

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Participatory water governance, a direct contribution to water related disaster risk reduction

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Linking Disaster Risk Reduction and Integrated Water Resources Management

Within the large variety of disaster risks for life, livelihoods and the economy, there are a few certainties:

- the vast majority of disasters is water-related;
- the number and extent of water-related hazards continue to rise;
- and the poor and vulnerable segments of society are most at risk, are the least resilient and have insufficient means and ability to recover.

In the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction¹, water is not prominently mentioned.

It should be clear, however, that effective disaster risk reduction depends on healthy ecosystems and secure livelihoods; and that it begins and ends with the sustainable management and governance of water bodies.

In light of that let us not forget:

- many of tomorrow's natural disasters are man-made today;
- quite often they are linked to unsustainable use and management of water resources;
- and even with non-water related disasters, the availability of sufficient and clean water is a key factor for survival and recovery.

According to the Global Water Partnership, and to quote the preparatory document for the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction²: "*Integrated*

¹ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030. Adopted by the 3rd UN World Conference, March 2015.
http://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

² *Water and Disaster Risk. A contribution by the United Nations to the consultation leading to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.*
<http://www.gwp.org/Global/ToolBox/References/Water%20and%20Disaster%20Risk%20Brief.pdf>

Water Resources Management is a direct contribution to reduce vulnerability and to strengthen the resilience to water related extreme events.”

Water insecurity costs the global economy some US\$ 500 billion annually, according to an international expert task force convened by the Global Water Partnership and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)³. That figure does not take into account environmental impacts so the total drag on the world economy could be 1% or more of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Flood damage, for example, is estimated at US\$120 billion per year from urban property damage alone, while major droughts were found to reduce per capita GDP growth by half a percentage point. In particularly vulnerable economies, a 50% reduction in drought effects could lead to a 20% increase in per capita GDP over a period of 30 years. Investing in water management would mitigate many of these losses and promote long-term sustainable growth.

The stakeholder consultations on water that GWP has conducted in 22 countries as part of the SDG preparatory processes were also very clear on that⁴.

- They revealed a consistent concern across countries and across stakeholder groups for the impacts of floods, droughts, storms and other water related phenomena, demonstrating the reality of such hazards on the ground in all regions of the world.
- And there was overall consensus on the importance of integrated and participatory approaches to harness the risks of hydro-meteorological hazards, and to achieve sustainable water use and solid water management as a prerequisite for development of the nation and its entire population.

³ Sadoff, C.W., Hall, J.W., Grey, D., Aerts, J.C.J.H., Ait-Kadi, M., Brown, C., Cox, A., Dadson, S., Garrick, D., Kelman, J., McCornick, P., Ringler, C., Rosegrant, M., Whittington, D. and Wiberg, D. (2015). *Securing Water, Sustaining Growth: Report of the GWP/OECD Task Force on Water Security and Sustainable Growth*, University of Oxford, UK, 180pp.

⁴ GWP (2013) *National stakeholder consultations on water: supporting the post-2015 development agenda*. <http://www.gwp.org/Global/About%20GWP/Publications/Reports/National%20Stakeholder%20Consultations%20on%20Water%202013.pdf>

Looking for compatibility, we see a strong resemblance between the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Integrated Water Resources Management and Governance approach that GWP has consistently propagated and worked on since 1996 and which we are very happy to see strongly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals:

- in terms of their cross-cutting nature and integration in all major development themes;
- because of their attention to preventive measures and the acknowledgement of ecosystems as a regulatory force;
- as they both give due consideration to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, the poor and marginalised;
- in that they acknowledge the need for decentralised approaches and the importance of community mobilisation;
- because both propagate good governance under the responsibility of national governments;
- and, last but not least, with respect to their participatory approaches, i.e. involving all relevant stakeholders at the appropriate level of intervention.

Therefore, many opportunities exist to effectively link the Disaster Risk Reduction and Integrated Water Resources Management and Governance agendas.

According to the UN Water survey that was conducted by UNEP in 2012 in close cooperation with GWP, an encouraging 82% of the 134 participating countries reported to have embarked on reforms to enable integrated approaches to water resources management; 65% had developed integrated water resources management plans; and 34% reported an advanced stage of implementation.⁵ 75% of the participants of the survey rank disaster management with a high or highest priority for water management and 74% consider that stakeholder participation has increased in significance over the last 20 years.

⁵ UN Water (2012). *Status Report on the Application of Integrated Approaches to Water Resources Management*. <http://www.unwater.org/rio2012/report/index.html>

It would be interesting to see in how far DRR measures are incorporated in these national IWRM plans.

With the Sustainable Development Goal target 6.5 to *implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation by 2030*, and target (e) of Sendai to *substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020* there are opportunities for synergies and mutual reinforcement.

Furthermore, there are important lessons to be learned from the many initiatives to attempt integrated and inclusive approaches to govern water and harness its risks.

GWP experience on integrated planning and multi-stakeholder engagement

The conceptual attractiveness of a paradigm is not enough. It must be applicable in the real world.

We have to be mindful that given the diversity of sectors, institutions and stakeholders involved when operationalizing the concept of *all-of-society engagement and partnership*, this transition from principles to practice requires a sustained effort from all parts of society.

