evaluation period, GWP has **effectively contributed to significant systems strengthening** at several levels and in several ways as elaborated below.

7.2.1 Strengthening Inclusive, Participatory Systems

The evaluation concludes that GWP has **credibly enabled integrated and participatory decision-making** through multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral inclusive consultations and the promotion of communities of practice and pilot initiatives, including for gender and the role of women, and incubators for innovation, while deepening cooperation with the private sector. The evaluation finds clear evidence of progress in embedding gender and youth perspectives into strategy documents, consultations, and selected programmes such as WACDEP-G (gender-transformative design) and dedicated youth platforms. However, whilst gender mainstreaming, inclusion of marginalised groups and youth have advanced at the policy and consultation levels, the evaluation concludes that these efforts have some way to go in partner countries before being fully realised and integrated into water-related budgeting, decision-making mandates, and accountability frameworks. The depth of inclusion varies considerably across contexts: where inclusion is institutionalised with mandated roles, dedicated budget lines, and monitoring indicators (as in Zambia's NWSSP), it strengthens sustainability and effectiveness; where inclusion remains consultation-based **without structural embedding**, effects are episodic and dependent on external facilitation. The evaluation concludes that GWP has consistently contributed to promoting inclusion as a key element of water systems change, and that moving from principle to practice requires continued advocacy to ensure inclusion is tied to mandates, budget allocations, tracking indicators, and accountability systems.

The evaluation concludes that GWP has **successfully engaged diverse sets of actors**—from governments, river basin authorities, and regional entities to civil society actors (youth, women, the private sector), multilateral banks, development agencies and

beyond—in order to **build trust** and collaboration amongst stakeholders; promote dialogue on shared water challenges and development priorities; mobilise political leadership and institutional ownership of reform processes; and strengthen and create multi-stakeholder platforms for water governance. GWP has significantly helped to connect stakeholders in processes of shared responsibility for water governance at national and transboundary levels, enabling the piloting of joint solutions to common challenges and the establishment or strengthening of transboundary organisations and their governance frameworks, policies, plans, and investment strategies. These are all works in progress, with some regions and countries more advanced than others.

7.2.2 Strengthening Water Governance Systems

The evaluation concludes that GWP has credibly **strengthened water governance systems** at multiple levels. Through its extensive network function, linking partner organisations across regions, countries, and basins, GWP has mobilised and aligned diverse actors to improve legislation, policies, planning frameworks, institutional and technical capacity, innovation, multi-stakeholder platforms, and financing mechanisms. These efforts have resulted in more robust and resilient systems for water governance, cross-border cooperation, and water investment mobilisation - evidenced by the adoption of improved governance frameworks, the establishment of functional multi-stakeholder and transboundary institutions, and increasing levels of investment commitments. GWP's contributions have **significantly advanced systems change at governance level**, including through IWRM, as evidenced by the consolidation of national IWRM legislation, policies, and planning; the costing of plans and their implementation; and the promotion of gender mainstreaming and inclusive consultations. GWP is effective in fostering steady progress from a low-capacity base by advancing IWRM planning, supporting transboundary cooperation, and mobilising adaptation finance; while also enabling more mature governance models that combine policy influence, legislative innovation, and partnership-based local implementation, research, technology, and inclusiveness. Together, both contexts illustrate GWP’s strategic value: convening multi-actor partnerships that progressively mature into robust national and regional water governance systems.

7.2.3 Strengthening Financial Architecture for Water & Climate

The evaluation concludes that GWP has contributed meaningfully to reshaping regional financial architectures to enhance support for large-scale investment mobilisation focused on water and climate resilience. This is evidenced, *inter alia*, by GWP's involvement in major investment summits and initiatives, including the Africa Water Investment Summit 2025 (showcasing a USD 10–12 billion annual pipeline and launching a Global Outlook Council on Water Investments as a G20 Presidential Legacy Initiative) and engagements towards USD 20 billion in investments for Latin America and the Caribbean. The evaluation further concludes that at the country level, GWP has strengthened financial architecture in several countries (investment readiness and finance mobilisation) by helping to create strategic finance and action plans, assess and address investment readiness gaps, and prepare bankable

projects. This has strengthened the systems and pathways through which countries can access climate finance and catalyse investments in water resilience, representing strengthening not just of technical or policy systems, but of the financial architecture necessary for sustained investment.

The evaluation concludes that this advance is possible thanks to strong foundations that GWP helped to lay in legislation, policies, and planning frameworks, combined with increased emphasis on engaging multinational and national private sectors and multilateral development banks. The evaluation concludes that GWP has successfully embedded water governance and technical solutions as key dimensions of broader efforts to strengthen climate resilience through water, evidenced by the integration of water security measures into and NDCs. Crucially, GWP has accompanied capacity strengthening with investment readiness support, thereby facilitating access to climate finance and influencing commitments and investments in water resilience projects.

7.2.4 Systems Strengthening Through Technical Solutions

The evaluation concludes that GWP has **helped advance the systems change envisioned by the SDGs** through **coordinated and integrated water action**, particularly by advancing the use of the WEFE (water-food-energy-ecosystems) **nexus approach** relevant for sustainability and socio-economic development. This has been achieved by consolidating necessary changes at governance level (including institutional capacity-building and nexus planning), engaging stakeholders including the private sector, sharing knowledge and developing capacity, and **increasing focus on technical solutions** through key pilot and longer-term initiatives. The evaluation concludes that GWP has contributed in a concerted way to advancing scalable and workable technical solutions aimed at improving water management on the ground in practical ways, thereby enhancing resilience to climate change and strengthening water management systems.

7.2.5 Strengthening Systems for Transboundary Water Cooperation

The evaluation concludes that **GWP effectively advances transboundary cooperation** by facilitating dialogue, building capacity to manage transboundary issues, providing technical support, and influencing riparian policies and programmes aimed at common transboundary challenges and solutions. Through its regional and local dialogues, GWP has brought stakeholders together to build consensus around institutional frameworks, joint knowledge generation, and shared management plans for transboundary water resources, while also supporting the establishment and operation of basin-level institutions. The evaluation further concludes that GWP has promoted learning towards adaptive management of transboundary issues, including through knowledge-sharing platforms that share best practices and offer relevant training for transboundary cooperation and investment, as well as tools and data to support decision-making. GWP's participation in and hosting of key transboundary water secretariats, combined with its concerted input towards shaping discourse on transboundary norms, agendas and protocols, has contributed to strengthening the

systems and frameworks necessary for effective transboundary water governance. This work has been **particularly valuable in politically sensitive contexts** where GWP's neutrality and convening authority provide comparative advantage. Looking ahead, further systems strengthening will hinge on progressively transferring institutional roles from GWP to riparian authorities to ensure locally anchored ownership and sustainability.

