

2012 UN-Water Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resources Management

The Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development marks 20 years since the historic Earth Summit¹ that was instrumental in laying the foundations and charting the course for contemporary sustainable development.

This report, based on an analysis of data from more than 130 countries, looks at the issues that pertain to the management, development and use of fresh water resources. Its starting point is in the Earth Summit's Agenda 21 recommendation for an integrated approach to the management of water resources. It is intended to inform decision-making at the Rio+20 conference and follow-up global policy discourses. It will facilitate information exchange to enhance the coherence and impact of national efforts to improve water resources management and related work of the UN and other external support agencies at country level.

Key messages and recommendations

1. Since 1992, 80% of countries have embarked on reforms to improve the enabling environment for water resources management based on the application of integrated approaches as stated in Agenda 21 and affirmed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

To ensure continued progress and positive outcomes in applying integrated approaches to water resources management, government and external support agencies should learn from experience and increase their efforts. Implementing integrated approaches to water resources management should remain a key component of future development paradigms.

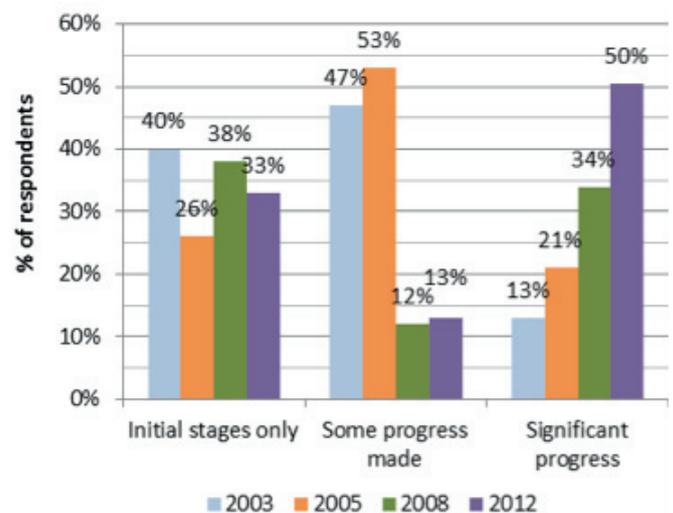
2. Water-related risks and the competition for water resources are perceived by a majority of countries to have increased over the past 20 years.

Given the increasing challenges and risks, it is important that the international community supports countries to operationalize integrated approaches that focus on solutions that address country priorities and needs.

3. Countries that have adopted integrated approaches report more advanced infrastructure development but further efforts are needed to ensure appropriate levels of coordination.

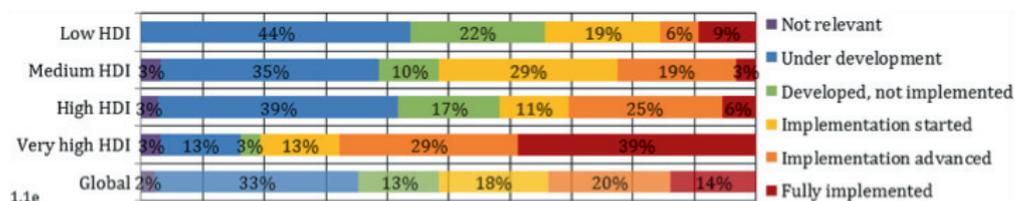
Countries should be supported in adopting integrated approaches to water resources management that are coordinated with the development of infrastructure to achieve growth and sustainable development goals.

Progress towards developing and implementing integrated water resources management plans



¹ More formally known as United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

National/Federal Integrated Water Resources Management Plan(s) or Equivalent: The current status of the main plans that include integrated approaches to water resources management in responding countries by HDI groups



4. Countries report a gradual but positive trend in financing for water resources development and management with more diverse sources of finance, but little progress on payment for water resources services.

More effort is needed to increase levels of financing for water resources management and to raise revenues from water resource and ecosystem services. Appropriate recording of financing for water resources development and management is needed in reporting mechanisms.

5. Countries report improvements to the institutional framework together with improved policies, laws and systems over the past 20 years. This has led to better water resources management practices bringing important socio-economic benefits.

Targeted support is necessary to continue to improve the institutional framework for water resources management with emphasis on the group of countries with a low Human Development Index (HDI)².

6. Integrated approaches to water resources management and development are critical for progress towards a green economy.

The integrated approach to water resources management, as defined in Agenda 21, remains relevant and must be a key component of emerging strategies towards a green

economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and a key element in building climate resilience.

7. The survey has demonstrated the progress made with integrated approaches to water resources management as called for at the UNCED in 1992. To capitalise on this progress and ensure continuity the following target is proposed for the Rio+20 conference to consider:

By 2015, each country to develop its specific targets and timeframes for preparing and implementing a programme of action and financing strategy to take its integrated approaches to water resources management forward in accordance with UNCED 1992 and subsequent global agreements.

8 The high country response to the survey demonstrates the value of reporting and emphasizes the need for a more rigorous, evidence-based, reporting system on progress with water resources development and management. The following target is proposed for the Rio+20 conference to consider:

By 2015 a global reporting mechanisms on national water resources management be established. UN-Water is committed to facilitate and coordinate this process, drawing on its existing mechanisms.

The full report can be found here (once released):
<http://www.unwater.org/rio2012/report/index.html>

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² The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures health, knowledge, and income. Countries are categorized in four HDI bands: “Low”, “Medium”, “High” and “Very High”