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Development Lessons from Water Management

Introduction

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg called for all countries to draw up national IWRM plans as a means of moving towards water security. In response, GWP established the Programme for National IWRM Planning in Africa (or IWRM Programme) to work with governments and stakeholders in African countries in drawing up national IWRM plans. Between 2005 and 2010, the Programme involved the mobilisation of many stakeholders and generated useful lessons for both facilitating IWRM planning and other national development processes.

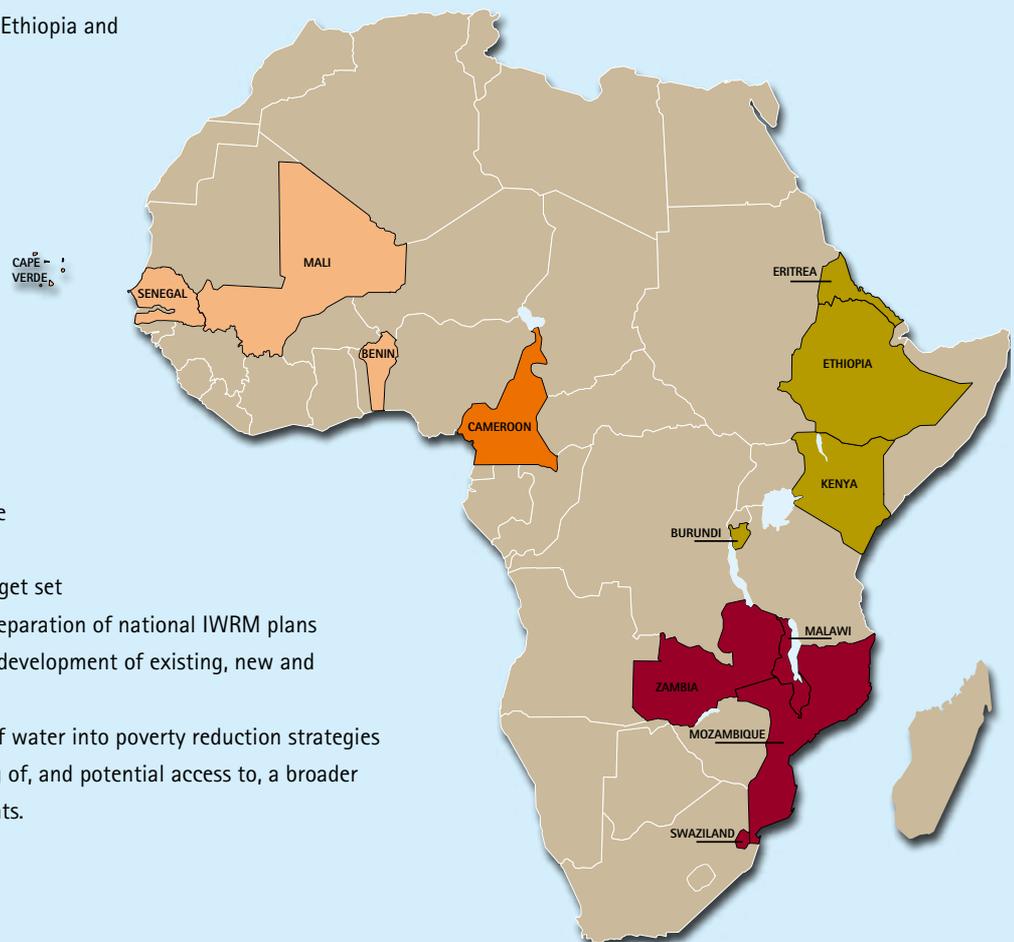
The Programme for Integrated Water Resources Management Planning

The IWRM Programme involved 13 countries in four regions of Africa:

- Central Africa (Cameroon)
- East Africa (Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya)
- Southern Africa (Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Zambia)
- West Africa (Benin, Cape Verde, Mali and Senegal)

Its goal was to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in the target countries by using an IWRM approach. The IWRM Programme comprised four components:

- support for achieving the target set at the 2002 WSSD for the preparation of national IWRM plans
- support for the institutional development of existing, new and emerging partnerships
- support for the integration of water into poverty reduction strategies
- increasing the understanding of, and potential access to, a broader range of financing instruments.



Lessons

Based on the Programme's experiences in IWRM planning, stakeholders drew up a set of key lessons that they considered essential steps in facilitating a successful planning process. The lessons were grouped into four clusters:

- understanding the national development context
- defining a strategic road map
- ensuring the sustainability of the interventions
- strengthening the development interventions.

The lessons and insights have the potential to be decisive in addressing climate change adaptation and turning the tide towards a water secure world. Although drawn from the water sector, they are equally applicable to development processes in other sectors. The lessons, which give credence to the wisdom that, 'developmental processes often take much longer than planned', are presented below.



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The development context

A suitable entry point in the national development context helps add value and minimises duplication

In the IWRM Programme, a key early activity was the identification of the best entry point in order to have the greatest leverage to push forward the IWRM planning process. Selecting the right entry point enabled GWP to add value to on-going development processes rather than duplicate them. A scoping assessment prior to the launch of the planning process helped to explore available options, including those outside the focal water sector. The aim was to find an entry point at the highest appropriate level, bearing in mind that this might determine whether the development intervention reached decision-makers' attention.

