

Eritrea: Vital aspects of the IWRM planning process (#366)

Description

Eritrea began the process towards IWRM development at end of 2005. The lead agency has been the Water Resource Directorate (WRD) of the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE). The Eritrean Country Water Partnership (CWP) has played an important role in IWRM planning process. Using CWP as a major platform for consensus building and dialogues, IWRM process continued through meetings, briefings and workshops to secure political will and consolidate stakeholder involvement for the preparation of the IWRM plan.

Actions Taken

With support of the government and commitment of partners, the water sector situation analysis report was drafted in July 2006. Five working groups worked on 18 thematic strategic areas. For each area, gaps were identified, and specific objectives and measures were agreed.

To facilitate the preparation of the IWRM Action Plan, a strategy on how to address the identified gaps for IWRM was formulated and documented with the full participation of stakeholders. At end of 2009 the IWRM Action Plan was completed and disseminated to the broader stakeholders. The Action Plan clearly documented 95 actions/project portfolios that address the identified gaps in enabling environment, institutional framework and management instruments.

As a result of IWRM planning process a major regulatory instrument (Water Proclamation) was amended and several new regulations were adopted. A capacity building component was critical part of the planning process.

Up to 80 decision makers, water professionals and experts of relevant stakeholder institutions at national level and over 700 stakeholders at sub-national level undertook extensive capacity building programs in their own institutions.

Lessons learnt

Two vital elements of the IWRM planning process are discussed in this case study: proper managing of IWRM planning process and building capacities on IWRM. A role of Eritrean Country Water Partnership in facilitation of the IWRM planning process was significant. Although the IWRM planning was initiated and funded by external actors, CWP succeeded to create national ownership.

A political will advanced the development of strategic planning document; however the implementation of the IWRM Action plan will test the results of this project. There are still challenges regarding availability of funds and expertise.

Tools

A1.2, C2.1, B2.3

Contact:

Eritrean Country Water Partnership,
WRD, Ministry of Land, Water and
Environment
P.O. Box 1488,
Tel. 00-291-1-120404/ 119636/116265,
Fax: 00-291-1-124625,
Asmara, Eritrea.
E-mail: asghedomte wolde@yahoo.com



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Full description

Introduction

The completion of the Integrated Water Resources management (IWRM) Action Plan has been the culmination of four years of intensive and collaborative effort from a variety of stakeholders in Eritrea from the water and related sectors including agriculture, trade, industry, regional governments, other governmental institutions and input from NGOs and the private sector in the country's IWRM Planning Process. The lead agency has been the Water Resource Directorate (WRD) of the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment (MLWE). The preparation of the Action Plan was steered by the Eritrean Country Water Partnership which simultaneously served as a capable platform for stakeholder mobilization, engagement and participation.

Managing the planning process

Eritrea started the process towards IWRM development at end of 2003, by the formation of a CWP. As a result, in July 2004 a proposal on an IWRM action program was prepared by the Water Resource Department of the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment and secured financing from GWP and the Netherlands Government to conduct the IWRM and water efficiency planning process. Using CWP as a major platform for consensus building and dialogues, IWRM process continued through meetings, briefings and workshops to secure political will and consolidate stakeholder involvement for the preparation of the IWRM plan. With support of the government and commitment of partners the water sector situation analysis report was drafted in July 2006 which was followed by the development of the strategy document in 2007.

The strategy document benefited greatly from the capacity building process carried out for the strategy formulation teams and establishment of 5 working groups that provided a structured approach to the process. To facilitate the preparation of the IWRM Action Plan, strategy on how to address the identified gaps for IWRM was formulated and documented with the full participation of stakeholders. At end of 2009 the IWRM Action Plan was completed and disseminated to the broader stakeholders. The Action Plan clearly documented 95 actions/project portfolios that address the identified gaps in enabling environment, institutional framework and management instruments.

Considering the present challenges in water resources management, development and use and their urgency of addressing them the ERI-CWP reviewed and redrafted former water resources policy, water resources proclamation and drafted a proclamation for the establishment of new water resources authority/commission and the inclusion of IWRM approaches and principles complying to the country national development strategies, sectoral policies and management plans, Interim-Poverty Strategy Paper, land proclamation, Environmental management plan, agricultural policy and operational procedures and guidelines.

