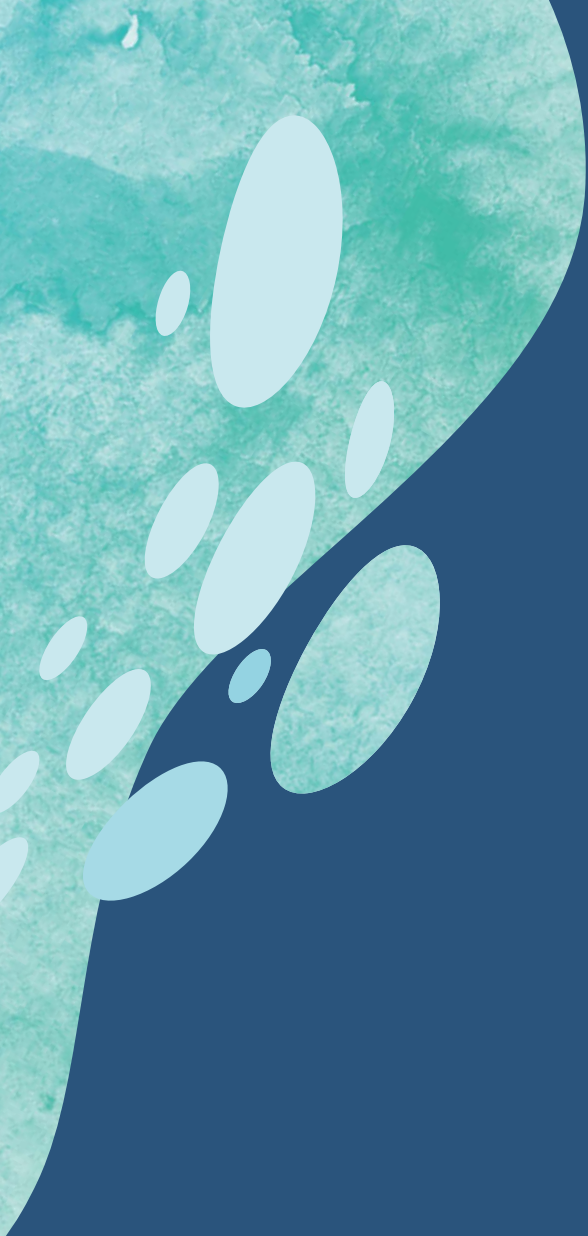


Research and Innovation for Water Security

IWMI Strategy 2024–2030

Driving Action • Propelling Change





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Message from the Board Chair and Director General

Exploitation of a finite planet has led to ecological breakdown, dangerous pollution and climate crisis. Young people across the world have risen in defiance to demand a transformed future, in which respect for nature and a safe and stable climate are the foundation for just and sustainable societies.

Solutions for water security will be essential for a just transition to a sustainable future. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. António Guterres, said at the conclusion of the UN Water Conference in New York in March 2023, “All of humanity’s hopes for the future depend, in some way, on charting a new, science-based course to bring the Water Action Agenda to life.”

The IWMI Strategy 2024–2030 responds to that call. Since its founding 40 years ago, IWMI has contributed to water management in the Global South through new knowledge, research and innovation. Given the scale of changes now needed, IWMI is ready to do more. We recognize that solutions to complex water problems are most successful when scientists work together with policy, development, business and investment communities. Today, IWMI’s priority is to push the boundaries of excellence in our research for development and raise ambition for collective action on water security.

The design of this strategy has been guided by questions and grounded realities from across IWMI’s rich and diverse network of partners. Government ministers have asked us directly, “How will we manage future water risks?” and “Will there be enough water to meet our development goals?” Partners have stressed to us that water security must be for all and asked, “How do we make sure no one is left behind?”

With young water leaders, we convened the Transformative Futures for Water Security dialogue and heard clear priorities from across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. Our strategy sets out how IWMI will contribute to

these priorities through research and innovation in collective action partnerships.

The IWMI Strategy 2024–2030 builds on our previous strategy, launched in 2019, and our achievements since then. Based on our research, results on the ground and partnerships spanning local to global levels, we have gained influence and grown significantly. We brought leadership to the water agenda and helped ensure that the world keeps its focus on water security.

We used our 2019–2023 strategy to steer IWMI’s entry into the One CGIAR integrated partnership. A shared agenda for water is now emerging across CGIAR that recognizes that a food-secure future is possible only in a water-secure world. The One CGIAR Water Systems Integration Roadmap, developed with inputs from across CGIAR, accompanies the IWMI Strategy and uses the same strategic framework to align water-related research in CGIAR for the first time. We are set to break new ground by integrating IWMI and CGIAR-wide capabilities to apply science, from genes to basins, in building water security.

As we mark IWMI’s 40th anniversary in 2024, this strategy sets course for the next stage in our organizational journey. We must align with others to transform water security and create the integrated solutions needed for food security, nature and climate change on the pathway to a just and sustainable future. On behalf of the Board of Governors and the senior management of IWMI, we invite all who share this ambition to join us.



Simi Kamal
Chair, Board of Governors



Mark Smith
Director General

Water Security — A Defining Challenge for Development

The urgency of water security is growing.

Vulnerability to water insecurity is highest for poor people in the Global South. These are the people least able to cope with scarcity and pollution, or droughts and floods made more frequent and severe by climate change. Those who are often marginalized, including women and youth, are least able to achieve the changes needed to improve water security. Water insecurity threatens global commitments to 'leave no one behind.'

Water insecurity triggers hardships for families, farmers, cities and countries, contributes to migration and aggravates fragility and conflict across the globe. Its impacts are not only local but are amplified through global interconnections that can disrupt distant markets and supply chains, put business value at risk and propagate instability through the global financial system.

Water security is essential for a safe, just and sustainable future. Water is vital for the future of food systems, the energy transition, human health and the conservation of nature. Strengthening water security will advance equality for women and men, reduce poverty, and facilitate cooperation for peace and security. The transformative agenda agreed to in the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Global Biodiversity Framework depends on a water-secure future.

Water security means achieving and sustaining access to an acceptable quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, ecosystems and

production, coupled with an acceptable level of water-related risks to people, environments and economies.

Water security is becoming harder to achieve. Climate change is causing water risks to increase with every increment of warming. Rural communities and smallholder farmers are most exposed to hunger from drying soils in a hotter world. Fears are rising that climate change could outpace adaptation where vulnerability is highest, and future water security therefore depends on both climate change mitigation and adaptation. Alongside the global energy transition, there must be an urgent transition to water security.

Change is needed across the water system. Water systems are complex, and are shaped by physical, ecological, social, economic and political influences. Transforming water systems entails delivering and scaling sustainable solutions for water across food, land, energy and ecosystems, to reduce future water risks and strengthen social and gender equality. Progress is contingent on lifting barriers caused by lack of data and information, weak water governance, social exclusion, gaps in knowledge and skills, and lack of finance.

Now is the time to accelerate this agenda. Convergence on collective action is key, aligning governments, the private sector and civil society to catalyze and scale change in water systems. Advances in knowledge, research and innovation are needed to strengthen the policies, investment and action that will drive transformation for future water security.

Five Wicked Water Problems

Water security is complex and multifaceted; it is a 'wicked problem' that cuts across global challenges.

HUNGER



3.2B people

live in regions where agriculture contends with high levels of water stress

Agriculture accounts for

72%

of global freshwater withdrawals, the highest of all sectors

Climate change is projected to put 8 to

80M people

at risk of hunger by 2050

POVERTY AND EXCLUSION



2B people

lacked safely managed services for drinking water and 3.6 billion for sanitation in 2020

In the next decade, climate change will drive

32-132M

more people into extreme poverty

Female extreme poverty is set to rise to

17.1%

under the worst climate change scenario

ECOSYSTEM BREAKDOWN



80%

of wastewater is released untreated into the environment in South Asia and Africa South of the Sahara

Over the last 50 years, water stored in nature dropped by

27,000B m³

3.4M km²

of wetlands have been lost worldwide, an area larger than India

CLIMATE BEYOND 2°C



4B people

experience severe water scarcity for at least one month each year

1.65B people

have been impacted by floods since 2000, with future flood risk potentially doubling between 1.5 and 2°C of global warming

Climate change adaptation is effective in reducing risks to a varying extent, but **future projected effectiveness falls sharply beyond 2°C**

DEEP UNCERTAINTY



Past water data and information are increasingly disconnected from future water problems

Probabilities for future water risks are unknown because of climate change

Lock-in to water insecurity is a risk where vulnerabilities are highest

The International Water Management Institute — Our Response

Our mission is research and innovation in partnerships for collective action that advance the transformation of water systems for sustainable, just and climate-resilient development.

