



GLOBAL INTERNATIONAL WATERS ASSESSMENT

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Habitat destruction severe in many sub-regions

Modification of aquatic habitats is present in all parts of the world and is inextricably linked to increased population pressure and exploitation of resources. In the GIWA assessment environmental impact of habitat and community modification is severe in 16 of currently 47 assessed sub-regions or parts of sub-regions. In the subsequent ranking, taking socio-economic and future concerns into account, about half of the regions include habitat and community modification among their two top priorities.

Water covers 71 per cent of the earth's surface and constitutes a key component in all ecosystems. The economic value provided by aquatic ecosystems is estimated at three-quarter of the total value of the biosphere making these habitats most important to human livelihood



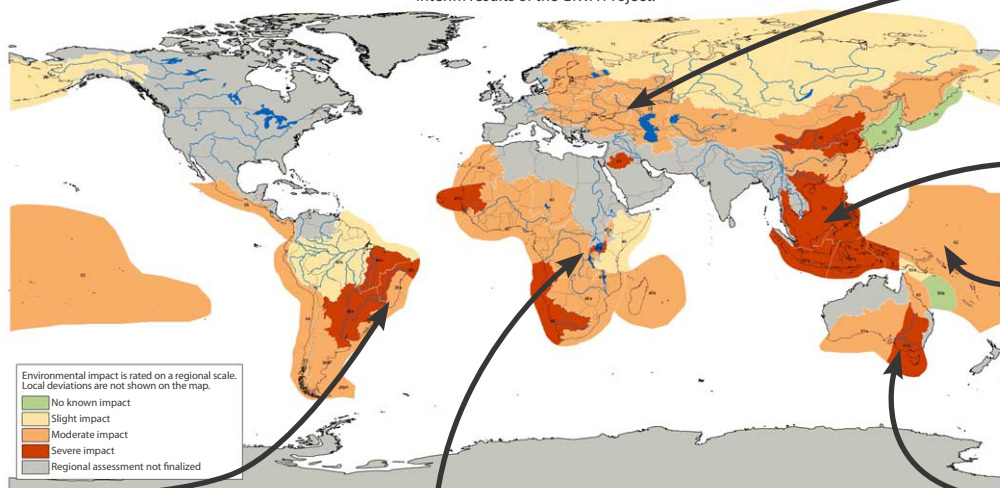
and wellbeing. The transboundary nature of many aquatic resources often makes the use and abuse of these resources a concern on an interstate or even global level.

The current condition of aquatic habitats has been assessed as severe in 16 sub-regions out

of 47 within the GIWA assessment (see map). When ranking the five GIWA issues about half of the regions have habitat and community modification among their two top priorities. In other regions the issue is perceived as secondary in relation to other more stressing regional issues, although habitat destruction and modification may be prevalent. The socio-economic impacts of habitat modification and loss are generally not rated as severe as the environmental impact, possibly as a consequence of the intricacy in estimating the true value of the services provided. The future prospect regarding the status of aquatic habitats is mixed but more than half of the regions anticipate a further deterioration in the next 20 years. There is a however, a growing realization that ecosystems are not inexhaustible and preventive measures are to be taken.

GLOBAL HABITAT MODIFICATION

Interim results of the GIWA Project.



In South America the habitats most at risk are the once situated along the Atlantic coast in the vicinity of large metropolitan areas. Heavy industrialization, tourism developments and domestic sewage are major contributors to the deteriorating condition of habitats.

In Africa, habitat destruction hotspots are scattered over the continent. The Lake Victoria ecosystem is in a precarious situation as a result of many contributing factors including eutrophication, invasive species and overexploitation. In southern Africa and in the northwestern part of the continent, rivers and wetlands have been severely impacted by dam constructions and development.

In Europe and Central Asia, eutrophication and overfishing in lakes, estuaries and semi-enclosed seas have altered the ecosystem balance with resulting habitat destruction and changes in biodiversity.

In Southeast Asia mangrove forests are the most threatened habitats mainly due to extensive aquaculture practices.

Island states in the Pacific and Indian Ocean suffer from deteriorating coral reefs as a result of destructive fishing practices and large-scale coral bleaching events caused by increased sea surface temperatures.