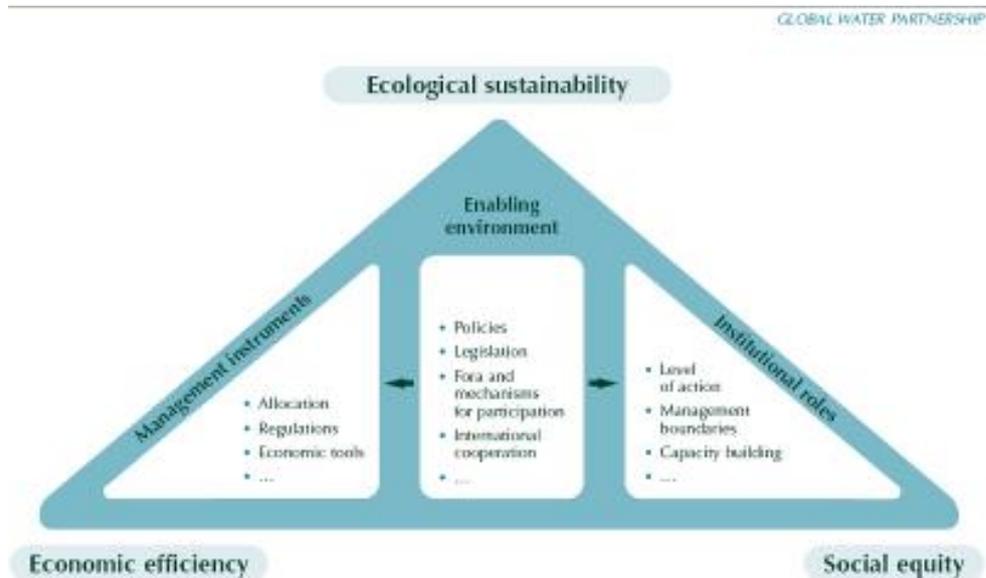
Strategy formulation Groups
Working Group 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Resource Assessment ▪ Catchment Management ▪ Water Quality and Pollution Control ▪ Disaster Management
Working Group 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water and Ecosystem • Communication and Information • Tran boundary
Working Group 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Water Supply • Water for Agriculture • Water For Industry
Working Group 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water for Tourism • Water for mining • Water for Other uses
Working Group 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Domestic Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene ▪ Legal and Institutional Frame ▪ Capacity Building ▪ Financial Mechanism • Implementation Mechanism

Other regulatory instruments like “*Regulations for the issuance of permits for water use and construction of hydraulic works*” and “*Regulation for the issuance of waste discharge permit*” were also drafted to check the unregulated use of water resources and waste discharge.

The full commitment of the CWP technical and core teams with regard to managing the project resulted in securing the role of the leading Ministry in fulfilling its obligation through involvement in the IWRM planning process and facilitating the stakeholder’s participation.

The second priority in managing the project was to improve understanding on IWRM principles at all levels from relevant ministries, through training institutions, to regional administration. Regular workshops, management meetings, 12 conferences, 4 national dialogues, 8 campaigns and more than 30 training courses were organized by project management unit (team). As a result, decision makers’ (Ministers, Director Generals and Directors) are fully aware of IWRM planning process, concepts and principles. The critical phase of the project was to develop Situation analysis. The report participated 94 people and was compiled by 9 key contributors from variety of sectors such as University of Asmara, IWRM Project office, Ministry of Land, water and Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Key documents of project developed over the past 4 years are summarized in Box 1. They are grouped according to three “E”s as defined by GWP.



Box 1: Key Documents developed through the Planning Process

A. Enabling Environment

The Water Resources Policy

Water resources policy was initially drafted in 2004 by the WRD. In the year 2007 the ERI-CWP supported by the leading Ministry and the full participation of all relevant stakeholders updated the former document so as to complement to the IWRM principles and approaches. Experts from different institutions with extensive experience in water sector and policy development were involved in facilitating the policy formulation and stakeholder dialogues. The amendment of Water Resources Policy was endorsed by a leading ministry and Ministry of Justice.

