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Sustainable Solutions for Urban Water Security

Innovative Studies

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Preface

How our society responds to the growing problem of urbanization induced environmental changes is a pressing issue with urban sustainable development. One way to understand this issue is through the case of water, one of the most precious resources in urban areas. Water resources face widespread deterioration due to unsustainable urbanization. The fundamental growth and development of human societies are dependent on water resources, and so the ecosystems on which human population directly depend on. In fact, an increasing number of researchers and professionals are now engaged in finding out solutions to this vast problem with huge social implications. However, the results largely remain not practiced on the ground and urban areas continue to adversely affect freshwater environments. But the interest in studying urban areas more with successful case studies, capturing the diversity of possibilities associated with urban water management—from increasing and protecting biodiversity in urban ecosystems to engineering solutions that are based on long-term benefits—is on the rise. This book captures notable sustainable solutions backed up by robust theoretical and scientific background analyzed as keys to these successful practices.

The foundations of the book were laid through the project Asia Pacific Network for Global Change Research (APN), titled “Climate Change Adaptation through Optimal Stormwater Capture Measures: Towards a New Paradigm for Urban Water Security” (Project ID: ARCP2014-20NMY-Mishra). Another major factor has been with the author’s interests in understanding and explaining urban water resource problems to professionals (academicians, policy-makers) as well as common citizens, thereby address and better equip water resource management policies in urban areas. The chapters in this book cover a wide range of issues regarding urban water security, with a focus on various success stories. We concentrate on success stories in detail mainly as we think they give hope for the future generations and provide examples, and showcase our ability to adapt in difficult situations such as degradation of a most vital resource. The most important feature of this book is the theoretical and conceptual viewpoints backed up by case studies of real-world situations, which mainly came through our experiences in the field of water resource management. Throughout the book, it is emphasized that sustainable water

resource management in urban areas plays a pivotal role in a broad range of issues relating to water security such as social stability, economic and environmental well-being. The book thus can also be taken as a handbook of workable answers to the problem of not only urban water resource management alone but also a nexus that relates urban sustainability through water issues.

Finally, we hope that this book will be an important step toward informing urban policy decisions regarding water security issues. We also hope that the combination of these valuable steps, together with other similar studies, will open new pathways for the urban society to deal with sustainable water resource management.

Pokhara, Nepal
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The original version of the book was revised: The funder information has been added. The correction to the book is available at https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-53110-2_10

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This book has been successful due to the Water and Urban Initiative (WUI) research program at United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), where we conceptualized the idea after debating hours on the current research gap and situations we learned during working at different projects. There is great amount of exposure of discussion and work with the colleagues, work and administration at UNU-IAS who helped us to refine our thinking. Most importantly, the programs, teaching and discussion at the University of Tokyo Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science (IR3S) 1, Japan, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), School of Engineering, Pokhara University, Nepal, The Fenner School of Environment & Society, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, Department of Sustainability Studies, Hosei University, Japan, and Natural Resource and Ecosystem Services, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), Japan. Without their support, this book would not have been a reality, especially as a lot of the information and case studies discussed in the book come from the authors'

research works in these institutions. The authors would like to thank all the people involved at Springer for making this project a success, particularly Dr. Petra van Steenbergen, Ms. Amudha Vijayarangan, Ms. Margaret Deignan and Ms. Bhagyalakshme Sreenivasan, who consistently supported us throughout the writing process.

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Contents

1	Urban Water Security: Background and Concepts	1
1.1	Background	1
1.2	Water Security: Concept and Evolutions	5
1.3	Water Security in Global Change Context	8
1.4	Water Security Assessment and Indicators	9
1.4.1	Associated Factors and Approaches	12
1.4.2	Sustainable Water Management	15
1.5	Summary	18
	References	20
2	Urban Water Security Challenges	25
2.1	Background	25
2.2	Urbanization	27
2.3	Climate Change	29
2.4	Implications on Water Security	30
2.4.1	Hydrological Cycle	30
2.4.2	Water Shortage	31
2.4.3	Land Subsidence	31
2.4.4	Surface and Groundwater Pollution	32
2.4.5	Human Health	32
2.4.6	Ecosystem and Biodiversity	33
2.5	Case Studies	33
2.5.1	Bagmati River Flood, Nepal	33
2.5.2	Ciliwung River Flood, Indonesia	35
2.6	Summary	38
	References	39

