

Water insecurity is 'a drag on the global economy'

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A new report shows floods, droughts and a lack of investment in providing good quality, reliable water supplies is dragging down the global economy. The report, published today and entitled 'Securing Water, Sustaining Growth', was written by an international Task Force co-chaired by Professor Jim Hall and Professor David Grey from the University of Oxford.

The Task Force was established by the Global Water Partnership (GWP)

and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The report and new scientific analysis examines not only water's destructive force but also how it contributes to human health and prosperity. It was published today at the start of the Seventh World Water Forum in South Korea, the international summit at which the world's water challenges are addressed.

The report draws on research led by the University of Oxford and feeds into a policy statement released by GWP and OECD calling on governments to invest in strengthening the world's institutional capacity to manage [water security](#), with much improved information systems and better water infrastructure. It urges that special attention be paid to social risks, with a focus on vulnerable segments of society.

According to the report, South Asia has the largest concentration of water-related risks. East and Southeast Asia face rapidly increasing flood risk, although the United States has the greatest exposure to flood risk. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where the risks of inadequate water supply and sanitation are rising. North Africa has the greatest percentage of population at risk of water scarcity.

The international Task Force is comprised of leading academics, researchers and practitioners from around the world. Task Force co-chair Professor Hall said: 'Effective ways of achieving water security involve combinations of investments in information, institutions and infrastructure. Not all investments have been beneficial or cost-effective. Investment must be designed to be robust to uncertainties and to support adaptive management as risks, opportunities, and social preferences change. All of this will require refined analytic tools, innovation, and continuous monitoring, assessment, and adaptation.'

Report co-author and Task Force co-chair Professor Grey said: 'Our analysis shows that the countries that depend on agriculture for their

economies are often the worst affected by floods or water scarcity. Some countries will need to think about how they can diversify from an agriculturally focussed economy to one less dependent on water. They will also focus on how better use can be made of the limited water supplies available to them.'

Claudia Sadoff, Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the School of Geography and the Environment, Oxford, and Task Force co-chair, said: 'Both our empirical and theoretical analyses demonstrate the importance of investment in water security for development and the importance of development for investment in [water](#) security.'

Provided by Oxford University

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