7.2.6 Strengthening Knowledge and Learning Systems

The evaluation concludes that GWP has **strengthened knowledge** and **learning architecture**, creating systemic change through enhanced mechanisms that build technical, institutional and adaptive capacity at regional, national and local levels. These efforts have supported the integration of water security and climate resilience (including transboundary cooperation) into decision-making processes and national planning; to plan for climate change impacts; to promote learning and adaptive management towards proactive rather than reactive preparedness; and to advance global climate commitments through support for NDCs and NAPs.

GWP has **credibly documented and shared lessons** across its global network, created and hosted communities of practice across countries and regions (including those on the IWRM Action Hub and for youth), promoted key and multiple learning events organised by CAP-NET, and developed technical and learning tools and publications to curate knowledge and integrate its application for better water governance. Its concerted focus on capturing and disseminating successful practices has helped strengthen system resilience, foster innovation, and inform the scaling of effective approaches in future programming.

While **linkages between learning and programming are not always clearly articulated**, these knowledge systems have strengthened system resilience and improved planning and programming by enabling evidence-informed decisions, scaling effective practices, and fostered multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral participation.

GWP's operational model demonstrates adaptive capacity, reflected in its flexibility to respond to stakeholder needs and sustain momentum during political transitions. However, adaptive management is not always systematically documented or embedded in formal risk management frameworks. The evaluation concludes that strengthening the articulation of how learning informs adaptation, and enhancing systematic risk identification and mitigation planning, would further reinforce GWP's adaptive capabilities.

7.2.7 Strengthening International Systems for Water

GWP's international presence has contributed to systems change by its contributions towards reshaping *how* water–climate issues are framed, governed and financed. At global level, its co-lead role on SDG 6.5.1 has normalised IWRM as the organising principle for water governance, embedded common diagnostic tools and indicators in UN reporting cycles, and provided countries with a structured pathway from monitoring to action planning and reform. This has helped move debates from ad hoc

"projects" towards more systemic, institution- and policy-focused approaches to water security and climate resilience. It has underpinned the crucial linkages between climate resilience and "getting water right".

On the investment side, GWP's work with the AU–AIP, the International High-Level Panel on Water Investments for Africa, and now the G20-linked Global Outlook Council and Global Water Investment Platform has begun to reposition water as a macro-level economic and security issue rather than a narrow infrastructure or social sector concern. By reframing water investments as central to growth, stability and climate adaptation—and by helping to develop pipelines, preparation facilities and design standards with the AU, GCF and others—GWP has influenced how public, climate and private finance institutions conceptualise and structure water-related portfolios.

Taken together, these contributions amount to an emergent systems change: water–climate challenges are increasingly governed through integrated, nationally anchored frameworks; monitored against shared indicators; and linked to coordinated, multi-billion investment agendas that span development, climate and security domains. GWP cannot claim sole credit for these shifts, but its technical platforms, convening power and investment narratives have clearly helped to "connect the dots" between local water governance practice and global decision-making on climate and finance in ways that did not exist a decade ago.

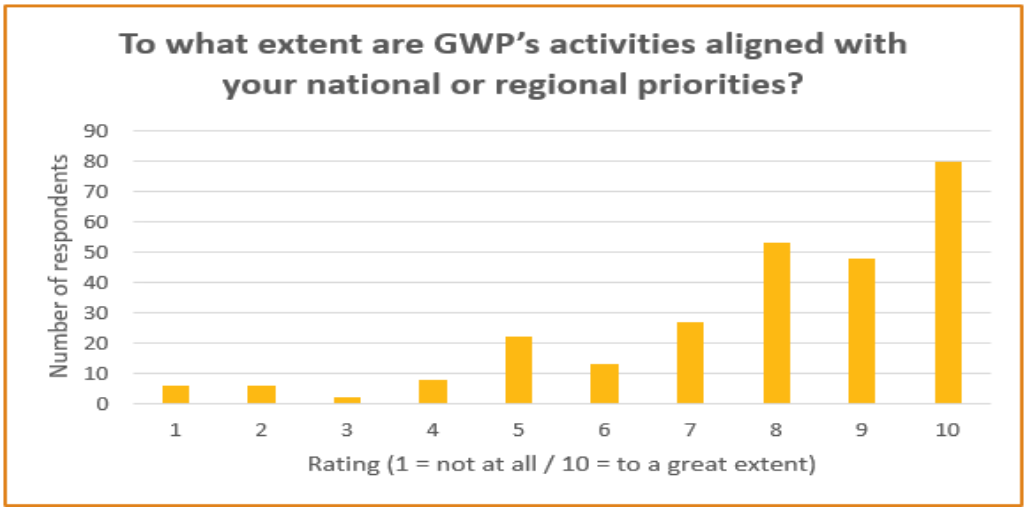
7.3 CONCLUSIONS ON RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE

7.3.1 Stakeholder Perspectives on Relevance and Coherence

The evaluation concludes that, from the perspective of stakeholders across regions and countries, **GWP has delivered its 2020–2025 Strategy with strong relevance and coherence to national and regional priorities, needs, and aspirations**.

Stakeholders consistently characterise GWP's support as strongly relevant to—and aligned with—identified gaps in governance, technical capacity, and investment readiness at national and regional levels. This relevance stems not only from what GWP does, but from how it does it: through locally owned approaches that prioritise national and regional leadership, and through its decentralised, subsidiarity-based operational framework network structure that enables contextually appropriate engagement. The evaluation concludes that stakeholders view GWP contributions as helpful, constructive, and in many cases essential to advancing water governance outcomes that would be difficult to achieve through other channels or actors.

Figure 7: Survey Respondents' Perceived Alignment with National and Regional Priorities



The evaluation concludes that from the stakeholder perspective, GWP's comparative advantages lie in a **unique combination of attributes** that other actors in the water sector cannot easily replicate. Stakeholders consistently emphasise GWP's **convening power** and boundary-spanning capabilities—its ability to bring together diverse actors, build trust in politically sensitive contexts, and maintain neutrality whilst facilitating progress. Beyond convening, stakeholders value GWP as an **incubator of ideas** and a space for co-ideation and co-design, where innovative approaches to persistent challenges can be developed collaboratively. This is reinforced by GWP's learning architecture and its culture of positioning itself—and its partners—as learning institutions. This emphasis on **adaptive learning** and **joint problem-solving** enhances GWP's relevance by enabling context-specific solutions rather than imposing standardised approaches. GWP's systems roles—as neutral convenor, technical broker, project adviser, and boundary partner—are viewed as complementary to, rather than duplicative of, the functions performed by national and regional entities, implementing agencies, and international financiers. The evaluation also finds evidence of **effective coordination** with regional bodies (such as AU/AMCOW, SADC, and UNECE), multilateral development banks, and UN agencies, with GWP often playing behind-the-scenes facilitation roles that complement these institutions' mandates and help strengthen overall coherence within the water governance architecture.

