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From vision to action
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WATER FOR LIFE

Civil Society: key contributors to water and sustainable development

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1. Introduction

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992), there is a call for broadest public participation in poverty eradication and sustainable development. Civil society is increasingly seen as a key player in this process, complementing the work of state actors and intergovernmental organisations[1].

Civil Society is a constantly shifting concept describing the social formation that is intermediate between 'the family', 'the state' and 'the market'. It is the arena in which people come together to advance the interests they hold in common, not for profit or political power, but because they care enough about something to take collective action[2]. There is no unified definition. The European Union considers Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to include all non-State, not-for-profit structures, non-partisan and non –violent, through which people organise to pursue shared objectives and ideals, whether political, cultural, social or economic. Operating from the local to the national, regional and international levels, they comprise urban and rural, formal and informal organisations[3].

Different organizing principles are used in classifying civil society. In this paper we follow the classification of UNCED Agenda 21[4], distinguishing nine **Major Groups** with common but differentiated responsibilities in implementing the water and sustainable development agenda: *1) Women, 2) Children and Youth, 3) Indigenous People and their Communities, 4) NGOs, 5) Local Authorities, 6) Workers and their Trade Unions, 7) Business & Industry, 8) the Scientific and Technological Community, and 9) Farmers.* Agenda 21 includes concrete measures to strengthen these Major Groups so that they can form effective partnerships that make sustainable development a reality on the ground.

[1] Leadership Council, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2013): An Action Agenda for Sustainable Development; report to the UN Secretary General
[2] http://hapinternational.org/pool/files/ngos,-civil-soc.pdf
[3] European Commission (2012): The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions
[4] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, 1992. Section III Strengthening the Role of Major Groups

The civil society pillar of the 2015 UN Water annual conference concentrates on the first four categories of Major Groups: **Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples and NGOs**, covering predominantly the category of volunteer groups in society that are considered by the World Summit on Sustainable Development as a category of specific importance for implementation[5].

2. Objectives and outcomes of the civil society session

The Civil Society-pillar of the 2015 UN Water Annual Conference aims to shed light on how civil society can contribute most effectively and efficiently to bringing the post-2015 development agenda on water into action. It will outline – from a civil society perspective - the main challenges concerning the four selected tools for implementation: *technology, capacity building, governance* (incl. institutions and legal frameworks), and *financing*. Lastly, it will propose solutions for effectively overcoming the obstacles for accelerated implementation with due consideration of the roles of civil society actors.

3. Program and structure of the Civil Society pillar

The conference has four thematic focuses reflecting main water-related challenges, which local communities, countries and the international community jointly face:

1. ***Water and Sanitation Services - Human Right to Water and Sanitation***

Session convener: CAWST
Lead case: Universal access to safe water and adequate sanitation in Mweteni Village, Same District (Tegemeo Women Group, Tanzania)

2. ***Water Resources Management - Dealing with Water Scarcity and Allocation***

Session convener: IWMI
Lead case: Participatory water governance for the Ayeyarwady River Basin (WRTC, ARBRO, Water Mothers, Myanmar)

3. ***Water Quality – Including Wastewater Treatment and Reuse***

Session convener: IUCN

4. ***Water Risk Management – Floods, Drought and Climate Change***

Session convener: SIWI
Lead case: Sustainable water management project (QWMP) in Salamieh District (Aga Khan Foundation, Syria)

For each thematic session, a lead case has been identified from a different part of the world. The lead cases are presented by different civil society actors: Women, Youth, Indigenous People and NGOs to demonstrate civil society's reality on the ground. The four thematic panels will reflect on these cases with respect to technology, capacity development, governance issues and financing, share their own experiences from

[5] WSSD Plan of Implementation (2002), paragraph 168.

different perspectives, and debate their views on the four proposed tools of implementation with the audience. In the closing panel, session conveners and international experts will synthesize the outcomes of the thematic sessions and propose priorities and recommendations for the implementation toolkit.

4. The role of Civil Society in achieving universal access and sustainable development

In the Civil Society Pillar of this conference, the focus is on the roles of *Women, Youth and Indigenous People*, which predominantly are volunteer networks that are membership-based and have limited, or no paid staff, and *the NGO sector* that is cause-based and service-oriented, addressing specific interest or themes mostly as a professional occupation.

