IW LEARN

GEF IW:LEARN 5

Training Strategy

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In collaboration with

Cap-Net

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IW:LEARN5 Training Strategy

1. Introduction

The International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resources Network (GEF IW: LEARN)'s latest phase commenced in 2022, with the endorsement of a fifth phase of the project (IW: LEARN5) by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). IW:LEARN5 will be implemented from July 2022 until mid-2026. The project executed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO), represents a cooperative effort between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),with the involvement of other GEF Agencies and project partners.

The GEF is a global partnership among 183 countries, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to address global environmental issues while supporting national sustainable development initiatives. It provides grants for projects related to five focal areas: biodiversity loss, chemicals and waste, climate change, international waters, and land degradation. The GEF International Waters (IW) focal area targets transboundary water systems, such as river basins with water flowing from one country to another, groundwater resources shared by several countries, or marine ecosystems bounded by more than one nation.

Cap-Net was commissioned to design and develop the IW:LEARN training strategy, following a stock-taking of existing training materials and the identification of portfolio needs for new training materials. Cap-Net brings over 22 years of experience in water capacity development as UNDP's capacity development delivery mechanism within the Sida Global Water and Oceans Governance Programme.

2. IW:LEARN – the knowledge hub for International Waters

The overall goal of IW:LEARN is to strengthen transboundary water management around the world by collecting and sharing best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions to common challenges. Over the last twenty years, IW:LEARN has grown from an informal network of a few projects and agency staff focused on IW projects to a community of individuals from a few hundred public and private sector organizations, including local, national, and international government and nongovernment organizations.

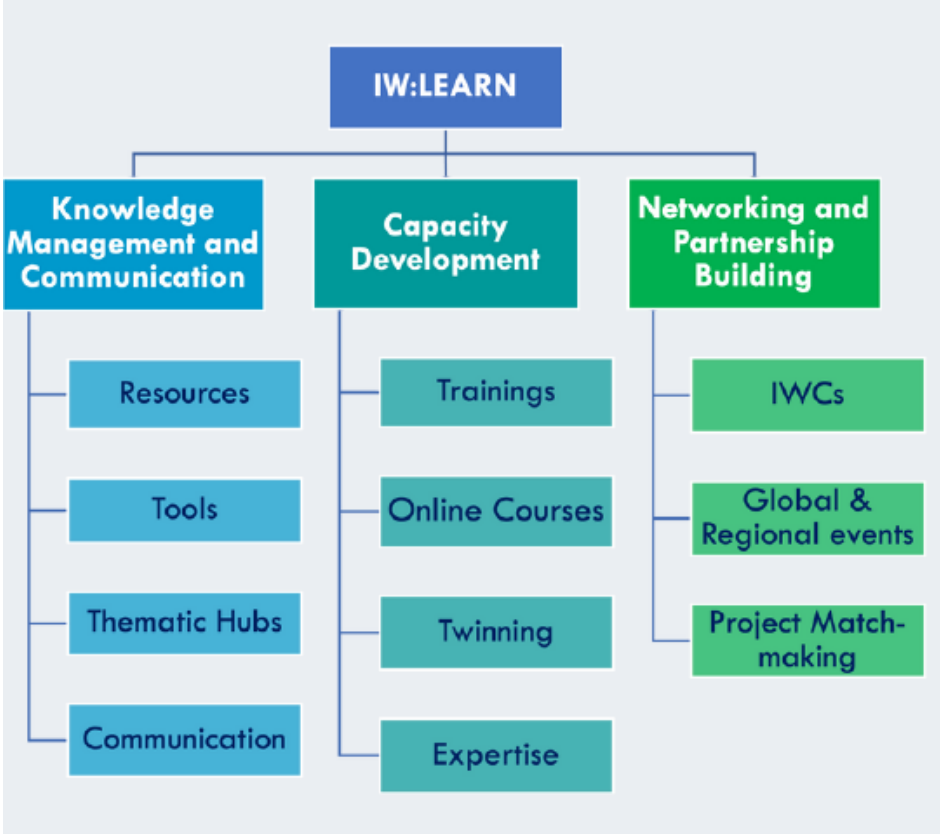
> The mission of IW:LEARN is to facilitate knowledge exchange, foster collaboration, and provide resources that empower stakeholders within the GEF IW focal area, strengthening the impact of the GEF IW portfolio.

IW:LEARN aims to strengthen the impact and sustainability of the GEF International Waters (IW) portfolio by enabling projects to leverage collective knowledge, build partnerships, and align with global best practices. Its key objectives include:

- Enhancing Knowledge Management: Collects, curates, and disseminates lessons learned, best practices, and innovative solutions to improve transboundary water management.
- Supporting Capacity Development: Provides training, methodologies, and guidance to empower stakeholders ineffectively implementing GEF IW projects.
- Promoting Innovation & Best Practices: Supports the adoption of proven approaches while embracing new tools and methodologies.
- Facilitating Collaboration & Peer Learning: Connects project teams, practitioners, and decision-makers through exchanges, dialogues, and knowledge-sharing events.
- Supporting the GEF International Waters Focal Area Strategy: Supports the portfolio to align with evolving priorities and improve cooperative management of existing and new shared freshwater and marine ecosystems to achieve long-term environmental benefits.
- Strengthening Regional & Global Integration: Links GEF IW projects to international frameworks, regional governance processes, and key partners to promote coordinated action.

Further to these, in its fifth phase, IW:LEARN focuses on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and addresses priorities such as the blue economy, integrated resource management from ridge-to-reef, protected areas, and climate resilience.

IW:LEARN offers three main lines of service: i. Knowledge Management and Communication; ii. Capacity Development and iii. Networking and Partnership Building. The full structure is presented in the following diagram.



The service line Capacity Development is a core function of IW:LEARN and is aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and long-term impact of GEF IW projects worldwide. Through a multifaceted approach, IW:LEARN offers tailored opportunities for learning, knowledge exchange, and skill-building to strengthen stakeholder capacities in transboundary water management.