3	Urban Water Demand Management	41
3.1	Background	41
3.2	Current Perspective and Prospects	42
3.3	Urban Water Demand Management Strategies	45
3.4	Case Study: Effectiveness of Urban Water Demand Management Strategies in Kathmandu Valley, Nepal	47
3.4.1	Introduction	47
3.4.2	Methodology	50
3.4.3	Supply- and Demand-Side Management Strategies Formulation and Analysis	50
3.5	Discussion and Summary	52
	References	54
4	Water Quality Restoration and Reclamation	59
4.1	Background	59
4.2	Effects of Land-Use Change	61
4.3	Water Quality and Health Nexus	63
4.4	Wastewater: Global Trends	64
4.5	Wastewater, Sanitation and the Sustainable Development Agenda	67
4.6	Innovations in Water Quality Treatment	68
4.7	Wastewater Reclamation Technologies	69
4.8	Case Study: Sustainable Water Environment Management in Jakarta	74
4.9	Summary	77
	References	79
5	Landscape-Based Approach for Sustainable Water Resources in Urban Areas	83
5.1	Background	83
5.1.1	Effects of Urbanization on Water Resources: Some Notable Examples	84
5.2	Water and Landscape Issues	86
5.3	The Role of the Ecosystem Service Approach to Water Security	89
5.3.1	Ecosystem Service Components that Can Better Address Urban Water Security	91
5.4	Landscape Diversity as a Tool for Urban Water Management	93
5.4.1	Areas Inside the Urban Domain	93
5.4.2	Areas Outside the Urban Domain	94

5.5	Natural Disturbance Regimes in Urban Water Security	95
5.6	Case Studies	96
5.6.1	Small-Scale and Holistic Landscape Conservation in Town Planning: The Case of Aya, Japan	96
5.6.2	Prioritizing Diverse Stakeholder Knowledge for Water Resource Governance in Urban Areas	100
5.6.3	Multiple Provisioning Services from Peri-Urban Watershed Environments: Case Study of Jala-Jala Watershed Near Manila	102
5.7	Summary	106
	References	108
6	Urban Stormwater Management: Practices and Governance	115
6.1	Background	115
6.2	Global Overview	116
6.2.1	Urbanization	119
6.2.2	Climate Change	121
6.3	Regulatory Policies	121
6.4	Tools and Approaches in Optimal Stormwater Management	123
6.4.1	Historical Trends	124
6.4.2	Potential Role of Remote Sensing and GIS Technologies in Stormwater Management	125
6.4.3	Numerical Simulation Modeling	127
6.4.4	Economic Assessment	127
6.5	Urban Stormwater Governance: Case Studies	130
6.5.1	Tokyo	130
6.5.2	Bangkok	132
6.5.3	Hanoi	134
6.6	Summary	137
	References	141
7	Numerical Modeling and Simulation for Water Management	147
7.1	Background	147
7.2	Model Classifications	148
7.2.1	Black Box Models	149
7.2.2	Conceptual Models	149
7.2.3	Physically Based Distributed Models	150
7.3	Model Selection	150
7.4	Calibration–Validation	151
7.5	Quantifying Uncertain Future	153
7.6	Open Access Data and Software	154

