



NeWater

Specification of mechanisms and tools for multi-stakeholder dialogue processes on poverty and gender in river basin planning.

**Report of the NeWater project -
New Approaches to Adaptive Water Management under Uncertainty**

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Preamble

The project has assembled a group of enthusiastic people with different scientific and practical background. In and of itself, the project presents a major challenge and a practical lesson in social learning in order to promote and guide the research process to profit from the diversity of knowledge and experiences. We welcome feedback and suggestions from anyone reading this report since it defines the basic structure of what we intend to do in the project.

All teams involved are grateful for the support of the European Commission in providing funds for this research and to the national organisations contributing to the project.

Claudia Pahl-Wostl

Coordinator of WB1
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August 2005



Executive Summary

1. Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues (MSD) that enable direct interactions between the governments and other authorities, and, the major stakeholders on specific topics are increasingly being accepted as part of international and national decision-making processes as well as meetings and negotiations taking place at the local levels. The dialogues provide opportunities for stakeholder groups to present their concerns, share experiences, develop effective proposals and discuss them with governments or other formal authorities.

2. MSDs in river basins are recognised as effective means for both introducing the concepts of integrated water resources management as well as establishing the needed institutions to implement it effectively. In river basin managements, they are particularly promoted for their potentials as critical mechanisms for conflict prevention that may be an important issue in trans-boundary level managements.

3. One of the main objectives of MSD is to create space for those groups of stakeholders who remain un-or under-represented in the formal government structures and decision making processes, and thus contribute to inclusive decision making for enhancing efficiency, equity and sustainability. These stakeholders may include, depending on the contexts, the poor, women, and other under-privileged indigenous groups that may represent a large majority among the stakeholders.

4. MSD in river basin management, however, faces challenges that it may encompass a large geographical area and cross scale participation for implementation and compliance. The other issue is ensuring representation while at the same time trying to address the issue of capacity difference and power inequalities among the stakeholders.

5. A particularly useful conceptual framework for addressing the above challenges, as the paper suggests, is to draw on rights based approaches to participation with due considerations to the power inequalities among the stakeholders. It must be recognised that although MSD processes may attempt to promote 'cooperation', it is essential that aspects of 'conflicts' among participants generating from their respective social, political, economic, and spatial positions are duly addressed and measures taken to enhance their capabilities to be able to meaningfully use the right to equal participation.

6. There is wide recognition in policies and commitments to inclusive approaches to water management. Experience, however, shows that implementation of these inclusive policies has proven difficult and there needs to be a concerted effort to deliberately and consciously address poverty and gender issues in MSD processes.

7. It is important to note that the purpose of designing an inclusive MSD is not to create a separate or parallel process but to mainstream poverty and gender issues in the on-going processes. The paper suggests a number of tools for making resources available in terms of commitment, expertise and funds to make this possible. These include: commitment to inclusive goal setting; social network and gender analyses; capacity building; appropriate tools for communication; monitoring and evaluation; and learning and adaptation.



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1. Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue as a tool for representing diverse interests

The UN Conference on Environment and Development of 1992, commonly known as the Rio Earth Summit, and particularly Agenda 21 formally recognised the role of stakeholder groups as crucial to sustainable development. Since then the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue – a unique participatory mechanism - has become an important feature of UNCSD (United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development) meetings.

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) enables direct interactions between governments and major stakeholders on specific topics. They are increasingly being accepted as part of not only the international and inter-governmental processes but also of meetings and negotiations taking place at the national and local levels. The dialogues provide opportunities for stakeholder groups to present their concerns, share experiences, develop effective proposals and discuss them with governments or other formal authorities. They are designed to help promote meaningful participation of stakeholders in the governmental decision-making processes. Apart from the UN agencies, the World Bank (WB), World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Commission on Dams (WCD) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are among the others that have undertaken activities to provide platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogues. At the national levels, discussions on PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) processes are the most common examples of multi-stakeholder involvements in the developing countries.

Given the global environmental changes, there is growing realization that complex problems of development and sustainability need holistic and inclusive solutions that can only be developed and implemented through engaging *all* stakeholders. The MSD is a forum where stakeholder groups hold the centre stage of formal discussions that aim to achieve equitable decision making.

Water allocation between competing uses is an area that often requires a holistic approach and attention to the environmental, equity and efficiency objectives. This entails simultaneous physical, economic and social processes. It is now believed that only an integrated, trans-disciplinary approach to problem solving can aim to achieving ecological, economic and social sustainability, particularly when it comes to the problems of managing and sharing water resources. This is indeed a departure from the traditional management techniques that emphasized ecological and economic knowledge and often downplayed social, cultural and political processes. The implementation of such an integrated approach to resource allocation and management requires a genuine participative process that can be conceptualised in the form of MSDs at various levels of decision making.

By its very definition, integrated water resources management that aims to coordinate the development and management of water, land and related resources and seeks to maximize social and economic welfare in an equitable and sustainable manner, essentially needs to ensure broad based participation of stakeholders, including local communities, and in particular, poor men and women. MSDs are increasingly designed to provide a more formal recognition to the participative processes that were being practiced by the non-governmental organisations and other civil society initiatives to represent the concerns and aspirations of the stakeholders particularly the marginalised, poor and women.

The current interest in MSD for river basin management got encouragement from the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) of the European Commission that aims achieving ‘good status’ of all inland and coastal waters within defined river basin districts by 2015.