- IW:LEARN facilitates regional experience-sharing and **training workshops** for GEF IW projects and partners in the Africa, Asia- Pacific, and Latin America—Caribbean regions. These workshops are based on cross-cutting themes facilitated by IW:LEARN project partners.
- As part of the GEF IW:LEARN's capacity development initiative, free **online courses** are offered on iwlearn.net. These courses were developed by IW:LEARN, LME:LEARN, and partners.
- IW:LEARN facilitates learning exchanges, known as **twinning**, among GEF IW and other partners. These exchanges provide practical solutions to common management and technical challenges while fostering collaboration among project teams.
- IW:LEARN is currently compiling **rosters of experts** from the International Waters Community to respond to portfolio needs for expertise.

The beneficiaries of these activities include project managers, country officials, implementing and executing agencies, regional organizations and other partners.

3. Developing an IW:LEARN Training Strategy: Requirements

The development of an IW:LEARN Training Strategy required the integration of innovative, flexible, and inclusive approaches that support online and remote collaboration, learning, and project implementation in the context of GEF IW projects. The strategy leverages appropriate digital tools and platforms to facilitate interactive knowledge-sharing, blended learning, and sustained capacity-building activities, such as training sessions, project-to-project twinning exchanges, and virtual events. The strategy also includes monitoring mechanisms to track the effectiveness of training interventions, identify gaps or challenges early, and inform continuous improvement. This ensures that training efforts contribute meaningfully to the overall project goals, enabling adaptive learning and reinforcing the delivery of tangible development outcomes.

4. Developing an IW:LEARN Training Strategy: Summary Findings

The development of the current IW:LEARN Training Strategy was informed by a combination of resources and recent activities aimed at aligning training efforts with evolving project needs. Key reference materials included the IW:LEARN5 Project Document and the GEF LME:LEARN Training Strategy (2015–2019), both of which emphasized the central role of training and knowledge management as cross-cutting elements integral to multiple project components. Complementing these sources, two key activities were conducted in 2024:

i. a **stock-taking exercise** to assess existing training materials and identify gaps requiring the development of new content.
ii. a **capacity needs assessment survey**, which provided insights into current training demands and helped map priority areas for future capacity development interventions.

Together, these inputs form the basis for a responsive and targeted training strategy that supports the goals of IW:LEARN.

A. Stock-taking of existing training materials

The needs for new training materials based on gaps in existing training materials were presented as low, medium, and high, based on the review of websites and training materials.

- The need for new materials is considered **low** when:
    - There is availability of training materials which are updated (produced in the last 3 years).
    - These materials have a tailor-made approach to IW:LEARN, therefore offering a previse focus on the topic within the framework on International Waters.

- The need for new materials is considered **medium** when:
    - There is availability of training materials, but these are outdated (produced 4 or more year ago).
    - These materials have a proximity to IW:LEARN training needs, but are not tailor-made, nor capture the framework on International Waters. Content is generic and not specifically focussed or considering the problematic of International Waters projects, or not specifically addressing the precise content need.

- The need for new materials is considered **high** when:

- There are no available training materials. Different knowledge contents may be available, but these do not constitute a training material as a training manual or an online course.

The stock-taking exercise reviewed the online courses presented on the IW:LEARN website and the training materials developed by IW:LEARN between 2017 and 2020 to consider the need for updates and language translations. As seen through the websites review, diverse water knowledge materials are available, which may be in the form reports, books, policy notes or case studies. These knowledge materials are not on their own training materials which an IW project manager may have access to for self-training or to share with the projects staff or target groups. Beyond IW:LEARN, and regardless of the large libraries of resources offered by many organisations, the search for training materials (manuals, courses) which are updated and address the specific needs which IW:LEARN projects face, was found as limited.

The stock-taking report also identified different organisations with experience, know-how, and diverse expertise working on water issues from different angles and regions of the world. This constitutes an available base of potential partners and experts with whom to collaborate for the revision, updating, or development of new training materials to address IW:LEARN needs. A comprehensive list of potential partners and their specific area of expertise is presented in annex 1.

The stock-taking report concluded with recommendations which have been considered in the development of this current strategy. These are:

- Revamp the training materials and training courses section within the IW:LEARN website
- Develop tailor-made training contents in response to the specific needs arising from IW:LEARN portfolio projects
- Deploy a user-friendly offer for online training courses

These results were taken into account in the development of the present strategy, the identification of the priority topics (annex 2) and the development of the trainings plan (6).

B. Capacity needs assessment survey

The objectives of the capacity needs assessment were to:

- Determine whether the capacity development needs and gaps of the IW portfolio on the previously five cross-cutting topics[1] identified are still relevant
- Determine the priority areas for the new training strategy, guide and inform future IW:LEARN capacity development initiatives

[1] The five cross-cutting topics identified in the IW:LEARN ProDoc are: 1. Water conflict prevention and management; 2. Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA-SAP process as well as SDG 6 and SDG 14 reporting; 3. Project communication with a focus on science to policy transfer; 4. Economic valuation; 5. Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices.

- Inform the design and implementation of the training strategy and schedule, through a trainings plan.

This formed the second phase of a survey initially distributed by IW:LEARN in October 2023, aimed to assess the broader capacity and training needs across the GEF IW portfolio. This second part focussed on understanding the specific gaps in current training materials/products, as well as the needs of the target audience to improve their capacities at the national, regional, and global levels, and improve project performance and impact.
A significant sample of 39 respondents, mostly having a role related to the IW project management (85% responses) and having a mid to senior level roles (90% responses), replied to the survey and shared valuable inputs to understand the capacity development needs and gaps and determine the priority areas for the new training strategy. They brought valuable inputs related to five different sections:
- Section 1: Demographic Information
- Section 2: Accessibility of training materials
- Section 3: Training needs in support of GEF IW projects
- Section 4: Training gaps and preferences in support of GEF IW projects
- Section 5: Additional information

The key findings were thoroughly analysed in the survey report. Hereunder are the key aspects which were considered in the design of the current training strategy:

Awareness of available contents: Most respondents (79%) affirmed they were aware of existing training materials/courses available within IW:LEARN resources. Regardless of this majority, it is important to consider the 21% who expressed a lack of awareness regarding the availability of diverse materials and courses within the IW:LEARN resources.