- 7.7 Applications of Remote Sensing and GIS 155
- 7.8 Case Studies 156
 - 7.8.1 Simulation of Flood Inundation in Manila Using FLO-2D Model 156
 - 7.8.2 Use of RS and GIS for Assessment of Land-Use Change Impacts on Runoff 158
- 7.9 Summary 158
- References 160
- 8 Urban Water Governance: Concept and Pathway 161**
 - 8.1 Background 161
 - 8.2 Water Governance: South Asia and India 162
 - 8.3 Urban Water Governance: Conceptualization 163
 - 8.4 Urban Water Governance Pathway: Adaptive, Polycentric and Hybrid 165
 - 8.5 Barriers to Implementation: Indian Context 167
 - 8.6 Summary 169
 - References 171
- 9 Toward Sustainable Solutions for Water Security 175**
 - 9.1 Background 175
 - 9.2 Long-Term Sustainable Solutions 176
 - 9.3 Interplay Between System Parts 177
 - 9.4 Conservation for Water Security: A Compound Criterion 178
 - 9.5 Making Meanings of Large Data and Stress on Pragmatic Solutions 178
 - 9.6 Ways Forward and Gaps Remaining 180
 - 9.6.1 Political Bottleneck and Lack of Integration 180
 - 9.6.2 Education and Lifestyles 180
 - 9.6.3 Channelizing Research and Innovation into Policies More Efficiently 181
 - 9.6.4 Data Creation and Management 181
 - 9.6.5 Understanding on an Individual Basis/Leadership 181
 - References 182
- Correction to: Sustainable Solutions for Urban Water Security C1**

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Chapter 1

Urban Water Security: Background and Concepts



1.1 Background

Currently, more than 1.1 billion people have inadequate access to clean drinking water globally, and approximately 2.6 billion people lack basic sanitation (Pink 2016; Jain 2012). Water is the foundation of life and a basic necessity for everyone, but lack of access is gradually becoming a crisis for millions of people around the world that is responsible for poor health, destruction of livelihoods and unnecessary suffering for the poor (Hanjra and Qureshi 2010). Therefore, overcoming the water crisis is one of the greatest challenges faced by our generation (IPCC 2007), and developing clean potable water, efficiently managing wastewater and providing basic sanitation facilities are the foundations for sustainability and human progress (UN-Water 2010; Tremblay 2010). Successfully achieving these goals would catalyze progress in many sectors such as public health, energy security, climate resilience and poverty reduction, as well as accelerating the pace toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were recently approved in the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (Sachs 2012). From the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the SDGs, the focus of the water security concept has shifted from only water supply and demand in cities toward the perception of water as an economic resource shared between countries (Connor 2015). This shift also emphasizes the concept of water governance, including its capacity to manage water efficiently and equitably (Conca 2006; Gareau and Crow 2006). Therefore, the definition of water security is rapidly changing to include ensuring every person has reliable access to sufficient safe water at an affordable price to enable a healthy and productive life, as well as maintaining water-related ecological systems for future generations (Cook and Bakker 2012). However, water stress is rapidly increasing in the developing parts of the world, including countries in Sub-Saharan Central Africa, Western South America, Australia, Southeast Asia, China and the world's most water-stressed region, the Middle East, where the water availability per person is less than 1100 cubic meters. In the past several years, the water situation has improved, but at least

650 million people still lack access to clean drinking water. The rapidly developing regions of Asia, Africa and South America face groundwater overexploitation and skewed water supply due to explosive population growth and negative impacts from climate change (Cook and Bakker 2012). Overall, the Asian region is also one of the most rapidly urbanizing parts of the world, with the urban population growing at the alarming rate of 2.3% annually, which is greater than the global average of 2% (Cohen 2006). Approximately, 16 megacities with populations of 10 million inhabitants or more, more than half of the world's megacities, are located in this region (UN DESA 2014), and it is estimated that the urban population of the continent of Asia will exceed the rural population by the year 2022 (ADB 2008). Recently, the Asian Water Development Outlook Report by the Asian Development Bank predicted that more than 1.7 billion people worldwide will lack access to basic sanitation by the year 2050; approximately 3.4 billion people will be living in water-stressed areas (AWDO 2016); and water demand will increase by 55% (Chellaney 2011).

