

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

The SDG5 - SDG6 interface: the core of sustainable development

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Introduction

Esteemed participants, dear Women, Water colleagues and friends,

It is my honour and privilege to participate in this Women's Forum and to address you on the subject of Women as a key stakeholder group to achieve the sustainable use and management of water; a topic that is very close to my heart.

This Budapest Water Summit comes at an important moment in time, as the scene is being set for SDG implementation.

I express the hope and expectation that the outcome document will do justice to the *all-of-society engagement and partnership* that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development propagates by including a strong advocacy for proper investment in stakeholder participation across all aspects of the water goal, and in particular will call for measures to enable the full and equal participation of women in water-related development efforts.

Integrated Water Resources Management in the context of the SDGs

I believe that we will only achieve our sustainable development ambition if we build on what already exists and has proven its worth; and if we incorporate lessons learnt from the past, so that we can avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

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So therefore, let me briefly take you back in time to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the Dublin Principles – on which IWRM is based – were adopted.

Promoting integration in a largely compartmentalised and fragmented global governance system was quite revolutionary at the time.

It is not surprising that the initiative came from the water domain; as water is in everything. With the rapidly increasing demand from different uses and users, the water managers of the world realised that the challenges they were facing with respect to access, sustainability and allocation across the different sectors, could only be addressed through integration.

Much has happened since then.

And the IWRM concept has been made much more concrete:

- Mainly in terms of functional integration, i.e. looking outside the water box and seeking to bridge across sectors and disciplines;
- Also in terms of institutional integration, i.e. creating mechanisms where different water authorities can meet, exchange and cooperate, including transboundary;
- But less so in terms of societal integration, addressing the disconnect between governments and the societies they serve. During the MDG period, the water agenda has remained predominantly a technical agenda.

We have now entered a new era.

Our joint development efforts are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

The beauty of the 2030 Development Agenda is that:

- It centralizes integration, not only for water, but across all the SDGs;
- It invites us to consider the interface between the different SDGs and to look at several SDGs in conjunction; the water-food-energy nexus for instance, but also the gender-water-development nexus;
- It also outlines a way for making such an integrated approach feasible and manageable at all levels; i.e. through an all-of-society engagement

and partnership. In doing so, the new sustainable development agenda puts a strong focus on societal integration, the pillar of IWRM that has received insufficient attention in the past.

Participatory and inclusive water governance

Societal integration is in fact the dimension that is most prominent in the Dublin Principles.

Dublin Principle 2 tells us that all relevant stakeholders should be included in the planning and decision-making that concerns them, and that this process should take place at the lowest appropriate level (principle of subsidiarity).

In our broad GWP experience over the past 20 years, stakeholder engagement in decision-making and planning processes is beneficial for the outcome; and it paves the way for ownership and active engagement in the implementation of those outcomes.

Reviews of GWP work in the Caribbean, Central Asia, China, Eastern Africa and Central and Eastern Europe, where IWRM and participatory water governance are implemented under different geopolitical, environmental, cultural and climatological circumstances, show that:

- **Strategic vision and political commitment is an absolute must to make participatory water governance a reality on the ground.**

In the Caribbean for instance, where there are many smaller pockets of success, the overall political engagement is lacking to structurally transform and reform the existing water management entities and frameworks, which are predominantly governmental and top-down.

- **Reforming institutional structures towards more participatory (water) governance requires a simultaneous ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approach with strong leadership and long-term commitment at all administrative levels.**

In Central Asia for instance, decision-makers realized that the significant institutional and legislative changes they performed failed to engage the lower-end water users. A serious investment to inform, capacitate and involve farmers and other stakeholders resulted in agreed procedures

and methods for equitable and stable water allocation under the control of water user groups. The institutional set-up for water management transitioned from within administrative boundaries to watershed boundaries, linking several levels of water hierarchy and establishing cross-sector integration.