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) is an international organization dedicated to water security. **Our vision is a water-secure world.**

IWMI develops, tests and scales science-based solutions for water management in the Global South and uses knowledge and evidence to strengthen policy and investment for water security. We aim to deliver excellence in research and apply our research-for-development model through diverse, collective action partnerships to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes.

IWMI's 2024–2030 Strategy is an ambitious agenda for research and innovation on water security. It reflects the complexity and severity of current and

future challenges in water management. It aims to use research for development to accelerate progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All – as well as national and regional development priorities.

IWMI's strategy responds to demand. Our host governments and partners expect us to tackle the rapidly growing need to transform future water security. Partners have called on us to increase the contributions we make and the impacts we achieve. Our research and innovation strategy for 2024–2030 is therefore backed by an action plan to drive partnerships, growth and higher organizational performance.

Our Values

Excellence

We use our skills and expertise to generate rigorous, relevant and high-quality evidence and aspire to the highest standards in everything we do.

Collaboration

We work with our colleagues and partners to develop multidisciplinary, contextually relevant solutions to complex problems.

Inclusivity

We believe in human dignity regardless of gender, identity, background or circumstance.

Integrity

We are accountable and build trust and respect with each other and our partners, maintaining strong ethics, with zero tolerance for harassment, intimidation or discrimination.

Our Foundational Ways of Working

- We commit to co-developing knowledge in the countries and communities where we work and co-ownership of research outputs and solutions.
- We respond to our partners' needs and listen to critical questions and feedback.
- We value diverse ways of knowing.
- We strive to deliver development outcomes and impacts based on rigorous, unbiased research.
- We comply with stringent data protection policies.

IWMI in the CGIAR System

IWMI is a CGIAR Research Center. CGIAR is a global research partnership dedicated to transforming food, land and water systems for a safe, healthy and sustainable future that is resilient to climate change and in which biodiversity is conserved.

One CGIAR is an integrated partnership that combines the complementary mandates of CGIAR Research Centers in a more unified and integrated way to tackle the complex challenges of food, land and water systems in the twenty-first century and their interrelationships with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

IWMI's strategy contributes to the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy. The IWMI Strategy 2024-2030 and the companion One CGIAR Water Systems Integration Roadmap 2024-2030 elaborate how water systems science contributes to the CGIAR mission to deliver science and innovation that advance the transformation of food, land and water systems in a climate crisis.

IWMI leads water systems science in the CGIAR partnership and its contributions to CGIAR's mission and Sustainable Development Goal 2 – End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture. Partnership within CGIAR, in turn, enhances the scale and impact of IWMI's contributions to future water security.

IWMI's 2024-2030 Strategy is fully aligned with the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy through delivery into the five CGIAR Impact Areas: (i) climate adaptation and mitigation; (ii) environmental health and biodiversity; (iii) gender equality, youth and social inclusion; (iv) nutrition, health and food security; and (v) poverty reduction, livelihoods and jobs.

Global Recognition

IWMI's 2024-2030 Strategy builds on our 40-year track record of rigorous, solutions-oriented water management research. Results from our research have led to changes in water management that have reduced poverty and hunger, advanced gender equality and social inclusion, restored ecosystems and strengthened water security. Throughout our history, we have sustained our commitment to on-the-ground presence across Asia and Africa and long-term local, country and regional partnerships.

IWMI was awarded the prestigious Stockholm Water Prize in 2012 and the Prince Albert II of Monaco Water Award in 2020.



Demand for Water Research and Innovation

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All of humanity's hopes for the future depend, in some way, on charting a new, science-based course to bring the Water Action Agenda to life.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
Secretary-General of the
United Nations,
2023 Water Conference

The world's transformative agenda is off-track, and research and innovation must respond.

Water in the Global Agenda

Water is integral to all of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It underpins progress on poverty, hunger, health, gender equality, inclusive growth and ecosystem conservation. In 2022, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) recognized the need to integrate water management into climate action. In the Global Biodiversity Framework, governments agreed that solutions for the biodiversity crisis must incorporate the management and restoration of inland waters and their ecosystem services. Still, the available solutions to meet these commitments fall short.

The UN 2023 Water Conference, the first intergovernmental conference on water since 1977, was convened to galvanize action on SDG 6 and accelerate inclusive, sustainable and climate-resilient development through water. The conference concluded that the global water cycle should be managed as a global common good and that delays in meeting the human right to safe water and sanitation must end. The participants affirmed that water is an indispensable catalyst for health and well-being, and for securing food and nutrition security and energy for all.

The conference called for policies that will enable scaling and acceleration of progress towards water security. Policies must align priorities for water across sectors, particularly agriculture and energy, and integrate efforts across national, regional and global levels to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation through water. Policies must promote inclusive and transparent cooperation across boundaries, connect rural and urban

water management in a rapidly urbanizing world and prioritize affordable local solutions. Public and private financing for water must increase in developing countries and be reconfigured to meet the needs of the environment and of women and excluded people.

Priorities for action on water security were to:

- ➔ Reduce water risks because of floods, droughts and climatic extremes, and to human health and ecosystems from wastewater and pollution;
- ➔ Guarantee inclusion and equality in access to water and the benefits of water use, including through diverse water values and ways of knowing;
- ➔ Manage water sustainably by balancing supply and demand, applying solutions for storage integrating built and natural infrastructure, and breaking the reliance on increases in water consumption for higher food and energy production where they cannot be sustained; and
- ➔ Ensure access to data and information for early warning, decision-making, cooperation and accountability for inclusive, sustainable and resilient water futures.

Governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, scientists and grassroots representatives gathered at the UN Water Conference and agreed that they must combine their efforts through collective action. This echoes and complements the agenda for transformation of food systems elevated globally at the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. Water and food systems, and the drivers for their transformation, are interdependent, and solutions for change in each will have to work for both.

The Water Action Agenda

The UN 2023 Water Conference launched the Water Action Agenda, which documents over 800 commitments to action and investment by governments, the private sector, civil society, advocacy groups, international organizations and the research community. IWMI's commitment to the Water Action Agenda was to build and support coalitions for collective action on high-ambition missions to transform water systems through our *Transformative Futures for Water Security* initiative.

Transforming Water Futures

Prior to the UN 2023 Water Conference, IWMI co-convoked the *Transformative Futures for Water Security* dialogue with partners from the

Global South. Working jointly with networks of youth leaders, we asked representatives from the policy, business, development and science communities about how to transform future water security. More than 1,000 contributors from more than 440 organizations came together to generate eight high-ambition missions for science-based, collective action on water security (see Figure 1).

Missions provide stakeholders with shared priorities for collective action to accelerate change in water systems at scale. They give IWMI a framework for demand-led research and innovation. Our commitment is that our knowledge, research and innovations contribute to achieving these missions through partnerships. This is how we bridge the science-policy-action gap.

TRANSFORMATIVE FUTURES FOR WATER SECURITY

The Transformative Futures for Water Security dialogue brought together more than 1,000 representatives from 440 organizations, including national and local governments, youth networks, civil society, the private sector, researchers and knowledge creators, investors and water users across sectors. Regional dialogues were held in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, West and Central Africa, and Latin America before a final conference in South Africa in February 2023. Participants called for mission-driven, collective action on water security to catalyze convergence on policy change, investment, private sector and community action and innovation.

