



# The 2030 Water Resources Group: Collaboration and Country Leadership to Strengthen Water Security

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## A Complex, Systemic Challenge

Water is vital to life itself, and critical to sustainable economic growth and human development. Ensuring access to water and sanitation for all is one of the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 6. And achieving Goal 6 will be needed to meet all the other SDGs.

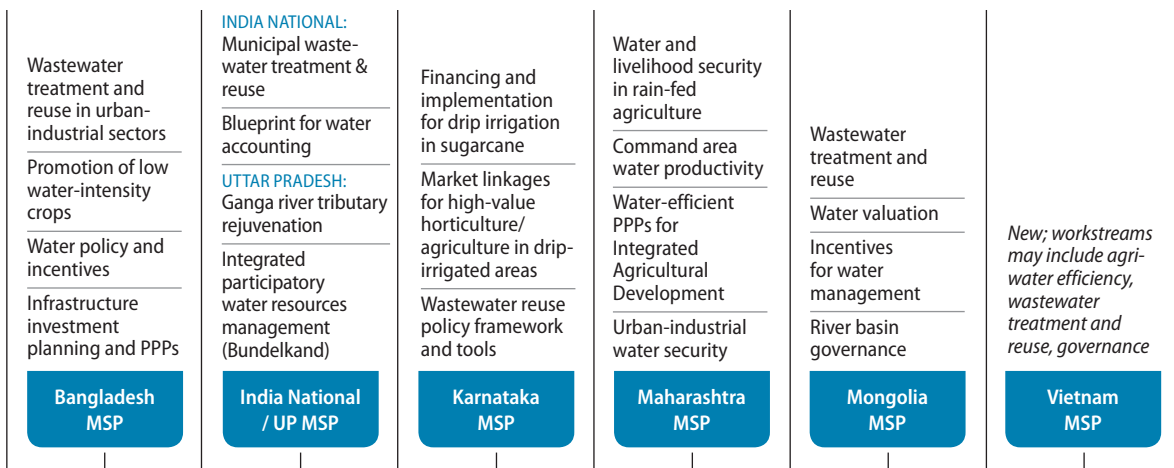
Unfortunately, water is already in short supply, and trends point in the wrong direction. The population is growing and urbanizing, increasing demand for water across the economy and straining the capacity of municipal water systems in many countries. Incomes are rising and supporting more water-intensive lifestyle choices, from using more energy to eating more meat. In some cases, companies are fueling such choices in their efforts to grow. Water governance is often weak and water prices are often so low that companies struggle to make the business case for using water wisely. It is also difficult to attract private sector investment into water infrastructure and other solutions. Climate change is exacerbating the problem from the supply side. By 2030, demand for water is expected to exceed supply by 40% – reducing water available to consumers, causing shortfalls in agricultural production, and imposing limits on economic growth.

Closing this gap is a technical, behavioral, and political challenge in which individual consumers and institutions in government, business, and civil society all have roles to play. Stakeholders must develop new technologies, products, services, business models, public service delivery models, policy and regulatory innovations, voluntary standards, and norms that together deliver new results. Strong government leadership will be essential in creating an enabling environment in which stakeholders have the incentives to undertake these activities. At the same time, strong government leadership will be needed to make tough choices about how limited water resources should be allocated among different uses and users – and to do it fairly, effectively, and transparently.

# The 2030 Water Resources Group

The 2030 Water Resources Group (2030 WRG) is a global partnership that supports country-level collaboration by government, business and civil society to achieve water security. Through multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) in 14 countries and states, 600 organizations – including 160 from the public sector, 240 from the private sector, and 200 from civil society – are now working together on projects and policy reforms with support from 2030 WRG. These vary according to country context and needs, and are identified by the stakeholders who will implement them. Common themes include agricultural water use efficiency, industrial water use efficiency, and wastewater treatment and reuse. The means of implementation range from capacity-building to innovative financing to new management systems. Time will tell whether these projects and policy reforms translate into impacts that transform water resources management – but they are important steps along the way.

2030 WRG has also set important cultural and institutional changes in motion. It has achieved commitment from the highest levels of government in Bangladesh, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, for example, where MSPs are chaired by the Prime Minister’s or Chief Minister’s offices. It has helped build trusted working relationships across traditional silos within government – as in Peru, where five different ministers sit on the MSP steering board – and across government, business, and civil society. The MSPs 2030 WRG has supported in Kenya, Mongolia, Peru, South Africa, and Tanzania and three Indian states have survived changes in political leadership and government administration. This kind of collaboration, in places where water is hotly contested, is a significant change. In Mongolia, stakeholders even see the 2030 WRG model as one they should replicate to tackle issues beyond water. As such, 2030 WRG exemplifies the type of multi-stakeholder partnership called for in Sustainable Development Goal 17.