Figure 1.1 shows the future global water stress scenario by the year 2040; most of Australia, Northern and Southern Africa, the USA and Western South America will face water stress in the form of a high withdrawal to supply ratio (40–80%) (WRI 2015), and a large part of Asia will face extremely high (>80%) water stress. Managing water scarcity to this extent requires new definitions of water security that emphasizes the importance of maintaining the ecological systems that provide water (Wagener et al. 2010) and increasing the significance of water governance in solving the problem. In this scenario, it is very important to design a wide range of sustainable water security solutions that address the multiple instances of increasing water scarcity around the globe and effectively address local constraints. Figure 1.2 indicates the urgency and necessity for a range of sustainable solutions by showing

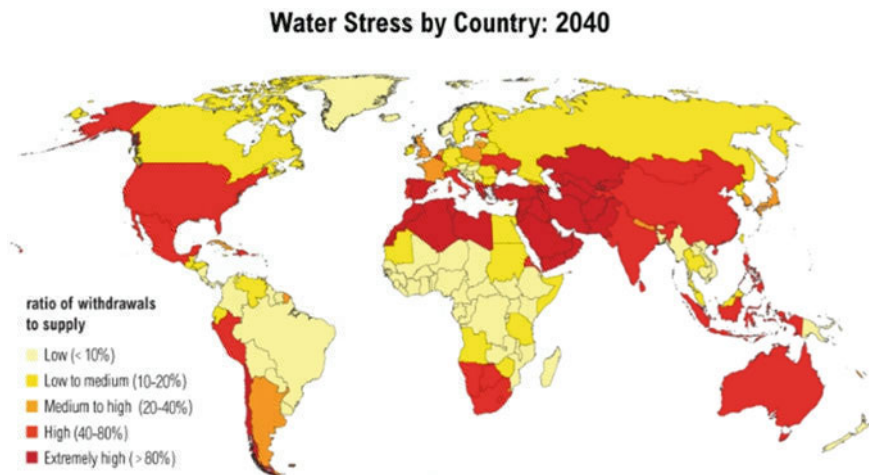


Fig. 1.1 Projected country-level water scarcity for the year 2040. Projections are based on a business-as-usual scenario using SSP2 and RCP 8.5. *Source* WRI 2015

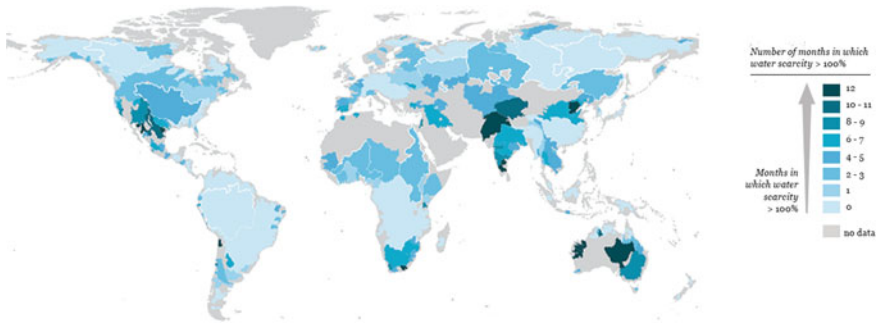


Fig. 1.2 Number of months in which severe water scarcity was observed in more than 400 river basins from 1996 to 2005. *Source* WWF 2012

the number of months in which water scarcity reached 100% from 1996 to 2005 in more than 400 river basins around the world (Fig. 1.2) (WWF 2012). Thus, there is an urgent need for a sustainable solution to achieve water security based on local considerations. The Southern USA, the Western coast of South America, most of South–Eastern Australia, North–Western India, Pakistan and other nearby regions are already facing the highest degree of water scarcity; therefore, localized sustainable solutions to reduce water stress are needed immediately.