CSOs have the capacity to reach out to, empower, represent and/or defend vulnerable and socially excluded groups, and trigger social innovation. Women, Youth and Indigenous People's CSOs do this within their own societal group or sector, addressing the full range of development issues from the perspective of their Major Group. NGOs cut across other Major Groups addressing specific themes and hotspots.

5. The Major Group Women

In the international development framework many references are made to women's contribution to improved water governance and to sustainable development in general; it is however not always clear whether this refers to women in their individual/professional capacity or to women organised in civil society groups. Both roles are important and in both cases women's potential remains largely untapped to date.

The central role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water is anchored in the **Dublin Principles[6] for Integrated Water Resources Management**, notably:

Principle No. 2 – Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels. The participatory approach involves raising awareness of the importance of water among policy-makers and the general public. It means that decisions are taken at the lowest appropriate level, with full public consultation and involvement of users in the planning and implementation of water projects.

Principle No. 3 – Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. This pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional

[6] The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, 1992

arrangements for the development and management of water resources. Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women's specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources programmes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them.

The United Nations General Assembly in its Resolution 58/217 proclaiming **the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life' 2005 2015,** calls for a focus on the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, *"whilst striving to ensure women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts …".*

Regional agreements such as the EU Water Framework directive, the UNECE gender Action Plan and the water and health protocol and SADC Gender Protocol give strength to arguments to apply gender analysis and women inclusiveness to regional water agreements and processes. The African Water Vision 2025 calls for an "equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation, socio economic development, regional cooperation, and the environment". Targets to achieve the vision include the mainstreaming of gender in water resources management, calling on women to take on key positions and functions in decision making on water issues, and for stakeholder involvement in water resources management by particularly women and youth. The vision encourages 30% gender mainstreamed national water policies by the end of 2005 and 100% gender sensitive national water policies by 2015. The AMCOW gender mainstreaming strategy provides a Pan-African framework for integrating a gender perspective in the water sector and including women in decision making at all levels.

The **High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation** (Dushanbe, 2014) puts women's involvement and their leadership central to achieving effective water cooperation for economic benefits, social justice and environmental integrity, with concrete measures to support women's action on the ground. Most recently, the **Gender-Water-Development: the untapped connection** International Conference in East London, South Africa has reconfirmed the importance of women's meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels as a prerequisite to achieve universal access to water and sanitation and sustainable water governance.

Women's civil society

Evidence shows that meaningful involvement of women in water resources development, management and use can lead to the design of effective new solutions to water problems, help governments avoid poor investments and expensive mistakes, make projects more sustainable, ensure that infrastructure development yields the maximum social and economic returns, and further development goals[7]. Much of this work is done through local, national and international women's groups.

[7] GWP-TEC Policy Brief 3: Gender mainstreaming: an essential component of sustainable water management,

Women have a strong tradition of building social networks that are characterised by norms of trust and reciprocity. The quality social relations provide a social support safety net and enable network members to collectively resolve their common problems while achieving mutual benefits. Women's organisations and networks are organised at local, national and international level and in a diversity of peer groups ranging from professional background, religious or political affiliation, ethnicity or nationality, to thematic face and interest groups. This vast social capital is a substantial resource for collective action at all levels contributing to social cohesion, democracy, economic development and sustainability of interventions.

Women's civil society has a mounting track record of successful interventions in providing water and sanitation for the poor, curbing corruption and preventing conflicts, increasing resource efficiency, and addressing water management in an integrated manner for sustainable livelihood[8]. Their strength lies in their ability to reach down into the capillaries of society; being trusted in their communities they inform and engage community members resulting in locally owned projects and programmes. They monitor the process preventing corruption and ensuring that the interventions reach the intended beneficiaries; and they take the lead in developing institutional arrangements for maintenance and management that are fitting the local circumstances. At the same time, through their national and international network, women's civil society provides the evidence base for informed decision-making at and unites the voice of women worldwide. Across the network, the diverse knowledge and capacities are shared and put to use for the common goals.

The Major Group Youth

The interest of youth in having a clean environment and enjoying related basic rights such as access to clean water and sanitation is undeniable, and has an outspoken influence on the realization of other basic rights such as the right to education. Youth is often disproportionally affected by the impact of poor air quality, lack of access to water and sanitation, etc.

