



# Integrated water resources management (IWRM)

For water resources that are shared in an equitable manner and used sustainably in all territories.

## Thematic factsheet



### BENCHMARKS

**7 interventions** in this subject area **since 2017**.

Processes undertaken in **Senegal, Togo and Haiti**.

Studies in **Benin, Uganda and Ecuador**.

**W**ater is now recognised as a common good that is essential for humanity and all living organisms. Yet, on a global scale, this resource is subject to uncontrolled consumption that, proportionally, is increasing more quickly than the population. In addition, soil sealing due to urbanisation or to the disappearance of ground vegetation drastically reduces water infiltration into soils; climate change is generating increasingly frequent droughts and flooding; and the quality of water is deteriorating due to agricultural, industrial and domestic pollution, as well as salinisation. Lastly, management of the resource is too often inefficient, unequitable and non-sustainable, exacerbating inequalities, leading to conflicts and running the risk of further intensifying food insecurity in numerous regions across the world, as 70 % of global water resources mobilised are used for agriculture.

The concept of Integrated water resources management (IWRM) emerged on the international scene at the Dublin conference in 1992. For the first time, it proposes going beyond sectoral visions, which too often evade the problems relating to the resource, its multiple uses, and its governance. In the decades that followed, numerous States became committed and defined action plans with a view to IWRM. Yet, although IWRM is commonly defined as *“a process that promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner, without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems”*<sup>1</sup>, the means to achieve the objective are not specified. In many contexts, decision-makers take a top-down, institutional approach not always leading to concrete results in terms of equitable preservation and sharing of the resource.

## GRET’s methodology

In light of these observations, GRET promotes inclusive, participative methods, which start at local level and enable co-construction of solutions with the stakeholders concerned. The IWRM processes supported are bottom-up and, in a spirit of subsidiarity, seek to coordinate scales and mandates. GRET prioritises action-research to structure its interventions, consolidate its findings and formulate recommendations aimed at improving public water policies. It also adopts a reflective process when conducting studies and project evaluations.

1. According to the Global Water Partnership.



## GRET's approach

» “While the planet is facing environmental, social and democratic crises, we choose on a territorial scale to support political processes – in the original sense of managing the city – that are participative and inclusive, aiming to define procedures whereby water can be shared in an equitable and sustainable manner, in response to local challenges and recognising territorial stakeholders’ decision-making powers. By taking a Commons-based approach, we facilitate the emergence of dynamics in which knowledge is shared and serves to inform groups of users, technicians and local authorities, which - applying the governance rules they define – strive to identify and implement public interest measures.” **Emmanuel Durand, IWRM programme manager at GRET.**



## Focus on two projects

### The Girel project (Senegal)

2019-2022 | **Budget:** 493 k€ | **Funding:** AESN, AFD | **Partner:** DGPPE.



Water resources in the Niayes zone in Senegal are made up almost exclusively of groundwater. Its various aquifers are today overexploited and the surface water table is polluted by anthropogenic activities. GRET and the Senegal Directorate of water resources planning and management are helping local stakeholders to set up IWRM: Local water platforms are being created in communes, their members are becoming organised, holding discussions, learning collectively, defining and implementing action plans. The objective is to reach all communes in the zone, to federate the platforms and construct governance and management mechanisms making it possible to take action on the entire Niayes aquifer system.

## Key stakeholders' views



“I believe that, unless we organise populations, strengthen their capacities and capitalise on their best practices, we cannot find appropriate solutions to local water challenges. An interesting and original element in GRET’s approach is that local stakeholders are masters of the process, GRET simply guides them

and supports them to implement frameworks for consultation, and to develop their planning tools. Today, in order to support the operationalisation of this local IWRM, the State needs to decentralise further.” **Niokhor Ndour, director of the Directorate of water resources planning and management, Senegal**

“IWRM must be different from former practices, where decisions were taken centrally and imposed on local populations. IWRM must provide a means for States to become more aware of realities in the field, and for populations to participate in decision-making on water resources in their areas.” **Médoune Loum,**



**chairperson of the Darou Khoudoss-Mboro Local water platform, Senegal**



“The programme for women’s empowerment developed by GRET enables us to become more aware of our capacities and of the role we can play within the Local water platform. At the first workshops, the women did not have the courage to express their ideas in front of the men and the community leaders.

Now, I think things have changed, because women have more self-confidence. Their involvement at the platform’s last general assembly demonstrated this: previously there were no women on the steering committee, but now several women have joined the executive committee and we even have a woman vice-chairperson!” **Awa Gueye, vice-chairperson of the Local water platform, Senegal**



### The Pasan-Apros project (Haiti)

2018-2022 | **Budget:** 7.8 M€ | **Funding:** EU, AFD | **Partners:** JFW, ACF, AOG, Odrino.



In the north of the Artibonite department in Haiti, GRET is participating in the implementation of a project aiming to ensure food and nutrition security and access to social protection. While watersheds are subject to runoff and erosion, and fertile land is disappearing, farmers are being supported to implement weirs, sills made of dry stones in gullies; to create nurseries and carry out reforestation. In a particularly complex context, the IWRM initiated is micro-local, it draws on demonstration activities and the mobilisation of communities being supported to plan achievable developments and choose sustainable maintenance methods.

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**GRET**

GRET is an international fair development NGO that has been actively fighting poverty and inequalities for more than 40 years in the field and at political level. Learn more about GRET’s “Natural resource and energy management” activities: [www.gret.org/themes/resource-energy](http://www.gret.org/themes/resource-energy)