The water policy recognizes a basin as the basic unit of planning, proposed for new institutional framework and developed its guidelines on the management, development and use of national water resources in seven thematic areas.

The Water Law/proclamation

The proclamation was prepared in March 2007, by integrating the IWRM principles and approach and reviewing the previous water laws of 1997 and 2004. The 2007 draft water policy has been taken as a base for the development of this new water law.

The Water Law constitutes 10 major parts and 57 articles that describe the ownership and use right in water resources, details the required actions and procedures to reform the institutional framework and functions and responsibility in administrating the water resources of the country, water resources administration, identifying key water resources planning issues and the need for public participation, includes articles that support pollution prevention, abatement and water quality control, outline regulation on pricing and other provisions necessary for offences and enforcements. Currently, the law is awaiting proclamation.

B. Institutional Roles

Institutional Framework

Following the water policy and water law documents a review of the exiting institutional framework and human resources of water management institutions has been carried out by the Ministry of Land, Water Environment together with the ERI-CWP. Two independent reports with an objective of assessing the existing institutional system and human resources capacity were produced and used as a base for the newly proposed institutional setup and the draft proclamation for the establishment of the water resources authority/commission. It is anticipated that this new institutional framework will reduce the fragmentation in managing water resources which has been a major challenge.

C. Management Instruments

The IWRM Action Plan

The IWRM action plan has been prepared since December 2007 through the participation of stakeholders (National and regional). The knowledge transferred in the process really helped to make the plan happen. Currently this plan is wholly owned by the government. The overall IWRM Action plan has fully linked and is coherent with government's policies, laws and strategies that enable equity, efficiency and environmentally sustainable management of water resources. In the process mainly during situation analysis and strategy development 7 thematic areas (Action Areas) appropriate to Eritrean situation were identified. For each action area the Draft Action Plans were elaborated with specific objectives, strategies, actions and activities that support the integration of water resources management and assured to complement government policies, strategies on poverty reduction, food security and sustainable economic development.

The Capacity Building Programs

At the initial stages, lack of knowledge on IWRM initially affected the process of IWRM to proceed further because the ability to implement at different levels by different categories of people greatly affected the ability to contribute. Thus, capacity building programs were incorporated directly into IWRM planning process as very essential element. The ultimate objective of the Capacity Building Programs was to contribute to the sustainability of the Eritrean CWP and to improve and develop the skills and knowledge of the stakeholders at national level on IWRM concepts. It was understood that building capacities of stakeholders will bring better involvement in the planning process and will improve the overall quality of the plan.

The design and preparation of training programmes were developed by the ERI-CWP core committee in collaboration with the IWRM project office. Frequent meetings were conducted and capacity needs assessment based on key IWRM principles and approaches were identified. The core team took into consideration, the potential sources of expertise; priority areas of training courses based on existing available resources. Some of the main identified areas of training programmes are shown at Box 2.

The whole capacity programme was facilitated and conducted by mobilizing its own available local expertise without international assistance.

Training of trainers programmes were used for gender mainstreaming, conflict resolution, RBM and GWP ToolBox while exchange and sharing ideas and experiences through participatory approaches were the main tools exercised in all programmes.

In the past three to four years, up to 80 decision makers, water professionals and experts of relevant stakeholder institutions at national level and over 700 stakeholders at sub-national level undertook extensive capacity building programs in their own institutions.

There are very positive outcomes of capacity building programs. For instance, the Environmental Management Plan is currently being updated as a result of the Toolbox training, demand for gender mainstreaming increased at the sub-national (*zoba*) level. Key stakeholders produced the problem analysis, objective analysis, and strategy document. The CWP continues to get numerous requests from the regional level and across sectors for further capacity building.

The capacities were built for all thematic areas defined in the situation analysis and IWRM Action Plan (Box 3).

Box 2: Key Capacity Building Needs

- IWRM: The Approach and Concepts,
- The IWRM toolbox,
- Result Based Management,
- Strategy formulation,
- Project planning,
- Watershed/River Basin/Catchment Management,
- WASH Planning,
- Fund Raising its concept and application,
- Gender Mainstreaming,
- Conflict management,
- Policy, legislative frameworks and institutional roles in water resources management.

