Civil Society Session: Civil Society and adaptive planning and management

Session report, 16 January 2015

Civil Society and adaptive planning and management

The Session was convened by Karin Lexen, (Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). The session addressed the main challenges of the global community related to water-related disasters, water crises and extreme weather events such as floods and droughts, and their consequences for the people and economy, in particular for the poor and vulnerable people. This session dealt with the role of community preparedness in flood risk management and how dealing with risks requires the involvement of civil society.

Session structure

Overview presentation/Introduction

- Murray Biedler, Deep Blue Consultants, Belgium

Main case study

- MHD Ali Al-Zein, Aga Khan Foundation, Syria

Panellists

- Financing: Ilias Sawadogo, Young Water Solutions Initiative and Réseau des Jeunes pour le Développement Durable, Burkina Faso
- Capacity development: Wasif Bashir, University of the Punjab, Pakistan
- Technology: Lydia Cumiskey, Water Youth Network
- Governance: Murray Biedler, Deep Blue Consultants, Belgium

Introduction

Karin Lexen, SIWI, introduces the session highlighting the importance of integrating young people's perception into the discussions and underlining the big gap between those taking the decisions at the global level and what is happening on the ground. Next, Murray Biedler, Deep Blue Consultants, sets the scene in relation to civil society and water risks. Risks can be classified according to: (i) sharp onset events, like floods or landslides; (ii) Slow onset events like drought and contamination (chemical & bio-hazard); and (iii) water-related (transmission & hygiene), like diseases (Ebola, malaria, cholera). Response to such water risks can be done at different levels: policies, declarations, funding, development and humanitarian assistance and

adaptation. Strategies to address them include needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation, and transparency and accountability. Some water risk tools highlighted in his presentation are the UNDG Post Disaster Needs Assessment PDNA Guidelines (2014), AMCOW Monitoring & Evaluation Platform (2014), and capacity building at the institutional and individual levels (COEs – Africa /LAM and PAUs Africa). Civil society must be involved in the governance processes, helping to ensure transparency and accountability, as well as the incorporation of cross- cutting issues like gender, youth, heath, education, culture.

Case studies and panel

MHD Ali Al-Zein, Aga Khan Foundation, presents the lead case study of the session, on Sustainable Water Management in Syria. Different case study presentations from the panelists follow.

Lead case study: Sustainable Water Management Project (SWMP) in Salamieh District
By Ali Al-Zein, Aga Khan Foundation, Syria

The Sustainable Water Management Project (SWMP) in Salamieh District aimed to alleviate negative impacts of water shortage such as poor yields, low incomes, high unemployment rate, which collectively lead to poverty and migration. It included multiple interventions in order to help farmers and create incentives for them to work collectively on scientific irrigation scheduling, water harvesting, supplemental irrigation, deficit irrigation and modernizing irrigation systems. The project interventions during the period 2005–2010 have resulted in several achievements, including minimized water consumption, yield improvements, increased water use efficiency and higher incomes, along with groundwater table stabilization in most of the villages.

All the dimensions of sustainability were addressed throughout the project phases. From the social point of view, farmers producing vegetables and fruits – who apply traditional irrigation techniques using water from private owned wells – from 120 villages were targeted. Some farmers were trained to be facilitators of the introduction, promotion and maintenance of drip irrigation networks among the farmer communities. Meanwhile, several workshops and campaigns aimed at behavior changing, awareness raising and promotion of collective work and community participation and mobilization on water management and conservation were conducted.

Regarding economics, an economic assessment showed that the first season's income could cover the cost of the network, which had a lifespan of at least 5 years. Encouraging formation of groups in villages in order to maximize cost saving and widen participation was also a vital part of the project. From the environmental point of view, minimum intervention on water resources and maximum reservation for the environment were achieved. Materials used for the network were collected and recycled by farmers and biodiversity was considered during the whole project. Link to complete case study

Democratic Policy of Civil Society in Risk Management for Universal Access of Safe Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Pakistan

By Muhammad Wasif Bashir Babar, University of Punjab, Pakistan.

The city of Lahore, Pakistan, faced critical drinking water, sanitation & hygiene conditions exacerbated by high levels of poverty, lack of political will/interest, environmental and groundwater pollution, worse socioeconomic status, lack of education, poor hygiene, high rates of water-borne diseases. As a result, a common initiative of Faisalabad's civil society and the Government of Punjab to develop WASH services and effective water risk management in the community with a high participatory and youth engagement component has been developed. The study presented in this case was carried out in 2014 to assess and analyses the effective role of civil society and youth in WASH Development and risk management, along with the process of community partnership and flexible strategies for community development. An innovative bottom-up and participatory approach was applied, engaging young women, educational institutions, religious leaders and children. It concluded that engaging communities and youth in development activities can play an essential role in developing local community ownership and ensure project and ecological sustainability, and partnerships including youth, media, women, educational institutions and civil society should be promoted. Link to complete case study

Flood early warning systems

By Lydia Cumiskey, Water Youth Network.