The raison d'être of Youth as major group in Agenda 21, however, lays primarily in youth's active role as an important segment of today's society. Moreover, as inheritors of today's world, young people have a particular interest in conserving a healthy environment and protecting natural resources. For this reason, the policy principle of youth participation in decision making on development and environmental issues, as set in Agenda 21, has been subscribed since many years, and now sees itself increasingly implemented on the ground.

Youth is generally known for its sense for innovation and its positive energy in tackling challenges. Youth networks and youth organizations have proven to be able to mobilize collective efforts for the good of society, very often out of care for the future. Indeed, the specific challenges of bringing about sustainable development, including sustainable

[8] see www.womenforwater.org: projects and results

management of water resources, have been high on the agenda of youth movements worldwide, in many cases even being their principal mission.

Beyond bringing fresh perspectives to the table, youth possess the unique potential of reaching their peers, the youth of today and citizens of tomorrow, through traditional and new media with an eye on creating the necessary change in mindset. In this way, youth can play a primordial role in creating socially and environmentally responsible citizens of tomorrow.

Indigenous People

Indigenous People, also indicated with terms as aboriginals, 'First Nations' (Canada) or native people, are referred to by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues[9] as "the descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means."

In 2009, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues estimated that there were 370 million indigenous people, living across 70 countries worldwide. While largely differing from one other, indigenous peoples face common challenges with respect to the protection of their rights and traditions, underrepresentation at political level, discrimination, and infringement of their rights to land and natural resources. Water as a natural resource is a prerequisite for indigenous peoples' welfare both at economic, social and cultural level.

Indigenous people have a long tradition of stewardship, living in harmony with their natural environment. Their unique knowledge and practices when it comes to the sustainable management of their natural resources are widely acknowledged and increasingly valued. In water management, the concepts and perspectives of indigenous peoples and national policy makers are often hard to reconcile; moreover indigenous peoples often find themselves excluded from consultation and decision making processes.

Given their intrinsic knowledge and stewardship traditions and their dependence on the natural environment, indigenous people have much to contribute to integrated water resources management and the implementation of the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation. The fulfilment of their right to water for enjoying many other basic rights, such as health, self-determination, and more generally a life in dignity warrants particular attention in national policies and regulations, which possibly affect their lives.

Non-Governmental Organisations

[9] UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Factsheet 2009, *'Who are Indigenous Peoples? '*

Non-governmental organization (NGO) is an ill-defined concept and is even used as a synecdoche for civil society by some[10]. The United Nations generally speaks of "NGOs and other civil society organisations"[11] categorizing NGOs are a specific element of civil society.

The UN defines NGOs as: *Any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group, which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise; serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. Their relationship with offices and agencies of the United Nations system differs depending on their goals, their venue and the mandate of a particular institution.*

NGOs are registered, not-for profit, independent from governments, and serve a public interest. A distinction from the previous three civil society groupings is their accountability: while Women, Youth and Indigenous People have a network structure and are accountable to their members, NGOs are generally professional staff and accountable to their Board of Directors or Board of Trustees. In general, Women, Youth and Indigenous People have a constituency, while NGOs have a target group. The distinction is however, not absolute, since many hybrid forms do exist.

6. The four water themes from a civil society perspective

Generic thematic briefs are available for each of the four themes of the conference. The following highlights some priorities from the perspective of civil society.

The human rights to water and sanitation

Civil society is a strong supporter of the human rights to water and sanitation. The UNGA Resolution on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, adopted in July 2010 states:

> *"The human right to water and sanitation entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, accessible, culturally acceptable and affordable water and sanitation services for personal and domestic uses, and which are delivered in a participatory, accountable and non-discriminatory manner. Governments are obliged to ensure that everybody gains access to these services over a considered timeframe, through creating an enabling environment, namely by adopting appropriate legislation, policies, programmes and ensuring that these are adequately resourced and monitored."*

[10] EIDHR-NSA Guidelines EuropeAid/135664/C/ACT/LY
[11] http://www.un.org/en/civilsociety/

The fact that 122 countries have recognized water as a human right and approximately 60 have indicated that this right has been included in their national legislation, highlights the world over support for the concept that water is a fundamental necessity for life, and that all persons have the right to a safe and secure supply of water. The reality is however, that 2.5 billion people still lack basic sanitation services and 780 million have no water access. And where water is available, it is not necessarily safe and sufficient to sustain their livelihood. The vast majority of those without adequate access live in rural areas.

