



Water, growth and inclusion

Water security is essential to all forms of economic activity, from farming to manufacturing, energy production, transport and other service industries including tourism. An absence of water in the right quantity and of the right quality, or an overabundance in the form of flooding, directly threatens economies and the livelihood security of key communities. In conditions of scarcity, allocation between rural agriculture and urban consumers, or between industrial uses and environmental flows, can have immediate or long-term impacts on economic growth but also on the future well-being of societies. Large numbers of people migrate to and from regions and countries where changes in water access and use can have significant impacts on rural development. Research on these challenges helps in identifying the institutions, policies and governance processes required to build more robust and water-secure economies, but also to reduce poverty and ensure more gender-equitable and inclusive societies.

“Global growth is now at a major turning point and business as usual cannot continue. Environmental destruction and inequalities in wealth and power are challenging human and ecosystem security in unprecedented ways. We’re struggling to make sense of these changes – and to respond adequately at scale. Through IWMI research and policy influencing, we are tackling critical issues in the circular economy and governance of water, by understanding the economics of impact and ensuring that structural change in gender equality is both an outcome of and central to all our work. Our ultimate goal is to ensure future water security for all.”





Alan Nicol
*Strategic Program Director
Water, Growth and Inclusion*



6% decline in GDP

by 2050 is expected in some regions as a result of water-related losses in agriculture, health, income and prosperity



OUTCOME	Key questions:			
<p>Enhanced growth resulting from more inclusive water governance together with institutions and incentives that diminish pollution and promote more integrated, sustainable and productive water management in all uses</p>	 <p>What threat does water scarcity pose to sustainable growth in developing economies?</p>	 <p>How does water allocation in the water-energy-food nexus affect economic growth?</p>	 <p>How can waste and wastewater be used as a resource for sustainable growth?</p>	 <p>How can water governance arrangements support transformative agendas, and ensure that women and men benefit equally?</p>

Our approach

IWMI is the only transdisciplinary, internationally-located water research institute working at the nexus of food systems, climate and growth. This provides us with unique opportunities to generate insights that will transform sectors and sector decision-making, helping to support future food security, long-term sustainable resource governance and economic growth with equity. Our work on growth and water brings together theoretical and methodological advances in understanding with practical implementation of solutions on the ground, driven through partnerships with governments, civil society and the private sector. Our Governance and Inclusion team has deep knowledge of systemic resource governance challenges across Asia and Africa, complementing our work under the Circular Economy and Water Pollution team, who are driving forward solutions to waste recycling, recovery and reuse. Our work in economics across a range of country contexts ensures that we bring academic rigor and broad experience to assessing the impacts of different interventions on economies and societies.

IWMI research:

- analyzes the dynamics of power, interests and incentives and their impact on decision-making
- supports cooperation in transboundary water management across a range of globally-important river basins
- understands the gender dimensions of new technologies and water governance, strengthening the inclusion of women, youth and marginalized people
- strengthens women’s access to decision-making through tackling institutional barriers
- identifies inclusive and sustainable ways of adopting and scaling up water-related technologies
- assesses the costs and benefits of water risk management at different scales
- undertakes ecosystem service valuations in decisions on water allocation and infrastructure investments
- applies cost-benefit and impact evaluation to strengthen policy analysis
- provides enhanced capabilities in hydro-economic modeling to support future decision-making



The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) is a non-profit, 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 and leads the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE).

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