GLOBAL WATER ALLIANCE

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023

Message from the President

We water worriers are taking note of the many weather-related stories that have dominated news cycles during the end of 2022 and the first week of 2023. News stories about extremes – floods and droughts; record-breaking cold snaps and hot spells; climate-damaged infrastructure and the resulting economic turmoil. As we start this new year – and best wishes to you and your families (may you regularly experience gentle rain, in moderation, well-forecasted, and under good and sturdy shelter) – we cannot help but reframe these news stories into assessments of our work within the realm of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal #6. Indeed, *sustainability* has become interwoven with ***resiliency***, not only in defining the goals of development, but also in reassessing past development projects. Water and sanitation management – whether in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania or in Ndiandiou, Senegal – needs to consider resiliency in the constant quest to provide and manage W.A.S.H. for all.

Ndiandiou came to our attention courtesy of Amadou Ndiaye when he visited our GWA booth at the World Water Forum in Dakar in March 2022. We are now in the very early stages of developing a school-centered project proposal. Our many years of school-based water and sanitation services work in West Bengal, India is guiding us in this new environment. In West Bengal, we expect to finalize two school WASH programs started by Sarboday Sangha in 2022.

[Image: Breakfast briefing by Dr. Arun Deb at the World Water Forum in Dakar.]

Speaking of projects, Tom McKeon is managing the initial stages of our project in Enriquillo, in the Dominican Republic. That project, which received some early start funding from the Ware Foundation, is in the data gathering phase, building a community-based participating agency, and assessing early building opportunities for water supply systems. Tom is in Kenya as we speak, touring the Rift Valley, and assessing the work we did several years ago in collaboration with Keiyo Soy Ministries. To round out this paragraph about field projects, we expect reports later this year about our collaboration with EWB-Philadelphia in Guatemala and Mexico. And, in our own territory, we hope to rekindle our dialogue with DigDeep and others about undertaking a few sanitation project ideas in West Virginia. It's mostly a question of bandwidth. We rely on volunteers and their time for these projects. If you can join and thus expand our bandwidth, please step forward.

[Image: Students and community meeting in Penalba, Enriquillo, Dominican Republic.]

In late 2022 we participated in the United Nations "Groundwater Summit" in Paris. Attached to this letter is a report from Mamadou Guisse. Mamadou stayed in Paris and attended the 9th General Assembly of the World Water Council, of which we are a member. The GWA is accredited as well for the UN 2023 Water Conference, to be held from 22-24 March in New York. Together with the Avara Institute (www.avara.org) and True Elements (www.trueelements.com), we are submitting a proposal for a side event at that conference. Indeed, 2023 is the midpoint in the timespan for the SDGs, and this year will be used by many UN agencies and organizations to focus on a midway review of progress so far. Our own conference in 2022 had a bit of that review build in. This year, we will direct the focus of our 16th Annual Conference toward resiliency, innovative approaches, and strategic planning shifts among the world's water professionals.

Another item to bring to your attention is organizing events. Several events are in the works for 2023, but we do want to specifically mention our plans to scale up our bike ride event from last year, when we collaborated with the Philadelphia Chapter of Engineers Without Borders. WHEELS FOR WATER will be the theme and several of our members, especially bicycle enthusiasts like Christian Rwakazina, are going to try to make it a great spectacle. We hope to create simultaneous rides in other places, all about raising fun(ds), raising awareness, and promoting bike riding. It's good for you! Stay tuned.