More than 80% of countries indicate that they have WASH policies, including policies related to basic water and sanitation facilities in schools and health centres, but only 20 to 30 % of those countries indicate that they are executing those policies. Lack of financing, deficient institutional and administrative arrangements and lack of stakeholder engagement are identified as major restricting factors for achieving universal access and adequate management and maintenance of WASH facilities. The 2014 GLAAS Report furthermore indicates that human resource capacity in WASH is constrained by limited financial resources, as well as shortage of skilled graduates and reluctance of skilled workers to live and work in rural areas. Attention is needed to developing capacity of local civil society. Given the importance of developing local capabilities for success in meeting water sanitation targets, measurement indicators are needed for local WASH knowledge and skills.

While governments have the prime responsibility and their political will to comply with their human rights obligations is essential, meaningful progress will only be made if other stakeholders join in. The handbook[12] developed by UN Special Rapporteur, Catarina the Albuquerque provides guidance for State actors to comply with their human rights obligations, giving due consideration to the roles of non-state actors, and to participation as underlying principle. States need to create opportunities for and eliminate barriers to participation[13]. Barriers that prevent meaningful participation may relate to language, literacy, meeting times and venue, but also include financial restrictions, lack of information, and socio-cultural traditions that prevent women from having a voice in public life. Enabling people, especially marginalised groups to participate meaningfully needs supporting measures that break down these barriers and change the mind-set of those in power.

Given that the majority of people that lack access live in rural areas, decentralised approaches with tailor-made solutions are needed that give due consideration to the local socio-cultural context. This implies:

- **Financing** that is sufficient to meet targets and is allocated to address inequities and sustainability of services. Specifically, increased financing is needed for basic systems, capacity development and small local projects. Given that sustainable WASH provision is to a considerable extent a social issue, and

[12] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/WaterAndSanitation/SRWater/Pages/Handbook.aspx
[13] http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/Handbook/Book7_Principles.pdf; pp 55 - 65

not a technical problem, financing for WASH cannot be restricted to service delivery alone. An important element in financing for sustainable WASH provision lies in providing adequate funding for the empowerment of local stakeholders, in particular for local groups, often women's civil society, that lead and manage community processes. This includes enabling meaningful participation of those who cannot financially afford it.

Eighty per cent (80%) of countries report that current finance is insufficient to meet targets established for drinking water and sanitation. They also report that public expenditures for WASH are often significantly less than other social sectors such as health where public expenditure can reach ten per cent of GDP.

Looking at the breakdown of sanitation and water aid commitments by purpose type (2012), we see that the majority of funds go to Large Systems (56%), followed by Basic Systems (21%). Water Resources, Rivers and Waste management receive 15% while 7% goes to Policy and Administration. Capacity development (education & training) receives less than 1%.

- **Capacity Development** that triggers and empowers local action, such as that of the Mweteni Women's group; and ensures skills and knowledge reside locally to (i) build, operate, maintain and monitor water and sanitation systems, (ii) continually reinforce proper hygiene practices, and (iii) supports and strengthens community groups' and organizations' institutional capability (e.g. governance, financial stewardship, monitoring for improvement).
- **Technologies (and services)** that households, health facilities, schools, and communities can implement, operate and maintain on their own; and have the ability to pay for the continued service over the long-term. Examples include rainwater harvesting, household water treatment and latrines.

  These simple, affordable "self-supply" technologies are essential for sustained access to safe water and basic sanitation, where needed and at the scale needed. These solutions will go a long way to address the challenge identified in the 2014 GLAAS report that only 18 to 25% of countries indicate that tariffs are sufficient to cover the majority of operations and minor maintenance costs of current systems in place. Cost of service could be considered as a proxy indicator for equitable service provision.
- **Governance** that is participatory and inclusive, and concentrated at the lowest appropriate level (as stated in Dublin Principle 2). Local people are the directly affected and most motivated to seek solutions to their own water and sanitation issues; and are generally motivated toward broad inclusion in decision-making. At all levels, civil society has proven commitment to democratic processes and systems, financial stewardship and controls, and measuring and reporting results. Local authorities often do not have the tradition, capacity and knowledge to take up participatory water governance, but show a keen interest in involving local civil society if confronted with the positive outcome of their interventions.

