

Editorial

The year 2016 has seen increasing interest in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015 (United Nations, 2015). The agenda has the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions. It builds upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and includes those that were not achieved. Among them, Goal 6 aims at ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

While this process has been set in motion by the international community, on the ground, neither the importance of water supply management to ensure availability of water nor the serious implications of unsustainable management of water and sanitation seem to have been understood. In fact, the economic, social and environmental costs of inaction do not seem to have been grasped in their totality yet.

Ignored for decades, lack of treatment of wastewater continues to degrade water quality, an issue that has become one of the most pressing problems facing the world. And pollution from point and non-point sources continues to accentuate problems of water scarcity and worsen physical and environmental health and the quality of life of billions of people.

Even though global goals have become more ambitious, local practices in the developing world, as well as in many developed countries, leave much to be desired. Much more attention needs to be paid to implementable policies and improved practices so that water is available in the quantity and quality necessary for the increasing number of uses and users at present and in the future.

Unfortunately, events such as those witnessed in September 2016 in India, due to disagreements in the allocation of water from the Cauvery River to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are likely to be more frequent in the future unless water management is improved significantly. There are enormous development challenges due to water scarcity, pollution, mismanagement, mis-allocation, growing competition by increasing numbers and types of uses and users, ageing infrastructure and also the impacts of climate change.

To address the numerous economic, social and environmental challenges, more initiatives are needed to develop the most appropriate policies and to strengthen institutions, regulatory frameworks and public, private and social-sector partnerships. Also needed are technological developments to unlock innovative solutions, advance knowledge, propose new alternatives and improve productivity. It is, however, necessary to move from rhetoric to action.

The articles in this issue of the *International Journal of Water Resources Development* focus on topics that are very relevant. These include challenges in the implementation of the Murray-Darling basin plan, alternative sources of funding for sanitation technologies and services in Mongolia, the South-to-North Water Transfer supply chain system in China, water consumption in tourist areas in Spain, economic valuation of irrigation water in Mexico, determinants of willingness to pay for groundwater and informal water markets in Iran, water pricing as a policy instrument to improve efficiency and sustainability of irrigation in Vietnam, impacts of hydropower dam development on agriculturally based livelihoods of resettled communities, also in Vietnam and a water conservation awareness campaign in Jordan. The issue also includes reviews of two books and one conference report.

In his contribution on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, Hart (2015a, 2015b) discusses in depth the challenges faced in implementing the goal of managing water resources in the basin from an integrated viewpoint. According to the author, goals for 2016 include a sustainable diversion limits adjustment process for the southern basin, a strategy for constraints management and a review of the northern basin's sustainable diversion limits. For 2024, the goals consist of an environmental watering plan for the entire basin, a water quality and salinity management plan, water trading rules, regional water resource plans, a monitoring and evaluation programme, and issues as important as community engagement and implementation of indigenous cultural flows. According to Hart (2015a), by the year 2024, some 21% of the consumptive water in the basin on average is expected to be recovered for the environment.

In a state-of-the-art review, Schäfer, Dietrich, and Mbilinyi (2015) assess the quantitative changes in streamflow and lake water levels in drainage basins of Eastern and Southern Africa. Their findings show that in the majority of case studies, the streamflow or lake water levels decreased between 1970 and 2010. The causes are mainly anthropogenic (water withdrawals, land use, land cover change and dams) and "only to a lesser degree climate-related". This article represents a robust analysis that can be consulted when discussing policy and climate change-related topics.

This issue is the sixth and last one for 2016. During this year, we have published four normal issues with individual submissions and two special issues: *Water Reuse Policies for Potable Use and Energy for Water: Regional Case Studies*. We have also seen the impact factor of the journal increase to 1.463, a very positive outcome. This is a testament to the improved quality of the submissions, the excellent work of the external reviewers, and the superb support of the editorial team at Taylor & Francis Journals. On behalf of Professor Biswas and myself, allow me to extend my most sincere appreciation to the authors, reviewers and editorial team. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you in the future.

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