While groundwater use has increased manyfold, with major socioeconomic benefits, little attention has been given to its governance and to resource conservation and protection.

Rather widely groundwater has in effect been abandoned to chance, intensifying extraction and increased pollution.

Good groundwater governance is required to provide the right environment to facilitate sustainable management.

Groundwater extraction over the past 50 years has increased by more than 300% between 1960 and 2010.

In many locations the current level of groundwater use is simply not sustainable.

Given the major concern about the future of groundwater, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the UN Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO), together with the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP), the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) and the World Bank, have initiated a major program to review and strengthen groundwater governance, through production of a Global Diagnostic, a Shared Vision and a Framework for Action.

The objective of the project is to embed a process of improved groundwater governance to halt the current trend of resource depletion and degradation and lead to positive environmental, social and economic outcomes.

This initiative involves authoritative institutions and renowned experts and aims to bring groundwater high on the political agendas.

Good governance can reverse this trend.
Outputs of Global Governance Program

The project team has worked together with groundwater stakeholders worldwide in a series of five regional consultations. The experience gained is being synthesized in a Global Diagnostic. The next steps then comprise the development of a Shared Vision (including generic guiding principles and processes for effective groundwater governance) and a Framework for Action (with context specific policy, institutional and investment options).

Following the Regional Consultations, a large number of groundwater practitioners and stakeholders are participating in a Permanent Consultation Mechanism (PCM) to incorporate additional local experience and expert input. The PCM is open to interested organizations and individuals. To request membership in the PCM, visit: www.groundwatergovernance.org/permanent-consultation-mechanism/pcm-contact-form/en/

For more information on the Groundwater Governance project visit: www.groundwatergovernance.org

or email: groundwatergovernance@fao.org