Stakeholder participation in the river basin planning process is a key element in the WFD. The Directive explicitly requires that significant water management issues and river basin

Objectives of Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

Relationship building: improve relationships among parties holding different values, clarifying areas of disagreement and agreement, and improving legitimacy of the process, its output, and its conveners.

Information sharing: gathering existing, and creating new, information relevant to the issues being considered, including factual analyses and stakeholder values.

Agenda setting : identifying key problems, framing future deliberations, planning future actions and deliberations.

Brainstorming and problem solving: jointly analyzing problems with the purpose of recommending possible policy options for the consideration of decision makers.

Consensus building: brainstorming and problem solving for the purpose of developing a joint recommendation or a “package” that meets the needs of all key stakeholders.

Source: Susskind et al 2003: 238

plans are made available to the public for comments. The Article 14 of the Directive further requires Member States to encourage the active involvement of *all interested parties* in the production, review and updating of river basin management plans.

In river basin management, multi-stakeholder dialogues are promoted for sustainable water management decisions and often also as a critical mechanism for conflict prevention that may be an important issue in trans-boundary level managements. Examples of this are evident, among others, in Africa (Senegal River Basin, Pungwe River Basin, Okavango River Basin, Incomati river basin), North America (Great Lakes), Asia (Mekong) and Europe (Danube, Rhine) that highlight different approaches to stakeholder participation. (Earle, A and M Daniel 2006).

1.1 Objectives

MSDs at a global level are designed to achieve two primary objectives. First, the multilateral and trans-national organizations alongside with the national governments are increasingly being pressed to incorporate into their work the views and inputs of the civil society organisations who presumably represent those stakeholders that may not be part of these organisations. MSDs are used as an important means through which they aim to achieve the legitimacy and acceptance of the broader constituency. Second, these organisations need access to the growing body of relevant knowledge and skills required for complex problem solving. MSDs can help bring wider inputs and expertise into the planning process and integrate diverse viewpoints. With the growing recognition that stakeholders are the real experts with respect to their own problems, it is expected that they are better able to generate more innovative and relevant solutions to their own challenges. (Gupta 2007). MSD processes as being a two-way flow of knowledge and information have the potential of providing input to improve and develop new ideas.



MSDs in a river basin are recognised as effective means for both introducing IWRM as well as establishing the needed institutions to implement it effectively. It promotes a transparent process that also helps acceptance of changes proposed and guarantees credibility (Bandaragoda 2005:1).

One of the main objectives of MSD is to create space for those groups of stakeholders who remain un-or under-presented in the formal government structure and decision making processes, thereby contributing to inclusive decision making and enhancing its fairness (UNWWDR 2006: 12). These stakeholders may include, depending on the contexts, women, under-privileged indigenous groups, and the poor. The ideals of creating trust and power sharing among the partners in MSD encourages these hitherto excluded groups to actively engage in MSD. This inclusive process, if implemented properly, could lead to better understanding of complex issues and enhance the legitimacy of decisions taken. Ideally, it creates ownership of the outcome by the participant stakeholders and motivates them to implement, monitor and evaluate the procedures. (Hemmati 2002: 23-25).

Environmental problems in general and water management problems in particular are compounded with uncertainty and complexity, and, extend over a long- time and spatial scale (van den Hove 2000, 2006). This led some researchers to argue that these complex problems relate to a rather unspecified set of stakeholders (Jurgens 2004) thus achieving a meaningful public involvement requires broad stakeholder participation. As resources to ensure this is always in short supply, one needs to be pragmatic in selecting stakeholders who should be part of the MSD processes at what time and at what level.

1.2 Underlying values and principles

The underlying principles of MSDs are many and varied. Hemmati (et al 2002: 39-72) provides an extensive array of key values and ideologies of the multi-stakeholder processes. They include:

- *sustainable development* that provides the ideological basis of MSDs and includes fundamental values for respect for nature and inter- and intra-generational justice;
- *good governance* that is grounded in the rule of law, legitimate power and responsible regulation and are characterized by participation, transparency, accountability of decision makers, effectiveness and efficiency, and responsiveness to the need of all stakeholders;
- *democracy* that suggests an advanced mechanism of participation whereby the governments or other decision making bodies bring together all stakeholders for consultations, dialogue and consensus building for implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes;
- *participation* that brings in stakeholder perspectives, knowledge and experience and enables stakeholders to influence and monitor policies;
- *equity and justice* that promote fair distribution of access and opportunity for all and a culture of tolerance, mutual respect, the willingness to find consensus and a strong sense of justice when dealing with different perspectives and power;
- *unity in diversity* that welcomes the diversity of expertise, talents, experiences, cultures and viewpoints and at the same time embraces the challenges of integration of diverse views;
- *leadership* that is willing and seeking to be accountable, offer trustworthiness, and demonstrate visionary, empowering and collaborative leadership to inspire the stakeholders.



Other important principles that follow from the above are taking a learning approach; promoting partnership, collaboration and solidarity based on trust, equality, reciprocity, mutual accountability and mutual benefit; transparency; access to information and informed consent; inclusiveness; legitimacy; and accountability.



2. Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in river basin management

Effective integration of the goals of efficiency, sustainability and equity in water management requires participation of a broad cross section of stakeholders in water management. There is a broad acceptance that whether on the local scale of a small catchment or on the international trans-boundary scale, water users and other stakeholders need to be involved, in varying degrees, in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of water management activities as it promises to enhance project quality, ownership and sustainability. (Earle, A and M. Daniel 2006). There is also an assumption that broad stakeholder participation contributes towards averting conflicts and fostering cooperation over water resources. Examples from various river basins show that decentralization of water resources management has resulted in involvement of a broader range of stakeholders in both the regulatory and operational spheres in many regions of the world. More recently, there has been a progression from involving stakeholders primarily in the operational functions at the local level towards their involvement in inter-state dialogue at the basin level institutions.

Complex realities of competing interests and power relations among the stakeholders however, pose a challenge to the prospects of MSDs as effective tools of representing interests of the majority of resource-poor stakeholders in developing countries. Ensuring the benefits of MSDs would mean providing the disadvantaged stakeholders effective means of participating in water-management decisions for the goals of achieving food security, poverty reduction and livelihoods sustainability.

Tapela (2006) noted that the effectiveness of participatory approaches in averting stakeholder conflicts hinges strongly on the degree to which interests of both the powerful and less powerful stakeholders are balanced. Apart from the importance of adopting mechanisms to strike such a balance, it is essential that stakeholder participation is not implemented as a token of compliance with national and international frameworks. Water users would need to be delegated some degree of decision-making power for securing a stake in water management.

2.1 The issue of scale

Stringer et al (2006) notes that participation is context specific and scale dependent; and, real challenges exist with the scaling up of successful local-scale experience to wider spatial scales. This may involve a trade-off between the scales at which adaptive management can operate. Involving local stakeholders across wide spatial scales can also be very time consuming and expensive. If the adaptive management paradigm is to tackle cross-boundary issues in a way that is sensitive to local needs and values, then a combination of methods could be used. For example, expert opinion at a national scale could be combined with context specific participatory data from finer spatial scales that take local perspectives into account. It may be assumed that given the multi-dimensional, dynamic nature of many problems, assessments that do not consider local interpretations neglect to capture the complexity of the problem or fail to provide results that are meaningful. Participation of stakeholders at a range of scales and the combination of participatory methods with other methods, like ecological or economic studies, can help to overcome the trade-off between effective participation and crossing scales.

Barraque and Mostert (2006) pointed out the importance of ensuring cross scale participations also for implementation or compliance. For example, agreements need to be ratified or approved by a higher authority, for example, by a minister, the cabinet or parliament. Now, if the negotiators have not interacted effectively with these higher authorities, this might prove difficult. On the other hand, problems may also occur after



ratification or approval, when the agreement has to be implemented or complied with. Implementation or compliance is usually the responsibility of lower level government and water users who may not have been involved in international negotiations. In reality, most river basin initiatives or institutions have two things in common. Their day-to-day operation is dominated by technical experts doing critically important work, but they lack adequate political engagement to be effective. (HDR 2006:227).

There is also a likelihood that true local participation may lead to different local policies and a lack of harmony at regional and national levels. This may not be easily amenable to tools and techniques used for bridging the cross scale differences but may be embedded in power configuration of the contexts in question. Thus it is important to carefully identify who in practice are the stakeholders, locally and at trans-boundary scales, and what is the power relation among them that is likely to affect the multi-stakeholder processes.

2.2 Capacity difference and power inequality

Understanding unequal power balances among various stakeholders to enable more voices to be heard is an important challenge. As WCD (2004) observed, often in multi-stakeholder processes, one sector or group holds a workshop and invite others. 'From our experiences, this leads to the organising sector having undue influence over the agenda and the final results. Our process to date, has tried to provide the opportunities for equalising traditionally unequal power relations and thereby to enable more voices to be heard. We feel it is a step in the right direction, though more work is needed to ensure that more subtle power imbalances are understood and remedied.' (Ibid: 110)

Building stakeholder capacity is a key to ensuring sustainable programmes. Although progress is being made, financial constraints impose limits on the participation of local stakeholders. In the Mekong Basin nongovernmental organizations are active in Thailand but not in Cambodia, Lao PDR or Viet Nam. In Lake Victoria, poverty and illiteracy are barriers to the effective spread of environmental knowledge (HDR 2006:229). Where participation by stakeholders is an uncompensated activity, poorer stakeholder often are unable to participate effectively as they cannot afford to spend time away from basic livelihoods activities. (Gupta 2007:11).

Where there is large capacity difference, local people may feel that they have been manipulated into a situation where their views are inadequately taken into account. This often happens when although there is a joint process, the actual writing is concentrated in few hands and, in effect, leads to control of the outcome of such participation. The ownership of policy outcome then may remain purely illusive. (Keeley and Scoones 2003).

Involving stakeholders does not automatically lead to equitable solutions. The issue of power inequalities is equally important within the communities. Power gaps may arise because fundamental differences may exist between stakeholders in such things like knowledge and information and the resources they possess but more importantly they may belong to groups that enjoy different social positions, in terms of class, gender, ethnicity or other background. Research on MSD experience has shown that minorities are less listened to and are more often interrupted, that minority members tend to speak less and that their contributions are taken less seriously. On the other hand, powerful stakeholders often find it difficult to allow others to talk on equal terms. (Hemmati et al 2002:66).