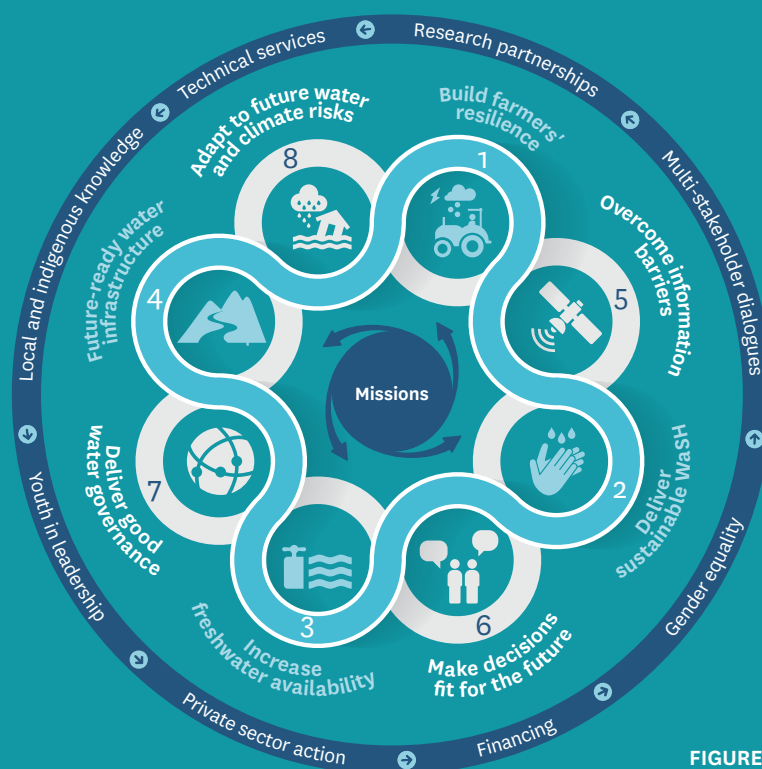
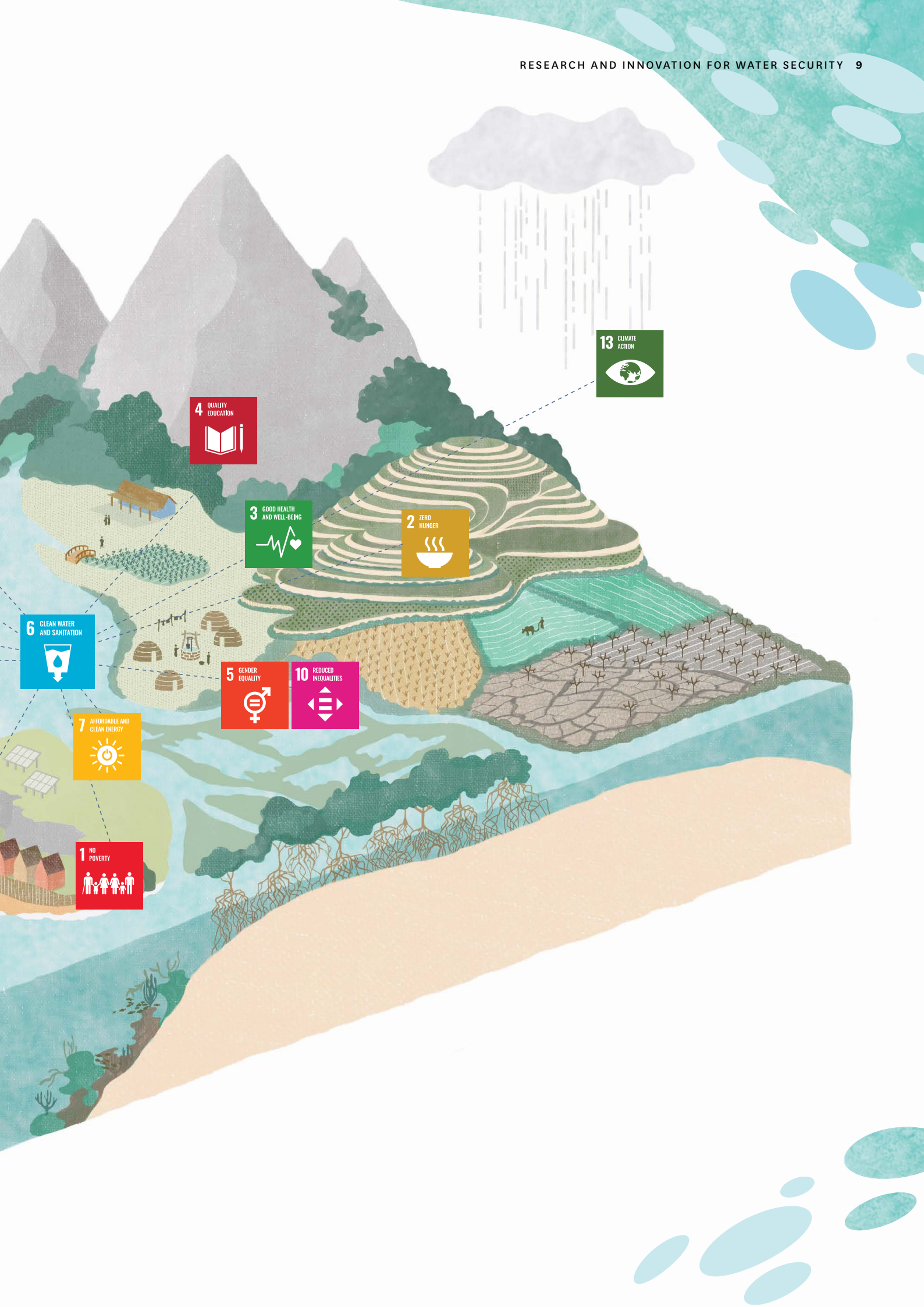


FIGURE 1.
Transformative
Missions and
Systemic Levers.

Water's Impact Across Sustainable Development Goals





Strategic Challenges for Water Security

IWMI's priorities for research and innovation are guided by strategic challenges centered on water risks, reducing inequalities and managing water within sustainable limits.

Water risks

Communities are exposed to drought and flood risks because of inadequate infrastructure, ineffective institutions, and disjointed planning, management and policies across sectors. Now, with climate change, they face deep uncertainty about future water risks because probabilities for extreme events are increasingly unknown.

Worldwide, over 3.6 billion people lack access to safe sanitation and more than 350 cubic kilometers of untreated municipal wastewater are discharged into rivers, lakes and seas annually. Water pollution caused by urbanization and agricultural intensification, including the expansion of livestock production and aquaculture, put public health, biodiversity and food security at risk.

Inequalities

Over 2 billion people still lack safe access to clean drinking water. Marginalized groups face the highest levels of water insecurity. Women and girls collectively spend 200 million hours annually fetching water which hinders their educational and economic opportunities. They often lack access to water for productive purposes because they are excluded from decision-making and opportunities to develop skills and access financing. Exclusion makes it hard for young people to achieve their goals. These disparities leave women, youth and marginalized communities more vulnerable to water risks and climate change. Failure to recognize the multiple ecological, cultural and spiritual values of water and their associated and diverse knowledge systems further reinforces exclusion and inequality.



Sustainability

Global demand for water for all uses is expected to rise by 20–30% by 2050, with agricultural demand for water continuing to increase with the growing demand for food. The number of food-insecure people is also rising, and water productivity in agri-food systems must therefore increase, to produce more food using less water while concurrently meeting water needs for health, energy, cities and ecosystems. Where future irrigation demand cannot be met within sustainable limits, water will have to be moved out of agriculture.

Investment needs for water infrastructure, to meet future demand, manage risks and achieve the SDGs, are estimated at USD 22.6 trillion by 2050. This should blend built and natural infrastructure and multisector solutions, while integrating biodiversity conservation and the needs of women and men and future generations. There is, in addition, considerable potential to reduce water scarcity using circular management, including water reuse and resource recovery from wastewater, as well as desalination and atmospheric water harvesting. But, technological, financing and policy barriers will have to be overcome before widespread application is achieved.

Enabling change

IWMI's research and innovation are also guided by strategic challenges that impede change on pathways to transforming future water security. A persistent lack of reliable water data and information is a widespread constraint on water management in the Global South. Weak governance, caused by fragmented policy and regulatory frameworks, inadequate compliance and enforcement of laws, low capacity and lack of participation, similarly holds back progress. In addition, barriers to inclusion and to women's participation and equality are more difficult to overcome where there is inadequate understanding of how to change gender norms or how gender and social differences intersect and shape inequalities in water use and vulnerability to climate change. Shortcomings in scaling of innovations and in financing for water are also major obstacles to enabling the changes needed for future water security.