Use of available contents: 51% of survey respondents acknowledged having occasionally and frequently used the training materials or courses available through IW:LEARN in the past. When including those who have rarely used the materials, the percentage rises to 74%. However, these findings also highlighted some areas of concern: i) 26% of respondents have never used these materials. This may indicate both lack of awareness, as well as not finding value in the available materials; ii) Only 2 respondents reported frequent use of these resources. This indicates room for improvement in terms of the content and courses offered through IW:LEARN, with the aim of encouraging more frequent use by a greater number of individuals.

Value of available contents: for those who are aware of and use the resources, these materials make a valuable contribution to their projects (66% somewhat useful to very useful). Therefore, IW:LEARN's impact could be significantly enhanced by raising awareness of the available materials and by better aligning the content to user needs. Notably, no respondents rated the materials as not useful. These results indicated that an increased level of awareness about the availability of materials might be beneficial.

External consultations for contents: 49% of respondents consult other websites, platforms, or resources (online or offline) outside of IW:LEARN to train and/or build your and/or their staff's capacities and skills. This shows that a significant number of IW projects are aware of their training needs and are actively seeking the best available opportunities. This highlights a clear demand for IW:LEARN to address.

Level of knowledge and skills: Responses were grouped in three levels: 5 topics which show a medium-high level of knowledge; 5 topics with a balanced status between medium-high and none-low; and the following 5 topics where respondents considered their level of knowledge and skills closer to none-low:

Cross-cutting topic	Result	Level of knowledge and skills
Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA/SAP approach as well as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and SDG 14 reporting*	64.1%	None-low
Citizen Science for IW projects	61.5%	
Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement	59%	
Water conflict prevention and management*	56.4%	
Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security	53.9%	

Degree of the needs for training materials/courses: respondents placed 13 topics in a status of "needed-highly needed", leaving only 2 topics (water conflict prevention and management; citizen science for IW projects) with a balanced result regarding the degree of a need for training materials and courses. While the previous questions showed that the level of knowledge and skills was viewed as quite acceptable and even high, this question showed that the degree on the need for training materials and courses was considered highly needed.

Cross-cutting topic	Result	Degree on the need for training materials and courses
Top 5 topics		Needed – Highly needed
Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement	87.2%	
Communication in IW projects with a focus on science to policy transfer*	77%	
Marine Spatial Planning & Blue Economy	69.2%	
Transboundary cooperation, governance & policy	69.3%	
Economic valuation approaches to wet ecosystems*	69.2%	
Other topics		
Introduction to the Global Environment Facility (GEF)	64.1%	

Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices*	61.6%	
Inclusivity: indigenous peoples, local communities, gender, youth, minorities	64.1%	
Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Programme (TDA/SAP)	64.1%	
Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security	59%	
Ocean Governance	64.1%	
Large Marine Ecosystems: Assessment and Management	66.7%	
Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA/SAP approach as well as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and SDG 14 reporting*	66.6%	

Training modality preferences: Respondents recognized the value of **blended learning (26%),** combining the richness of in-person training with the practicalities of online platforms. **In-person trainings (24%)** and **Training of trainers (19%)** also appeared with a high level of value. Specifically for **online courses**, respondents appreciated an **instructor-led** training (45%), with the possibility to interact with colleagues as part of a learning process. As regards to the preferred capacity development modality, there was a clear appreciation on the value of **training courses** (34%), followed by **peer-to-peer exchanges** (26%). This infers that respondents expressed a preference for trainings, preferably blended and instructor-led, with a significant component of interaction between colleagues.

Citizen Science: The majority of the GEF IW projects (19 respondents or 77%) have not integrated any aspect of citizen science yet. In response to "what type of resource you would need to integrate Citizen Science into IW projects" training courses received the highest number of responses (32%), seconded by a manual or methodology (25%). Although the level of knowledge and skills on citizen science for was rated as none-low (61.5%; survey question 14), the survey did not point towards a remarkable high degree of the need for training materials/courses on citizen science (48.8% not needed-somewhat needs versus 51.3% Needed – Highly needed; survey question 15). In addition, Citizen Science for IW projects ranked lowest in terms of importance and urgency (53.8% medium-high priority; survey question 16).

Small Islands Development States (SIDS): Only 8 respondents (21%) are part of the SIDS project portfolio. For them, the topics which received the highest responses to be specifically tailored to SIDS were:

- Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement;
- Communication in IW projects with a focus on science to policy transfer;
- Introduction to the Global Environment Facility (GEF);
- Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices.

Overall, the survey offered valuable inputs from a solid sample of IW project members with management roles and mid to senior levels. These inputs addressed issues as the importance of increasing awareness of what is already available through IW:LEARN; current level of knowledge and skills and training needs; preferred training modalities; and the needs for specific thematics such as citizen science and SIDS. All are valuable inputs which were considered in the development of the IW:LEARN training strategy.

The summary table of the combined findings is presented in annex 2.