Apart from these, there are inherent issues in the management of trans-boundary rivers that have been a source of considerable tension between countries. The World Commission on



Dams (WCD) notes that storage and diversion of water by a upstream country can result in manifold effects in the downstream countries, such as, reduced flows and altered hydrological flow regimes having a significant impact on the riverine ecology, soil fertility and fish abundance. Often discharges are insufficient to meet downstream water needs for irrigation and human consumption. This has in many cases triggered social and political conflicts. The WCD thus recommends that national water policies have to adopt an approach which is based on equitable and reasonable utilisation, no significant harm and prior information, and that the riparian countries should focus on benefit-sharing. (WCD 2000).



3. A conceptual framework for inclusion of poverty and gender issues

The issue of representation of poor men and women and other disenfranchised groups in multi-stakeholder dialogues is essentially an issue of creating equal opportunities for all stakeholders in community policies and activities. Power analysis is of fundamental importance here as there is a common tendency for existing power relations in the community to persist in participatory processes despite the aim and, often, claim that MSDs promote equal access and bottom up decision-making. Further, the technical – managerial style of top-down decision making has tended to persist in the face of new rhetoric and experimentation with participative and deliberative approaches of environmental management. (Few et al. 2006: 10)

3.1. Recognising rights

A particular useful concept in understanding the functioning of MSD processes is the right to participation based on the UN Charter of Human Rights published in 1945 that stated equality between all men and women as a fundamental human right (United Nations 1945). More recently, in 2000, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted a General Comment that provides a normative interpretation of the right to health as enshrined in Article 12 of the Covenant. This General Comment interprets the right to health as an inclusive right that extends not only to timely and appropriate health care but also to those factors that determine good health. These include access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, a sufficient supply of safe food, nutrition and housing, healthy occupational and environmental conditions, and access to health-related education and information. In 2002, the Committee further recognized that water itself was an independent right. Drawing on a range of international treaties and declarations, it stated: “the right to water clearly falls within the category of guarantees essential for securing an adequate standard of living, particularly since it is one of the most fundamental conditions for survival.” Although this is a non-legally binding document, the right thus interpreted was nonetheless designed to promote binding and enforceable rights under national laws.

Whilst the focus of the General Comment 15 is on extending individual access to domestic water supply, it is frequently at the water source that fundamental competition for water resources is played out. This entails that more attention needs be paid to ‘upstream’ processes of assessment and grant of rights, including permissions for abstraction or diversion of water sources ‘in bulk’. (ODI 2004). Such processes are necessarily political, thus the General Comment noted: “The right of individuals and groups to participate in decision-making processes that may affect their exercise of the right to water must be an integral part of any policy, programme or strategy concerning water.” (Ibid: 4).

A rights-based approach has implications for a range of actors concerned directly or indirectly with water issues. Governments, as primary duty-bearers, must take concrete steps to respect, protect and fulfill the right to water and other water-related rights and to ensure that anyone operating within their jurisdiction - individuals, communities, civil society, and the private sector - do the same. This means paying attention to these rights also in processes, ensuring the right of beneficiaries to participate in decision-making that affects them and guaranteeing transparency so that individuals have access to information and are able to understand, interpret, and act on the information available to them. (WHO: 2003:10) A rights-based approach is also premised upon the principle of freedom from discrimination and equality between men and women. The principles include equality and equity, accountability, empowerment and participation for all.



3.2 Recognising ‘cooperative conflict’

A rights based approach is a necessary but may not be sufficient in dealing with gender and poverty issues in water and environmental governance. It is often found that communities and individuals are not homogenous entities with equal capabilities to articulate and represent their concerns. (Leach 1997). Thus different social actors can influence a participatory process in their own ways, and, often, disproportionately. Hillier (2003), using examples from local planning in Western Australia, argues that in reality, however, the commitment to increase participation in planning practice has tended to often favour networks of articulate, middle-class, property owners to the exclusion of the voices of the marginalised and of planning officers.

For promoting a gendered approach, Agüera-Cabo (2006) argues that ‘recognising differences’ is necessary in environment-related participatory-processes. Citing examples from two Spanish case studies, she argues that men and women have different perceptions and gender may be relevant to the interpretation of different environmental concerns. Further, roles, rights and responsibilities of women and men are socially defined and culturally based and they are reflected in the formal and informal power structures that are in place.

We thus propose that within a universal human rights perspective that entails equal opportunities for all, it is important to recognize the interplay of differential power and, even, conflicting interests in designing participatory processes for effective MSDs. Here it is useful to draw upon the concept of “cooperative conflict” as suggested by Sen (1999:192) for describing relations in the context of family relations. Sen explained that women and men have both *congruent* and *conflicting* interests but the very nature of family living requires that they pursue cooperation with some agreed solution of the conflicting aspects. He noted that this type of “cooperative conflict” is a general feature also of many group relations. This concept can be useful in understanding the influences that operate on the deal that each party get following implicitly agreed patterns. There may be many alternative possible agreements or deals – some may be more favourable to one party than others depending on their relative position to influence the deal.

This concept can be extended to the MSDs where often conflicting parties enter into a negotiation process. To come to a joint deal, the aspects of congruent interests need to be pursued but the result will be very different for different stakeholders depending on their relative strength of power, dominance and bargaining capacity. Poor men and women are often disadvantaged and to gain from these negotiations it is not only necessary that they have the rights but that their disadvantages are recognized and capabilities enhanced for them to be able to use the right of equal participation.