One important dimension of effective sustainable water solutions is dealing with societies that have persistent water inequalities, the growing development divide and the competition for scarce resources. The inhabitants of many developed nations, as well as high-income regions and cities, enjoy the delivery of several hundred liters of water per day at a very low price, but in other parts of the world, poor households in both rural and urban areas do not have an adequate supply of safe drinking water (UNICEF and WHO 2011). Similarly, within the agricultural and industrial sectors, small farmers have the least access to water in wealthy areas. Jenson (2016) recommended solving these water issues through the development of equitable water policies, investment in water infrastructure, public–private partnerships and institutional approaches (Jenson 2016), and the concept of strong and adaptive water governance was effectively explored by Huitema et al. (2009), who defined adaptive water management comprising four institutional prescriptions. To manage water resources, there is first a strong need for a collaborative governance system along with a high level of public participation in decision-making. The authors recommended an experimental approach toward water-related resource management and highly emphasized water management at the regional scale, but they also raised concerns about the complexities associated with collaboration and participation in the management of water resources, the problem of real-world experimentation and the inadequacy of governance structure at the regional level (Huitema et al. 2009; Lankford et al. 2013).

UN report on global water quality perspective based on changes in the nitrate concentrations at various river mouths during 1990–1999 and 2000–2007 is shown

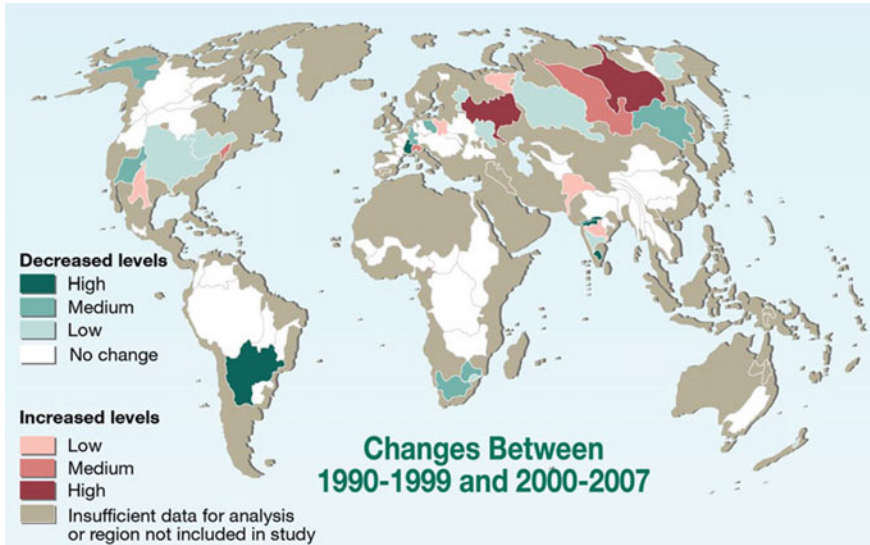


Fig. 1.3 Water quality issues around the world: nitrate concentrations at the mouths of rivers. Adapted from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP); The Water Program 2008, and the National Water Research Institute, Environment Canada, Ontario 2008. *Source* United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) (2016)

in Fig. 1.3. Here, the results raise concerns over another dimension of water security, which is related to water quality or water pollution and the complexities of designing sustainable solutions to deal with stormwater, wastewater, water quality and the pollution of freshwater (Gleick and Ajami 2014).

Most of the wastewater and stormwater generated in cities are discharged with 85–90% of its full load of pollutants and toxic compounds (Henze et al. 2001), and high concentration of contaminants/pollutants here is primarily responsible for degrading the quality of both surface and groundwater resources as well as the associated coastal regions (Winter et al. 1998). Furthermore, water pollution affects the economic future of communities and puts human well-being at risk. Therefore, a new water security paradigm must consider treated wastewater as a resource rather than a form of waste (Asano 2002).

It is widely acknowledged that holistic approaches to address water security challenges are needed that include social, economic and environmental dimensions at multiple scales (WSSD 2002). This chapter explores a range of water security dimensions while capturing the dynamic and constantly evolving paradigms related to the subject, and it offers a holistic outlook for addressing water challenges by recommending a portfolio of sustainable solutions to geographically distributed water security challenges. The premises of this study are based on the analysis of case studies from different geographical regions, and it is argued that water security is directly related to the growth of a country's gross domestic product (GDP) or in other words, its economy. Thus, water management and economic growth are strongly related.