Understand the local development context and build on development processes with broad cross-sectoral support, even if they are outside the water sector.

Champions are crucial, and they should be wisely selected and valued

A champion is an influential, dynamic and passionate individual, able to drive a process forward, and who brings with them institutional 'image' and profile. A committed champion, with the right connections and knowledge about the sector, helps to open doors and launch a process rapidly. In selecting a champion, it is important to understand what needs to be changed or influenced, and the nature of the difficulties that may be encountered. As the national development context changes, development processes need to evolve and the champion may need to change. The stakeholder process is still critical and champions

complement rather than replace the role of partnerships.

Carefully identify and select champions based on the change or outcome desired in the planning process.

Strategic road map

Integrating with national development priorities and frameworks increases the chances of success

Development interventions must address government priorities. As emphasised by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, development aid should be aligned with existing government policy frameworks, strategies and systems. Development programmes implemented outside the government framework risk fragmentation, high transaction costs due to the use of different and often conflicting systems, and a reduced chance of sustainability.

Despite the fact that aligning with existing government systems can mean a loss of flexibility, leading to delays and a loss of momentum, experience from the IWRM Programme shows

that alignment, harmonisation and building on existing processes is effective.

Plans linked to national development planning processes also have the advantage that implementation is driven as part of the government's broader investment processes. There may be limited gains from promoting broad stakeholder activities unless they are accompanied by, or catalyse, a core government-based management programme.

IWRM planning should be integrated in national development planning processes and identify key government priorities. At the same time, the planning process should be flexible to allow for the time-consuming process of integration.

Institutional arrangements for coordination and financing should build on existing processes and institutions

As water cuts across many sectoral interests, the coordination arrangements within and between sectoral ministries and with other agencies are a fundamental part of the integrated approach. Coordination arrangements that make use of existing government frameworks help to build capacity, reduce duplication and institutionalise the development process. This in turn has the potential to



increase the probability of follow-up action during implementation.

When development processes rely on external funding, long-term sustainability is enhanced if the process is integrated into existing national financing and planning mechanisms. The experiences of the IWRM Programme generally confirm the importance of integrating with national development frameworks, but also underscore the challenges that exist when attempting to harmonise financing arrangements. In many cases, IWRM Programme funds were pooled with other funding sources using government systems, and this always led to delays. The challenge is to achieve a balance and to maintain forward momentum for the development process within existing financial systems.

Integrate planning processes with national development frameworks and anchor the integration and coordination function in a higher-level government body or ministry with influence to mobilise cross-sectoral collaboration. Donors and other development agencies and governments should provide support to facilitation processes.

Clarification of roles and responsibilities at an early stage helps build trust, transparency and accountability, but can take time

It is important to establish clear roles for each partner in a development process. Government bodies and facilitating agencies have different mandates and capacities. The legal mandate for carrying out development work lies with the government, while the role of development facilitators is to support government, aid the implementation of a development programme, help remove barriers and constraints to effective policy implementation, and accelerate implementation.



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In the IWRM Programme, the use of Memoranda of Understanding was encouraged to define the roles and responsibilities of the GWP country water partnerships, governments and other key players. Nonetheless, clarifying roles can sometimes be a protracted process, which can in itself lead to delays.

Roles and responsibilities should be clarified from the beginning and the planning processes should be flexible enough to accommodate both a variety of roles and the time needed to clarify them.

Ensuring sustainability

Institutional memory enhances the sustainability of development processes

Development processes take time, yet the people involved often change. Early champions and pioneers of the development intervention move on. Experienced project managers and facilitators, as well as people who were trained as part of the development process join other, unrelated, programmes. As new governments are elected, key decision and policy-makers also change. This poses the risk of losing the experiences and lessons acquired along the way. The development process



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risks losing its momentum and may even fizzle out with no impact. Maintaining institutional memory throughout the process is necessary, and requires special attention.

The experiences from the IWRM Programme suggest that there is no standard approach and the individual country's context is important. Proactively involving high-level decision-makers early in the process, and anchoring the management team in an existing government institution were both found to be effective strategies. Whatever approach is taken, it is important to consider the continuity and sustainability of the process beyond the lifetime of the programme funding. A combination of strategies may be required to ensure institutional memory is maintained at political, institutional and project levels.

Develop and implement a comprehensive and coherent plan to ensure institutional memory throughout all stages of the programme.

Stakeholder partnerships provide a neutral platform for dialogue and resolving water security challenges

Stakeholder participation has long been recognised as an important element in sustainable development. Participation by stakeholders offers

diverse perspectives on development challenges and allows people who are directly or indirectly affected the opportunity to offer their perspectives and solutions. Stakeholder participation is also important for the legitimisation of development processes. This increases both ownership of the outcomes and the probability of successful implementation.

