Experiences in the Water Sector

Welcome to the second day of the 5th Delft Symposium on Water Sector Capacity Development. Today we will focus on experiences with Capacity Development, the current realities and practice of knowledge on this topic in the water sector at the level of river basins, regions and nations.

Today’s sub themes deal with Water Operator Partnerships as a vehicle for Capacity Development, but also various relevant country case studies (sessions 9, 10 and 11) will be discussed. In addition to the various best practices and success stories, another important sub theme today discusses the measuring capacity and considers effective indicators to measure and evaluate effects and impact on the ground as well as addressing human resources capacity gaps in the water and sanitation sector among other interesting sessions.

Join the plenary session later today at 15:30 hrs. in A1 where recommendations based on the EXPERIENCES sessions will be made.

Ndey-Isatou Njie

“Future water leaders must be nurtured”

Dr. Uta Wehn de Montalvo, Symposium Host and Senior Researcher and Programme Coordinator at UNESCO-IHE, Professor András Szöllösi-Nagy, Rector of UNESCO-IHE and Pieter Guldemond, Alderman Knowledge & Planning of the Municipality of Delft welcomed all Symposium participants at the Opening Ceremony. The Rector looked back at the first Capacity Development Symposium that was held 22 years ago, initiated by Guy Alaerts, Professor of Capacity Building at UNESCO-IHE and how much the world has changed since then. He calls upon the audience to help the political community to engage in the important task in defining the future Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, to have ‘the future we all want’ and stressed the need for trained human resources, water leaders, who are much needed to deal with the complexities of water and related themes in various parts of the world. Not only is this necessary to achieve the MDGs, or the soon to be formulated SDGs, post-2015, it is vital for human sustainable development.

“The lack of human resources is a threat to sustainability and also forms a barrier for new investments,” said Kitty van der Heijden, Ambassador for Sustainable Development & Director Energy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands. She addressed the audience with her keynote address during yesterday’s opening ceremony at the 5th Delft Symposium on Water Sector Capacity Development.

“Water is central to human needs, equitable growth and development. It is one of the key drivers of sustainable economic growth. In the last century global water use grew at more than twice the rate of population increase. In 2050, as the population reaches 9 billion, the challenges we face are immense but not insurmountable. Clearly, the global water agenda has moved beyond WASH. We are looking at water for household use, industries, agriculture, manufacturing and ecosystems. Human capabilities are a key factor for sustainability, but to date it has been a largely neglected area of research and investment in the water and sanitation sector. This needs to change.”
She continues: “It is simply not enough to build dikes, wells and sanitary facilities without having trained people in maintaining and using them correctly and being able to properly manage the facilities. The countries with the greatest need for development are often the ones lacking the capacity to absorb and spend funds effectively. Donors who are reluctant to invest hinder them further, thus a vicious cycle is created. I firmly believe that capacity building will bring back the trust between donors, central and local governments and guarantee the sustainability of investments in water availability and sanitation.”

Ndey-Isatou Njie, Chief of Water and Energy at UNDESA and Secretary of UN-Water, then addressed to the participants in the same auditorium at UNESCO-IHE where she had been welcomed as a student in the Environmental Science and Technology class of 1982. The alumna said: “The ownership of the capacity development agenda at the national level will be key for achieving sustained results. In this regard, it will be of prime importance that in the definition of the water resources capacity development interventions, the assessment of the capacity development needs is done in an inclusive manner that empowers stakeholders to come up with their capacity development needs based on their national priorities.”

She adds: “The future water leaders must be nurtured to enable them to make environmentally friendly decisions, be socially conscious and promote equitable economic development. Igniting the passion of these young leaders so that they in turn use the skills and knowledge they acquire to respond to their national water resources challenges is a must. UNESCO-IHE did this for me, and that is why I am here today. It can be done for more future leaders.”

Csaba Körösi, Head of the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN, Co-Chair of the UNGA Open Working Group on SDGs then ended the plenary opening with his keynote on ‘Who should take the lead’. He goes into detail on the challenges and opportunities and makes the case for open and accessible data with combined impact studies that needs to be used for sound and intelligent decision-making. The story needs to be translated into the languages of different social and political cultures. He ended with concrete requests to the scientific community to inform the work of the Open Working Group.

The Opening Ceremony has been recorded and can be viewed online on the Symposium website: www.unesco-ihe.org/CD-Symposium.

Session 6
“Rural farmers in Sri Lanka do not understand the concept of climate change”
By Kenny Wang

This session on ‘The local challenge: The role of citizens in Capacity Development to address their needs’ addressed the challenges that various individuals or stakeholders groups face and illustrated the real problems they are confronted with on the ground.

The stakeholders ranged from rural farmers to vulnerable women, groups that have conflicting interests to groups that are unable to facilitate communication due to lack to a common language. It was most fascinating to learn that rural farmers in Sri Lanka do not seem to understand the concept of climate change and thus do not prepare for the longer term. Vulnerable people not only need access to water but also empowerment.