5. IW:LEARN training strategy: Strategic goals, principles and objectives

i. Strategic Goal

Strategic goal for an IW:LEARN training strategy
Strengthen capacities and enhance knowledge, skills and expertise on transboundary water management.

ii. Strategic principles

The IW:LEARN training strategy was formulated around the following four strategic principles:

a. **Demand responsiveness:** By responding to demands arising from IW projects, actions are impact oriented, locally embedded, and help to leverage funding and in-kind contributions, making the strategy efficient and sustainable. In this way, capacity development is anchored at the institutional level, making skills and capacities available for continuous growth, enabling training delivery over time.

b. **A partnership approach for trainings:** Water is a complex topic which requires interdisciplinary approaches, as well as expertise from global, regional, and local context. A partnership approach is essential to address this complexity. Partnerships allow peer-learning and sharing, as well various forms of contributions to upscale knowledge development and delivery. IW:LEARN has experience in collaborating with others and this line of work should be continued.

c. There are many different organisations with experience, know-how, and diverse expertise working on water issues from different angles and regions of the world. Annex 1 presents a summary of available partners expertise for the development of contents addressing IW:LEARN needs. This constitutes an available base of potential partners and experts with whom to collaborate for the revision, updating, or development of new training materials to address IW:LEARN needs.

d. **Innovation, financial, and environmental sustainability:** The strategy enhances access to digital learning, combining online and blended learning through Training of Trainers, instructor-led, and self-paced courses. It considers available contents and expertise, as well as it allows peer-reviews and collaboration. The strategy contributes to bridging the digital divide, while offering an innovative, cost efficient, and environmentally sound response.

e. **Durability and scalability:** Durability of trainings through online and blended learning is an integral part of the strategy. Ease of access to various forms of contents and trainings is considered. This facilitates availability over time and scalability at a cost-efficient approach. Open-source learning management systems should be used to host contents and courses.

iii. Strategic objectives and corresponding activities

The IW:LEARN training strategy was developed based on the following three Strategic Objectives:

- Strategic objective 1: Develop the capacity of the IW portfolio in priority areas.
- Strategic objective 2: Develop tailor-made contents and courses, and update existing training materials to address the current and future capacity development needs of the IW portfolio
- Strategic objective 3: Foster a culture that values learning and continuous improvement

Each Strategic Objective is further subdivided into concrete activities.

Strategic objective 1: Develop the capacity of the IW portfolio in priority areas.

Activity 1.1 Address the priority training needs of the IW portfolio
The following topics were identified as the top priority areas through the stock-taking exercise and the capacity needs assessment survey.

Identified priority areas. See Annex 2. Identified priority topics**for more information.**

Topic	Comments and suggestions
Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement	Identified as highly needed to fill a gap of available materials (stock taking) and as high training priority at all levels (knowledge and skills levels, applicability of IW projects and IW effective project management). This topic was also identified as priority by survey respondents representing SIDS. One of the pre-conference workshops at the 10th International Waters Conference (IWC10; September 2024; Uruguay) was a masterclass on Sustainable Funding and Financing. Other capacity development activities on the topic, e.g. in the form of guidance documents and workshops, are already planned.
Communication in IW projects with a focus on science to policy transfer	Identified as highly needed to fill a gap of available materials (stock taking) and as high training priority high training priority for IW projects. This topic was also identified as priority by survey respondents representing SIDS. Support on communications is already being provided through the Comms Webinar Series organized by IW:LEARN, the organization of a Communication workshop (September 2024; Uruguay), the development of a Communications toolkit and the establishment of a communication hub within the IW: LEARN website where all resources for the Communications community will be gathered.
Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices	Identified as highly needed to fill a gap of available materials (stock taking) and high training priority for IW effective project management.

Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA/SAP approach as well as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and SDG 14 reporting	Data and information management was also identified as priority by survey respondents representing SIDS. A DIM Taskforce will be set up by IW:LEARN to support IW project on data and information management aspects and streamline activities across the portfolio. This is an outcome of the first DIM workshop (June 2024; Paris) and a second workshop as part of the IWC10. IW:LEARN will launch the updated website guidelines and other guidance materials the support the portfolio on aspects related to DIM.
Transboundary cooperation, governance & policy, including water conflict prevention and management	A core topic for International Waters. As part of an Integrated Water Resources Management approach (IWRM), this topic may also address issues as water conflict and inclusivity. The stock-taking report showed that training materials are available for this topic, offering a solid basis for the potential development of new courses within the framework of IW:LEARN.
GEF IW projects: Project management, Transboundary Analysis/Strategic Action Programme (TDA/SAP)	Identified as highly needed to fill a gap of available materials (stock taking) and as high training priority high training priority for IW projects. The GEF IW: LEARN International Waters Project Management Course and GEF IW: LEARN Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Programme Course, currently archived on Cap-Net´s virtual campus (2020) will be updated and relaunched. These will follow the planned update of the PM manual and the TDA/SAP manual to reflect an enhanced methodology that includes Source-to-Sea, Nexus, MSP and gender considerations. One of the pre-conference workshops at the IWC10 (September 2024; Uruguay) was dedicated to the Management of GEF IW projects.
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)	Inclusivity: indigenous peoples, local communities, gender, youth, minorities As part of IW:LEARN's workplan, IW:LEARN is enhancing the TDA/SAP methodology to include gender aspects and preparing a practical guidance note on "How To Integrate GESI in IW projects".
Small Island Developing States (SIDS)	Priority topics identified by respondents from SIDS include: • Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement • Data and information management • Communication in IW projects

	As part of IW:LEARN's workplan, IW:LEARN will be organize intra-regional training workshops in SIDS on identified priority topics for the SIDS regions. The training materials from these workshops will be available on the SIDS hub within the IW:LEARN website.
Marine Spatial Planning & Blue Economy	A new course on MSP developed by MSPglobal (IOC/UNESCO) is now available on the Ocean Teacher Global Academy. The course is available in English, French and Spanish. This course is offered to the participants of the MSP training workshops organized by IOC/UNESCO, in collaboration with MSPglobal, IW:LEARN and GRID-Arendal in LAC, Africa and Asia. The workshop also integrates exercises from Blue Training Practice by GRID-Arendal as a blended training set-up.
Economic valuation approaches to wet ecosystems	A guidance document and relevant training materials are available in the Economic Valuation hub as part of the IW:LEARN website.

Strategic objective 2: Develop tailor-made contents and courses, and update existing training materials to address the current and future capacity development needs of the IW portfolio

Activity 2.1 Design and deliver a tailored-made, scalable, and durable training roll-out
IW:LEARN should engage in the development of tailor-made responses to training needs coming from the ~ 125 active projects in the portfolio. These responses may take various forms, as **Training of Trainers courses**, **instructor-led courses** to a selected group of recipients, and **open, self-paced courses** to a larger group of participants. This scaling model also allows courses to be translated and regionally adapted to capture and respond to various needs and contexts, as needed.