The evaluation further concludes that stakeholders value GWP's **strategic positioning** in integrating water across multiple development agendas. GWP's nexus approach—linking water with food and energy security, and embedding water within climate, food, and socio-economic development frameworks—is viewed as strategically relevant and coherent with the interconnected nature of development challenges. This positioning helps **avoid siloed approaches** and enables stakeholders to advance water priorities within broader policy and planning processes where water might otherwise be marginalised.

However, the evaluation also concludes that the strength of perceived relevance and coherence is **materially conditioned** by the depth and consistency of GWP's

institutional presence. Where regional water partnerships and country water partnerships have established strong networks, maintained consistent engagement, and built institutional depth, stakeholders report higher relevance and more coherent contributions. Conversely, where GWP's presence is thinner or more variable, stakeholder perceptions of relevance are correspondingly weaker. GWP visibility at provincial and local levels varies across contexts, and this affects the extent to which stakeholders perceive GWP as having enhanced capacity to influence outcomes or integrate water imperatives into action plans. The evaluation notes that relevance and coherence are, to some degree, coloured by perceptions of results, and both dimensions are therefore strongest where GWP has been able to sustain engagement and demonstrate tangible contributions over time.

7.3.2 GWP's Positioning and Value Proposition

The evaluation concludes that GWP occupies a distinctive, **unique position** within the global water governance landscape that is difficult to replicate. As a global partnership, GWP represents an extensive network of connections spanning global, regional and particularly local levels, enabling it to facilitate nationally and regionally owned processes in ways that other actors cannot easily achieve. This positioning allows GWP to work hand-in-hand with relevant stakeholders on water and climate issues.

The evaluation demonstrates that multiple stakeholders, including MDBs, UN entities, regional organisations, and government partners, consistently point to GWP's **value added** as stemming from a unique combination: deep and contextually relevant networks paired with capacity to provide technical and strategic assistance, facilitate dialogue and partnerships, and help develop innovative approaches to persistent challenges. As one development bank stakeholder noted, *"yes, we all have water departments, but we do not have the reach, credibility and adaptive management know-how at the local level that GWP offers."*

The evaluation concludes that GWP's decentralised, **subsidiarity-based operational framework structure** is central to this comparative advantage. It enables programming that is locally relevant whilst simultaneously connected to and benefiting from experience, knowledge, and networked relationships across the globe and at regional, national, and local levels. This structure is fundamental to GWP's unique value proposition: it allows GWP to maintain **deep local legitimacy** and contextual understanding whilst **leveraging global expertise** and cross-regional learning—a combination that centrally structured organisations struggle to replicate. The Strategy's three concomitant focus areas—act, mobilise, learn—have proven effective in anchoring GWP's contributions towards meaningful and largely sustainable outcomes. The operational model, which grants substantial autonomy to regional offices and country water partnerships, is structurally integral to what makes GWP uniquely different from other water actors and why the roles it fulfils remain distinctively its own.

The evaluation concludes that as a decentralised partnership network stretching globally across most regions and countries, GWP has deployed its "contribution

pathways" in various combinations and sequences: as a neutral convenor and trusted facilitator of multi-stakeholder events and dialogues; as an influencer of policies and advocate for inclusion; as a provider of technical advice and institutional capacity strengthening for planning, design and reform; as an effective actor in preparing financing pathways for catalysing investments; as host of strategic secretariats; and as a contributor towards shaping discourse on norms and agendas and the implementation of frameworks such as SDG 6.5.1 and transboundary protocols. This multi-pronged approach, enabled by GWP's decentralised, subsidiarity-based operational framework structure, allows it to operate flexibly and responsively across different contexts whilst maintaining coherence with its overall strategic vision.

7.3.3 Appropriateness of Scale and Ambition

The evaluation concludes that GWP's strategic breadth across three anchor areas—linking water to climate, biodiversity, transboundary diplomacy, youth, gender, private sector engagement, and infrastructure investment—provides important legitimacy and relevance to diverse stakeholders. This expansive framing aligns well with the interconnected nature of water challenges and enables GWP to position water governance within broader development and climate agendas.

However, the evaluation also finds evidence of **tension between strategic breadth and resource focus**. GWP's ambitions are substantial relative to its network capacity and current financial resources, and some programme dimensions remain under-implemented relative to their articulated importance in strategy documents. For instance, whilst transboundary work is well advanced and investment mobilisation has gained significant momentum, technical solutions for water and private sector engagement remain at an earlier stage of development globally, though more mature in some regions.

The evaluation nevertheless concludes that GWP's scale and reach are generally appropriate to its facilitative, non-implementing role, but that the uneven capacity of regional and country water partnerships and their ability to generate resources affects the extent to which strategic ambitions can be realised consistently across contexts. Where RWPs and CWPs have **established strong networks** and **institutional depth,** GWP's **contributions are more substantial and sustained**; where presence is thinner or capacity weaker, outcomes are correspondingly more variable. GWP's comparative advantage lies in bridging policy ambition and institutional delivery, a positioning that remains appropriate but will require continued investment in network capacity and strategic focus as ambitions grow during the 2026–2030 period.

7.3.4 Relevance to and Coherence with Sida's Water Strategy

The evaluation concludes that GWP's work demonstrates strong overall alignment with Sida's water strategy and development cooperation priorities, though contributions vary in depth and scale across different sub-objectives.

The evaluation concludes that GWP's most substantial contributions align with Sida's priorities on **governance**, **participation**, and **institutional capacity development**.

Through its support for SDG 6.5.1 monitoring, investment planning processes, and multi-stakeholder learning platforms, GWP has strengthened enabling conditions for water governance at multiple levels. Similarly, GWP's work on transboundary water cooperation—including facilitation of political dialogue, joint assessments and basin-wide planning frameworks —has proven particularly valuable in politically sensitive contexts where its neutrality and convening authority provide comparative advantage.

The evaluation concludes that in areas of **climate resilience** and **water efficiency**, GWP's contributions through the AIP, including investment readiness support, adaptive planning tools, GEF mobilisation, and work on advancing **technical solutions** to water and working in cooperation with the private sector, demonstrate meaningful alignment with Sida's focus on resilience and risk reductio. However, the long-term sustainability and scaling of these approaches remain to be fully demonstrated.