  Specific to governance for water and sanitation, clearly defined roles and

responsibilities are needed, along with clearly defined processes and procedures for continued systems management.

Clear measurement indicators of success are also needed for water, sanitation and hygiene. The 2014 JMP Report recommends new water and sanitation indicators that go beyond access to infrastructure to include measurements on water quality and quantity, and the safe disposal of feces. However, the primary hygiene indicator recommended is 'hand washing', whereas hygiene behaviour goes well beyond hand washing and personal hygiene, and includes proper environmental hygiene behavior such as safe storage of water and appropriate disposal of all waste (not just human feces).

An information brief on Implementing Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) is available on www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/images/wash_eng.pdf.

Water management: Dealing with water scarcity and allocation

By the year 2025, 1.8 billion people are expected to live in areas with absolute water scarcity and two-thirds of the world population could live under water stress conditions[14].

To take into account the multiple uses of water and the full range of human and environmental water needs, Integrated Water Resources Management IWRM) was adopted as a policy-making and planning framework at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development (UNCED, 1992). 80% of countries, which participated in a UN-Water survey in 2012 have since 1992 embarked on reforms to improve the enabling environment for water resources management based on the application of integrated approaches, as stated in Agenda 21 and affirmed in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation[15]. The IWRM framework takes a Human Rights Based approach and puts stakeholder participation central.

Water Resources Management in the context of the SDGs has focused on sustainable use and development of water resources. Specific targets have hinged on bringing freshwater withdrawals in-line with sustainably available water resources while increased water productivity, and maintaining a threshold of environmental flows in all countries. In addition, the SDGs have focused on improved governance and management systems for freshwater and sanitation. Some proposed indicators for measuring progress toward these goals include:

[14] http://www.unwater.org/publications/publications-detail/en/c/204294
[15] Water and Disaster Risk, a contribution by the United Nations to the consultation leading to the Third World Conference in Disaster Risk Reduction, 2014
http://www.wcdrr.org/documents/wcdrr/prepcom1/UN/ATT1IUQN.pdf

- Balance water use and safeguard the ecosystem while holistically implementing IWRM and mainstreaming climate change[16]
- Establish transboundary agreements, build up basin capacity to ensure enforcement of laws, and strengthen transboundary water management through establishing basin organisations[17]
- Monitor, govern and manage ground and surface water sustainably and in an integrated manner to satisfy human needs while respecting ecosystem requirements[18]
- Management of freshwater sources for human needs, culture, gender, economic growth while respecting ecosystem requirements (adopting sustainable, long lasting basin treaties) and resilience to disasters[19]
- Percentage of countries implementing IWRM plans[20]
- Percentage of countries with strategic planning and participatory decision-making processes[20]
- Percentage of transboundary basins and aquifers with cooperative management frameworks[20]
- Percent of countries with national policies supporting integrated disaster risk management (including drought and flood policies), as part of national development plans[20]
- Proportion of communities which have implemented risk strategies (UN Water, 2014a)
- Monitoring and evaluation systems that include surveys on governance issues (building on Rio+20 status report) [20]

Civil society at large and the specific different segments of civil society (NGO's, women, etc.) can play an important role in shaping water resource management solutions suited to particular conditions. Civil society can shape the nature and dynamics of water resource management, and can give important inputs to governance processes that affect the nature of water management. In particular, civil society can help ensure optimal and sustainable balances are struck among the multiple users and uses of water.

[16] Beyond 2015. Global Thematic Consultation on Water and the Post-2015 Development Framework - Water In The Post-2015 March 2013. Development Agenda.
http://www.beyond2015.org/sites/default/files/Position%20paper%20Water.pdf
[17] GWP 2013. Global Water Partnership National Stakeholder Consultations on Water: Supporting the 2015 Development Agenda. www.gwp.org
[18] SDSN, 2013. Report prepared by the Leadership Council of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network And Action Agenda for Sustainable Development REPORT FOR THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL 6 June 2013
[19] SC, 2014. Swiss Position Paper on post 2015 Water Goal. The Switzerland Confederation.
http://www.swisswaterpartnership.ch/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2013.12.20_Swiss_Position_on_Water_in_Post2015_Agenda.pdf
[20] UN Water. A Post-2015 Global Goal for Water: Synthesis of key findings and recommendations from UN-Water.
http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/27_01_2014_unwater_paper_on_a_post2015_global_goal_for_water.pdf