**2030 Water Resources Group**

SUPPORT (e.g. funding, international expertise and examples)  
 FACILITATION  
 CONVENING

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# Early Lessons from the 2030 WRG Approach

Since it began as an informal group in 2008, 2030 WRG has evolved based on experimentation and learning. The group commissioned external evaluations in 2013 and 2014. These highlighted key strengths and significant challenges, including the need for greater openness, inclusion, and ownership by local stakeholders, building on existing initiatives; more balanced emphasis on the social and environmental as well as economic dimensions of water security; and a clearer theory of change and better results measurement. Today, 2030 WRG's approach reflects five early lessons relevant for leaders working on water security and other complex, systemic challenges.



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## 1 Government in the lead

2030 WRG recognizes the central role and ultimate responsibility of government in managing water resources, and treats the government as its core partner. 2030 WRG facilitates greater, more strategic coordination across relevant ministries, from agriculture to energy to finance, often with support from the head of state. And its overall approach is designed to help fill the capacity gaps and overcome the political constraints governments face in managing their water resources effectively.



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## 2 Local ownership and collaboration from business and civil society

2030 WRG cultivates national and state-level multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) that bring governments together with businesses and civil society organizations. Together, stakeholders work to understand the scope and dimensions of the water challenges they face. They develop shared priorities and work in groups to pilot cost-effective solutions. In so doing, they find new ways of implementing existing policy and informing policy change. And in the process, they build the political capital that change requires. In this way, MSPs enable governments to make the tough policy choices needed to achieve water security in an inclusive and transparent way.



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## 3 A combined focus on data and analysis, stakeholder dynamics, and the political economy of change

2030 WRG has learned to balance a technical and economic understanding of water challenges with an appreciation of the institutional and political context. It now maps and consults with stakeholders before deciding to engage in each country. It funds rigorous analysis to convey scale and urgency, create demand for collective action, help

stakeholders build a shared understanding and prioritize their responses, building on what has already been done in each country and using local consultants. In addition to illustrating water security as a potential constraint on economic growth, it considers the social and environmental dimensions of water security, such as gender, which has helped bring key stakeholders to the table. Seats for civil society are reserved on MSP steering boards. 2030 WRG is also learning to communicate better about the driving roles that local stakeholders play in MSPs, versus its own facilitating role.



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## 4 Strong 'backbone support'

For 2030 WRG, just as important as water expertise is the ability to catalyze, coordinate, and support dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. The group convenes stakeholders who may not know or trust each other. It creates a sense of inspiration and energy, challenges perceptions and power dynamics, fosters mutual understanding, and develops a common language. It helps to uncover and promote opportunities to collaborate, to mobilize additional resources and partners, and to maintain momentum. This requires both the mindsets and systems to think long-term, live with uncertainty, learn and adapt along the way.



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## 5 Vital roles for individual champions

At the global, national, and state levels, individual leaders in government, business and civil society use their voices, influence and networks to raise awareness and build demand for long-term, strategic cross-sector collaboration to achieve water security. They authorize or convince their organizations to get involved in the 2030 WRG global partnership or in local MSPs – usually challenging traditional mental models and operating models in the process. They often take real personal risk, investing their time, effort and in some cases reputation in initiatives they do not control, whose outcomes are uncertain.

## The Road Ahead for 2030 WRG

2030 WRG now seeks to mainstream its approach to achieving water security, expanding to 25 countries and inspiring even more. To succeed, it will need to focus on:

- Continuing to increase local ownership and inclusion at the country level – becoming more effective at its approach.
- Better articulating and demonstrating the role of the private sector alongside government and civil society in achieving water security.
- Ensuring that projects translate into transformational change in the countries where it already engages, at the same time as expanding into new ones.

## A Call to Action

Securing enough water for people, economic growth, and the environment is a true collective action problem. Diverse stakeholders have played roles in increasing water stress, and the same stakeholders will have to reverse the trend.

2030 WRG has developed a new model for doing so, bringing many stakeholders out of their comfort zones in the process. It is not the only model and there will be others. But regardless of approach, it will be critical to think and act in a similarly creative, possibly even disruptive, and potentially transformative manner.

This will require new mindsets and skill sets in key institutions in all sectors. But there is no other choice if water security is to be achieved – the need for collective action is too urgent. And if it can be demonstrated to work in the currently fragmented and politically charged water sector, there will be enormous potential for the kind of approach described in this report to play a much broader role and accelerate progress across the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

*The 2030 Water Resources group was incubated at the World Economic Forum and hosted by the International Finance Corporation from 2012 to 2017. It is now part of the World Bank's Water Global Practice. Global partners include:*

AB Inbev	Grundfos	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
African Development Bank	Inter-American Development Bank	The Coca-Cola Company
BRAC	IUCN	United Nations Development Programme
Dow	Nestlé	World Economic Forum
Global Green Growth Institute	PepsiCo	
Global Water Partnership	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	
Government of Hungary		

*This case study is based on a review of existing documentation and 30 interviews with 2030 WRG stakeholders, who are gratefully acknowledged in the full version available at [www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/mrcbg/programs/cr/research/reports](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/mrcbg/programs/cr/research/reports)*

*For more information about 2030 WRG, please visit [www.2030wrg.org](http://www.2030wrg.org)*