The evaluation concludes that GWP's engagement with Sida's priorities on **pollution control**, **ecosystems**, and **biodiversity** has been more limited in scope, primarily taking an enabling rather than implementation-focused approach. Governance frameworks developed through GWP processes have created entry points for pollution reduction and water reuse strategies, and ecosystem considerations are reflected in SAPs and WEFE frameworks. However, these contributions remain uneven and often lack the costing and monitoring mechanisms needed to ensure sustained impact.

Importantly, Sida's flexible, multi-year support has **enabled GWP** to reinforce and operationalise its own strategic positioning as a systems enabler and strategic facilitator rather than a direct implementer. This approach has allowed GWP to exercise multi-level influence—combining global convening power and political neutrality with grounded engagement in nationally and regionally owned processes. **The evaluation concludes that the coherence between Sida's funding modality and GWP's comparative strengths has proven mutually reinforcing: Sida's investment has helped anchor GWP's distinctive role within the broader water cooperation architecture, whilst GWP's work has advanced multiple dimensions of Sida's water strategy through channels where GWP holds unique legitimacy and access**.

7.4 CONCLUSIONS ON SUSTAINABILITY

7.4.1 Sustainability of Contributions

Evidence from the evaluation indicates that that GWP's approach to water governance strengthening has reinforced sustainability of outcomes, though durability remains contingent on several critical enabling factors. GWP's strategic focus on local ownership, local capacity development, and locally driven solutions has embedded sustainability as a **core operational principle** rather than an afterthought. This is evidenced in GWP's consistent emphasis on institutional embedding, alignment with national budgetary processes, and strengthening of investment readiness—all designed to ensure that outcomes endure beyond GWP's direct involvement and avoid the creation of "one-off plans" that lack implementation pathways.

The evaluation identifies **institutionalisation** as the leading predictor of sustainability. Outcomes embedded in statutory plans, basin arrangements, or budget processes demonstrate greater durability than those dependent on ad hoc or externally driven mechanisms. GWP's neutral convening, technical capacity strengthening, and policy influence have been instrumental in enabling this institutionalisation. Sustainability is strongest where GWP's role shifts from initial facilitation to lighter-touch stewardship, maintaining coalition coherence as partner institutions assume leadership. This transition reflects GWP's decentralised model, which enables regional and country partnerships to complement rather than supplement national and regional institutions.

Financing continuity and the route to finance matter equally for sustainability. The evaluation concludes that the presence of viable finance pathways—whether through public budgets, climate funds, or blended finance mechanisms—correlates strongly with sustained outcomes, and that GWP's catalysing of investment and financing pathways has been critical to bridging the persistent gap between planning and implementation. Where GWP has successfully enhanced investment readiness and enabled access to resources (e.g., through the GCF), outcomes demonstrate greater durability. Conversely, where financing routes are absent or undefined from the outset, platforms and frameworks risk weakening regardless of their technical quality. The evaluation therefore treats "finance readiness achieved" as a key sustainability marker and concludes that GWP's systematic attention to this dimension represents a significant contribution to long-term durability of water governance outcomes.

GWP's **knowledge brokering and learning architecture** have further reinforced sustainability by building system resilience and enabling adaptive management. Through tools curation, communities of practice, documentation of successful approaches, and fostering of cross-regional learning, GWP has strengthened the capacity of partners to sustain and adapt interventions over time. Similarly, GWP's **inclusion advocacy**—promoting gender equality, youth participation, and attention to marginalised groups and Indigenous Peoples—has strengthened legitimacy and broadened ownership of water governance processes where effectively integrated, thereby enhancing prospects for durability. However, the depth of these efforts remains variable across contexts, and fuller integration into budgeting and decision-making processes would further strengthen long-term sustainability.

Network capacity remains uneven, with variation in regional and country water partnership capabilities affecting the durability of outcomes regardless of upstream technical quality. Where network capacity is weaker, outcomes are less likely to endure, suggesting that targeted strengthening of core functions—coalition management, policy-finance literacy, and monitoring for contribution—would improve sustainability across contexts. Additionally, exit and transition planning is inconsistent and requires more systematic attention: whilst some transitions are well signposted and executed (for example, where GWP's secretariat roles evolve towards lighter-touch stewardship as counterpart institutions assume leadership), others lack clear planning, and in some instances GWP's continued presence has been vital for maintaining momentum to the point that withdrawal could risk stalling advances. The evaluation

concludes that GWP's facilitative model works best when it catalyses and then transitions—leaving behind planning instruments, platforms, and capacities that are owned by those with long-term delivery mandates. The evaluation concludes that more systematic approaches to transition planning, including explicit handover strategies, technical capacity transfer, and monitoring system embedding, would further enhance sustainability outcomes. GWP is familiar with these constraints and works actively to address them, including through capacity strengthening efforts and attention to institutionalisation from early project stages.

The evaluation concludes that the **strongest sustainability outcomes appear where GWP's convening power is paired with explicit finance pathways, where inclusion is built into decision rules rather than limited to consultations, where learning loops connect country practice to regional learning and portfolio choices, and where institutionalisation is anchored early in the intervention cycle.** Conversely, sustainability weakens where these elements are absent, regardless of technical quality. GWP's contribution model—characterised by its distinctive pathways of neutral convening, capacity strengthening, investment catalysis, policy influence, and knowledge brokering—is fundamentally fit for purpose in complex water governance settings. When minimum enabling conditions exist, GWP demonstrably accelerates the journey from dialogue to adopted frameworks and from plans to finance readiness, whilst simultaneously working to reinforce these enabling conditions where they do not yet exist. This approach, embedded in GWP's decentralised structure and sustained through its multi-pronged methodology, represents a strategic contribution to the durability of water governance outcomes that extends well beyond project timelines.

7.4.2 Organisational Resilience Through Decentralisation

Beyond the sustainability of GWP's programmatic outcomes and institutional partnerships, the evaluation also very briefly considered the **sustainability of GWP as an organisation** itself—particularly its capacity to maintain operations and deliver results during periods of institutional stress.

The evaluation concludes that **GWP's decentralised governance and management structure demonstrated notable resilience** during a period of significant organisational turbulence. Over the evaluation period, GWP faced considerable challenges at the headquarters level, including frequent chief executive turnover, the transition away from its longstanding host country arrangement after decades of operation in Stockholm, and uncertainty regarding future core funding arrangements beyond 2025.