Delivery through **blended and online courses** facilitates scaling up while offering ease access and learning opportunities for more participants. It is also efficient in terms of implementation costs and it is environmentally adequate.

Peer-to-peer learning and dialogues take place at various moments: i) collaborative partnerships for the revision and/or development of training materials and courses facilitation; ii) peer reviews of new or adapted training materials; iii) country and regional meetings; iv) IW Conferences.

Tailor-made training contents and courses are highly effective in addressing specific training needs related to competencies and skills for various reasons:

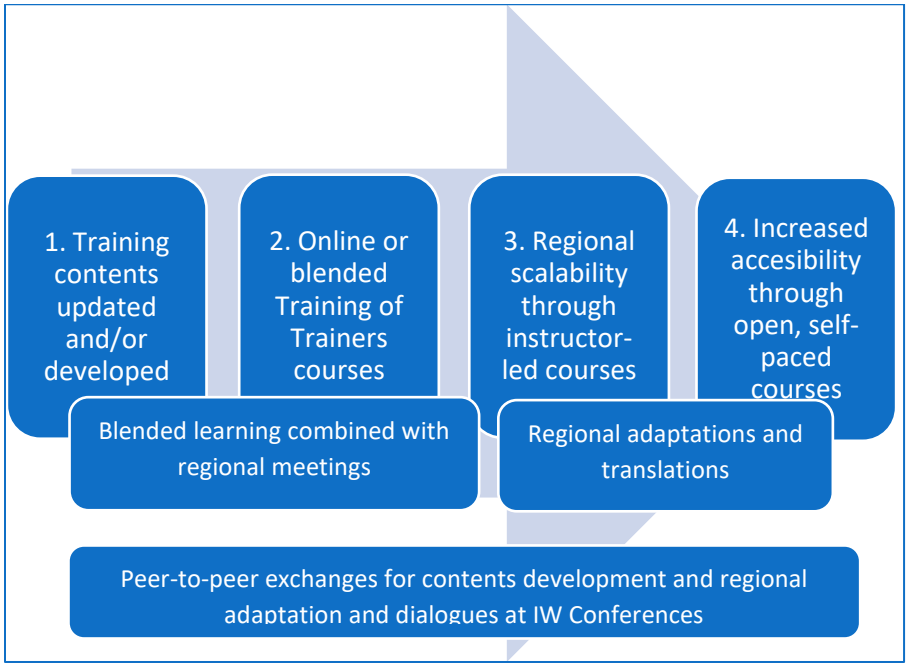
- **Offer a precise response to specific and contextualised needs** as they are designed in consideration of precise needs (competences and contents) of a project or organisation.

- **Are engaging for participants,** who find a direct relation between the course or manual with their regular activities.
- **Are focused,** avoiding time associated with generic training programmes. The result is more effective.

Some key elements the **design and preparation of tailor-made contents and courses** include:

- Working with target recipients, understanding their needs in terms of contents and skills, include them in the design, integrate their available expertise.
- Set learning outcomes, align topics and materials to the speed needs and context, include real-world examples, case studies, and scenarios relevant to the learners' environment.
- Choose an appropriate format and modality for the training, best responding to the target needs and possibilities.
- Use engagement activities to keep the participants active and motivated (interaction, technology, field visits, games).
- Consider moments for practical application. Allow learners to apply what they've learned through exercises. Create moments for peer and instructor feedback to reinforce learning. Encourage participants to set actionable goals post-training.

Trainings roll-out, scalability, durability, and regional relevance



The suggested roll-out scheme incorporates findings from the capacity needs survey and provides a convenient response and offer to suit IW projects needs and possibilities for effective participation in these various trainings.

The suggested roll-out considers these preferences and designs a plan which starts with contents development or updating, continues with training of trainers (which anchor knowledge at local

levels and enable replications), follows with a “cascade effect” scalability at regional levels, and finally generates broad accessibility through self-paced courses. This roll-out allows for peer collaboration, regional adaptations, translations, and combines in-person and digital learning, resulting in a broad plan at various levels, and combining modalities to make it cost-efficient. This suggested roll-out is in line with the project features presented in the IW:LEARN project document.

Annex 3 presents main features of different types of online courses.

Activity 2.2 Branding and revamping the training materials and training courses section within the IW:LEARN website and develop specific "Topic Pages"

It is highly important for IW project managers and their staff to be able to have easy access to the precise responses in terms of training manuals and training courses which they are looking for. Internet is infinite and most persons will not engage in a profound review to find a proper response to their knowledge needs.

The specific section of training courses within the IW:LEARN website will be rebranded and revamped a part of the overall website revamp planned in 2025, presenting an updated offer of training courses, knowledge contents, and links to key partners.

In terms of knowledge contents, and beyond training courses, the IW:LEARN website may also offer a curation of specific contents, in the form of a "Topic Page". A topic page shows a selection of contents for specific topics, granting access to learning resources to persons who may not have the time or interest to take a training, but still wish to have access to basic contents. This way, persons have access to an updated curation of various type of contents, varying from manuals and tools, to publications, websites, videos, and access to training courses. A topic page is about the curation of contents which already exist, rather than developing new contents. It is a main gate to knowledge of specific topics

Strategic objective 3: Foster a culture that values learning and continuous improvement

To stand as an effective knowledge management initiative for International Waters and facilitate global portfolio experience sharing and learning, dialogue facilitation, and targeted knowledge sharing and replication, it is also important to consider other significant aspects for a longstanding training strategy and a sustainable training programme.

Activity 3.1 Implement a user-friendly offer of online training courses

The stock-taking review identified various online courses, some tailored-made to fit IW:LEARN needs, and others presenting different levels of proximity with IW: LEARN needs. Further to the need to update some of these courses, and elaborate new courses to respond to priority needs, it is recommended that these courses are offered as part of a consistent package, and as much as possible, hosted and running on the same learning management system (LMS) or virtual campus.

