

Interview in Aqua Vitae with Dr Letitia A Obeng, Global Water Partnership Chair

An approximate translation into English.

- What are the major challenges that humanity has in terms of water and sanitation?

The real challenge is to deliver sufficient good quality basic services to meet peoples' needs in a sustainable way.

Those responsible for delivering basic water supply and sanitation face several additional challenges. Some of them are listed below:

There is a general lack of institutional capacity to deliver services to everyone, in particular to the poor;

It is hard to keep up with service delivery as populations grow;

There are costs for water and sanitation services which have to be met – investment costs for construction as well as costs of maintenance, expansion and rehabilitation.

Often water must be shared among countries, or within countries. It is important to find the most effective way to sustainably share water, especially when it is scarce.

- What role the world organization as a GWP, which is a policy to achieve its objectives and strategies based on the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)?

GWP is dedicated to the supporting the sustainable development and management of water at all levels. The members of our multi-stakeholder Partnership work together to facilitate and bring diverse groups of interested parties (government, private sector, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, academia, professional organizations, gender and youth groups, bi- and multilateral development agencies etc.) together to discuss and take action on technical, social, and economic issues related to sustainable water management.

- What do you mean by GWP and IWRM? How should IWRM be applied globally and regionally? – How do you link the development and implementation of regional actions in the common goal of the GWP? – How do you promote a good practice in IWRM?

The Integrated Water Resources Management approach is about bringing stakeholders together in the sustainable management of their water resources. It considers coordinated development, management and allocation of water for its different uses taking into account institutional, social, infrastructure and economic needs. It focuses on environmental and ecological sustainability, social equity, and economic efficiency in water management.

GWP is a partnership, but it is also a Network which extends across 13 identified Regions, and countries within them. Members of the Network at global, regional, country and local levels, share knowledge and support each other in fulfilling our mission of supporting sustainable development and management of water resources at all levels.

Because water is such an important part of all aspects of life, the partnership needs to reach beyond the water sector to ensure that all key actors are a part of the solution.

- What elements have the new GWP strategy for 2009–2013; Which objectives that have this new strategy in times of financial crisis and global warning claiming?

The new GWP Strategy for 2009–2013 has 4 key goals:

1. Promote water as a key part of sustainable national development: – This goal focuses on improving water resources management, putting IWRM into practice to help countries towards growth and water security , emphasizing an integrated approach, good governance, appropriate infrastructure and sustainable financing.
2. Address critical development challenges: – This goal focuses on contributing to and advocating solutions for critical challenges to water security, such as climate change, growing urbanization, food production, resource related conflict and other challenges as they emerge.
3. Reinforce knowledge sharing and communications: – This goal focuses on developing the capacity to share knowledge and to promote a dynamic communications culture, so as to support better water management.
4. Build a more effective Network: This goal focuses o enhancing the Network’s resilience and effectiveness through stronger partnerships, good governance, measuring performance to help learning and financial sustainability.

- You said that to water security is one of the main challenges to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. How much progress has been made in this matter?

Water is an integral part of the all the MDGs.

[Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger](#) – water is essential for improving the quality of life – for drinking, eating, bathing, and for economic development.

[Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education](#) – sustainable access to water supply, sanitation and hygiene education, helps to keep children well so that they can attend school regularly

[Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women](#) – fetching water and storing it, managing household hygiene and sanitation needs are important tasks that face women all around the world. Making water supply and sanitation more accessible, to them is enabling.

[Goal 4: Reduce child mortality](#) – without safe water, sanitation and hygiene, children are constantly at risk.

[Goal 5: Improve maternal health](#) – better water and sanitation services contribute to improving maternal health.

[Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases](#) – malaria, schistosomiasis, diarrhea, dysentery, cholera and many other such diseases are water related involving our management of water and or excreta.

[Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability](#) – water is key to the sustainable management of land, plant and animal resources. Pollution, erosion, loss of biodiversity water related. This goal also includes halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to basic water supply and sanitation.

[Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development](#) – since water is key to achieving the MDGs, getting countries and their support agencies to work together is crucial for success.

Progress varies across the world. Some countries are doing better in some areas, but all progress is now challenged because of the current global economic situation. Now is the time when commitment to development goals, should be even stronger, otherwise, the progress that has been made will all be lost. This site has specifics about progress in different countries. (<http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>)

- What impact does the work of GWP between governments and other social sectors?

It is important that all sectors which are impacted by water be involved in decisions about its management, sharing and allocation. It is crucially important that decision/policy makers at the highest levels in government understand the role that water plays in socio-economic development and growth, so they can take the right decisions for the benefit of countries.

- How do you get to building strategic alliances for action around the world?

This is an interesting question. We have to broaden the dialogue to those outside the water sector, who use or rely on water for socio-economic, growth and prosperity. We have to speak in terms that they understand and relate to. We have to have good, cutting edge knowledge materials, and we have to communicate effectively. GWP's Network is an effective tool for this outreach.

- Which programs have GWP in Latin American?

There are two regional water partnerships in Latin America: Central America Water Partnership and South America Water Partnership. The attachment above provides a progress report on their activities.

- What role should America play in Latin material for water and sanitation? What challenges and achievements that characterize this region?

The basic challenge for all is the sustainable development and management, (including sharing, and allocation) of water. Countries need to focus on this with their own resources and get whatever help they can from wherever they can.

About Aqua Vitae

Aqua Vitae is a Latin American non-profit magazine, specializing in water and sanitation which seeks to raise awareness of the challenges of water resources management and to propose innovative alternatives for their care.

Aqua Vitae report and investigate the regional situation with regard to water involving experts in the field, resulting in newspaper articles which help to develop a platform to present relevant solutions, analyze proposals and promote intersectoral dialogue with Latin American vision. Circulates in 14 Latin American countries between government officials, ministerial, legislative, municipal, non-governmental organizations, universities, media, environmental groups, international agencies, and agricultural sectors, financial, business and civil society.

It has an Editorial Board consisting of world authorities on the subject: Beneditto Braga, director of the National Water Agency of Brazil, Maureen Ballesteros, Chair of GWP Central America, Claudio Osorio, adviser to the Water and Sanitation Initiative, UNICEF and TACRO Eduardo Mestre, Director Water Tribune