IWMI's Research and Innovation

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The water crisis is a systemic challenge — we need proactive, science-based solutions for the water crisis — but knowing is not enough; we must apply

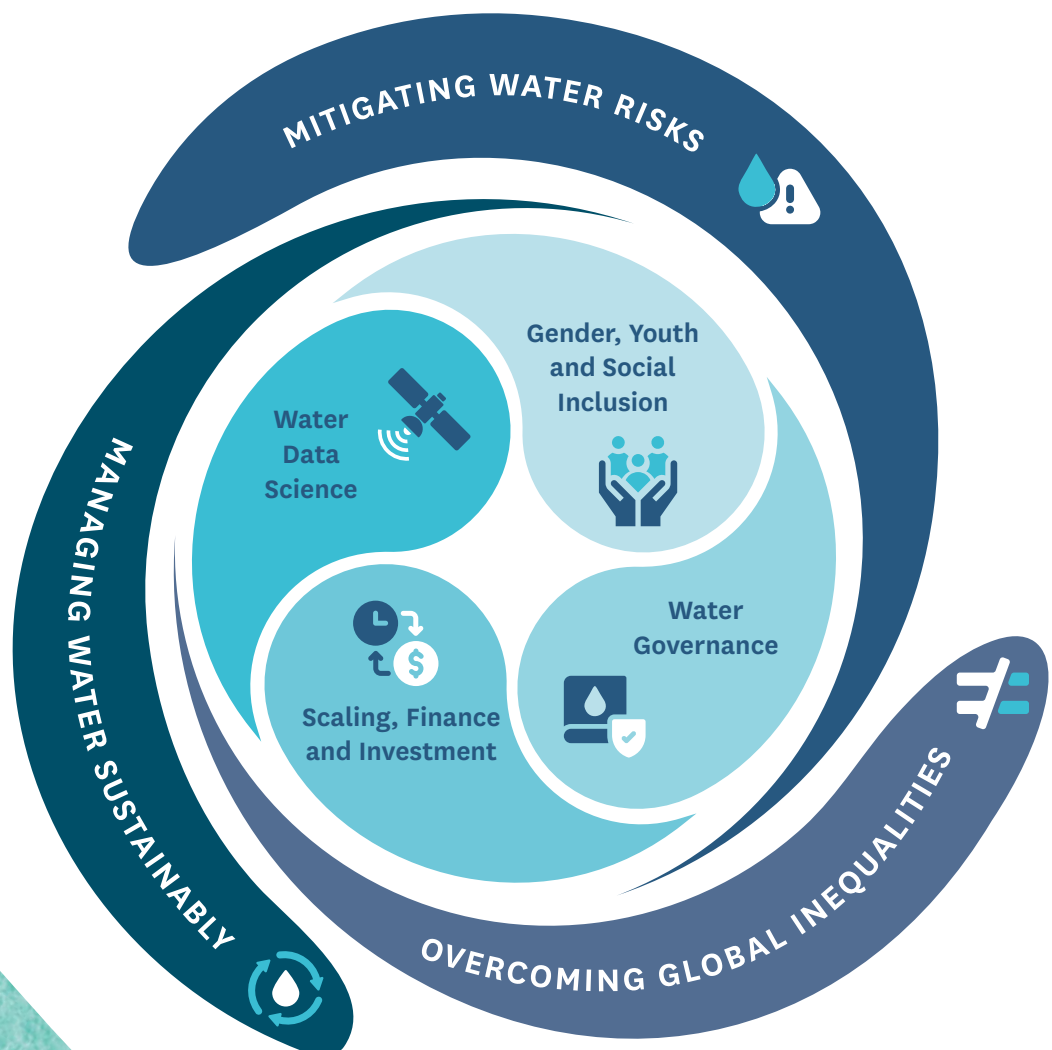
H.E. CSABA KÖRÖSI,
President, UN General
Assembly

IWMI's 2024-2030 Strategy applies agile, interdisciplinary and systems-oriented research for development to address complex water problems.

By harnessing the power of collective action, we aim to ensure that adaptive, robust solutions have lasting impacts. We focus on IWMI's comparative advantages and research excellence to leverage

the complementary capacities of our partners to achieve joint social, economic and environmental outcomes.

FIGURE 2. Strategic Focus Areas and Transformational Levers.



Our three Strategic Focus Areas are (Figure 2):

- ➔ Mitigating Water Risks
- ➔ Overcoming Global Inequalities
- ➔ Managing Water Sustainably

These Strategic Focus Areas are interdependent. Outcomes from each depend on progress in the others. They are further enabled by four Transformational Levers (Figure 2):

- ➔ Water Data Science
- ➔ Water Governance
- ➔ Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion
- ➔ Scaling, Finance and Investment

Outcomes from Transformational Levers contribute to progress in each Strategic Focus Area.

IWMI's strategic framework aligns with the CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy and its five Impact Areas. Priorities and outcomes also contribute to the Transformative Futures for Water Security missions in support of partners and stakeholders (see Figure 1).

Strategic Focus Area: Mitigating Water Risks

Farmers, communities, policymakers, the private sector, planners and investors seek new data, knowledge, capabilities and strategies for managing future water risks. They need answers to the question: **How can we manage future water risks?**

MITIGATING WATER RISKS

- ➔ Risks from droughts and floods are reduced
- ➔ Future water risks are integrated into climate resilience
- ➔ Low-emission, climate-adaptive development contributes to decarbonizing water systems
- ➔ Water pollution is reduced and lowers risks to human health and ecosystems
- ➔ Communities affected by fragility, conflict and migration are made more resilient

OUTCOME

Water risks are reduced, and climate action integrates strategies to anticipate and respond with agility to current and future changes in water risks

Reducing risks from droughts, floods and compound systemic water risks. IWMI will enhance drought and flood forecasting and early warning systems to help decision-makers at farm to regional scales make more timely decisions. We will identify the underlying causes of vulnerability and facilitate data-driven anticipatory action across institutional and sector silos.

In agriculture, we will further strengthen water risk management for farmers by scaling bundled solutions for flood and drought that combine index-based insurance, advisory services, seed and agronomic technologies, and climate-smart agriculture.

Working through partners, we will co-design strategies for water resilience that focus on governance, inclusion, data sharing and exchange, capacities and infrastructure, including nature-based solutions. We will work with governments, basin organizations and financial institutions to re-tool planning, investment and policies for deep uncertainty in future water risks.

Decarbonizing water systems. IWMI will continue to develop, test and scale water management for low-emission, climate-adaptive development pathways. We will advance the renewable energy transition in water management through technologies such as solar-powered irrigation, and assess the implications for water policy and management of transition to energy technologies such as hydropower, solar and green hydrogen. We will use energy-intensity data for water abstraction, storage, supply, use and recycling to guide emission reduction.

Our research will deliver evidence of climate change mitigation co-benefits for methane emissions from recycling wastewater and sanitation waste, and for water-related adaptation, including nature-based solutions that integrate wetland and landscape restoration.

We will use data and evidence to inform climate financing for water security, implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions and policy coherence across sectors.

Reducing water pollution. To protect water supplies and reduce risks to human health and ecosystems caused by water pollution and waste, we will apply our proven solutions to scale business models and strengthen policy for recycling and safe wastewater reuse and off-grid sanitation. We will continue to apply our modelling capabilities to reduce the spread of aquatic contaminants, including anti-microbial resistance, and develop new applications to reducing microplastic contamination.

Through deeper collaborations within CGIAR, we will develop and test solutions for water pollution in rural communities – caused by crop, livestock and aquaculture production – to improve food safety and reduce waterborne diseases.

Building resilience in communities affected by fragility, conflict and migration. IWMI will apply water risk assessment tools and solutions to address the needs of communities, humanitarian organizations, and local and national governments. We will further assess the interconnectivity among climate-related water risks, institutional capacities, fragility and conflict as a basis for strengthening anticipatory action. Our research will help humanitarian organizations plan, design, coordinate and implement water interventions in emergency and post-conflict situations.

Strategic Focus Area: Overcoming Global Inequalities

Policymakers, financial institutions, and development and humanitarian agencies want to integrate evidence-based recommendations for social transformation into policy, planning, program design and implementation. They need answers to the question: **How do we make sure there is water security for all, and no one is left behind?**

OVERCOMING GLOBAL INEQUALITIES

- ➔ Water is managed in ways that ensure equal access for all
- ➔ Women, youth and marginalized groups have equal access to the knowledge, skills and tools to mitigate water risks
- ➔ Incomes, livelihoods, and water and food security are improved for women, youth and people in poor communities
- ➔ Diverse knowledge and values are considered in decision-making on infrastructure, ecosystems, landscapes and water management
- ➔ Youth leadership on water security is strengthened through inclusion.



OUTCOME

Gender equality, and youth and social inclusion are improved to make the benefits of water security more equal, reduce poverty and ensure that water management leaves no one behind

Equality in accessing and managing water resources.