Box 3: The Seven thematic areas

- Water resources, assessment, development and protection,
- Water resources allocation and water use,
- Disaster management,
- Implementation and Financial Mechanism
- Research and Information Exchange
- Basin management Plan, and
- Enabling Environment.

Building credibility of the stakeholder platform

From its formation, the Eritrea CWP has moved in leaps and bounds defining its place in the planning and management of water resources from the margins to the centre. At its formation, the approach of using an all inclusive platform with so many players across sectors, non-governmental organizations, and private sector and training institutions appeared unimaginable. Many actors were uncertain, the approach had been untested and above all, developing national plans had been previously the sole responsibility of government. The basic foundation of a strong and credible stakeholder platform however was built right from inception.

In 2005, the creation of CWP and steering committees at operational levels (national and regional) provided the first milestone. A number of informal orientation and awareness meetings were held by key players, key ministries and institutions who were expected to be part of the process.

Led by a dedicated project management team, soon the ministries of agriculture, trade, national planning and development, regional government representatives, the national union of women and private sector among others were galvanized to form the pioneer CWP steering committee. Five years later, this team has only grown in stature and numbers. Other members of the committee now include UNICEF, OXFAM and other local NGOs. Currently, the partnership has fully developed its own statutes with a membership of up to 36 participating institutions. The statutes have been approved by the ministry of internal affairs and government hence meeting a key requirement that also outlines the importance the increasing recognition of the role of the partnership by the government.

Three key factors have been particularly important in the success of the CWP in Eritrea;

- ***Openness in participation and decision making:*** With over thirty five (35) regular institutional members, an agreed governance framework and regular support from the regional water partnership and GWP global network, the CWP under the leadership of the Director of Water Resources has maintained a strong and committed steering committee that's adequately representative. The partnership has been able to clarify its role, its mandate and expectations to members which are now agreed upon and complemented through other member's participation.
- ***Continuous capacity building among its membership:*** In the last four years of its existence alone, the CWP has undertaken over ten capacity building sessions aimed at improving the capacity of partners and a number of institutions in laying their role in the IWRM planning process. Much more specifically, the ToolBox training and IWRM Facilitation course brought benefits to partners. These have been trained in managing stakeholder processes and conflict management which have been invaluable in enabling the partnership to move on as a cohesive platform.
- ***Maintaining a strong political support:*** From inception, the involvement of key government officials including the Ministers of Land, Water and Environment as well as Agriculture gave the partnership a head start. Their endorsement at the initial stages gave the CWP a clear signal of authenticity, even though it was not formalized as a legal entity. The motivation to join the partnership was mainly due to the opportunity it provided to enable stakeholders to influence the on-going reforms in the water sector, a task it has managed to deliver on competently.



A Stakeholder awareness meeting in Zoba Maekel Region, Eritrea



Participants at a capacity building session organized by the CWP.

Challenges and Lessons

Securing political commitment and maintaining it to the required level to implement the proposed reform on institutional and legal framework is still a challenge that continues to confront the IWRM process. Even though there have been significant sensitization and awareness programs undertaken as key step to secure political commitment from policy and decision makers and achieved significant achievements, government ministers change, leadership evolves and more fundamentally, the ultimate benefit of political will is best brought to test in the implementation phase of the Action Plan. In other words the “paperwork has been done” but there is still a long way to the impact that “IWRM is influencing conditions on the ground and objectives for water resources are achieved fully or in part”.

IWRM process is a lengthy process that requires time to internalize. A one off training on IWRM is clearly insufficient. The basic focus had been given to the national level. Therefore, it is vital to extend the process up to the grass-roots in a participatory way, frequently and repeatedly. This requires resources and the development of a more dedicated capacity building plan breaking down the IWRM process in packages that can be delivered at low cost and with high impact.

Implementing IWRM Action Plan requires a significant amount of financial resources both from internal and external sources and this is expected to be one main challenge to continue and implement the IWRM process. As the project came to a close, a financing round table had not been developed but this will be increasingly necessary to get solid commitments from the variety of implementing agencies and development partners.



Participants share experiences at a Gender Mainstreaming Workshop