



The CEO Water Mandate

UN Global Compact CEO Water Mandate

Overview of Priority Areas in 2011

Updated February 2011

The CEO Water Mandate is currently focusing its efforts in three primary areas/workstreams: 1) policy engagement, 2) the human right to water and business, and 3) corporate water disclosure. At the November 2010 Mandate working conference in Cape Town, Mandate endorsers and stakeholders affirmed that these workstreams will remain the initiative's priorities for 2011. Below is a description of the current status and planned work for each of these focus areas. This paper concludes with brief descriptions of a few Mandate activities that do not fit squarely into any one workstream.

I. Responsible Business Engagement with Water Policy and Management

Acknowledging that water scarcity, pollution, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, and ineffective water management create risks for companies and governments alike, the Mandate released the [*Guide on Business Engagement with Water Policy and Management*](#) in November 2010. This Guide provides principles, concepts, practical steps, and case examples that can facilitate companies' responsible engagement with water policy in a manner that reduces business risks through the advancement of equitable and sustainable water management.

In 2011, the Mandate's activities related to policy engagement will focus primarily on facilitating companies' on-the-ground implementation of the Guide's principles and operational framework. Current projects in support of this goal include cross-sectoral water management activities in South Africa and Southeast Asia (discussed in more detail below). Pending funding, the Mandate will also look to develop employee training material/curricula for the Guide. In addition, the Mandate is developing an online capacity platform (discussed in more detail below) that will help companies identify potential partners for collective action and policy engagement on water at the local- and watershed- level, among other things.

II. Water and Human Rights

In 2010, the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council agreed to resolutions affirming the human right to water and sanitation. In response, the CEO Water Mandate has amended the initiative's [*founding document*](#) to acknowledge these resolutions. Further, Mandate endorsers and other stakeholders alike have recognized that there is now a corporate responsibility to conduct business operations in a manner that respects the right to water and sanitation. However, endorsers have also expressed a need for more clarity on what it specifically means for a company to act consistently with this right and how to operationalize respect for the right to water in practice.



The Mandate will help answer this need by developing operational guidance that elucidates how companies can respect the right to water and also support the fulfillment of that right in a way that is responsive to stakeholder interests. The process for developing this good practice guidance will include a series of stakeholder dialogues, public comment/review processes, and an empirical assessment of emerging corporate practice. In preparation for this work, the Mandate has released a [white paper](#) summarizing current endorser and stakeholder perspectives on this issue and has begun building relationships with key organizations with expertise in this area.

III. Corporate Water Disclosure

The Mandate also has a workstream that focuses on improving business' ability to effectively communicate its efforts to be responsible water stewards to key stakeholders (i.e. investors, fenceline communities, consumers, and the general public). Such water reporting increases corporate accountability for their actions and better allows stakeholders to inform and shape company practices.

In 2011, the Mandate will develop corporate water reporting guidance – with support from PricewaterhouseCoopers and in close collaboration with key strategic partners such as Carbon Disclosure Project, World Resources Institute, and Global Reporting Initiative. These guidelines will offer water disclosure metrics and insights for aligning disclosure with stakeholder needs. In the coming months, to inform the development of the disclosure guidance, the Mandate will publish an analysis of Mandate endorsers' *Communications on Progress–Water* reports – in an effort to identify current trends and innovative practice in corporate water disclosure, particularly with respect to qualitative reporting.

On the Ground Action

Since its inception in 2007, the CEO Water Mandate has focused primarily on convening multi-stakeholder working conferences among endorsing companies, NGOs, academics, public officials, and other stakeholders to discuss emerging corporate water stewardship practices, as well as on providing practical guidance on related topics. One of the initiative's key goals for 2011 is to transform the learnings from the dialogues and thought leadership into meaningful on-the-ground action. It is within this context that the Mandate is seeking to foster and coordinate collective action among businesses, NGOs, the public sector, and other stakeholders in regions of interest. The overarching goal of this work will be to contribute to improved corporate water practices and overall water management in specific watersheds so as to mitigate business' water-related risks and reduce water-related stress on communities and ecosystems in the region.

Southeast Asia collective action within the apparel industry

The Mandate is launching a Viet Nam and Cambodia-focused project in collaboration with the UN Environment Programme to improve supply chain water management practices among the apparel companies within the initiative. The project's primary objectives will be to:

- Drive operational water use efficiency and improved waste water discharge among apparel companies' supplier facilities by sharing and implementing good water management tools and practices;
- Facilitate better water measurement and communication among companies and their suppliers;
- Foster cooperative relationships among apparel companies and their stakeholders in the region to address shared water risks.



South Africa collective action

The Mandate is in the initial stages of establishing a project in collaboration with the German International Development Agency (GIZ, formerly known as GTZ) designed to foster and coordinate collective action among businesses, NGOs, the public sector, and other stakeholders in South Africa. This project will contribute to improved corporate water practices and overall improved water management in specific watersheds in South Africa so as to mitigate business' water-related risks and reduce water-related stress on communities and ecosystems in the region.

Online Capacity Building Platform and Water Action Hub

The Mandate and UNEP are currently developing a publicly-available online capacity platform that serves as a clearinghouse for emerging corporate water stewardship information and tools. The platform is geared toward raising awareness in the business community about the critical role for companies in addressing global water challenges, as well as the range of analytical methods and tools available to companies to help them understand and manage their water-related risks and impacts. In order to advance these goals, the online platform will be comprised of three separate, but complementary components:

1. An articulation of the business case for corporate action on water,
2. An evaluation of the range of corporate water accounting and risk/impact assessment methods and tools available, along with their relative utility based on the nature of water issues and questions the company is attempting to address, and
3. A Water Action Hub that connects companies with other companies, public sector agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders within specific watersheds in order to facilitate collective action on water.

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