

Update 2002

Dialogue on Effective Water Governance



Water court in Valencia, Spain in 1831. It still meets in the same place today to resolve water disputes.

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The current water crisis is mainly a crisis of water governance. Consequently, resolving the challenges in this area is recognized as one of the most important elements of managing water to address if we are to achieve sustainable water resources development and management.

Water governance refers to the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to regulate the development and management of water resources and provision of water services at different levels of society. Governance issues have important implications on the management of water resources at all administrative levels — global, regional, national and local — and is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

The IWRM approach advocates a move towards a much more integrated and coordinated water development and management process than is currently practiced. The solutions to current and future crisis will not for the most part be found solely in new and extraordinary technological advances or supply orientated approaches. Instead, they will be found through changing the way we use and manage water. Consequently, appropriate changes in the water governance processes hold the key to sustainable water resources management in the future.

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Water governance

Water governance is perceived in its broadest sense as entailing those social, political and economic organizations and institutions and their relationships which are regarded important for water development and management. Given the complexities of water use within society, managing it effectively and equitably entails ensuring that the disparate voices are heard and engaged in decisions over common waters. The political aspects of

water management are to be acknowledged and faced in the road ahead. Effective governance of water resources will require the combined commitment of governments and various groups in civil society, particularly at local/community levels, as well as the private sector.

Governments play an important role for ensuring equitable and sustainable water resources management. Although they set the overall policies and laws for development, management and use of

water resources, they cannot operate in isolation. For successful implementation, they need to involve all users of water in the process of developing appropriate policies and regulations for water resources management and use. Establishing this 'enabling environment' involves not only the creation of the right policy frameworks to appropriately allocate and manage water among competing uses and for regulating water quality, but for ensuring there is adequate capacity and accountability within regulatory and management institutions to correctly implement these policies. Legislation on water rights and benefits must be included, especially to pursue strategies for integrated wa-

ter resources development and management that take account the needs of the poor. Above all, governments need to ensure the participation of all stakeholders — including both public and private sectors — in the process of creating new, and modifying existing, legislation. Importantly, governments have a significant role in developing cooperation at all levels among those sharing water basins.

Achieving effective water governance is a political process and needs to be undertaken in the context of integrated water resources management. The IWRM approach requires that decision-making processes be devolved to the lowest appropriate level capable of handling such tasks,



normally to local government and community-based institutions. The roles and functions of these, and the various tiers of authority, need to be adjusted accordingly. To build effective institutions action is required to ensure community participation and representation from all water users involved in these processes.

Building human and institutional water resources capacities is important

for the sustainable development and management of water resources. Decision-makers, water managers and users need for example, to increase their capacity to manage limited water resources taking into account increased user demands and environmental needs, to develop appropriate tariff structures that

take into account the needs of the poor, to raise the revenues required to sustain both the services provided and the resource itself, and much more.

Getting the political process right is the key towards effective water governance and successful implementation of integrated water

resources management. Only when water resources are managed in ways responsive to social, and economic needs, and to the long term sustainability of the water resource will the goal of water security be achieved. And that is what the Governance Dialogue sets out to do: address how to get the enabling environment and institutional arrangements right.

The Dialogue aims

By addressing the socio-political aspects of water the Governance Dialogue aims to:

- facilitate communication between politicians and other decision makers, water managers and users in an effort to address water governance in several countries
- highlight good practices and lessons learned in implementing IWRM and, based on examples drawn from case studies, illustrate progress on improving water governance and water development and management
- demonstrate IWRM as a practical process by using tools in the IWRM ToolBox
- identify follow up actions.

The Dialogues

The Dialogue on Effective Water Governance brings stakeholders together to examine the political processes and analyze water governance systems. The Dialogue will create a platform for conflict resolution, negotiation, social learning and collective decision making. It will help build trust among the participants and promote information exchange. The discussions will be centered on real cases and focus on action. The issues discussed will vary depending on the socio-political context as countries have different cultural and political traditions and regimes. Although some issues are country specific, there are many areas where common experiences can be shared. The activities underway

include multi-stakeholder workshops, roundtables on the political processes, and electronic conferencing.

Based on the information and experiences gleaned from 'brainstorming' meetings among the Dialogue Task Force team — which comprises of network members of the GWP, the International Council for the Environment (ICLEI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) — a report providing a comprehensive background on all aspects of water governance will be prepared by the Dialogue Task Force. This report will be used as an input to the regional and country level multi-stakeholder workshops.

Understanding governance

Multi-stakeholder meetings will be held to analyze existing governance systems. These analyses will identify the critical regional, national and and/or local water governance issues. Some of the issues that may arise from these multi-stakeholder discussions include, do governance systems fit with existing arrangements for water resources management and use; do the legal instruments assist with the participation of stakeholders in the decision making processes; what are the water governance roles of local authorities and other stakeholders in managing water resources at local levels; who is to be involved, and how are they to be involved and when; and many more. The outputs of these multi-stakeholder discussions can provide a basis for the political roundtables.