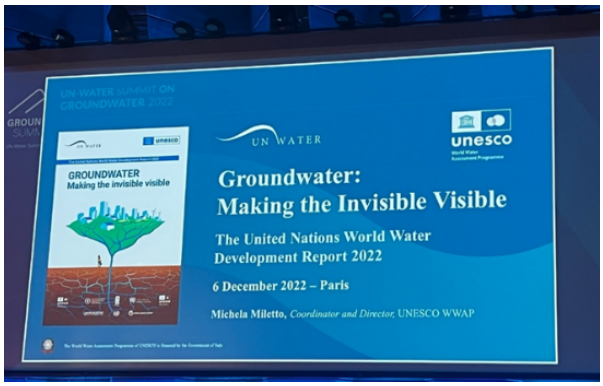
As we move into 2023, we will build on our experiences and lessons learned during 2022. A formal annual report on 2022 is forthcoming, but I would like to highlight how we tackled some

major issues last year, overcoming a freeze of sorts, brought on by COVID. Memorable moments included the GWA contingent that went to the World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal, where Ellen Schultz was able to present Ed Grusheski's vision on water education; several GWA-organized webinars that received positive feedback; productive conversations with several universities about bringing water issues into the undergraduate curriculum (Water in All Policies, to paraphrase from the world of Public Health); and of course our 15th Annual Conference at the Perry World House in October. We closed out the year's events with a symposium during World Toilet Day, with great support from the Water Center at Penn and the Penn School of Nursing. Everything we do is through collaboration, and we are extremely grateful for each one of our partners. I thank them, each and all.

~ Christiaan Morssink, GWA President

UN Groundwater Summit: Making the Invisible Visible

Paris, December 6-8, 2022
by Mamadou Guissé



The United Nations Groundwater Summit at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris from 6 to 8 of December 2022 has come and gone. The Global Water Alliance participated in the deliberation, represented in person by Mamadou Guissé, while other GWA members attended online.

During the 9th World Water Forum in Dakar, Senegal, and on World Water Day 2022, UN Water launched its World Water Development Report, "Groundwater; Making the Invisible Visible" (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380721). Earlier, in April 2018, our Alliance held its own conference "Groundwater, the Hidden and Disappearing Resource," hosted by Villanova University. Ground water has indeed been made visible in the corridors of global politics and policy circles, tackling availability, exploitation, pollution, and accessibility. Presenting the report, UN Water is inviting national governments and regional bodies to commit themselves to developing adequate, effective, and sustainable groundwater management and governance policies in order to address current and future water crises throughout the globe.

This first ever international UN Groundwater Summit under the theme "Making the Invisible Visible" builds on the report and is organized as a contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework. The summit is a coordinated effort between UN Water, UNESCO, International Groundwater Resources Center (IGRAC), alongside other partners.

The Summit spanned over three days with the first day reserved for side events sponsored by partners and stakeholders. More than 12 sessions and 19 side events with a variety of subjects were organized. Knowledge and monitoring of groundwater; role of groundwater on the SDGs; sustainable management of the groundwater; adaptation & flexibility in groundwater governance; groundwater for water security and resilience; groundwater and right to a healthy environment; valuing ancient water cultures are among many topics that were brought to the attention of the more than 700 in presence and 3,000 online participants.
For an in-depth report see:
https://public.wmo.int/en/media/news/un-summit-groundwater-makes-invisible-visible%E2%80%9D

The main takeaway of the summit is clear and promising. Modern technology and data sharing systems are so well developed that we can on a global scale make the urgent call to bring groundwater MANAGEMENT to the center of attention of all stakeholders: governments, researchers, deciders, professionals, even the judiciary.

Of importance, especially for students (the professionals and managers of tomorrow) was the photo exhibit on groundwater and the launch of the UNESCO Museum of Groundwater. Indeed, dowsing is now an ancient curiosity eclipsed by accuracy of the electronics toolkit of the modern geologist. Having been deeply involved with the 9th WWF in Dakar, at the closing ceremony I took note of the transfer of the baton from the Minister in charge of Water of Senegal to his counterpart in Indonesia for the organization of the 10th World Water Forum in Bali in May 2024. Finally, all the messages and conclusions from the UN Groundwater Summit are to be conveyed to the UN 2023 Water Conference to be held in New York in March 2023, with the aim of raising the crucial importance of groundwater.