

What is IWRM?
**Towards Situation Conformity in Integrated Water Resources
Management**

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IWRM, “Integrated Water Resources Management”, has become an important and generally accepted guiding concept in water management. There is less consensus, however, about the precise definition of the term, as definitions proposed by various leading organisations differ significantly. One must ask whether or not there is any justification for these differences and divergences. This article examines various interpretations of the term IWRM, by looking at two sub-concepts that are crucially important, “integration” and “management”. It becomes clear that if these terms are not precisely defined, they can give rise to serious misunderstandings, and can thus become an obstacle to the effective realisation of IWRM approaches. This article indicates where distinctions must be made in order to avoid confusion. It also provides a heuristic instrument which can help users draw the lines between various IWRM approaches and definitions, and to place them in the overall context. It thus makes a contribution to achieving a differentiated and situation-specific understanding and implementation of IWRM.