- **The participation of stakeholders has to be meaningful and occur at the different levels of governance in order to transform existing management cultures and practices. To make participation meaningful, substantial investments are required in capacity development and education, in particular at local levels in developing countries where many of the poor and vulnerable are living.**

In Eastern Africa, where the interdependency of the many different uses of water had long been ignored, stakeholder participation is now at the heart of water governance at all levels. The case studies from this region recognise that community participation adds value to good governance and sustainable development; and that sensitizing and capacitating stakeholders is the main entry point for changing attitudes and overcoming resistance to institutional reforms. This is best done through community-based organisations, which have developed or are developing strong relationships with their communities over time.

- **In general, the complexity and lengthy process of partnership-building, in particular with respect to community involvement and the inclusion of minorities and vulnerable groups, is easily underestimated.**

What does this mean for SDG implementation?

The *all-of-society engagement and partnership* - which is at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development– is about inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory participation.

This can only be achieved if we invest in empowerment of those groups in society that generally do not have the opportunity and means to participate. This means: giving “licence to operate” to Women, Youth and Indigenous People, who have the social networks to engage their peer groups, to reach into the capillaries of society and to pay special attention to the poor and the marginalized.

The SDG5 - SDG6 interface

When looking at SDG5 – the gender and women’s empowerment goal – through the lens of SDG6 – the water goal –, the commonality is promoting women’s agency.

Gender equality, like access to water and sanitation, is considered key for the development of a healthy and prosperous society. Gender equality is not only about equal access to resources; it also means that women should have an equal voice in decision-making and that they fully take part in all sectors and spheres of society, including in the water domain.

In fact, Dublin Principle 3 is all about the latter: about the central role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

Unfortunately, because of traditional gender roles, with the decision-making concerning water still being in the male domain in many parts of the world, women’s transition from water carriers to water managers still lacks traction.

The second section of Dublin Principle 3 already outlines what needs to be done to advance on the implementation this key principle of IWRM:

Dublin Principle 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 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.*

But it is safe to say that this is not really happening at scale. Even where such policies exist, the translation of policy to practice is a long and winding road.

Why is that?

In my view, it is because of the fact that pre-investment in capacitating women and other stakeholders, including local authorities, to practice participatory water governance has not received sufficient attention in the past.

Poor funding continues to marginalise the role of women's civil society and restricts their contributions to gender-sensitive water management. At the same time, audits and evaluations by, inter alia, the European Union, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the World Bank demonstrate that a considerable number of water and sanitation projects fails to adequately service the targeted beneficiaries. Meaning that many millions invested in water and sanitation provision and management are effectively wasted on non-sustainable interventions partly because, due to insufficient involvement of the beneficiaries, interventions fail to match their demands and local circumstance.

While international development policies have put gender equality and women's empowerment front and centre on the development agenda, this strategic focus is thus far not reflected in gender responsive budgeting. OECD-DAC¹ uses a gender equality policy marker to assess the gender focus of Official Development Aid (ODA). An analysis of overall donor spending in DAC countries in 2012 reveals that of the 86,061 million USD that were screened for the gender equality policy marker (87.1% of the total allocated amount), 27% included gender equality/women's empowerment as an explicit or as a secondary objective of the activity. A mere 2% of this so-called gender-focused funding was allocated to women's equality organisations and institutions.

In conclusion

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for an all-of-society engagement and partnership and clearly articulates the importance of involving non-State actors, including the Major Group Women, in the implementation of this ambitious agenda.

This raises the expectation that important lessons have been learned from the past and that world leaders are willing to pre-invest in strengthening those

¹ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee

stakeholders that are often and easily forgotten, but known to be crucial for the transition from principles to practice.

Women are such a stakeholder group.

If we are serious about the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, now is the time to translate the rhetoric of women's important role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water into action; and to seriously pre-invest in the empowerment of women and other easily forgotten stakeholder groups to contribute meaningfully to the Implementation of the SDGs.

The SDG#5 –SDG#6 interface deserves particularly attention because it tackles poverty and inequality at its roots.

I thank you for your attention and wish you fruitful deliberations today.