There are risks in presenting an offer of different courses which are based on multiple platforms. Users will need to become familiar with these various platforms, they will have to go through various registrations (and have multiple usernames and passwords). Having these courses scattered around may not best the best engagement offer for participants and may result in the lack of motivation to access them.

By offering a set of courses on the same virtual campus, participants could be motivated to take more than one course. Furthermore, a "Certificate Programme on International Waters" could be designed by combining credits obtained after the completion of specific courses. Therefore, if a given participants completes, for example, 4 courses, then he/she would receive a certification.

An open-source and high quality LMS should be considered to host and run the IW:LEARN online courses. Possibilities include the Ocean Teacher Global Academy, the web-based training platform of IOC/UNESCO that supports face-to-face, blended training and online (distance) learning, and the Cap-Net virtual campus which runs on OpenEdx.

Activity 3.2 Communicate and create awareness within IW project portfolio about the training opportunities and access to learning contents

Based on the findings of the capacity needs survey, the IW:LEARN Training Strategy must **prioritize increasing awareness and accessibility of existing training materials and resources**. While a majority of respondents (79%) indicated awareness of IW:LEARN's offerings, the remaining 21%—many of whom occupy senior or mid-level project management roles—were unaware of the available training resources. To enhance the reach and utility of IW:LEARN's training portfolio, targeted communication and outreach campaigns will be enhanced, particularly aimed at decision-makers within the GEF IW portfolio, to promote greater utilization of existing content. Regularly communicating what is available, and which new courses and contents have been recently added is a vital action to support the training strategy.

Efforts will be made to enhance the relevance and alignment of training materials to user needs. While the survey showed that users who access the resources find them valuable, 26% of respondents left this section blank, suggesting either uncertainty about the materials' applicability or a lack of engagement. To address this, IW:LEARN will incorporate regular feedback loops and user consultations into its content development process, ensuring training offerings remain demand-driven and contextually relevant.

Furthermore, the strategy recognizes the proactive efforts of many projects to seek external platforms for capacity building—49% of respondents reported using sources outside IW:LEARN. This signals a strong and active demand for high-quality training opportunities, presenting an opportunity for IW:LEARN to position itself as a more central and responsive hub for knowledge and learning. In response, the strategy will explore partnerships with other trusted platforms, curate relevant external content, and expand IW:LEARN's own training offerings to meet the diverse and evolving needs of the GEF IW community.

Activity 3.3 Design and implement a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (MEL) to review and adjust the training strategy and training activities

Measuring its impact of capacity development is difficult because of the multiple dimensions in which it operates: individuals, organisations, and their environments. Measuring impact against goals and indicators requires a system approach that involves aligning indicators, data collection tools, measurement methods, verifiable means of verification and reporting mechanisms. Both quantitative and qualitative data is collected to measure progress.

Inputs as the ones considered for this training strategy should be regularly updated, mainly the capacity needs survey targeted to IW project managers. In addition, various means of verifying

the level of application of knowledge as well as the concrete impact of the training courses should be established.

Additional considerations for a monitoring and evaluation plan are presented in annex 4.

6. Trainings Plan

The proposed trainings plan distinguishes between the existing, updating and developing new training materials, based on the identified needs of the GEF IW portfolio as outlined above. It considers what is feasible and achievable within the IW:LEARN project timeframe, while also aligning with and complementing other planned activities. While some courses are directly developed and offered by IW:LEARN, others are the result of longstanding collaborations and partnerships with external organizations. These joint courses are also included below to provide a comprehensive overview of the full range of training opportunities available. In addition to the trainings plan, IW:LEARN is also developing a publications plan, which will include a series of "How To" guidance notes on pertinent topics (source-to-sea management; GESI; sustainable funding and financing; conjunctive water management; and citizen science). The launch of each publication will include a portfolio webinar, which provides training on the application of the guidance note. These webinars are not included in the overview below.

Title	Offered by	Partners	Duration	Type	Training Platform	Relevance to IW:LEARN5 topics of interest
Existing training courses						
Large Marine Ecosystems: Assessment and Management	IW:LEARN, University of Cape Town	NOAA, GEF, UNDP, IOC-UNESCO, UNEP	Approx. 25 hours, 6 modules	Instructor-led	Coursera	LME
Governance for Transboundary Freshwater Security	GWP	SIWI, UNESCO, International Centre for Water Cooperation, IHE Delft, Northumbria University-Newcastle, UNECE, UNU-INWEH	6 weeks, 4 – 6 hours per week, 6 modules	Self-paced	SDGAcademyX	Transboundary water management
Marine Spatial Planning Blue Planning in Practice	IOC-UNESCO & MSPglobal GRID-Arendal			Training workshops	OTGA	MSP
Update of training courses						
Project Management for GEF IW (2020)	IW:LEARN	GEF IW Partners	4 weeks, 12 hours, 3 modules (tbc)	Self-paced	OTGA (through a dedicated IW:LEARN interface)	Project Management

Updated TDA/SAP methodology (2021-2022)	IW:LEARN	GEF IW Partners	4 weeks, 12 hours, 3 modules (tbc)	Self-paced	OTGA (through a dedicated IW:LEARN interface)	TDA/SAP
New courses						
Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement		GEF IW Partners	tbc	Training workshops	IW:LEARN website or OTGA (through a dedicated IW:LEARN interface)	Sustainable funding and financing
SIDS • IWRM (Pacific) • DIM (Caribbean	IW:LEARN	SPC UNEP Cartagena	tbc	Training workshops	IW:LEARN website or OTGA (through a dedicated IW:LEARN interface)	SIDS
MSP in TDA/SAP	IW:LEARN	GRID-Arendal	tbc	Training workshop	OTGA (possibly adding a module to the existing MSP training course)	MSP; TDA/SAP

Annex 1: Summary of available partners expertise for the development of contents addressing IW:LEARN needs