Challenges and Tools for implementation of WRM:

- **Investment and Financing**: Many developing countries face infrastructure constraints and securing financing is no easy task. Further, when infrastructure is constructed, sustainability is often an issue. Civil Society may help facilitate investment and sustainability through active input to investment and financing process—input which provides constructive paths for optimal tradeoffs. Further, civil society may help foster greater sustainability of small infrastructure for example through collective community maintenance programs.
- **Technology:** Expansion of known technologies and introduction of some new ones can help improve water resources management in particular water efficiency. There is clearly a need to promote technologies where they are needed, and civil society can help in the identification, uptake and maintenance of technologies where appropriate.
- **Capacity strengthening:** Capacity is key to implementation of WRM and coping with scarcity. Strengthened capacity can appropriately diagnose situations and help find key solutions. Civil society can also help to make key linkages between diagnosing water resources situations on the one hand, and communicating with stakeholders in an accessible way on the other.
- *Water Governance* Water governance is about the process through which water management decisions are made, and key stakeholders can play a key role in governance processes in order to strengthen management decisions. Participation platforms are ways for civil society to give input into governance processes that influence water resources management decision making an implementation.

For the information brief on Implementing water management, focus on water scarcity[21], see www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/images/implementing_water_eng.pdf

Water quality

On a global scale, 2 million tons of sewage, industrial and agricultural waste is discharged into the world's water bodies annually[22], making water quality a prime concern for both developed and developing nations. The focus of this civil society session is on developing countries and on the protection of ecosystem services as an important aspect of water quality preservation.

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[21] Additional references:
AMCOW (2013) "Tunis Outcome Document for the Water Sector post-2015 Thematic Consultations, 1 March 2013" http://www.amcow-online.org/images/docs/outcomes_of_the_tunis_post_2015_water_consultations.pdf
HLP (2013) "A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies through Sustainable Development - The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda" http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf
Government of Colombia, Peru, United Arab Emirates (2012) "Concept Note on Sustainable Development" www.minambiente.gov.co/documentos/DocumentosInstitucional/rio_20/150512_proposal_colombia_emirates.pdf
JMP Working Groups (2012) "Proposal for consolidated drinking water, sanitation and hygiene targets, indicators and definitions" http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/A-proposal-for-consolidated-WASH-goal-targets-definitionsandindicators_version7_Nov22_final.pdf
Aquafed (2013) "Post-2015 Global Goals – Towards a wastewater sub-goal of the goal on water" http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/306022
UN Global Compact (2013) "Corporate Sustainability and the United Nations Post-2015 Development Agenda" www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/news_events/9.1_news_archives/2013_06_18/UNGC_Post2015_Report.pdf

[22] http://www.unep.org/pdf/SickWater_screen.pdf

With over 80% of wastewater being discharged without treatment into their surface water bodies, developing countries face a formidable task to preserve water quality. Acknowledging that wastewater management in the urban context, especially in fast growing cities is a priority for national and local governments in the developing world, this is not necessarily the area where civil society can contribute most significantly. In rural areas, on the other hand, where improving access to sanitation is slow and the preservation of remaining ecosystems within water catchment areas become increasingly important, civil society can make a different through facilitating local actors and enabling their access to tailor made and decentralised approaches. While the local population is generally quite aware of the importance of clean water for their well-being and knows how they are impacted by pollution, they lack the means to cope with both livelihood and pollution challenges.

Ecosystems provide essential goods and services for human well-being and economic prosperity. Goods include food, fuel and clean water; services can be regulatory services such as regulation of floods, droughts, land degradation, disease, and notably here of water quality more in general, supporting services such as soil formation and nutrient cycling, and non-material benefits such as recreational, spiritual and religious services. In addition, ecosystems have an intrinsic value in preserving biodiversity and natural beauty. The economic value of ecosystem services is often disregarded despite prominent studies that prove their enormous contribution on a global scale, including by biome and different type of habitat. [23, 24]

Human activities negatively affect ecosystems and diminish their capacity to meet the increasing human demands. Current estimates of 3 billion more people and a quadrupling of the world economy by 2050 imply a formidable increase in demand for and consumption of biological and physical resources, as well as escalating impacts on ecosystems and the services they provide. [25, 26]

While water is essential for ecosystems, ecosystems at the same time provide multiple benefits and services that contribute to water security. These include natural freshwater storage, water flow regulation, water purification, and replenishment of groundwater aquifers, climate regulation and reduction of risks associated with water-related disasters. [27,] The detrimental effects of massive water pollution threaten the self-cleaning capacity of the world's ecosystems. Concerted action at all levels is needed to curb these negative trends.