It is widely recognized that water management practices are intimately linked with social and cultural settings and relations. Therefore, any change in water management and or in a production system may also affect the relations that exist between men and women of different age groups and classes. “Understanding the social dynamics in agricultural water management requires looking at the diverse forms of social differentiation such as gender, poverty, class, caste, religion, and ethnicity. Practitioners in water and agriculture sectors, extension workers, scientists and policy makers will always directly or indirectly affect the social relations among such groups when trying to direct or change certain management and/or production dynamics; but these social relationships are also likely to affect the outcome of programmes. By being aware of this, actions and interventions can be better designed to try to strengthen, break, change or adapt existing gender patterns and dynamics.” (GWA 2006). However, as Agüera-Cabo (2006) noted, developing practical mechanisms to recognise the relevance of gender, and to give women and men the power to bring their own views into the discussion and decision-making process is one of the main challenges of



participatory initiatives when aiming to promote non-gendered, plural, inclusive and more efficient governance practices.



4. Poverty and gender issues in Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

There is a growing body of research that informs that institutions which include stakeholders groups consisting of both men and women have a better chance of sustaining and perform better. Westermann et al (2005) in their study on the gender aspects of social capital in groups for natural resource management find that collaboration, solidarity, and conflict resolution all increase in groups where both men and women are present. MSD processes that similarly aim to promote these outcomes seem to gain from these approaches. Furthermore, MSD principles tend to promote equity and justice for all stakeholders and it is important to further develop approaches that simultaneously promote efficiency and sustainability.

The importance of integrating poverty and gender sensitive representation in stakeholder approaches to water management has been recognized widely as evident from the international policies and commitments discussed below.

4.1 Current status: Policies and commitments

It is widely recognized that water allocation is inherently a process of contested decision making, and, thus effective representation of stakeholders is crucial. The challenge is to develop and sustain effective representation for those stakeholders who are currently largely under-represented, e.g., the poor and women.

The international summits on the development and environment agenda since the early 1990s have expressed commitments on inclusion of the interests of the poor and women in the water management policies. In the area of formulating policies to foster a pro-poor and gendered approach to water management, a number of principles have been articulated. Some of these are:

- The International Conference on Water and Environment held in Dublin in 1992 emphasized that water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels. (Dublin Principle 2). It further recognised the central part that women play in the provision, management and safeguarding of water and recommended positive policies grounded in addressing women's specific needs (Dublin Principle 3).
- Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration 1992, stated that women have a vital role in environmental management and development and that their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development. Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 reflected and reiterated this focus on gender in water management. It noted that one of the objectives of the integrated water resource management is to design, implement and evaluate projects and programmes that are both economically efficient and socially appropriate within clearly defined strategies, based on an approach of full public participation, including that of women, youth, indigenous people and local communities in water management policy-making and decision-making.
- The Beijing Platform for Action 1995 highlighted current gender inequalities in the management and safeguarding of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment environmental issues as one critical area of concern. To address these three strategic objectives were chosen: involving women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; integrating gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programs for sustainable development; and, strengthening or establishing mechanisms to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.



- In March 2000, the second World Water Forum (The Hague Ministerial Declaration) called for recognition that access to safe and sufficient water and sanitation are basic human needs and are essential to health and well-being. It called for empowering people, especially women, through a participatory process of water management. It also stressed the need for ensuring good governance, so that the involvement of the public and the interests of all stakeholders are included in the management of water resources.
- The 2001 Ministerial Declaration of the Bonn International Conference on Freshwater recognized that water resources management should be based on a participatory approach where both men and women should be involved and have an equal voice in managing the sustainable use of water resources and sharing of benefits. The role of women in water related areas needs to be strengthened and their participation broadened to promote gender equity in governance.
- The World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 issued the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation that underlined that the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal on safe drinking water and sanitation should be gender sensitive and that access to public information and participation by women should be facilitated.
- At the third World Water Forum, held in Kyoto, Japan in 2003, a strong gender theme was present that is reflected in the Ministerial Declaration. It was noted that prioritizing water issues is an urgent global requirement that requires promoting empowerment of local authorities and communities by Governments with due regard to the poor and gender.
- The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality established the inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water in 2003.
- In December 2003 the General Assembly proclaimed (resolution 58/217), the period 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life', and called 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.
- The Millennium Development Goals, which have the same time frame as the 'Water for Life' Decade, include 2015 targets on gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as on safe water and sanitation. (from GWA2006)

In the European Commission's sectoral policy on water management the importance of water resources is mentioned as one of the focal areas of support for development strategies, both as a productive resource and as a factor in regional integration. A set of guidelines for water resources development cooperation were drafted in 1998 that touches on the different groups of water users, from the perspective of integrated resource management. One priority of the sectoral policy concerns involvement of local communities, women in particular, at all levels of project preparation, management and maintenance, in close collaboration with health services. Participatory structures and gender issues are mentioned as priorities.

4.2 Current status: Implementation

Experience demonstrates that participatory processes to involve stakeholders do not automatically include poor men and women. Particular attention to inequalities and gender differences is required if participatory development initiatives are to be truly inclusive. Gender and Water Alliance (2006) suggests that a deliberate strategy of gender mainstreaming can be useful to ensure that issues that affect women and men are part of situation analysis, programme and project planning, implementation, and evaluation. Moreover, gender mainstreaming can assist in bringing about institutional and organisational changes necessary to ensure gender equality on which there seems to be a general consensus



among the international policy makers as presented above. However, GWA noted that currently there is little evidence to suggest that water management has deliberately and consciously addressed gender concerns. (Ibid:32)

Gender mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels (global, national, institutional, community, household). It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality by transforming the mainstream. (UNESCO,1997 in GWA 2003a).