Aquatic habitats in the Murray-Darling river system in Australia have been modified along more than 70 per cent of its river course. The main impacts are irrigation, clearance of riparian vegetation and introduction of exotic species such as European carp.



Focus on waters and peace

The 3rd World Water Forum in Kyoto, Japan, is held in mid-March, a large event attracting major water stakeholders. GIWA is organizing a session at the Forum under the theme "Water for Peace" on Friday March 21 at 8.45 to 11.30. The venue is the Ensemble Hall in Biwako Hall at the Shiga Site.

This is the outline of the GIWA program:

Introduction to Water for Peace and to Environment and Peace. General scheme of conflict prevention and resolution and the role of GIWA.

Case studies and results from the GIWA assessment

and its environmental focus in regions such as Middle East, Latin America, East African Rift Valley Lakes, the Baltic Sea and Coral Reefs.

Conclusions and general recommendations for the future.

The session will include speakers who participate in the GIWA assessment in different sub-regions. The Swedish Minister of Environment Lena Sommerstad will give concluding remarks. A GIWA exhibition is presented at the Stakeholder Center.

Swedish Queen learns about GIWA

The Queen of Sweden, Her Royal Highness Queen Silvia, has been introduced to the work of GIWA. The core team in Kalmar made a presentation of the GIWA assessment to her when she participated in a model UN activity at a local high school.

Queen Silvia spoke to the high school students on children's rights, a concern she works for in many parts of the world. She has initiated programs for aiding children being abused, handicapped children and orphan children in large cities. When informed about GIWA she agreed to the fact that the right to good water is important for all children. Queen Silvia will carry this message as she continues travelling around the world to meet with decision makers.

The students at the model UN, around 200 teenagers from ten schools in Sweden, were also informed of the GIWA assessment. GIWA's Raphael Magin, intern



The Swedish Queen Silvia took great interest in the information on water use in different parts of the world from GIWA's intern Raphael Magin and Scientific Director Dag Daler.

from Germany, spoke on the water use in different countries and was assisted by Renato Leite, intern from Brasil, at an information booth.

Water for the Future

The World Water Day 2003 is celebrated on March 22. The goal for World Water Day this year is to inspire worldwide political and community action and encourage greater global understanding of the need for more responsible water use and conservation.

"Water for the Future" is the theme for this year, calling on one and all to observe sustainable approaches to water use for the benefit of future generations. The organizer for World Water Day 2003 is United Nations Environment Programme. This year the World Water Day coincides with the International Year of Fresh Water. GIWA is planning school activities in Sweden to mark both the World Water Day and the International Year of Freshwater.

Symposium on Transboundary Waters in Kalmar

In August transboundary water issues will be discussed at GIWA-Kalmar University symposium in Kalmar, immediately after the Stockholm Water Week. The program and call for registration are now available on www.giwa.net/symposium

DEAR GIWA FRIENDS, 2003 seems to be a year when water issues are at focus. World Water Day will again be celebrated on March 22, a day when attention is also given to the 2003 International Year of Freshwater. Freshwater is one of UNEP's priority areas of concern and here GIWA plays an important role.

This year water stakeholders from all parts of the world will meet in Kyoto, Japan, for the 3rd World Water Forum. GIWA is there and we have chosen to highlight the importance of water agreements to avoid conflicts. A GIWA session is held under the theme "Water for Peace". Case studies from the assessment in different parts of the world will be presented, all focusing on areas where cooperation (or conflict) may emerge among countries because of water related issues. These areas are freshwater shortage, pollution, habitat and community modification, and unsustainable exploitation of living resources.

The main purpose of GIWA is to provide decision-makers with information that will help them to identify actions where they should concentrate their efforts to mitigate environmental degradation in international waters. This task is especially important in regions where water pollution, overexploitation of aquatic resources and habitat destruction may also lead to conflict.

We welcome you to the GIWA session in Kyoto and also to our exhibition site at the Stakeholder Center. We invite you to make the GIWA site the meeting point for all colleagues working for "Water for the Future", which is the theme for the World Water Day this year.

Dag Daler
Scientific Director

Upcoming events...

16-23 March 2003,
in Kyoto, Japan:
3rd World Water Forum

11-14 August 2003:
Stockholm Water Symposium

18-20 August 2003, in
Kalmar, Sweden:
Joint GIWA-University of
Kalmar Symposium on
Transboundary Waters.