The role of Indigenous people as natural guardians of their living environment deserves attention. Traditional Indigenous Territories encompass up to 22 % of the world's land

[23] Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005): Ecosystems and Human Well-being; a Framework for Assessment. http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.48.aspx.pdf
[24] ten Brink P et all (2013) The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for Water and Wetlands. Executive Summary. https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/2013-001.pdf
[25] http://www.gwp.org/Global/About%20GWP/Publications/Briefing%20notes/P816_GWP_Ecosystems Briefing%20Note_WEB.pdf
[26] Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005): Ecosystems and Human Well-being; a Framework for Assessment. http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.48.aspx.pdf
[27] Global Water Partnership Briefing note: Ecosystem Services and Water Security.

surface and they coincide with areas that hold 80 % of the planet's biodiversity.[28] While indigenous people are among the most vulnerable groups to the negative effects of climate change, their intrinsic knowledge and conservation practice are an asset to climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as to ecosystem preservation in general, including sustainable use of natural resources.[29] Examples include community based management and participatory governance systems for wetlands and other landscapes. [30, 31] The same holds true for the Major Group Women whose role in national and international ecosystem management and control over environment degradation has been emphasized since the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women[32].

Given the evident importance of ecosystem preservation and the added value of involving the local population, civil society contributions in this field should be further developed and strengthened. These amongst others needs:

- **Financing** that ensures conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, and that pay adequate attention to the needs of local actors so that they effectively contribute to the sustainable management of the watershed. Governments, financing institutions and civil society should help with the effective application of natural infrastructure options through ecosystem management and restoration together with capacity building and support for reforms of natural resource governance. [33] *Enabling-though-funding* is an effective mechanism to building capacity of local civil society and is successfully practiced by women's civil society all over the world; tailor made to the specific local circumstances and absorption potential.
- **Technologies** that combine traditional and indigenous knowledge with the insights of research and innovation. Financial institutions and governmental agencies should make financing available to local initiatives for watershed management through decentralized funds and credit schemes that integrate clean and adequate water for all, ecosystem services, livelihoods and economic development. Water utilities and private sector water users should then participate in the development and implementation of technologies that combine engineered and natural infrastructure as part of these schemes. [34] Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) is an increasingly popular conservation and resource management tool in developing countries. PES can help to reduce poverty, and to satisfy environmental and watershed preservation needs. But the insecure land and resource tenure of many poor people remains a key

[28] Claudia Sobrevilla (2008): The Role of Indigenous Peoples in Biodiversity Conservation: The Natural but often Forgotten Partners. The World Bank
[29] http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/ceesp_briefing_note_9_iccas.pdf
[30] UNEP (2014) Green Infrastructure Guide for Water Management: Ecosystem-based management approaches for water-related infrastructure projects. http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/green_infrastructure_guide.pdf
http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/asia/asia_where_work/bangladesh/about_us/bdongoingprojects/?4419/Community-Based-Sustainable-Management-of-Tanguar-Haor-Program
[31] http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/draft_garbatula_resilience_26_04_2011.pdf
[32] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/confer/nfls/Nairobi1985report.txt
[33] http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/nexus_report.pdf
[34] http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/nexus_report.pdf

obstacle to them participating in and benefiting from PES schemes. Other obstacles many PES schemes face are the complex and often bureaucratic project procedures and high project transaction costs[35].

- **Capacity Development** at all levels to ensure an integrated approach from national to local level, including transboundary cooperation for shared water bodies and their supply systems. Building the capacity of local civil society to take up their role should be given due attention and adequate means are needed to ensure the meaningful participation of marginalized groups. Capacity building for communities is important to e.g. ensure that future economic activity in a basin — especially hydropower and agriculture — is regulated to take into account river dynamics, flows, climate change and other water uses affecting the quality of the resource. Together with governance, capacity building is a critical element to empower stakeholders to negotiate trade offs and build consensus on priority management actions for ecosystem management and restoration.[36]
- **Governance** that includes partnerships between State and non-State actors and is structured in a way that inclusion of watershed inhabitants and their meaningful participation is ensured. Local people are the ones directly affected and their traditional knowledge, in particular of indigenous communities, will be most useful in the development of natural infrastructure options.. The key is to identify priorities that can benefit social equity in development, and then what is needed to empower the relevant stakeholders to undertake implementation. Investment in natural infrastructure options e.g. for water quality regulation is best made through linking planning and decision making to implementation.[37]