A critical review of the implementation of these international and commitments has shown that the implementation of UN Agenda 21 that strongly highlighted the relevance of gender equity for sustainable development has been 'repeatedly gender-blind' in Europe. Agüera-Cabo (2006) notes that 5292 LA 21 projects has been implemented in 36 countries of the European continent by 2002, and has significantly improved the involvement of communities in local environment-related planning and policy making, although women's groups were still among those the most excluded. A survey of 127 European local authorities revealed that 105 didn't address any women-related subject. "Women's issues" was the third highest topic ignored from a list of 26 areas of activity (ICLEI, 2001 and ICLEI, 2002 in Agüera-Cabo 2006).

Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) also notes that 'to a large extent there has not been an explicit approach to gender in most countries as part of LA 21, however, they showed there is ample room for development of such an approach.' (WEDO 2000 in Hemmati 2002)).

A number of countries have moved forward to integrating gender and social equity issues in water policies, legislation and regulations. In South Africa, an extensive consultation exercise was undertaken by the government on the water policy that resulted in a White Paper with strong references to poverty and gender issues and stressing the importance of women's representation. These guiding principles shaped South Africa's 1997 Water Services Act and the 1998 National Water Act. Uganda's National Water Policy of 1997 has the full participation of women at all levels as one of its principles. However, in practice, it seems that often gender and poverty sensitive participation in river basin management is lagging behind.

Tapela (2006) refers to the empirical observations of stakeholders in the Pungwe Sub-Catchment Council in Zimbabwe to reveal that the issue of power pervaded the relations among stakeholders and between water management institutions and other sector agencies, such as local authorities, other government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Among stakeholders, power-distributing cleavages included interests in water resources, political and economic clout, gender, proficiency in the language of discourse and personality. She further observes that despite women having been identified as playing a central and multi-faceted role in the provision, use and safeguarding of water, their involvement in water-related decision-making structures has been very low. She observes that there is a need for the adopted gender approach to go beyond the issue of gender inclusion, and to enhance institutional capacities and mechanisms that build women's confidence in expressing their views.



In the context of the Mediterranean region, Minoia (2007) noted that though the rhetoric approach to gender in water management is receiving increasing recognition globally, local policies and practices are a more difficult task to address. Gender topics in water management are scarcely addressed in institutional policies, and women's involvement in the decision-making process on water management remains an underrepresented issue to tackle.

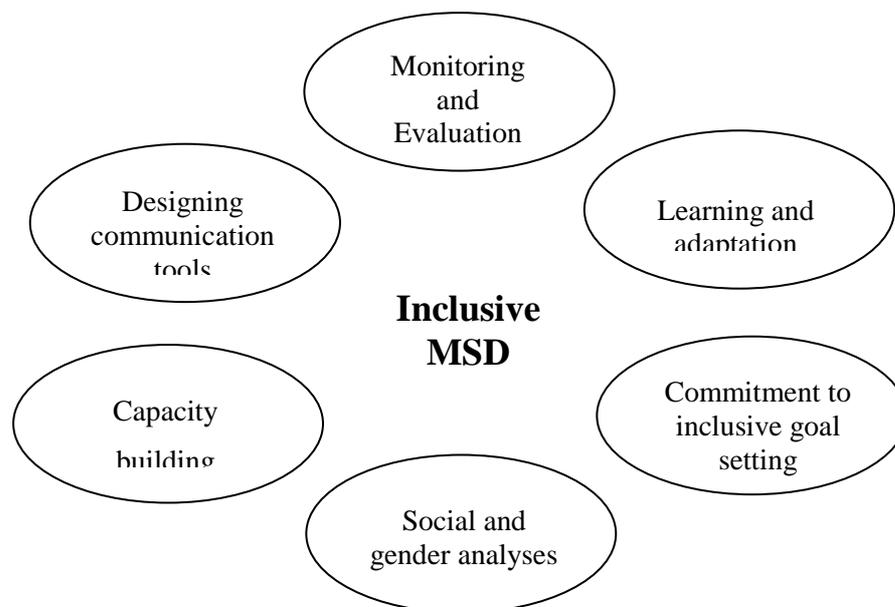


5. Designing inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue processes: Tools and mechanisms

Eversole (2003) notes that development practice has too long been focused on how to create change, without seriously examining who is defining and driving change, and how the motivations and relationships of different people and groups influence the change process. Creating formal institutions for stakeholders to participate may not be sufficient as informal institutions may provide obstacles to achieving the goals. Building equitable and participative social institutions, like MSD processes, requires understanding of who's who, how do they relate to one another, and what influences their relationships?

While designing inclusive MSD processes, it should, however, be noted that the purpose here is not to create parallel gender and poverty sensitive processes but to try to mainstream these issues in the on-going MSD processes. This could be achieved by making resources available in terms of expertise and funds to work towards the objective.

Inclusive MSD: Tools and Mechanisms



Following experiences of MSD and other consultative processes, a number of tools and mechanisms could be identified for poverty and gender sensitive river basin planning:

- Commitment to inclusive goal setting
- Social network and gender analyses
- Capacity building and promoting inclusive structures
- Designing tools for communication
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Learning and adaptation



5.1 Commitment to inclusive goal setting

There need to be a clear commitment to include poverty and gender issues in the dialogue processes. Blanket categories of objectives or visions like ‘equitable social- and economic development’ often found in documents for consultative processes may not automatically promote these causes, and may remain only a lip-service. It is essential that river basin organizations show their commitments by allowing resources, expertise and time earmarked for making their processes truly inclusive.