Organisation	Expertise
Cap-Net	Water capacity development, training manuals, face to face and online courses
GWP IWRM Action Hub	IWRM knowledge platform, tools, case studies, publications
IHE Delft	Interdisciplinary topic expertise, citizen science
SIWI	Water governance, shared waters programme
UNEP-DHI	IWRM and river basins data portal, nature-based solutions, water quality
FAO	Water and food
UNDP	Water governance, democratic governance, climate change
UNEP	Environment, climate change, biodiversity
IOC-UNESCO	Marine sciences, marine spatial planning
Ocean Teacher Global Academy	Ocean science, marine resources, marine spatial planning, marine and coastal ecosystems
International Ocean Institute Ocean Academy	Ocean, climate, human activities and livelihoods
IUCN	Environmental law, water governance, nature-based solutions
WWF	Freshwaters, oceans
TNC	Ocean, land, freshwater protection and conservation
Conservation International	Ocean protection, coastal communities, fisheries.
ADB, IADB, CAF, WB, UN ECLAC	Regional and country expertise
OECD	Water governance
GRID-ARENDAL	Environment, communications
CEO Water Mandate	Water stewardship
UNIDO	Industrial development

Annex 2. Identified priority topics

The next table presents findings from the stock-taking of existing training materials and identification of gaps and needs for new training materials as well as from the outcomes of capacity needs assessment survey which has held in Q3-Q4, 2024. Results sorted by responses to survey question 15 "Highly needed training materials/courses at the level of GEF IW project".

HIGH needs for new training materials based on gaps in existing training materials (stock-taking report)*	**Level of knowledge and skills on various cross-cutting topics (survey question 14)**	**Priority training materials/courses at the level of GEF IW project (survey question 15)**	**Priority training needs in order of importance and urgency for an effective management of a GEF IW projects (survey question 16)**
Sustainable Funding and Financing	Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement (59%)	Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement (87.2%)	Sustainable financing & Private Sector Engagement (89.7%)
Project communication with a focus on science to policy transfer	Communication in IW projects with a focus on science to policy transfer (64.1%)	Communication in IW projects with a focus on science to policy transfer (77%)	Communication in IW projects with a focus on science to policy transfer (89.7%)
Transboundary cooperation, governance & policy	Transboundary cooperation, governance & policy (82%)	Transboundary cooperation, governance & policy (69.3%)	Transboundary cooperation, governance & policy (82%)
Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices	Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA/SAP approach as well as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and SDG 14 reporting (64.1%)	Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices (61.6 %) Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA/SAP approach as well as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and SDG 14 reporting (66.6 %)**	Data and information management (DIM), including legal aspects of data sharing and best practices (82.1%) Modelling and satellite imagery analysis in support of the TDA/SAP approach as well as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and SDG 14 reporting (79.5%)
GEF IW projects: Project management, Transboundary Analysis/Strategic Action Programme (TDA/SAP)	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Programme (TDA/SAP) (71.8%)	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Programme (TDA/SAP) (64.1%)	Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis-Strategic Action Programme (TDA/SAP) (77%)
Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)	Inclusivity: indigenous peoples, local communities, gender, youth, minorities (77%)	Inclusivity: indigenous peoples, local communities, gender, youth, minorities (64.1 %)	Inclusivity: indigenous peoples, local communities, gender, youth, minorities (76.9%)

Citizen science	Citizen Science for IW projects (61.5%)	Citizen Science for IW projects (51.3%)	Citizen Science for IW projects (53.8%)
		Marine Spatial Planning & Blue Economy (69.2%)	
		Economic valuation approaches to wet ecosystems (69.2%)	

* Topics identified with a “high” need in the stock-taking assessment, without any specific ranking on which is the most highly needed.

** Analysis of topics merged due to their interrelated scope.

Annex 3: Types of online courses

Course	Description	Participants outreach	Recommended for:
Blended: Combines online with face-to-face moments.	Facilitates information sharing and team building. The online part works similarly as an instructor led.	Pre-selected participants based on specific objectives of the course/project.	Recommended for specific projects working with a group of people with continuity and where face to face events are already planned. Excellent for **Training of Trainers**.
Instructor-led: 100% online with intensive facilitation, pre-defined start and end dates, and pre-selected participants.	Usually 6 weeks course (shorter courses also possible). Structured in modules, which move on progressively. All participants progress at the same time, following an established course schedule. **Pre-defined start and end dates. May be delivered one of more editions each year.** Requires intensive coordination and facilitation. Rich sharing in forums.	Participants must be selected and confirmed before the course starts. Not too many participants as intensive facilitation is needed (max 100).	Mostly recommended when the target group is well known, e.g., **Training of Trainers**, Master level courses, as part of specific projects. In cases where intensive follow up and interaction with participants is required. And when there is a facilitators team in place available for an intensive work.
Self-paced: 100% online, open courses, massive level of participants, limited facilitation, participants progress at their own pace.	Completely self-paced courses. **Participants may enrol and start at any moment.** Participants progress at their own pace. The course is usually open for various months. Forums based on peer-to-peer comments. Facilitators may access from time to time and add general comments and feedback.	Open courses, also possible to make them private (for specific participants "by invitation only") From 100 to 1000+ participants per edition.	**Self-paced courses are the most used modality**, they enable a more efficient use of course contents, which may reach out a larger group of participants that in an intensive, instructor-led modality. In self-paced courses it is also easier to do new editions, re-runs, keeping the course open throughout the year.

Annex 4: Recommendations for a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is an approach rooted in tools and practices that helps us apply the knowledge gained from evidence and analysis to improve the results from our capacity development activities and ensure accountability for the resources used to achieve them.

Monitoring: the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to help us know if we are on track toward achieving our desired results.

Evaluation: the systematic and objective assessment of the relevance, efficacy, or efficiency of a program.

Learning: the systematic process through which information generated from M&E is reflected upon and intentionally used to continuously improve and adapt a program's ability to achieve results.