Despite these **substantial disruptions** to organisational stability, GWP's operational structure has enabled regional and country-level operations to maintain momentum and continue delivering results. The autonomy granted to regional offices and country water partnerships has meant that even when headquarters-level management and governance challenges created difficult operational environments, and reduced financial flows, regional and national entities have largely been able to forge forward and maintain focus on programme delivery and stakeholder engagement.

This **organisational resilience** reflects both a strength and a structural reality of GWP's model: the network's effectiveness is not solely dependent on headquarters functions, but rather distributed across a system where regional and country partners have established legitimacy, relationships, and operational capacity. Whilst headquarters stability remains important for strategic coherence, resource mobilisation, and global convening functions, the evaluation finds that **GWP's decentralised architecture has provided a degree of operational continuity that may have been more difficult to achieve in more centralised organisational models**. This structural buffer, we conclude, has allowed GWP to sustain much of its programmatic work and stakeholder relationships during a challenging transitional period.

The evaluation also concludes that as a result of the effectiveness of GWP efforts, the overall perceptions from stakeholders regarding its relevance and its unique value-added, and the extent to which GWP actions are coherent with Sweden's own water strategy goals, GWP strategic partners and donors can feel reassured that their commitments towards GWP, and their institutional support, have helped to strengthen the sustainability of efforts towards water security.

7.5 CONCLUSION ON THEORY OF CHANGE

The evaluation concludes that: GWPO's Theory of Change, structured around "*We Mobilise – We Act – We Learn*", is **broadly sound and fit for purpose**, particularly in explaining how GWP initiates and strengthens systems-level change. The ToC effectively captures the organisation's strategic identity as an enabler and convener rather than a direct implementer and aligns coherently with GWP's institutional positioning. The evaluation concludes that the ToC has proven directionally accurate and operationally meaningful during the 2020–2025 period, validated by observed change processes across anchor areas and regions. However, the evaluation also concludes that whilst the ToC is valid as a narrative framework, it **remains under-specified as a results model** perhaps in part because outcome mapping with progress markers meant to monitor behaviour change is developed by each GWP entity. The evaluation concludes that GWP's contribution pathways successfully operationalise the ToC in practice, and these pathways help to illustrate how and where GWP has demonstrated its value proposition. Key limitations include: implicit rather than explicit assumptions about enabling conditions; insufficiently explicit articulation of contribution pathways as deliberate strategic pathways rather than incidental outcomes ; and gaps in articulating how learning systematically feeds back into programming and institutional adaptation.

7.6 DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE IN CONCLUSIONS AND JUDGEMENTS

Unless otherwise indicated, the evaluative analysis and conclusions in this report are based on triangulated evidence drawn from the six deep-dive case studies, numerous key informant interviews, the global stakeholder survey and systematic review of GWP and independent documentation, websites and data. The evaluation found clear,

overarching evidence that GWP uses a robust, multi-layered monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning system, and that GWP's annual reporting has been primarily accurate, balanced and credible. Combined with the findings from the evaluation's six deep dives, stakeholder interviews, the global survey, external document review and the initial findings presented during the inception phase, the evidence base for the evaluation is judged to be sufficiently robust, triangulated and credible, and the conclusions are, on the whole, therefore deemed reliable.

Beyond the robustness of GWP's monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning system, the evaluation also assessed whether the MEL system effectively supports adaptive decision-making and strategic learning within GWP. The e**valuation concludes that GWP's MEL architecture**—combining outcome mapping, logframe indicators, investment tracking, and user satisfaction metrics—**provides a solid foundation for accountability and performance tracking within and by GWP.**

At the same time, in relation to evidence limitations and confidence in the conclusions and judgements, the evaluation recognises:

The **positive reporting bias risk**: Much of the documentation used originates with or near GWP systems. The evaluation mitigated this through triangulation, stakeholder interviews, and independent sources where available, as well as cross-checking the results of the evaluation's deep dives (including stakeholder interviews) against reporting and the evaluation's global survey. The balance of evidence indicates that GWP's reporting is primarily accurate, balanced, reliable and credible. At the same time, the evaluation could not "deep dive" into each region or country. Stakeholders generally perceived high relevance and coherence to national and regional priorities, though these results were conditioned by RWP/CWP capacity. The residual risk is *moderately low*.

The **attribution limits**: By design, GWP works in multi-actor systems; causal claims are framed as plausible contributions rather than sole causation. Attribution to GWP alone is neither feasible nor intended; the evaluation findings and conclusions rest on plausible contribution assessed across multiple lines of evidence. The residual risk is considered *low* that plausible contributions are not reliable.

The **risk presented by GWP's heterogeneity**: The uneven capacity of country water partnerships and regional water partnerships affects generalisability; the evaluation states conclusions at the appropriate level of generality. This is helped by the conclusion that annual reporting from GWP is credible and therefore usable to form general conclusions. The residual risk is considered, all the same, as *moderate*.

8 Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this chapter translate the evaluation's findings and lessons into forward-looking guidance. They are grounded in the evidence base gathered through interviews, document review, regional deep dives and the survey. Recommendations are intended to inform GWP's strategic reflection as it moves into the next strategy cycle, as well as Sida's considerations regarding future cooperation and support.

Importantly, the evaluation recognises that the forthcoming GWP 2026–2030 Strategy already reflects many of the directions proposed in this chapter, indicating that the organisation is moving on a positive trajectory. Several of the recommendations below should therefore be viewed as reinforcing and supporting this emerging strategic orientation rather than introducing entirely new shifts.

Overall, the evaluation finds that GWP remains a highly relevant and distinctive actor in global water governance, with a clear comparative advantage in facilitating multi-stakeholder processes and strengthening the enabling environment for governance reforms. At the same time, the next phase will require stronger focus on implementation follow-through, more systematic learning, and clearer pathways connecting frameworks, finance, and delivery. The recommendations therefore aim to consolidate what works well, address identified gaps and help both GWP and its partners translate convening power and governance outcomes into sustainable systems change.

8.1 FOR GWP

1. Clarify and Refine the Contribution Logic and Theory of Change (ToC)

Refine GWP's Theory of Change and results framework. Building on the seven contribution pathways developed and agreed through this evaluation, GWP should articulate its ToC more explicitly, clarifying how its outputs, outcomes, and intended contributions to impacts connect across different levels of engagement. This does not require a new ToC, but a more explicit and structured presentation of the one already in use, showing how GWP's facilitative role and delivery modalities link to tangible behavioural, institutional, and policy results.