IWMI will develop and apply transformative approaches to gender equality and social inclusion in water management and decision-making. We will use our results to champion water services, technologies, learning and skill development that remove barriers to women's equality and youth and social inclusion, cater to differences in user preferences and community needs, and encompass both productive and non-productive uses of water. We will assess the impacts of restricted access to clean water on human health and create frameworks to guide transparent and fair water trading, pricing and allocation across sectors and users.

Our scaling pathways for innovations and management will adapt and apply business and financial models that promote inclusion and equality supported by impact assessments to gauge trade-offs, risks and unintended consequences.

Incomes, livelihoods, and water and food security.

IWMI will integrate equality and inclusion into research and applications addressing water and food security and assess how they affect the distribution of benefits. We will explore how equal access to water resources, innovations and risk management translates into development gains for women and marginalized groups and quantify adverse impacts and maladaptation.

Our research will encompass the protection and recognition of rights in accessing, managing and using water in food and energy systems. We will apply principles of feminist political economy to guide policies, programs and investments to achieve a more even distribution of benefits.

Use of diverse water values and knowledge.

IWMI is committed to including a wider range of stakeholder interests and choices in water management by integrating diverse values and knowledge systems, including indigenous

knowledge, in negotiation and decision-making. We will build on our experience integrating formal and customary law in hybrid water law and support inclusive basin planning and water allocation to meet diverse user preferences and needs. We will develop and apply evidence to guide the alignment of institutional reforms with the interests of all community members, especially those who have been historically marginalized.

Youth leadership. We aim to empower young people to tackle current water challenges and lay the foundation for future water security. Our innovation accelerators and partnerships for small enterprise incubation will empower youth to be entrepreneurs and leaders in water innovation, businesses and management. We will develop capacity sharing programs that are flexible and responsive to the needs of disadvantaged groups. We will use this shift toward youth leadership to promote intergenerational accountability for water.

Strategic Focus Area: Managing Water Sustainably

National and local governments, multilateral financial institutions, development partners, farmers and the private sector need answers to the question: **Will there be water to meet our development goals?**

MANAGING WATER SUSTAINABLY

- ➔ Food security and farmers' livelihoods are improved in irrigated and rainfed agriculture
- ➔ Water is moved out of agriculture where future demand is unsustainable
- ➔ Water scarcity is reduced by scaling circular management and non-conventional water innovations
- ➔ Nature-based solutions for water and environmental flows improve biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration
- ➔ Water infrastructure and allocation decisions are made using information on trade-offs and options for built, natural and groundwater storage



OUTCOME

Sustainable solutions to meet growing and competing demands for freshwater are applied with increasing scale and speed

Improving food security and farmer livelihoods.

IWMI will empower small-scale farmers through farmer-led irrigation, renewable energy solutions (e.g., solar irrigation) and multiple-use water systems to address productive and non-productive water needs in rural, peri-urban and urban settings. In large irrigation schemes, we will tackle suboptimal performance, for example, by combining institutional incentives, pricing mechanisms and community-led governance.

We will apply research on scalable solutions for water storage while optimizing soil water management in rainfed agriculture. Our research will address soil health related to water-holding capacity and salinity to increase production while reducing water use along the rainfed to irrigation continuum.

We will use the evidence and data we generate to advance policy coherence in the water and food sectors to avoid development drivers in agriculture that jeopardize water systems.

Moving water out of agriculture. While water is essential in agriculture, we will explore pathways for moving water out of agriculture where future demand is not sustainable. We will assess the use of crop diversification, precision agriculture and non-agricultural revenue streams to keep water use within sustainable limits, and applications of hydroponics and vertical farming to curb water use in food production. IWMI will apply multiscale forecasts of green and blue water use in agriculture, livestock production and aquaculture to understand how future needs can be met when scaling innovations.

Building on our long-term experience in wastewater reuse and recycling, IWMI will further develop circular economy applications to reduce water withdrawals for agriculture. Our focus will be the feasibility and acceptance of circular solutions, including integration of safe reuse, resource recycling, desalination using renewable energy and water swaps to create sustainable water systems at watershed scale.

We will assess how trade influences drivers for water use in agriculture and search for evidence to help eliminate perverse incentives for excess water use through policy coherence across sectors.

Biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration.

IWMI will test and scale solutions for managing and restoring wetlands to deliver ecosystem services for urban water supply and resilience, and food and nutrition security, including fisheries. We will further develop and apply knowledge of environmental flows to the management of river systems. We will develop financing criteria for nature-based solutions by quantifying performance and trade-offs across objectives. We will apply natural capital accounting in crafting incentives for inclusion of ecosystem services in water investments. We will apply our evidence to the strengthening of policy coherence for water and biodiversity.

Water infrastructure and allocation decisions.

IWMI will further develop water accounting frameworks and their applications to the adaptive management of the water balance for current conditions and future climate scenarios. To help reduce the growing water storage gap, we will develop solutions for integrating built, natural and groundwater storage in basin planning and investment. To reduce groundwater depletion, our research will continue to strengthen sustainable groundwater management and scale solutions for aquifer recharge.

We will develop and apply assessments of trade-offs in the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus to support water allocation and integrated planning. Through partnerships with advanced research consortia, we will apply cutting-edge analytical tools for designing and operating infrastructure portfolios to balance multi-sector performance for water, climate, energy, food and ecosystems.

IWMI's Regional Strategic Focus

STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS	WEST AFRICA	EAST AFRICA	SOUTHERN AFRICA
 MITIGATING WATER RISKS	• Food system resilience to climate change and water risks • Early warning for early action on flood and drought • Water pollution control and waste management to reduce risks for human health and ecosystems	• Mitigation of drought risks and responsiveness to drought emergencies • Flood forecasting and community-based flood early warning • Water security in fragile and conflict-affected situations	• Climate-resilient agricultural practices • Risk management for water scarcity, pollution and climate change impacts • Inclusive digital tools for disaster risk management
 OVERCOMING GLOBAL INEQUALITIES	• Gender equality and social inclusion in water governance • Inclusion of women and youth in scaling of innovations • Inclusive and sustainable private sector investment	• Social inclusion and gender equality in conservation agriculture • Access to land, water and solutions to increase water productivity • Gender-responsive data, information and capacity for water resilience	• Equitable access to resources, decision-making and benefits • Adoption barriers for irrigation and sanitation innovations • Water policies to transcend colonial legacies and build coherence across sectors
 MANAGING WATER SUSTAINABLY	• Scaling innovation bundles for irrigation and multiple-use water systems • Optimizing infrastructure planning for energy, food security, ecosystems and sanitation, integrating circular solutions • Water storage solutions integrating built infrastructure, ecosystems and groundwater	• Soil and water conservation to reduce environmental degradation and raise productivity • Planning and financing for watershed management • Knowledge and data for transboundary water management	• Accelerators for scaling across the value chain for water-smart innovations • Groundwater availability, quality and sustainable management • Integrated catchment management, water allocation and ecosystem restoration



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA	CENTRAL ASIA	SOUTH ASIA	SOUTHEAST ASIA
• Preparedness for droughts, floods and future water risks • Climate information systems, policy and financing for climate resilience • Resilience of affected populations in fragile and conflict-affected areas	• Adaptation to changing water availability in agriculture • Early warning and resilience to climate change impacts in vulnerability hotspots • Control of pollution and wastewater treatment and reuse to raise water system resilience	• Adaptation integrating early warning, anticipatory action and climate-smart agriculture • Renewable energy transition in irrigation • Solutions for water quality, health risks and urban resilience	• Agricultural resilience to climate change and variability • Greenhouse gas mitigation in rice-based farming systems • Transboundary cooperation in flow management for downstream flood and drought resilience
• Participation of women and youth in water governance • Gender norms in water management and agriculture • Inclusive and culturally-appropriate business models for water services	• Empowerment of women and youth in adaptation and water management • Gender and social differentiation in water security solutions • Knowledge sharing for co-creation of solutions	• Differential vulnerabilities to climate, environmental and economic crisis • Voice of women, youth and marginalized groups • Capacities for inclusive solutions in public, private and civil sectors	• Governance enabling water access for poor people. • Inclusion in hydropower planning and decisions • Empowerment of women and youth in livelihoods impacted by large dams
• Water-saving irrigation technologies and practices • Enabling environment for wastewater reuse and non-conventional water solutions • Multi-sector solutions for water, energy and food security and ecosystem conservation	• Precision irrigation, crop diversification and conservation agriculture • Multi-sector solutions for energy transition and water allocation • Wetland and watershed restoration for resilience, climate mitigation and biodiversity	• Irrigation modernization, water productivity and reduced diversion of freshwater • Control of groundwater depletion and demand management in agriculture • Wetland and mountain spring restoration	• Diversification and productivity of food systems within sustainable water limits • Groundwater governance and management • Basin futures integrating hydropower, biodiversity, fisheries and food systems

Transformational Levers

Transformational Levers deliver evidence and solutions to enable, scale and accelerate outcomes across the Strategic Focus Areas.