An information brief on improving water quality and protecting ecosystem services is available on
www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/images/water_quality_eng.pdf

Water risk management: drought, floods, climate change

Water-related disasters such as floods, flash floods and droughts are by far the most frequent calamities worldwide. They are also the most economically and socially destructive. Since the original Rio Earth Summit in 1992 floods, droughts and storms have affected 4.2 billion people (95% of all people affected by disasters) and caused USD 1.3 trillion of damage (63% of all damage)[38]. Unfortunately and unquestionably, climate change is aggravating the risk for water-related disasters. Local communities are not only the major victims of these disasters; they are also at the center of building risk resilience. Effective responses to these risks must comprehend both adaptation and

[35] http://www.iied.org/markets-payments-for-environmental-services
[36] http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/nexus_report.pdf
[37] http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/nexus_report.pdf
[38] Water and Disaster Risk, a contribution by the United Nations to the consultation leading to the Third World Conference in Disaster Risk Reduction, 2014
http://www.wcdrr.org/documents/wcdrr/prepcom1/UN/ATT1IUQN.pdf

mitigation strategies, and deliver on a short term while taking into account the longer term perspectives and needs. Both climate adaptation and mitigation are essential in reducing the negative impact of climate change on the water cycle and on our societies. To have robust and sustainable water resources management in place, will contribute to mitigate the negative impact of disasters and thus need to be an inherent part of disaster preparedness.

Civil society at large and the specific different segments of civil society (NGO's, women, etc.) are an important actor for adapting to and mitigating water-related disasters. Civil society is a key stakeholder in building resilience to water-related disasters, thereby protecting particularly the most vulnerable groups. The active involvement of civil society can substantially contribute to taking preventive measures through curbing disruptive practice like deforestation, building settlements in flood prone areas.

In terms of **governance**, civil society organizations are vital in holding governments accountable and ensuring that the needs of local communities are effectively reflected in national policies and plans, and that the necessary resources are mobilized to enable local communities to take adaptive action (Crispino Lobo on the Need and Role of Civil Society Organizations, in the World Resources Report). Here the real challenges does not lay in 'building the capacity of civil society', but in creating governance structure which allow for and enable the interventions of civil society in decision making at all relevant levels.

The involvement of civil society in **technology** interventions is required from the very beginning, so to ensure that they bring sustainable solutions. In the absence of their involvement, it is hard to ensure that the interventions meet the real needs of the community, are adapted to the local context, can be managed by the local community. Therefore, civil society should have a lead not only in deploying, but also in designing technological interventions; this will also ensure their ownership (Crispino Lobo on the Need and Role of Civil Society Organizations, in the World Resources Report).

When looking at developing and valorizing the **local capacity** required to build resilient, effectively combining the traditional wisdom of local communities with the new technologies which have been developed over the past decades will be a catalyst for increasing the adaptive capacities at local level.

While natural hazard cannot be prevented, the number of lives they take and the damage they cause can be greatly reduced if taking preparatory and protective measures. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) saves lives, protects livelihoods and strengthens the resilience of communities. DRR considerations in WASH interventions are dependent on the type of hazard faced and a community's level of vulnerability. A rapid-onset event (e.g. flood, earthquake, hurricane) can destroy or severely damage infrastructure and limit the capacity of service providers (e.g. community, government or private sector) to operate and maintain systems. A slow onset or chronic event such

as drought can critically reduce normal water resources by drying up surface water and lowering groundwater tables.

With respect to **financing**, DRR is costs effective: on average, every euro spent on DRR activities would save between four and seven euros that would be spent to respond to the impact of disasters[39].

The Water Risk session of the Civil Society Stakeholder Group will focus on identifying examples of the role of civil society, especially in implementing adaptation and mitigation strategies.

For the information brief on implementing risk management in water and sanitation, see http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/images/risk_management_water_sanitation_eng.pdf

[39] http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/disaster_risk_reduction.pdf