The ultimate impact of our work depends heavily on what our participants or partners do with the support given to them, and how these actions combine with other external contributing factors to produce systemic change. For this reason, influence is strongest over activities (we can control how we carry out
capacity development activities) and weakest when it comes to impact (we can't control whether a national policy is implemented).

Indicators allow us to answer the question 'How do we know whether or how much we have achieved our objective?'. They help us quantify performance/progress and they involve monitoring the quality, quantity, and timeliness of activity outputs as well as outcomes.

Indicators should have certain pieces of reference information such as the source of the data, the frequency with which they will be collected, and any necessary disaggregation of data, among other elements. Indicators can be quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative indicators provide information about things that can be expressed in numbers. Qualitative indicators provide information about things that are expressed through description and narrative. Qualitative data generally is harder to collect, however, it can enrich the evidence provided by quantitative data.

Learning from our MEL processes and results is key to understanding how we can improve the progress/performance of our work. For this, we should review the key findings from our monitoring and evaluation phases and draw main conclusions from them. This usually happens at the time of elaborating progress and annual reports, as well as it is a key section of a MEL report.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Principles[2]

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION/KEY QUESTION
Relevance	Are activities relevant, well-conceived in the context of International Waters?
Efficiency	Is the activity implemented in a timely and cost-effective manner? Have resources been used cost effectively? Do the quantitative and qualitative results justify the resources expended?
Effectiveness	In relation to the project objectives, what changes in behaviour, relationships or activities of boundary partners is the project generating; what is the evidence? What are we learning from our experience and how can we improve?
Impact	What evidence is there that the project is potentially contributing to international waters and increased capacities at the national and regional levels?
Sustainability	To what extent is IW: LEARN contributing to building an enabling environment for continued capacity development action?
External Utility	To what extent are actions replicable? Might its approaches, methods, and/or content have potential value in other countries or regions or for other subjects?

Monitoring tools

- Activity narrative report
- Financial reports
- Participants list template (including GESI integration indicators)
- Knowledge management survey: use and sharing of publications and training manuals
- Knowledge base line survey
- Course evaluation form
- Outcome and impact survey (8-10 month after a training course). Survey to learn about: i) use of knowledge; ii) sharing of knowledge; and iii) impact of knowledge.
- Impact stories

[2] Adapted from the Cap-Net Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan.

Annex 5: Logical framework for the IW:LEARN Training Strategy

The logical framework for the IW:LEARN Training Strategy is presented below, including suggested indicators and means of verification.

Strategic goal	Strategic objectives	Outcomes	Activities	Indicators	Means of verification
Strengthen transboundary waters management by facilitating global portfolio experience sharing and learning, dialogue facilitation, and targeted knowledge sharing and replication.	1. Develop the capacity of the IW portfolio in priority areas	Skills and capacities enhanced for International Waters. Including training modules on cross-cutting issues. Locally relevant knowledge responding to demands, incorporating local expertise, and available in various languages. Enhanced portfolio & development partner capacity at the national, regional & global levels, and improved portfolio-wide project performance. Enhanced number of partnerships and resources mobilized for the portfolio.	1.1 Address the priority training needs of the IW portfolio	Number and topic coverage of new training contents and courses developed. Number and topic coverage of training contents and courses updated. Number and topic coverage of training contents and courses translated. Number of cross-cutting modules developed. Number of partners participation in the updating and development of training contents. In-kind and financial resources mobilized through partners. Results of projects performance.	Training contents developed and/or updated and available. Training courses in place. Activity reports. Progress and annual reports. Partners meetings reports. Financial reports. IW:LEARN website. Partners websites.

Strategic goal	Strategic objectives	Outcomes	Activities	Indicators	Means of verification
	2. Develop tailor-made contents and courses and update existing training materials to address the current and future capacity development needs of the IW portfolio	Relevant training materials and courses aligned with the current and anticipated capacity needs of the portfolio, addressing gaps and future challenges. Modular training materials allow for adaptability across the portfolio. A scalable and durable roll-out design enables access to knowledge at different levels and for multiple targets.	2.1 Design and deliver a tailored-made, scalable, and durable training roll-out	Number, topics, and type of training courses delivered, target groups. Contents developed and/or updated. IW: LEARN website Online courses in place Partnerships in place Peer reviews	Courses reports Participants lists Courses evaluations IW: LEARN website Virtual campus Partners reports IW Conferences programmes and reports Communications, newsletters, social networks
		Up to-date and enhanced IW: LEARN web platform.	2.2 Branding and revamping the training materials and training courses section within the IW:LEARN website and develop specific “Topic Pages”	Courses section at the IW: LEARN revamped. Number and topics developed and incorporated in the IW: LEARN website as “topic pages”.	Topic pages IW: LEARN website Communications, newsletters, social networks

Strategic goal	Strategic objectives	Outcomes	Activities	Indicators	Means of verification
	3. Foster a culture that values learning and continuous improvement	Increased experience sharing and replication of successes within and across the IW portfolio, as well as enhanced understanding of GEF IW project interventions beyond the portfolio. Increased global awareness of GEF results and increased GEF partnerships beyond the portfolio. Progress of the training strategy are informed by a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan.	3.1 Implement a user-friendly offer of online training courses	Online courses offer Functional virtual campus supporting the IW: LEARN training strategy	IW: LEARN website Virtual campus hosting IW: LEARN courses Courses evaluations Courses reports Progress and annual reports Surveys on trainings
			3.2 Communicate and create awareness within IW project portfolio about the training opportunities and access to learning contents	IW: LEARN website Communications, newsletters, social networks Presentations at regional meetings and IW Conferences	IW: LEARN website metrics Social networks, newsletters metrics Reports Surveys on communications
			3.3 Design and implement a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (MEL) to review and adjust the training	MEL plan designed and communicated MEL plan implemented	Monitoring and evaluation plan tools developed Monitoring and evaluation tools implemented

Strategic goal	Strategic objectives	Outcomes	Activities	Indicators	Means of verification
			strategy and training activities.	Regular capacity needs assessment surveys	MEL report developed and shared