Water Data Science

Advances in data science are revolutionizing data analytics just as the urgency of water security is rising. The availability of water data and access to data across the spectrum of water stakeholders is poised to change radically. For these innovations to deliver on their potential to accelerate water security, data analytics and applications of data

and information must meet the needs and priorities of the Global South.

IWMI's strategy will leverage water data science to close data and information gaps and develop and apply data analytics that leverage the power of artificial intelligence (AI).

CLOSING DATA AND INFORMATION GAPS

- ✓ Increasing data availability using the latest advances in remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS) and the Internet of Things
- ✓ Harmonizing fragmented public and private data sources using AI
- ✓ Using AI to disaggregate data for gender, age and other social differences
- ✓ Decision support systems that integrate modelling, socioeconomic data analytics and Earth observation
- ✓ Digital dashboards for equal access to data

DATA ANALYTICS LEVERAGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

- ✓ AI tools for near real-time optimization of decisions at farm-to-basin levels
- ✓ Water accounting for current and future climate scenarios, and demand forecasting for food, energy and ecosystems
- ✓ Social inclusion analytics to target water innovations
- ✓ Scenario assessments for risk mitigation
- ✓ Digital twins at farm-to-basin levels to support water governance, investment and integrated planning



Water Governance

Policies, laws and institutions and an effective regulatory regime are essential to facilitating, scaling and accelerating the changes needed to manage water risks, implement sustainable solutions and overcome inequalities in water management. Water governance must link to and align with water management across sectors and scales to advance transformation in water systems.

Improving water governance is a powerful lever for delivering outcomes across IWMI's Strategic Focus Areas. We will strengthen IWMI's role in enhancing water governance at local, national and transboundary levels and in improving the coherence of water policies and strategies across sectors and uses.

WATER GOVERNANCE AT LOCAL, NATIONAL AND TRANSBOUNDARY LEVELS

- ✓ Facilitating participation in multistakeholder platforms
- ✓ Facilitating data transparency and accessibility
- ✓ Promoting cooperative governance models with equality for women, youth and vulnerable groups
- ✓ Assisting with governance for water quality, irrigation and groundwater sustainability
- ✓ Supporting regional and basin organizations to implement transboundary water management

COHERENCE OF WATER POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ACROSS SECTORS AND USES

- ✓ Aligning agricultural water use and sector policies for water, food and energy security
- ✓ Climate action integrating adaptive water management, investment and water resilience
- ✓ Policies for upscaling anticipatory action in fragile and conflict-affected areas
- ✓ Demand-driven technical support for Nationally Determined Contribution and National Action Plan implementation



Gender, Youth and Social Inclusion

Better knowledge of the root causes of exclusion and barriers to change, and how these vary across social groups, is needed to make policies and interventions more effective in promoting gender equality, and youth and social inclusion. With clearer evidence and data-driven diagnostics, integrating strategies to reduce inequalities into solutions for resilience, sustainability and water

management that leave no one behind can be more successful.

IWMI's strategy will leverage research on the root causes of gender inequality and youth and social exclusion and on how to open more space in water management for the voices of women, youth and people in poor communities.

IDENTIFYING THE ROOT CAUSES OF GENDER, YOUTH AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

- ✓ Generating data and evidence on the root causes of inequalities and exclusion and how to address them
- ✓ Applying an intersectional lens to build our knowledge of power relations shaping water management
- ✓ Using evidence to challenge and eliminate hierarchies that prevent women's participation in decision-making
- ✓ Assessing how intergenerational differences influence the adoption of water solutions and change

VOICE AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND POOR COMMUNITIES

- ✓ Engaging communities in water research to ensure it reflects local realities, values, needs and preferences
- ✓ Empowering communities to use citizen science
- ✓ Empowering disadvantaged groups to strengthen their agency in water governance
- ✓ Open and inclusive communication channels for research results, data and policies



Scaling, Finance and Investment

Financing for water is a barrier to future water security and there are opportunities to improve the application of evidence to direct financial flows for increased impact and better targeting of inclusive investments. Scaling water solutions needs pipelines of innovations backed by a strengthened ecosystem for public and private finance, enabling policies, incentives and partnerships.

IWMI's strategy will strengthen scaling of innovation for water security and enhance the application of evidence from our research in data-driven support tools for investment, strengthening financing for water and repurposing of subsidies.

SCALING WATER INNOVATIONS FOR WATER SECURITY

- ✓ Create innovation pipelines that balance reduced risk, sustainability and inclusion
- ✓ Foster multistakeholder engagement to overcome barriers to adoption
- ✓ Create adaptive scaling pathways to integrate future water risks and ensure equal opportunities along value chains
- ✓ Support evidence-based policies to facilitate financing, private sector engagement and scaling water innovations

FINANCING FOR WATER, REPURPOSING SUBSIDIES AND DATA-DRIVEN TOOLS FOR INVESTMENT DECISIONS

- ✓ New partnerships with the multilateral, public and private sectors to apply evidence for investment
- ✓ Impact evaluations to target innovation financing
- ✓ Data-driven tools to address future water risks, sustainability and inclusion in financing decisions
- ✓ Analytics to support repurposing subsidies
- ✓ Data to support investments for water resilience and decarbonizing water systems through climate finance

Advancing Change — A Stronger IWMI Enabling Impact

The urgency of water security demands changes at scale and with speed.

To respond to this challenge, IWMI will ramp up the contributions we make, but we too must change. Our 2024–2030 Strategy combines research and innovation with ambitious plans to transform IWMI (Figure 3).

IWMI's business is research and partnerships. From research excellence, we create new knowledge and know-how for water management with networks of partners connected through our offices across Asia and Africa, our projects in more than 50 countries across the Global South and our membership in CGIAR. In 2024–2030, we will embed IWMI's research for development in collective action for water security to elevate our role in bridging the science-policy-action gap. We will use our comparative advantages to strengthen the role of knowledge, research and innovation in partnerships for collective action.