A first step could be to create a facilitating body that may be called a Task Force (TF) or by any other name that the organizers deem appropriate at the basin levels with a team of qualified professionals that can initiate or give impetus to inclusive MSDs. It is important to ensure that the TF attracts a critical mass of qualified and senior professionals from all the basin countries who can provide leadership. The TF will work to set the initial goals which could later be refined by the stakeholder groups in the respective countries at various levels. One way to start the process is engaging in ‘visioning exercises’ on what an inclusive MSD should look like and agree on the initial goals to achieving this. This should provide a common framework to start the process of working together. Suggested goals will need to be put forward to and reviewed by the broad based constituents for comments, and, then modified where needed.

Initiating a process may face a number of challenges that needs to be kept in mind and dealt with. These questions are particularly important in large, diverse watersheds where there are many complex and conflicting interests. For example, from experiences with participatory processes in implementing the Citizen’s Jury on watershed management in Europe, Kenyon (2003) points out that any discourse-based valuation or decision processes should be prepared to resolve the following questions:

- Issues of representation: Should it be broad, “symbolic”, statistical, random, or intentionally skewed to give a “voice” to traditionally underrepresented groups?
- Accountability: how to ensure accountability to a range of stakeholders that may be placed at various levels?
- Power relationship: how to balance and share power among the ‘experts’ or ‘facilitators’ and among the ‘ordinary citizens’ so as to avoid alienation and cynicism about the process itself?
- Scale: River basins can be extremely large geographic areas and can be difficult to define spatially making dialogue processes difficult, if not, nearly impossible to implement in practical terms.
- Time-Frame: a dialogue can be short-term, even, a one-off process, while sustainable decision –making in water management in particular requires long time-frames and iterative decision processes that can put great demands on participants and demand high degrees of “institutional memory”
- Jurisdictional Issues: Watershed management generally requires collaboration across many political and institutional boundaries, so even if a participatory panel can be assembled, the implementation of its decisions throughout the watershed may be difficult, if not, nearly impossible.

(Kenyon, 2003 in Perkins, 2004:5)

These are challenging issues indeed and addressing them would require locally-designed and locally-appropriate public participation exercises to be carried out at various levels and build over a time.



A practical approach for the TF would be to liaise with organizations that can represent poor men and women's perspectives on water and highlight issues that particularly affect them. It should also exchange information, experiences and good practices with other networks.

5.2 Social network and gender analyses

Social network analyses done at an early stage help to identify marginalized groups, provide information on power imbalances and conflicts that may exist between stakeholders, and provide guidance to policy-makers on how best to structure stakeholder engagements. (Dougill et al 2006). Others note that gender is significant for participatory processes because differences do exist between female and male environment-related interests, roles and needs. (Agüera-Cabo 2006, GWA 2006).

Conducting social network and gender analysis at all levels of policy, planning and implementation is essential for a detailed understanding of roles and relations of various stakeholders that are included or may be excluded from the ongoing process of dialogues. The TF should initiate such independent analyses within the specific context of each country's national IWRM. It is important to earmark a separate budget to support these analyses. Depending on the context, however, a good number of countries may already have baseline studies on social and gender analyses that could be relevant and should be taken into account in producing detailed plan of action for poverty and gender mainstreaming.

Social and gender analyses can provide an understanding of culture, e.g. the patterns and norms of what men and women, boys and girls do and experience in relation to water; examine why the disparities are there, whether they are a matter for concern, and how they might be addressed. The analyses can promote understanding on existing power relations in drawing attention to the fact that power differentials may dictate who participates in specific meetings/consultations. Power inequalities can make it difficult for some to voice their opinions. These studies can also shed light to intra-household and intra-family relations. Men and women have different responsibilities and workloads that may constrain their abilities to participation. Additionally, formal or informal membership norms in community institutions can also deny people the right to participate. Further, due to existing gender biases in education, skill and experience, women and men often have varying capacity to participate in dialogues and voice their concerns. In practical terms, the analyses can help understand the perceived benefits of participation for the stakeholders. Poor women and men may make different calculations about the costs and benefits of their involvement in participatory processes as they often have little time to engage in dialogues. This may challenge the initiators to design appropriate methods for participatory processes that are sensitive to the needs of poor men and women. (GWA 2006: 16-17).

For conducting social and gender analysis, the TF facilitators should work with and could be assisted by research institutions, civil society organizations, donors, activists, private organizations, professionals and conservation groups.

5.3 Capacity building in promoting inclusive structures

For an effective participation of poor men and women in MSDs, it is important to address the quality of participation. Commitment to an inclusive decision making process by itself cannot ensure that gender and poverty concerns will make their way automatically onto the policy agenda, unless attention is paid to develop the capacities of participants.



A number of good practices exist for programmes and projects that have developed methods to recognize capacity differences within the stakeholders in terms of class, gender, ethnicity or age. For example, for promoting inclusive structures it may be useful to support men, women and other social groups in developing their own strategies and plans for implementation based on their own social realities, and devising their own indicators for monitoring and evaluation (Akerkar 2001). Another practical way could be to engage in formulation of local water management strategies that reflect the interests and priorities all water users. This would require using gender and poverty disaggregated information and perspectives generated locally and at the higher levels.