In the IWRM Programme, local stakeholder partnerships permitted action on specific issues, such as concerns about water quality degradation in the Okpara Dam in Benin, and conflicts over water use in the Berki River Basin in Ethiopia. Local pilot projects carried out within the broader context of national development processes can help demonstrate to government and stakeholders the potential outcomes from an intervention. Lessons learned at the local level can help to inform national policy and avoid policies that cannot be implemented in practice.

The regional water partnerships made an important contribution to regional and pan-African water reform processes, leading to improvements in continental water policies and strategies. They were also critical in catalysing national action in water management planning.

Partnerships at both national and local level should be supported and strengthened so as to enhance their effectiveness.



Strengthening functions

Capacity building enhances knowledge sharing and implementation capacity

Weak institutional capacity is one of the key challenges facing many developing countries. A lack of implementation capacity affects the sustainability of development processes and capacity building needs to target institutions and individuals. But capacity building must be relevant to on-going processes and embedded in development activities. Capacity building with stakeholders also enhances participation. It brings diverse stakeholders to a common understanding of the objectives of the development process.

Knowledge sharing was a key part of capacity building in the IWRM Programme. The IWRM planning process provided fertile ground for learning. Experience sharing workshops brought together country and regional representatives from participating countries to share experiences and lessons. These workshops promoted learning and

covered a broad range of process and content-related issues.

Build on existing capacities rather than creating new ones. This means prioritising national expertise, including reviving and strengthening national institutions, and protecting social and cultural capital.

Communication and advocacy are important to ensure understanding of goals, progress and achievements

On-going communication and advocacy are necessary to maintain stakeholder awareness and interest in the progress of a development process. Good communication can avoid many of the conflicts associated with a lack of information on the goals, objectives and achievements of the programme. Key messages targeting specific audiences need to be developed and disseminated on a consistent basis.

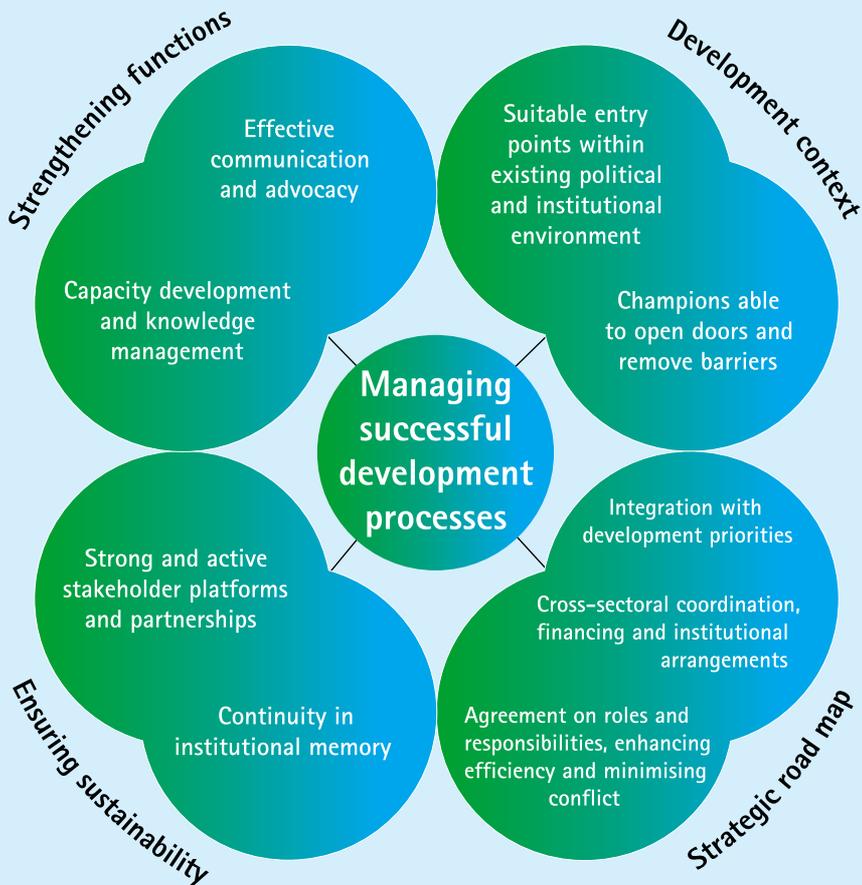
Several countries in the IWRM Programme used communication as a vehicle for raising awareness and lobbying for political support. The media played a pivotal role in mobilising government, civil society and the public to accelerate the water reform process. Various strategies were used to engage the media. These included supporting the establishment of a journalists' network on water, including media representatives in the management structures of the programme, and building the capacity of the media to report on water issues.

Embed communication in all activities and interventions and allocate realistic human and financial resources.



Georges Gobet/Betty Images

Essential elements for development planning



Christopher Pillitz/Betty Images



The Global Water Partnership (GWP) is an international network whose vision is for a water secure world. The GWP mission is to support the sustainable development and management of water resources at all levels.

GWP was created in 1996 to foster IWRM: the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital environmental systems.

The network is open to all organisations involved in water resources management: developed and developing country government institutions, agencies of the United Nations, bi- and multi-lateral development banks, professional associations, research institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

www.globalwaterpartnership.org