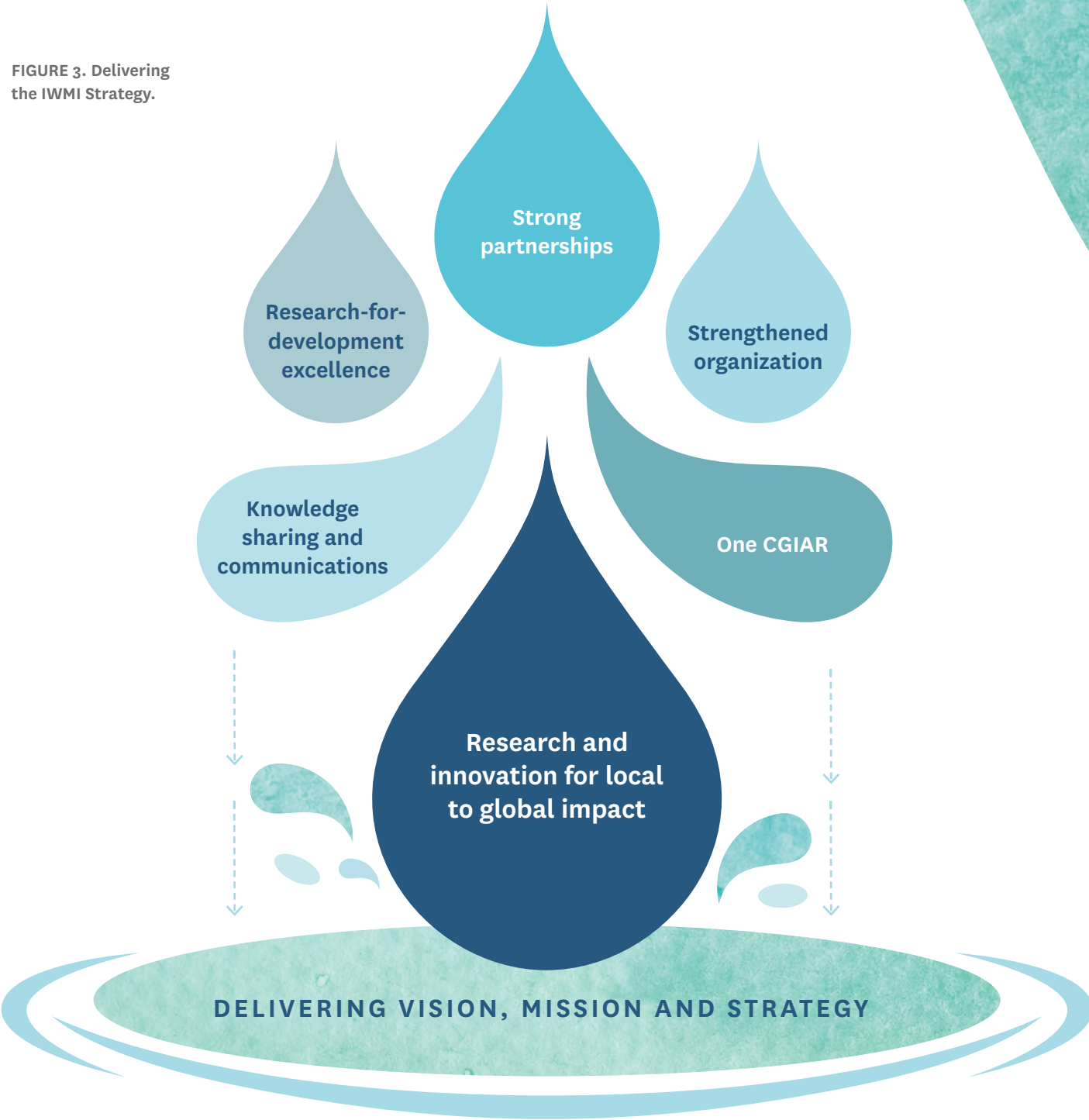
IWMI will deliver projects and programs to catalyze and implement change in water systems, building on CGIAR research initiatives and programs in partnerships with governments, NGOs, the private sector, farmers and communities, investors and

research and knowledge organizations. We will focus our partnerships on supporting national and regional strategies and priorities. Our knowledge, research and innovation will contribute through collective action to advancing the missions of the Transformative Futures for Water Security initiative.

IWMI brings evidence and data to the development of science-based policy. Our target for 2030 is for IWMI to be recognized as an indispensable global voice helping shape the water agenda, based on the support we provide to partner governments in combination with our influence in key global platforms, including the UNFCCC, the Global Biodiversity Framework and Ramsar Convention, future Food System Summits and the UN Water Conferences in 2026 and 2028. To back this target, we will significantly upgrade knowledge sharing, communications and outreach.

To achieve our 2030 ambitions for research and innovation and for impact and influence, IWMI must grow. We must develop new organizational strengths and capacities.

FIGURE 3. Delivering the IWMI Strategy.



Organizing for Delivery and Excellence

Our Strategic Programs and country offices are organized to deliver excellence in research and innovation for local to global impact that is aligned to CGIAR Impact Areas and programs.

Interdisciplinary Science Grounded in Local Contexts

Our strategy is designed to address complex water challenges using interdisciplinary research. Delivering outcomes requires that research responds to stakeholders and their realities and is grounded in local institutional contexts and partnerships. Our structures for research management integrate country and regional presence with expertise.

IWMI has long maintained a network of country offices as a platform for co-development and implementation of research. Our diverse and multicultural research staff are based in offices in Africa and Asia, with many from the countries and regions in which they are working. We deliver by building on the grounded expertise of our staff, their networks and long-term, mutually accountable strategic partnerships.

IWMI-wide Strategic Programs bring together thematic expertise. The Strategic Focus Areas and Transformational Levers use contributions from across Strategic Programs to transcend programmatic silos.

IWMI has four Strategic Programs providing leadership and expertise on:

- **Water, Food and Ecosystems.** Expertise on agricultural water management, the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, water infrastructure, nature-based solutions, wetlands, groundwater and basin management.
- **Water, Climate Change and Resilience.** Expertise on water risks, early warning systems, climate change adaptation, resilience, renewable energy and low-emission development and scaling, and climate finance.
- **Water, Growth and Inclusion.** Expertise on circular economy, wastewater, water quality and non-conventional water; and governance, gender and inclusion, impact evaluation, development finance and economics.
- **Water Data Science.** Expertise on modelling, Earth observation, GIS, data analytics including artificial intelligence, applications for decision support, and human-centered design and digital inclusivity.



Leveraging One CGIAR Science Groups

IWMI's capabilities are seamlessly integrated with One CGIAR as the Water Systems Department within the Systems Transformation Science Group. We collaborate across CGIAR to leverage water-related research and innovation – from genetics and agronomy to health and nutrition, landscape restoration and food systems policy – to advance outcomes for water security, as documented in the accompanying One CGIAR Water Systems Integration Roadmap 2024-2030.

Agile Platforms

IWMI Agile Platforms will convene interdisciplinary teams to respond to emerging issues and opportunities. Responsive, flexible and time bound, Agile Platforms will align project design, partnerships and policy engagement to enhance outcomes from the Strategic Focus Areas and Transformational Levers.

Co-led by at least two Strategic Programs, each Agile Platform brings together multiple disciplines within IWMI, from CGIAR as well as other partners, to strengthen the development of integrated solutions for complex water problems. Outputs include the design of strategic initiatives, policy innovation, knowledge products and communications campaigns.

Research-for-Development Excellence

Scientific rigor is fundamental to IWMI's ambition to provide world-class leadership in water research for development. It is the foundation for our credibility and influence. Good science alone, however, is not enough to bring about transformation. Our research-for-development approach seeks to deliver scientific excellence tightly coupled to social, economic and environmental outcomes with a clear line of sight to development impacts. Our objective is research-for-development excellence.

We are guided by CGIAR's criteria for Quality of Research for Development: relevance, scientific credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness. We embed these criteria in our quality review processes for project design, partnerships, outputs and communications, and in our performance management to differentiate the roles and contributions of staff along the research-to-development continuum.

Strong Partnerships for Collective Action

We are committed to making a clear shift to leverage the power of partnerships and better connect our research and innovation, through collective action, to the implementation and scaling of change in water systems.

We aim for partnerships to become core to our organizational culture and a foundation for dynamic collaborations that deliver mutual benefit.

We focus on three strategic priorities in our partnerships (Figure 4).

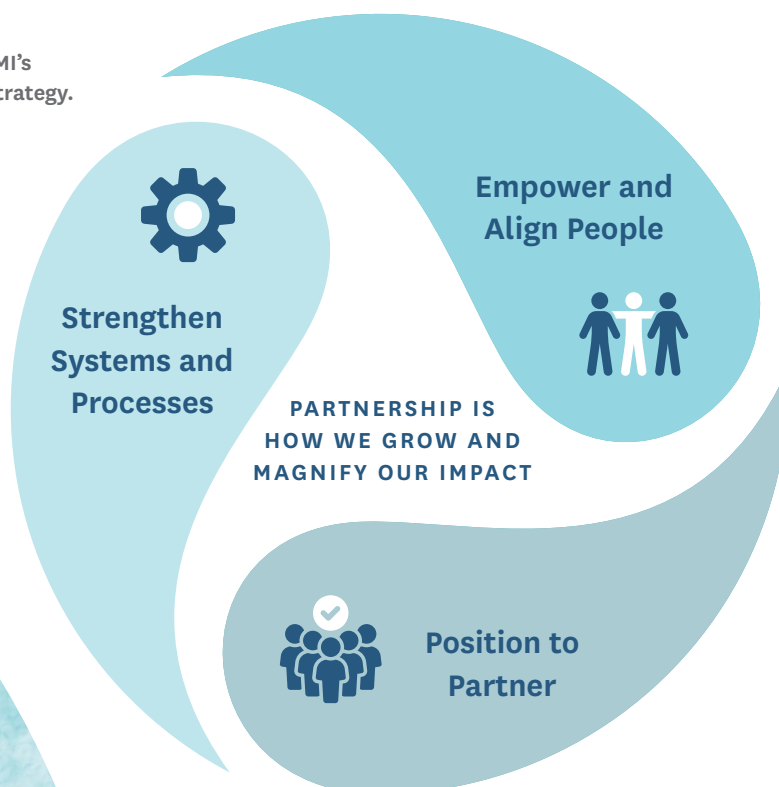
Position to partner. We will be clear on the unique value we bring and will leverage this to deliver greater impact. Critical to our success will be working with partners to ensure effective and mutually beneficial two-way relationships.