A country’s laws can be incongruent with what the people need with respect to water resources and distribution rights as shown in the Brazil case presented here. What all these situations have in common are the crucial need for Capacity Development with respect to water and education within their respective situations, in order to improve their living standard and the wellbeing of the people. Capacity Development can also act as a social cohesion, bringing communities together where before they were in conflict. This is especially important at the local level where these challenges can have significant impact on the lives of those affected.

Valeria Mendoza, Executive Manager for Cap-Net Argentina: “Capacity development is essential in providing solutions to challenges that we face.”

James Nganga, Researcher at Nakuru Water: “It is crucial to take the standards and knowledge learnt today about capacity development and apply it to a community level.”
This discussion flowed like water, with topics discussed ranging from data management to the global importance of Capacity Development in the water sector. All panelists provided interesting and poignant thoughts and opinions, which invoked challenging questions to arise from the audience. The morning panel discussion was a serious talk between Csaba Körösi, Head of the Permanent Mission of Hungary to the UN, Co-Chair of the UNGA Open Working Group, Ndey-Isatou Njie, Chief of Water and Energy at UNDESA and András Szöllösi-Nagy, Rector of UNESCO-IHE.

A clear theme that prevailed throughout all the discussion was the importance of water education globally. As Prof. Szöllösi-Nagy described, it is difficult to bring all water students to Delft, but what we should do is bring Delft to them. In essence, UNESCO-IHE should become a Global Campus, only by teaching more students and utilizing their potential we can deliver more water experts into this world to help provide water to the people.

Also discussed was our lack of attention paid to data management and collection. Only by measuring and collecting more data, can we manage water. Hence, we need to place more attention to this, but as technology today allows instantaneous sharing of information and data, citizens will have the capacity to transfer data quicker than governments around the world. This will essentially deteriorate the past notion that data can be bought and sold, or used as leverage for negotiation. In today’s world it will be a common right for all citizens of the world to interpret, use and manage this data. Finally, what underpinned all the discussion was that at the crux of all discussion surrounding the Millennium Development Goals, water should have been put as the central theme. Water is the root of all discussions whether it relates to public health, climate change, public safety or economic development, to name a few.

Morning Plenary Keynote ‘Setting the Scene’
“Funding is no longer a constraint”
By Kenny Wang

Funding is no longer a constraining factor for infrastructure development or solutions for water scarcity, but rather the lack of feasibility in the presented proposals," says Guy Alaerts, Professor of Knowledge and Capacity Development at UNESCO-IHE and Lead Water Resources Specialist at the World Bank.

In his morning keynote address ‘Setting the Scene’ he addressed the audience. "It appears there is a problem due to converting a vision and dream into reality with concrete steps and action plans. It was also intriguing how this lack of readiness is systemic in not only developing countries but also in developed countries; hence, despite there being available funds for distribution, this failure to present clear and feasible plans is hindering these potentially life saving solutions from coming into fruition.”

He continues: “Once again, the theme of education comes into play here, where more education needs to be invested into so that the maximum number of innovative and creative solutions can be realized.” Lastly, the issue of skilled labour shortage within the water sector is raised where the demand of labour is not met by the supply, due to the lack of interest or infrastructure available to study water around the world.

“Therefore, we may need 1000 water leaders, but we need much more water students," he concluded.
Session 3
Hardly any water security in Asia
By Stefan Siepman

"There is hardly any water security in Asia," stated Wouter Lincklaen Arriens. The Lead Water Resources Specialist at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) shared recent research undertaken by the ADB on Water Security in Asia with participants who attended session 3 on Exploring Water Leadership Development.

"By categorizing countries into five levels, we were able to give a clear insight into the current level of water security. The results showed that the water problems are becoming even bigger in scale and complexity. I believe it requires leadership to solve these problems." Lincklaen Arriens quotes John C. Maxwell to define what this leadership entails: "Leadership is influence".

The session participants referred to the last Symposium held in 2007 to see where we now stand. Many said that much has been improved since those last discussions, but many actions are still to be taken to empower and enable water leadership. But what exactly is a water leader? And how do water leaders differ from general leaders? Those two questions were the main starting points of another research presented by Eline Boelee, Researcher at Water & Health.

According to respondents to a survey undertaken as part of this research, a water leader's main competence is the ability to deal with complexity. Furthermore, technical knowledge was highly valued. The outcomes of the research contributed to the development of the Joint International Water Leadership Programme (IWLP), currently under development by the International Water Centre, Nyenrode Business Universiteit and UNESCO-IHE. A more detailed description of this programme will be presented at tomorrow’s plenary session at 14:00 hrs.

ICTs for learning, competence building and mobilizing local knowledge

Are you interested in learning more about ICTs for learning and competence building? Join the session (21) IICD is convening today at 16:30 hrs. in A3 to learn more about examples and best practices in e-learning in Africa, Latin America and e-learning at UNESCO-IHE.

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This Symposium Daily is developed for you by the UNESCO-IHE Communications Team. We are working together with volunteers from TheWaterChannel.tv, the International Water and Sanitation Centre IRC, Delft Technical University, the Let's Talk About Water Programme, and many other editorial contributors.

LIVE STREAM
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