Clarify intermediate outcomes and contextual assumptions. GWP's current ToC implicitly assumes a degree of political openness and institutional willingness to reform, which may not always hold in fragile or complex contexts. Clarifying these underlying assumptions – and the conditions under which GWP's approaches are most effective – would strengthen both strategic planning and monitoring. Making these links explicit would also enhance the organisation's ability to communicate its contribution logic, improve MEL focus, and demonstrate the value of its approach to partners and donors.

2. Continue to Scale and Systematise What Works

Develop a strategic approach to replication and scaling. GWP has successfully demonstrated replicable models across its portfolio, including the AIP Scorecards, IWRM planning tools, and Technical Solutions for Water pilots in the Mediterranean. The next step is to codify enabling conditions and standardise replication processes—developing adaptable "toolkits" or operational models that facilitate transfer across regions and partners. Structured documentation of success factors and cost–benefit considerations would strengthen both learning and fundraising.

Scale corporate–public water projects as a replicable funding and delivery model. Building on promising experiences such as the Kifissos aquifer replenishment project in Greece, GWP could position these collaborative models as a new avenue for scaling tangible water outcomes and diversifying funding. To do so, GWP should broaden its network and partnerships with corporate water stewardship initiatives, investors, and fora (e.g., CEO Water Mandate, sectoral stewardship platforms). In parallel, the technical and methodological expertise that currently resides primarily in GWP-Med – such as VWBA, procurement processes, and partnership design – need to be disseminated and adapted across other GWP regions. Establishing more strategic, standardised processes for such partnerships would enhance efficiency, and replicability, while reducing transaction costs.

3. Further Strengthen the Path from Frameworks to Financing

Consolidate GWP's role as a strategic enabler of investment mobilisation. Building on the AIP, ZIP/ZWIP, and GCF readiness work, GWP is well positioned to help governments translate strategic frameworks into bankable pipelines. This role can be deepened by formalising cooperation with project preparation facilities (e.g. GCF, AfDB, GEF, and national development banks), transaction support mechanisms, and blended finance platforms. Strengthening internal expertise in investment planning, cost–benefit appraisal, and financial structuring would further reinforce GWP's credibility as a partner bridging policy and finance.

Ensure implementation follow-through and institutional anchoring. When facilitating national or regional investment frameworks, GWP should support the development of clear implementation pathways, including handover plans to domestic institutions and subnational actors such as municipalities, basin agencies, and utilities. This could involve embedding financial and governance provisions – such as budget lines, co-financing arrangements, and maintenance responsibilities – within the frameworks themselves. Over time, this would enhance local ownership, reduce dependency on external facilitation, and strengthen the sustainability of investment outcomes.

4. Further Embed Learning in Programming and Adaptive Management

Strengthen MEL–programme linkages and feedback use. While GWP generates a large volume of knowledge, it does not yet systematically track how its knowledge products and trainings are used, by whom, and with what effect. Without such feedback, it remains difficult to fully assess the extent to which learning activities lead to behavioural or institutional change. Establishing simple mechanisms to monitor uptake and user feedback—across CoPs, training initiatives, and knowledge products—would provide critical evidence on what works, inform future design, and enhance accountability.

5. Consolidate and Formalise Inclusion Approaches

Accelerate Systemic Integration of Inclusion. While GWP has made notable progress through initiatives such as WACDEP-G and other initiatives, GWP has only partially succeeded in embedding inclusion into planning more systematically. GWP should identify the institutional and contextual barriers that have limited this uptake and determine what can be done to accelerate change so that inclusion becomes systematically integrated in programme design and implementation, with clear roles, budget allocations, and measurable indicators.

Deepen participation of Indigenous Peoples and marginalised groups. While GWP has made meaningful progress in gender and youth empowerment, engagement of Indigenous Peoples and other marginalised groups remains underdeveloped. GWP should analyse the institutional and contextual barriers that have limited their systematic inclusion in planning, budgets, mandates, and roles, and identify what can be done to accelerate change. This may include developing clearer accountability frameworks, building targeted partnerships with representative organisations, and creating meaningful decision-making spaces at regional and national levels. Although enabling conditions – such as government recognition and resource allocation-lie partly beyond GWP's control, anticipating these constraints through programme design and advocacy can help secure more durable and transformative outcomes.

6. Strengthen Strategic Communication and Visibility Achievements

Consolidate communication around outcomes and impact. Despite excellent and visually appealing and compelling GWPO reporting, and pretty good web-based communications at regional and country levels both on GWP-related sites and on social media platforms, the public communication of GWP's extensive results and contributions often seem fragmented across country programmes and regions making it difficult for external audiences to grasp the full picture. This is in part because the communications system is devolved, and communications functions tend to be under-resourced resulting in varied availability and depth of information . Accomplishments at country and regional level need to be better communicated. To address this, GWP should invest in more coherent storytelling - linking its diverse activities to a few clear, outcome-oriented narratives aligned with its strategic objectives and using its contribution pathways. Short, evidence-

based “impact snapshots” or visual briefs can be developed from existing MEL data without creating new reporting burdens. .

Engage strategically with global fora and initiatives. GWP could use its participation in high-visibility policy platforms (e.g. UN-Water, COPs, SDG 6 events) to highlight aggregated results and tangible outcomes across its full spectrum of work, and position itself as a bridge between global policy and local delivery. Aligning communication moments with key international milestones would maximise reach without significant additional cost.

7. Safeguard GWP’s Decentralised Delivery Model

Reinforce the value of decentralisation. GWP’s regional and country partnerships have demonstrated strong resilience and delivery capacity, even during recent leadership and funding challenges. This decentralised model underpins GWP’s legitimacy and ability to adapt to local contexts. It should be maintained and further strengthened as a core organisational asset.

Ensure coherence within flexibility. To balance autonomy with alignment, GWP could reinforce light coordination mechanisms—such as clearer guidance on shared priorities, concise reporting, and structured peer learning—so that decentralised actions remain coherent with the global strategy while retaining local agility.

8. Consolidate and Further Develop Emerging Financing and Delivery Mechanisms

Sustain engagement under reduced core funding. As GWP transitions to an even more decentralised and partner-driven delivery model, able to efficiently absorb transformations in donor modalities and financial support, maintaining incentives for Regional and Country Water Partnerships to stay engaged will be crucial. Declining core funding risks weakening motivation and coordination across the network. GWP should continue developing light, performance-based mechanisms that reward active contribution, innovation, and co-financing, while allowing flexibility for different regional contexts.

Continue strengthening the evolving financing and delivery architecture. The 2026–2030 Strategy rightly advances a leaner, network-based model through Technical Support Hubs and Global Thematic Platforms, given the current circumstances. The evaluation encourages GWP to continue refining these mechanisms and to operationalise innovations already under consideration—such as streamlined procurement processes or pre-qualified partner rosters—to enable faster contracting and delivery. Embedding clear criteria and accountability mechanisms will help sustain trust, motivation, and quality implementation across the network.

