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Mexico 2006
4th World
Water Forum



World Water Council
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The following messages are based on feedback from Forum participants who attended the various morning and afternoon sessions of DAY 2. Two hundred Voices of the Forum questionnaires have been analysed.

Please note that you can react and add your voice at www.worldwatercouncil.org

■ **Governments take the lead in the development of National IWRM plans...**

Integrated Water Resources Management plans must take into account and be incorporated within the overall economic development framework of a country. The leadership of the process is a governmental responsibility, but local authorities and civil society have their rightful roles, which must be defined and respected. IWRM plans need to be grounded in reality and address key issues. Overly ambitious plans are difficult to translate into actions.

Support for the development of National IWRM plans must be followed likewise by strong support for the implementation of the plans that must be financed by the national government, but donors also have a role. Financing should also include soft interventions, like participation, awareness-raising and capacity development.

Multi-stakeholder platforms at local and basin levels create room for participation and build up ownership. When the Ministry of Finance buys in into the process, national budgets for water are more likely to increase. In the case in Malawi, 25 % increase took place.

It is necessary to monitor the IWRM process closely and follow up with corrective actions. Development of clear indicators for the implementation which are essential for monitoring will also facilitate successful IWRM processes.

■ **...but their implementation is a local affair**

Watershed management is ultimately a local affair but requires national support (in funding, technical support, institutional framework and legal reforms). The local users and civil society have to be involved in the whole process. Right balance between local and state commitments should be reached within the watershed scope.

Local authorities have to participate in the integrated process of water management. Depending of the level of decentralization, they will take part in all the steps of the IWRM processes: studies, awareness progress, political mediation, project structuring, monitoring and evaluation actions and overall implementation at local level.

Capacity building is required to develop local expertise. Knowledge sharing and learning processes will optimize the use of the experience of all the participants. IWRM is largely a knowledge management process. Empowerment of local actors will facilitate inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial involvement.

■ **Financing IWRM is a government responsibility but communities are willing to share the cost if they are part of the process**

Governments have the primary responsibility to finance the implementation of national plans formulated in the IWRM process.

Community cost-sharing and cost recovery for water services should be an objective, but it should not be imposed on communities. Cost recovery should, rather, be the outcome of a participatory process. Tariffs can be combined with cross-subsidies from productive services to non-productive services and other means to ensure that cost recovery does not deprive the poor.

Raising awareness about water, its different uses and the benefits from sustainable water management, through education and communication increases the communities' willingness to contribute financially to water projects. Secure funding is particularly needed for education and communication right from the start of the process.

Resources for IWRM should only be brought in when absolutely essential and should not contribute to the debt burden of developing countries.

■ **Transboundary management may be a tool for peace**

Management of transboundary river basins requires strong and transparent institutions, as well as legal frameworks, for developing a “shared vision” sweeping through many domains. Furthermore, agreements – and management strategies – should focus on “sharing” benefits rather than “dividing” water.

Water may be a tool for peace. If well managed, water has proven to be an economic wealth that supports economic development and thus allows poverty reduction as well as stability and peace between States. Costs and benefits must be equitably shared between riparian states. Building of trust is also a must. Solutions must be practical, just and agreed upon, so that sustainable partnerships can be implemented.

■ **Groundwater, the hidden resource**

Groundwater is an essential water resource for all water uses, including water supply and irrigation. However, this hidden resource is endangered by an obvious lack of knowledge and understanding of this hidden resource which endangers it. This requires difficult political choices and a definition of policies and priorities.

It is critical that local stakeholders in the field increase their knowledge of the groundwater resource and understand the issues related to its management. The main challenge is to communicate about groundwater issues and make this information available at the local level: groundwater forum has been launched, which should raise the policy and management issues over the next three years and report at the next Forum. This forum will involve a great variety of stakeholders and try to address the local issues.

■ **Integrated ecology and hydrology approaches need to become part of education programs**

Sustainable water resources management requires a more global approach, in particular on hydrology and ecology. Human activities and climate changes can entail erosion of land, sedimentation of lakes, eutrophication and pollution of rivers, etc. Different projects can be carried out to protect ecosystems against this degradation, and can have themselves a positive impact on local economy and social development. Interdisciplinary working group should be created to design and manage these projects. The teaching of ecohydrology in universities will encourage this. Awareness raising of the public is also needed as their participation is essential to success.