

The United Nations World Water Development Report 4

The United Nations World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), a flagship programme of UN-Water hosted by UNESCO, presents the collective work of 28 UN-Water members and its partners in the triennial World Water Development Report.

The WWDR is a comprehensive review of the world's freshwater resources. This 4th edition, 'Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk' seeks to demonstrate, among other messages, that water underpins all aspects of development, and that a coordinated approach to managing and allocating water is critical. The Report underlines that in order to meet multiple goals water needs to be an intrinsic element in decision-making across the whole development spectrum.

'Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk' is the first volume and includes the first two Parts of the Report. Part 1, 'Status, trends and challenges', is an overview of recent developments, emerging trends and key challenges. Part 2, 'Managing water under uncertainty and risk', is the thematic part of the report in which decisions affecting water, from management and institutions to allocation and financing, are investigated through the lens of risk and uncertainty.

'Knowledge Base' is the second volume and contains 14 Challenge Area Reports, 5 Regional Reports, and 3 Special Reports prepared by UN-Water members and partners. These reports provide the solid 'factual' basis for the comprehensive synthesis presented in Volume 1.

'Facing the Challenges' is the third volume and features 15 case studies conducted at local, national and international levels that describe the progress made in meeting water-related objectives. The case studies also detail obstacles leading to current and emerging problems, demonstrating there are lessons to be learned from success stories as well as from failures.



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Key Messages

- Water underpins all aspects of development: it is the only medium that links sectors and through which major crises can be jointly addressed.
- A coordinated approach to managing and allocating water across competing sectors to meet multiple goals also helps ensure that progress made in one sector is not offset by declines in others.
- Strong institutions and political will are needed to facilitate discussion and decisions between sectors and help balance risks. Institutional arrangements and regulatory frameworks must also have the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances affecting water management.
- Global interdependencies will increasingly be woven through water: if no immediate action is taken, regions and sectors without enough water to meet their own needs will need to rely more heavily on others' resources to meet them.
- Under global conditions of increasing uncertainty and risk, concerted action must now be taken by water managers, leaders in government, civil society and business at local, basin, national and global levels. It is critical that national governments assume leadership and integrate water as a priority in all key policy areas – trade and the economy, food and energy security, financing, public health and security – within their own countries in addition to through the relevant global policy tracks.