This case presents the 'Mobile Services for flood early warning in Bangladesh' project conducted by a multi stakeholder consortium including government institutions (Flood forecasting and Warning Centre and the Regional Integrated Multi Hazard Early Warning System), research institutions (Deltares and HKV consultants) and NGO partners (Cordaid Netherlands, Concern Universal Bangladesh, Practical Action Bangladesh and MMS). This project develops a people-centred early warning system comprised of four key elements: knowledge of the risks; monitoring, analysis and forecasting of the hazards; communication or dissemination of alerts and warnings; and local capabilities to respond to the warnings received (Basher, 2006). The communication and dissemination component has being recognized as the least developed one, with a huge gap between the information produced by national level forecasting agencies and that received and acted upon by the flood affected communities. Thus, in view of the recognition of the important role of young actors in flood risk reduction given by the 3rd UN World Congress for Disaster Risk Reduction (3WCDRR), the Children and Youth Blast, 3WCDRR is to be held in Sendai in 2015 and will give young people the opportunity to influence decision makers, display their unique abilities, make commitments, co-educate and plan actions to reduce the risks our communities face to disasters. Link to complete case study

Case study: BeWater- Making society an active participant in water adaptation to global change

By Murray Biedler, Deep Blue Consultants

The Water Exploitation Index indicates severe stress over water resources in the Mediterranean. The project worked in 4 Case Study River Basins, in four cardinal points of the Mediterranean, representative of various conditions. It was based on a collaborative response, including components of (i) dialogue, awareness & empowerment, notably concerning gender and youth; (ii)Science & Society – Research & Policy; (iii) Joint responsibility- public & private and Civil Society; (iv) bottom-up approach. Addressing Governance Challenges included facing the NEXUS: Water, Energy, Food Security & Beyond, tackling climate and policy and policy review in multiple sectors. The Tools for such policy reviews include: 1. Identifying policies specifically for climate; 2. Identifying sector policies that address climate in ANY way; 3. Analysing Sector Policies, identifying conflict or complementarities; 4. Analysing sector policies for adaptation and participation; 5. Identifying opportunity: New and/or upcoming policy and stakeholders. Link to presentation

Microcredit project for young people to protect the oasis of Bidi
By Ilias Sawadogo, Young Water Solutions Initiative and Réseau des Jeunes pour le Développement Durable, Burkina Faso

Young's Water Solutions seeks to develop projects managed by youth to improve access to safe drinking water worldwide through microloans ranging from 100 to 10,000 euros. They have the support of GoodPlanet Belgium and the Agence de l'Eau Artois Picardie France. One of the projects being implemented is to protect the oasis of Bidi in Burkina Faso. The oasis, very important for the Bidi community, is seriously threatened by various factors, including growing desertification and human pressure, as local populations and livestock take water from the oasis. The project built a green wall around the oasis to protect it from the sand, consisting of non-woody plant trees as shea or baobabs, which besides being adapted to this Sahel region also produce fruits that can be very profitable. This way the oasis is protected, and opportunities for women and youth are also created.The project also addressed the lack of control over the water use in the oasis, increasing the populations' knowledge and skills on integrated water resources management. It has been important to make them aware that their actions have consequences for the survival of the oasis. It requieres training, but also guards controlling the oasis, a sort of water police formed by young people who may notify the competent authority if they find misuses in the oasis. Finally, it's convenient to install water holes to keep cattle away from the oasis and a water distribution system to the community to avoid women and girls having to walk to the oasis to fetch water instead of going to school or participating in local governance.

Challenges and tools

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. 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. Data ownership is also key issue, and it is important that access to information is endorsed by the government .

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. In some of the cases presented during the session (eg. Pakistan), the technologies are available, but there is a lack of information, capacity and civic engagement for them to be adequately used. In the Syria case study, in order to transfer technologies to the farmers, capacity building and awareness raising activities to change peoples' perceptions and increase

ownership have proved to be very useful tools. In Bangladesh a knowledge platform with a hotline enabling people to call for advice is in process.

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. There is a potential to encourage the role of youth at local and global levels to respond to the growing professional capacity gap identified in the water sector by AMCOW and IWA, by presenting it as a legitimate, interesting and important career. Children can play a key role in changing perceptions of water and sanitation when they may learn in school and go back home with the knowledge to influence their families.

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 17 as drought can critically reduce normal water resources by drying up surface water and lowering groundwater tables. It is important to take into account that the way messages are designed will affect how the people are reacting to them, as is the case in early warnings.

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

Session photos

Session panel