Empower and align people. People are the basis of the relationships that underpin partnerships. We will invest in and empower IWMI's staff to develop and deepen partnerships.

Strengthen systems and processes. A two-way flow of information, backed by simple and effective processes, is essential for effective partnerships. We will align tools and practices to ease and enable individual and institutional relationship building.

IWMI's role as a partner is determined by our comparative advantage relative to others. We bring capabilities related to knowledge, research and innovation that complement the contributions of other partners to shared objectives for collective action. Our partnerships extend across the public and private sectors, community-based organizations and national research partners. We connect local, national, regional and global stakeholders through partnerships and networks to bridge scales and sectors to catalyze and manage change.

FIGURE 4. IWMI's Partnership Strategy.





Knowledge Sharing and Communications

Knowledge sharing is embedded across our strategic framework and in our collective action partnerships.

Our commitment to sharing knowledge is based on fairness, inclusion and recognition that there are diverse values and knowledge systems used in managing water. We learn from our partners, and they learn from us. We strive to achieve this balance through knowledge creation, knowledge sharing platforms, knowledge management and adhering to FAIR principles.

Knowledge creation and generation. IWMI fills critical knowledge gaps to meet the needs of partners in research, development, business and policy communities. Working together, we integrate water research with knowledge generated by partners to translate evidence into information and guidance.

Knowledge sharing spaces and platforms. We are proactive in using multistakeholder platforms and high-level policy forums, at national to regional and global levels, to foster dialogue and promote evidence-based policy.

Knowledge Management. IWMI serves diverse audiences with a wide variety of outputs, from peer-reviewed research papers, through technical reports to blogs, success stories, toolkits, training materials and opinion articles. We make data, advisories and decision support accessible online, and co-produce videos and radio and television shows to share stories and inspire change. We support development of new university curricula, co-share knowledge in workshops, incubators and investor forums, and use diverse digital channels for dissemination of knowledge.

Adhering to FAIR Principles. IWMI follows the FAIR principles when sharing data – Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability and Reusability. We also aim to ensure our research publications are open access, further promoting the accessibility and usability of our research.



Organizational Growth and Performance

To deliver the ambition of the IWMI Strategy 2024–2030, our impact must grow, and we must develop new capacities and partnerships and increase our funding.

Underpinning our ambition is an Organizational Growth Strategy and Action Plan that defines focus areas for IWMI’s organizational development. Our aim is that IWMI can effectively, and sustainably, implement a larger and more complex research-for-development portfolio.

Our Priorities for Organizational Development

Growth in funding. Our target is to double IWMI’s funding by 2030. This is feasible, given the demand for research and services related to our Strategic Focus Areas. To succeed, we need limited geographic expansion and new capabilities to work with diversified funding types.

CGIAR integration. The One CGIAR integrated partnership offers unprecedented potential to align capabilities in water systems science from across CGIAR to amplify transformation of water systems and interdependent food and land systems. IWMI leads water systems science in CGIAR, but we need to further strengthen our agency within CGIAR using the One CGIAR Water Systems Integration Roadmap 2024–2030 that accompanies this strategy.

Strengthening our organizational culture. Underpinning organizational development and growth will be continuous strengthening of our culture. We will build our leadership culture and strive to foster research excellence and innovation, a growth mindset and a client focus.

FIGURE 5. IWMI’s Organizational Performance Framework Approach.



Developing IWMI's global workforce. We will bring in new skills and build the competencies needed to strengthen delivery of our strategic priorities and a larger and more integrated research-for-development portfolio. Growth in staffing will need to accompany growth in funding, with most new staff based in country offices close to our partners. We will apply CGIAR's policies and targets for gender, diversity and inclusion to guide workforce development.

Building IWMI's brand, communications and outreach. Our ambitions for growth in impact and funding will benefit from building IWMI's brand and strengthening our influence through communications and outreach to attract new opportunities with partners and funders.

Using our data and knowledge effectively. We recognize that sustainable growth relies on better management of data and knowledge across the organization. We will improve data capture, storage, analysis and use by leveraging CGIAR integration whenever possible, to improve research delivery, resource planning and management decision-making.

Reinforcing our policies, processes and infrastructure. We will update organizational systems, including those for project, financial and risk management, and ensure our policies are aligned with the CGIAR integrated partnership. Continued development of the Tripartite Agreement among IWMI, WorldFish and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) will offer new operational efficiencies, including lower support service costs. We will expand physical infrastructure in line with needs.

Refining our structure in line with a growing organization. We will review and refine our organizational structure as we grow to balance efficiency and agility in delivering a larger portfolio, strengthening our country offices, and organizational resilience.

Our Commitment to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

We will update our strategy for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in 2024 to align with our organizational strategy. Our GESI strategy will guide the integration of GESI into the design, implementation and management of IWMI's programs. We will ensure GESI research is aligned to and integrated with One CGIAR research and reporting frameworks.

Our Commitment to Sustainability

IWMI is a member of the UN Global Compact and has committed to reducing organization-wide greenhouse gas emissions in line with a net zero and 1.5°C future. We apply emissions accounting based on the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) using a 2019 baseline. Beginning in 2024, guided by a new IWMI Sustainability Policy, we will implement an action plan to reduce IWMI's carbon footprint and report on progress in IWMI Annual Reports.

Tracking Organizational Performance

IWMI will launch an Organizational Performance Framework (Figure 5) in 2024 to track progress as we implement the 2024–2030 Strategy, including organizational development. The framework will integrate performance metrics across three areas: strategic outcomes, operations and action plans. It will enable IWMI managers and staff to analyze performance for research delivery, partnerships, knowledge sharing and communications, alongside progress in the implementation of our action plans for growth, including resource mobilization and workforce development. The framework will complement the CGIAR results framework and align with performance tracking for CGIAR integration.

We will use this framework to strengthen IWMI's reporting, promote improved performance across the organization, and support a culture of transparency, evaluation and continuous improvement. IWMI's Organizational Performance Framework reflects our commitment to strengthening the contributions we make to transforming future water security.



The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) is an international, research-for-development organization that works with governments, civil society and the private sector to solve water problems in developing countries and scale up solutions. Through partnership, IWMI combines research on the sustainable use of water and land resources, knowledge services and products with capacity strengthening, dialogue and policy analysis to support implementation of water management solutions for agriculture, ecosystems, climate change and inclusive economic growth. Headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, IWMI is a CGIAR Research Center with offices in 15 countries and a global network of scientists operating in more than 55 countries.

www.iwmi.org

CGIAR is a global research partnership for a food-secure future. CGIAR science is dedicated to transforming food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis. Its research is carried out by 13 CGIAR Centers/Alliances in close collaboration with hundreds of partners, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, development organizations and the private sector.

www.cgiar.org

Global Headquarters

+94 112880000
iwmi@cgiar.org

SOUTH ASIA

India

+91 1125840811, +91 1125840812,
+91 1125843536
iwmi-delhi@cgiar.org

Nepal

+977 15542306, +977 15543141
iwmi-nepal@cgiar.org

Pakistan

+92 4235299504, +92 4235299505,
+92 4235299506
iwmi-pak@cgiar.org

SOUTHEAST ASIA

Lao PDR

+856 21771438, +856 21740928,
+856 21771520
iwmi-southeastasia@cgiar.org

Myanmar

+95 9899008011, +95 9899008022,
+95 9899008033
iwmi-myanmar@cgiar.org

CENTRAL ASIA

Uzbekistan

+998 712370445
iwmi-ca@cgiar.org

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Egypt

+20 233650013
iwmi-mena@cgiar.org

EAST AFRICA

Ethiopia

+251 116172000, +251 116457222,
+251 116457223
iwmi-ethiopia@cgiar.org

SOUTHERN AFRICA

South Africa

+27 128459100
iwmi-southern_africa@cgiar.org

WEST AFRICA

Ghana

+233 302784753, +233 302784754,
+233 544 088277
iwmi-ghana@cgiar.org

EUROPE

Italy

+39 0661181
r.mcdonnell@cgiar.org

Global Headquarters

127 Sunil Mawatha, Pelawatte
Battaramulla, Sri Lanka

Mailing address:

P. O. Box 2075
Colombo, Sri Lanka

+94 112880000, +94 112784080
iwmi@cgiar.org