The outcomes of the discussions in the Dialogue on Effective Water Governance will be fed into the Governor's meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank in South America in March 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002, and the Third World Water Forum in Japan in March 2003.

In addition, studies will be held to analyze existing water governance systems. These analyses will identify the critical political issues at each level of water governance. As countries have different problems, contributors to each conference will concentrate on the priority issues in their own areas. The IWRM ToolBox will be used in the analyses to help identify the main issues and, in turn, any case studies arising from the dialogues will be incorporated into the ToolBox.

Political roundtables

The political roundtable discussions between senior decision makers — government ministers, administrators, mayors, councilors and civil servants — are designed to provide additional insight into the issues arising from the multi-stakeholder discussions. It is anticipated that the results of these deliberations will provide an overarching set of priority measures needed to address water governance issues. During 2002, political roundtables are planned in China, West Africa, South East Asia, and in Central and Eastern Europe. In the Mediterranean region and Central America there are also plans to bring together parliamentarians to debate water governance issues. Plans are being prepared to hold roundtables in other regions later during the year.

Electronic conferencing

During 2002 and early 2003, electronic conferences on both the political issues and the water governance analyses will be

conducted through the Virtual Third World Water Forum.

The Dialogue outputs

Specifically, the outputs of the Dialogue will include:

- a report exploring the concept of water governance in a changing world where government needs to share responsibility for the development and management of water resources
- reports on the political processes in governance from countries and regions
- reports on the analyses of governance in countries and regions
- identification of new case studies for inclusion in the IWRM ToolBox
- understanding of the value of the IWRM ToolBox, a web based database developed by the GWP (www.gwpforum.org), that describes the majority of tools that are available for use by decision-makers and water managers to build sustainable water resources management and effective water service delivery.

Because this Dialogue will focus on real processes and actual cases — both good and bad practices — it will inform people about the governance systems needed for sustainable water resources development and management, and provide guidance on putting integrated water resources into practice. The outcomes of the roundtables, the analyses and the

electronic discussions will, in the short term, be fed into special panel debates on water governance that will be convened at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in September 2002 and the Third World Water Forum in Japan in 2003.

In the longer term, the results of the Dialogue will be used to strengthen water governance procedures worldwide and bring us closer to our goal of water security — that every human being should have access to safe water for drinking, appropriate sanitation, food, energy and other good uses at reasonable cost, while maintaining and protecting the environment in the process.

Coordinating the Dialogue

The Dialogue on Effective Water Governance, an initiative of the GWP, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is being coordinated by the GWP. A Dialogue Task Force, comprising members from the GWP, ICLEI and UNDP, is guiding the process. In addition to these, other global and regionally focused organizations will participate in the dialogue, for example, the World Bank which is already involved in review of the political aspects of water reform, the regional Development Banks which have on-going programs on water governance, the European Union which includes governance as a priority theme, and the World Water Council.

Contacts:

Laura Piriz
GWP Secretariat, c/o Sida
Sveavägen 24-26
SE-105 25 Stockholm
Sweden
Tel: +46-8 698 50 00
Fax: +46-8 698 56 27
E-mail: laura.piriz@sida.se
Website: www.gwpforum.org

Alan Hall
GWP Resource Center
HR Wallingford Ltd
Howbery Park, Wallingford
Oxon, OX10 8BA
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 1491 822443
Fax: +44 1491 826352
E-mail: awh@hrwallingford.co.uk
Website: www.gwpforum.org

Hakan Tropp
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
304 E 45th Street, Room FF-1026
New York; NY:10017
USA
Tel: +1-212 906 5866
Fax: +1-212 906 6973
E-mail: hakan.tropp@undp.org
Website: www.undp.org

The Water Campaign
ICLEI World Secretariat
16th Floor, West Tower, City Hall, 100 Queen St. West
Toronto M5H 2N2
Canada
Tel. + 1 416-392-1462
Fax: + 1 416-392-1478

The Global Water Partnership (GWP), established in 1996, is an international network open to all organizations involved in water resources management: developed and developing country government institutions, agencies of the United Nations, bi- and multilateral development banks, professional

associations, research institutions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. GWP was created to foster Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) which aims to ensure the coordinated development and management of water, land, and related resources by maximizing eco-

nomical and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital environmental systems. GWP promotes IWRM by creating fora at global, regional, and national levels designed to support stakeholders put integrated water resources management into practice.



Global Water Partnership, GWP Secretariat, c/o Sida,
SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone: +46 (0)8 698 50 00, Fax: +46 (0)8 698 56 27
E-mail: gwp@sida.se
Website: www.gwpforum.org