An experience of how this paradigm can be operationalized is the Help Desk on Integrated Flood Management, pioneered by the World Meteorological Organization and the Global Water Partnership. The Integrated Flood Management Help Desk builds on a network of over 20 partner organizations working with policy makers and communities to maximise the net benefits from the use of floodplains and minimise the loss of life. This is a resource for all to access expertise and in-depth experience.

Similarly, the Integrated Drought Management Programme is established as a platform for policy and management guidance to support national and regional

drought policies, apply drought preparedness measures and develop monitoring, and early-warning systems, drawing on local knowledge and innovative practices. The programme was established as a resource emanating from the High-Level Meeting on National Drought Policies in 2013, in which delegates from 87 countries articulated a strong message to implement National Drought Management Policies and develop proactive drought impact mitigation, preventive and planning measures.

Providing tailor made information to both policy makers and communities is an important tool to further cooperation and integration. But more is needed to make the “All of Society Inclusive Approach” a reality on the ground, especially at community levels and in societies where traditional norms prevail.

If we take IWRM as example, we see that over the past decades, its principles are increasingly included in national policies, strategies, and laws. But we also observe that the implementation on the ground is far less advanced. In effect, the 2012 UN Water survey mentioned earlier, reports that: *“progress appears to have slowed or even regressed in low and medium Human Development Index (HDI) countries since the survey of 2008.”*

This has prompted the GWP Technical Committee to embark upon a critical analysis of IWRM planning and subsequent implementation in the different regions of its constituency. Thus far GWP TEC has conducted reviews for the Caribbean, Central Asia, China, Eastern Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, where IWRM is implemented under different geopolitical, environmental, cultural and climatological circumstances.

From these analyses, we can deduce common denominators for putting the integrated and participatory approach into practice:

- **High level political commitment and strategic vision is an absolute must.**

In the Caribbean for instance, where there are many smaller pockets of success, the overall political engagement is lacking to structurally

transform and reform the existing water management entities and frameworks, which are predominantly governmental and top-down.

- **Reforming institutional structures towards more integrated and participatory (water) governance requires a simultaneous ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approach with strong leadership and long-term commitment at all administrative levels.**

In Central Asia for instance, decision-makers realized that the significant institutional and legislative changes they performed failed to engage the lower end water users. A serious investment to inform, capacitate and involve farmers and other stakeholders resulted in agreed procedures and methods for equitable and stable water allocation under the control of water user groups. The institutional set-up for water management went from within administrative boundaries to watershed boundaries, linking several levels of water hierarchy and establishing cross-sector integration.

- **The participation of stakeholders has to be meaningful and occur at the different levels of governance in order to transform existing management cultures and practices. To make participation meaningful, substantial investments are required in capacity development and education, in particular at local levels in developing countries where many of the poor and vulnerable are living.**

In Eastern Africa, where the interdependency of the many different uses of water had long been ignored, stakeholder participation is now at the heart of water governance at all levels. The case studies from this region recognise that community participation adds value to good governance and sustainable development; and that sensitizing and capacitating stakeholders is the main entry point for changing attitudes and overcoming resistance to institutional reforms. This is best done through community-based organisations, which have developed or are developing strong relationships with their communities over time.

Multi-stakeholder participation in Water Related Disaster Risk Reduction

This brings us to main focus of this 3rd panel of the UN special session on water and disasters: “*the full and meaningful participation of stakeholder at the appropriate levels*” as stated in article 14 (page 11) of the Sendai Framework.

Stakeholders can be defined as: any party who may affect, or be affected by the outcomes of policies and programmes.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, civil society is increasingly seen as key stakeholders for achieving sustainable development, complementing the work of state actors and intergovernmental organisations.

Civil society or non-state actors comprise a wide range of stakeholder groups, including academia, business, farmers, workers unions, and non-governmental organisations; but also the Major Groups Women, Youth and Indigenous People, who in themselves are quite a diverse group.

So, the key question is:

- Who does what in this diverse palet of actors?
- And how do we organise ourselves effectively to practise an integrated approach?

Today we have renowned representatives of some of the main stakeholder groups present. So I will gladly leave it to the panel to address these questions. I would like to conclude with some general remarks based on the experience of GWP as a neutral multi-stakeholder platform for sustainable and inclusive water governance.

The rationale for multi-stakeholder partnerships in building resilience to water-related hazards is clear and compelling. To make such partnership work effectively and efficiently at different levels, we need a mechanism for horizontal and vertical coordination.

National multistakeholder platforms connect sectors and stakeholder groups in planning and monitoring processes. They will however, not guarantee that at

community level, where most of the action takes place and ownership by the different groups in contention determines the success and sustainability thereof, meaningful engagement of all stakeholders will also take place.

An all-of-society engagement and partnership - which is propagated by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai framework alike – is about inclusive, accessible and non discriminatory participation. This can only be achieved if we invest in empowerment of those groups in society that generally do not have the opportunity and means to participate. This means: giving “licence to operate” to Women, Youth and Indigenous People, who have the social networks to engage their peer groups; and to pay special attention to the groups that are disproportionately affected by disasters, especially the poorest and the marginalized.

In the broad GWP experience, multi-stakeholder involvement in the decision making processes is essential for the acceptability of the outcome; and it paves the way for ownership and active engagement in the implementation of these outcomes.

The complexity and lengthy process of partnership building however, in particular with respect to community involvement and the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups, is often underestimated.

We express the hope that the Water and Disaster Risk Reduction agenda will give due consideration to the long and painstaking process of empowerment that precedes any process of inclusive, accessible and non discriminatory participation.