Communicate the results of this evaluation. While Sweden’s decisions may reflect considerations outside this evaluation’s scope, we found no evidence that would account for the substantial reduction in support for GWP or the termination of the host-country agreement. In light of the overall positive findings, GWP should

brief strategic financing partners on the report and emphasise the urgency of securing predictable core funding for GWPO.

8.2 FOR SWEDEN AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS

1. Communicate and Consolidate Sida's Legacy of Support

Sweden's long-term engagement with GWP has had a transformative influence on global water governance and the achievement of SDG 6—particularly Target 6.5 on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). The evaluation finds strong evidence that Sida's sustained support has helped position GWP as a globally recognised and trusted actor in water governance, catalysing national policy reforms, investment mobilisation, and regional cooperation.

It would be both appropriate and strategic to communicate these achievements more visibly—highlighting the outcomes and systems change that Sida's contributions have enabled. This would demonstrate that Swedish development assistance in the water sector has generated lasting global public value and would reinforce Sweden's leadership profile in sustainable water governance.

2. Carefully Consider Modalities for Future Engagement

Sweden (the government) ended the host country agreement with GWPO, effective May 2026. Sida ended is core funding in 2023, and provided programme funding in 2024 and 2025. Sweden should feel proud of the legacy it has helped to create and what it has helped to accomplish through its long-standing support in a complex area with growing needs and challenges.

Sweden and other sponsoring partners can justifiably take pride in the legacy created through long-standing support in a complex and increasingly important field. Sweden is encouraged to enhance the visibility of its contributions to water by communicating its legacy of support to GWP. Sweden could consider future constructive relationships through alternative modalities, such as:

- **Thematic or project-based collaboration** in areas aligned with Sweden's priorities.
- **Knowledge partnerships or secondments**, whereby Sida or Swedish institutions contribute expertise to GWP-led initiatives or joint learning endeavours.
- **Participation in strategic dialogues** and international fora where GWP's convening role and Sweden's policy leadership can remain mutually reinforcing.

Such engagement would allow Sweden to build on the strong foundation it has helped create, and continue to leverage GWP's network for broader policy influence.

9 Reflections on New Strategy

9.1 LOOKING AHEAD: GWP STRATEGY 2026–2030

Although this evaluation was not mandated to assess the 2026–2030 Strategy — launched towards the end of the data collection period — the evaluation team and Sida agreed that it was relevant to briefly discuss the new strategy. This allows readers to situate the findings on the 2020–2025 Strategy within GWP's evolving trajectory. A short overview is therefore included here.[19]

With the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals fast approaching, GWP's new Strategy 2026–2030 responds to the urgent need to accelerate progress on water security in the face of climate, demographic, and geopolitical pressures. It builds on nearly three decades of convening, knowledge, and governance support, while adopting a stronger focus on transforming water investments at scale.

9.1.1 Vision and Mission

The vision remains a *water secure world*. The mission has been sharpened to supporting countries in the financing, governance, and management of water resources for sustainable, climate-resilient, and equitable development

Strategic Goals

The strategy identifies three mutually reinforcing systemic challenges and corresponding goals:

1. *Finance and Investments* – increase the volume, quality, and efficiency of finance and investments for climate-resilient water security.
2. *Governance* – improve national water governance and transboundary cooperation across sectors.
3. *Knowledge, Capacity, Data, and Digital Transformation* – strengthen institutions, professionals, and systems, with greater use of data, innovation, and digital tools

[19] This section draws on "GWP's gwp-strategy-2026-2030_spreads"; and "gwp-strategy-2026-2030-summary" available on www.gwp.org.

9.1.2 Strategic Interventions

Delivery is organised via five interventions designed to unlock synergies across goals:

- Mobilising high-level commitments (e.g., through the G20 and Global Outlook Council on Water Investments).
- Building partnerships, capacity, and mutual accountability.
- Accelerating investment programmes and project pipelines at national, regional, and transboundary levels.
- Unlocking blended public–private finance, engaging institutional investors and leveraging climate finance.
- Advancing climate resilience, gender equality, and social inclusion.

9.1.3 Organisational Transformation

The new strategy suggests significant institutional shifts. GWPO headquarters will relocate to the Global South, after decades in Sweden where it has been since its inception. This will be accompanied by the creation of continental **Technical Support Hubs** and **Global Thematic Platforms** to bring technical capacity closer to the regions. A '**One GWP**' approach is intended to enhance coherence across the network while strengthening engagement with private sector actors, financial institutions, and digital innovators.

Given that international development assistance is in serious global decline generally, the pulling away by Sweden from a successful long-term intervention, its removal of major support[20], and the consequent relocation of an entity as large as GWPO, is likely to create incredible challenges for GWP. This may lead ultimately to a scenario in which what governments (such as Sweden), and donors (such as Sida) have accomplished (through their support to GWP) is grossly undervalued. This could risk narrowing the scope of what they can accomplish in future in their continued quest to support the SDGs, water and climate resilience.

This is especially poignant as the need for better water governance and the ever more urgent imperatives this creates are expanding rather than retracting. Whilst these challenges are not insurmountable for GWPO, in particular given its current CEO, the need to address these challenges requires a vast amount of time and energy that could, perhaps, have been better spent on substance and strategy. This being said, the proposed organisational transformation seems well placed to put GWP in the best position possible as it moves forward under the new set of circumstances.

[20] Ministry of Foreign Affairs core support (to rent and tax compensation); and Sida's programme support.

9.1.4 Implications

The Strategy 2026–2030 signals a **transition from GWP's traditional convening and governance facilitation role toward becoming a global mobiliser of climate-resilient water investments.** It emphasises the intersections of finance, governance, and capacity as the critical levers for systemic change. This aims to position GWP to influence USD 15 billion and directly mobilise at least USD 500 million in investments by 2030, while strengthening 150 governance outcomes and supporting 60 countries with improved data and capacity.

9.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE 2026–2030 STRATEGY

Although the evaluation was not mandated to assess GWP's 2026–2030 Strategy, its adoption during the evaluation period makes it relevant to offer reflections. These are intended to situate the evaluation findings in relation to GWP's future trajectory and to highlight points of continuity and risk.

The new strategy reflects both continuity and evolution. It builds firmly on GWP's longstanding role as a convener, knowledge broker, and facilitator of governance reforms, while retaining core commitments to IWRM principles, gender equality, youth engagement, and civil society participation. At the same time, it signals a more ambitious repositioning: **moving GWP beyond governance facilitation towards mobilising climate-resilient water investments at scale**. This shift recognises that systemic change requires the combined levers of finance, governance, and capacity, and it places investment readiness and financial mobilisation at the centre of GWP's contribution model.

The ambition set out in the new strategy is striking. Targets of influencing USD 15 billion and directly mobilising USD 500 million in water investments by 2030 mark a decisive step into the investment facilitation space. This creates opportunities to enhance GWP's relevance to countries and donors seeking to scale climate-resilient water security, but also introduces risks of overextension, reinforcing how GWP complements - rather competes with established financing institutions and their water departments, and the challenge of demonstrating contribution in a crowded and complex landscape. Success will require GWP to be strategic and fully committed and would be greatly enhanced with clear donor and strategic partner support and endorsement, which seems probable. .

Institutional transformation of GWP itself is also at the heart of the new strategy. The **relocation of GWPO headquarters** to the Global South, alongside the establishment of continental Technical Support Hubs and Global Thematic Platforms, has the potential to enhance responsiveness, legitimacy, and proximity to country and regional partners. Realising this potential, however, will depend on adequate resourcing, staffing, and change management to ensure that new structures are fully capacitated to deliver on heightened expectations.

In pursuing this shift, it will be essential for GWP to preserve the comparative advantages that underpin its credibility: convening diverse actors, aligning governance

reforms with financing, and linking global frameworks to local implementation. These functions have been repeatedly validated through this evaluation as areas where GWP adds distinct value, and they should not be diluted even as the organisation deepens its investment focus.

Monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and learning (MERL) systems will be critical for the credibility and effectiveness of the new strategy. **Continuing to use the robust MERL system** within GWP (embedded outcome mapping, logframe indicators, investment tracking, and progress markers across GWPO, RWPs, and CWPs) will continue to reinforce accountability and credibility and help to ensure adaptive management and organisational learning is continuing to thrive. In this vein, a concerted focus on how to facilitate in a practical way knowledge exchanges and inter and intra-regional hub ideation will be key. These systems, and demonstrating results also helps sustain donor and investor confidence. In this same vein, GWP could consider working with CWPs in their efforts to ensure the consolidated sequencing from learning to adaptive management and to ensuring that learning and knowledge acquisition is happening beyond central structures, and includes a plethora of relevant actors, including women, youth and IPs.

For Sweden and other partners, the new strategy is **strongly aligned with priorities** on climate adaptation, resilience, gender equality, and transboundary cooperation. The enhanced focus on finance and investment offers opportunities for synergies with evolving development finance agendas. This process is likely to include calibrated expectations around reporting, risk-sharing, and oversight. Areas that GWP is well situated to address.

Overall, the Strategy 2026–2030 represents **a significant step-change** for GWP. It rightly identifies systemic gaps in finance, governance, and capacity as the critical bottlenecks to achieving water security. If successfully implemented, it has the potential to elevate even further GWP's role in global water and climate governance and - more importantly - it has the potential to meaningfully enhance water governance and the ways in which building resilience to climate change while ensuring SDG 6.5.

Crucially, the findings, conclusions, lessons, and recommendations of this evaluation are **consistent with the new strategy's direction**. The evaluation underscores the importance of GWP maintaining its convening legitimacy, resourcing new institutional structures adequately, continued use of robust MERL systems in-house and promotion of these within national governments, and balancing ambition with capacity. These insights reinforce the foundations on which GWP is seeking to build its next phase.

9.3 KEY MESSAGES ON 2026–2030 STRATEGY

- **Continuity with evolution**: The new strategy builds on GWP's strengths as a convener, knowledge broker, and governance facilitator, while reinforcing the organisation as a mobiliser of climate-resilient water investments.
- **Ambition**: Targets of influencing USD 15 billion and mobilising USD 500 million in investments are bold and in keeping with vast resourcing needs for

water. These, demand GWP's continued technical, financial, and fiduciary capacities..

- **New and redistributed capacities**: Realising this strategic evolution will, however, require new and redistributed capacities across the Network – particularly in areas such as investment preparation, financial structuring, and climate finance readiness. These capacities are unevenly present across regions, suggesting that targeted capacity-strengthening and peer-learning will be essential to ensure that all Regional and Country Water Partnerships can effectively contribute to the investment-oriented agenda
- **Institutional transformation**: Relocation of GWPO headquarters to the Global South and creation of Regional Technical Support Hubs and Global Thematic Platforms is likely to streamline focus and operations, and to enhance legitimacy and responsiveness though adequate resources and management skill will be lynchpins for success.
- **Comparative advantage**: The new strategy focuses strongly on reinforcing and building GWP credibility in convening, governance, and policy influence while it deepens it technical, advisory and investment mobilisation roles.
- **MERL systems**: Robust monitoring, evaluation, reporting, and learning continue to be essential to track results, ensure accountability, and support adaptive management. These dimensions are firmly anchored in the new strategy, with an emphasis on why they "matter" for investment readiness in countries and regions, and how to enhance them in each context.
- **Relevance for partners**: The strategy aligns closely with Sida’s priorities on climate adaptation, resilience, gender, and transboundary governance.
- **Consistency with evaluation:** The evaluation’s findings, conclusions, lessons, and recommendations reinforce the direction of the new strategy. The evaluation findings underscore the importance of balancing ambition with institutional capacity.

Evaluation of the Implementation of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) Strategy 2020-2025

Purpose and Use
The evaluation independently assessed the Global Water Partnership's (GWP) performance against its 2020–2025 Strategy, focusing on effectiveness, relevance, coherence, and sustainability. It aimed to inform strategic decisions, strengthen accountability, and guide GWP's 2026–2030 strategy.

Conclusions
GWP has delivered on its vision of a water-secure world, driving systemic change in water governance, climate resilience, and transboundary cooperation. Its decentralised model and convening role proved highly relevant and coherent with national priorities. Sustainability is strongest where reforms are legally and institutionally embedded, though uneven capacity and finance pathways remain challenges. Greater integration of gender, youth, and learning into formal systems is needed.

Recommendations
Refine the Theory of Change; codify and scale successful models; strengthen investment mobilisation and financial structuring; deepen institutional learning; accelerate inclusion of women, youth, and Indigenous Peoples; reinforce decentralised delivery; and secure predictable core funding. Sweden is encouraged to maintain strategic engagement through thematic collaboration, knowledge partnerships, and global fora

SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
Visiting address: Rissneleden 110, 174 57 Sundbyberg
Postal address: Box 2025, SE-174 02 Sundbyberg, Sweden
Telephone: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: sida@sida.se Web: sida.se/en

Sida