Capacity building is needed not only for the community members but also for MSD facilitators in poverty and gender sensitive methodologies. Performance measures of the organisers or facilitators at various levels should include qualitative indicators such as promoting empowerment processes alongside quantitative targets.

For effective participation of the poor and women in the MSDs, capacity development should also promote affirmative actions for transforming social and gender relationships and gaining access to water. Water user associations often take a narrow approach in defining stakeholders and thus may exclude women and the poor who may be entirely dependent on land and water for their livelihoods but may not have sufficient property rights to these resources to justify their voices to be heard.

Taking into account capacity difference is also important while conducting consultations. These need to occur in a climate of shared respect for all participants and a genuine attempt to remove potential barriers to participation by providing financial support to participants for travel as needed, holding consultations in locations convenient, particularly for women, supplying childcare, using alternative formats and media, and offering linguistic support if required.

A protocol for participation needs to be developed that will recognize that the poor and women are not a homogeneous group; and to be appropriately inclusive and representative of all stakeholders, any consultations must incorporate gender, age, class, ethnic origin, disability, language and religion differences (Rankin 2006).

Core stakeholders in the river basin planning, such as government ministries, water authorities, local leaders, private sector providers and other interest groups should also take steps to ensure the active and meaningful participation of poor women and men in their own structures and participatory platforms. Capacity building should aim to developing skills so that these structures are able to run negotiations in such a way that stakeholder interests, particularly those representing the groups living in poverty, are not just heard but rather have an actual impact on the decisions that are made.

5.4 Designing tools for communication

The consultative processes employ a number of methodological techniques: live consultations led by professional facilitators; interviews with selected individuals; and on-line, electronic consultation forum. In the national and local contexts, it is important to first identify institutional, cultural and attitudinal barriers that discourage women's participation in public consultations and then work to develop strategies and tools to address this problem in meaningful ways. The choice of communication channels should take into account the size of the stakeholder groups, resources available and cultural preferences. Sometimes the process of undertaking social and gender analyses helps identifying viable tools for engaging the poor and women in the dialogue processes. Communication channels can include a mix



of methods and need to be guided by the principles of inclusiveness, equity and transparency. Though such choices can be suggested by the facilitators, they should be made by the stakeholder groups.

Communication standards, and thus performance, are raised if the group has clear, performance-oriented goals; an appropriate task strategy; and a clear set of rules; fairly high tolerance for inter-member conflicts and explicit communication feedback to ensure that information is understood. (Maznevski 1994 in Hemmati 2002:78).

Preparation of a background or position paper is an effective way to structure communications. These could be prepared or reviewed in such a way as to encourage dialogues. Results of these dialogues then could be released to the general public for further feedback. A round of consultative processes could be ensued, in which groups and individuals are invited to offer comments and suggestions on the position paper. These papers and inputs from these dialogues could then be used to outline strategies for realizing the common vision as mentioned above.

A year-long, nation-wide consultation in Canada designed to produce a national strategy to increase the involvement of women in local government and encourage municipalities to adopt gender analysis in their decision-making processes, produced a series of recommendations about what factors contribute to inclusive consultations with women. Those recommendations included:

- Provide detail information about consultation opportunities in plain language to women and women's organizations, informing them of how they can be involved and what will happen with their input;
- Use various ways of getting information to women including websites, newspapers, media, information to women's groups;
- Make full use of partnerships with local women's organizations;
- Practice proactive strategies to reach marginalized women;
- Consult in the language with which women are most comfortable;
- Use the information women provide and follow-up decisions that are reached so women know that their input is valued and used. (Rankin 2006:4-5)

It is important that both the objectives of the consultation and the process to be followed are communicated clearly from the beginning. Communication processes need to be iterative in their approaches to allow for the development of shared solutions. These processes seek to identify and build on common grounds instead of focusing on disagreement and create a shared responsibility for the way forward.

5.5 Monitoring and evaluation

MSDs should ensure transparency in all negotiations between different stakeholders so that knowledge generation and learning that take place are not lost or manipulated in subsequent negotiations and are reflected in the strategies and policies that follow. It is thus important that dialogue processes are recorded visibly and transparently, with stakeholders having control over the content and accuracy of the recording. This would provide the basis to decide how to monitor and evaluate the dialogue process or any implementation that may follow. Monitoring and evaluation activities are better carried out by an internal group consisting of different participating stakeholders to ensure neutrality and balance.



Evaluative mechanisms need to be included at each stage of the consultative process that would allow participants to reflect on the process they are participating in, i.e., on the meta-communication. These reflections can be facilitated by feed-back loops coordinated by the task force or facilitators at each level. These exercises should be conducted in a transparent and inclusive way so that opinions of all stakeholders are included in them. Depending on the scope and size of the groups participating, and the structural and organisational arrangements, some level of formal procedure for meta-communication will be required. (Hemmati 2002: 243).

Stakeholder participation is a complex process that relates to organizational and institutional capacities, perceptions and reactions of stakeholders, and relationships among them. In general, indicators should measure empowerment and capacity issues (e.g., changes in stakeholders' knowledge, perceptions, practices); take into account limitations due to language, gender, economic, and cultural contexts and biases; and be disaggregated by gender, socioeconomic status, indigenous or minority community membership, government, and private sector in order to assess progress made within different stakeholder groups. The measures of its success and learning from it are thus by nature often qualitative. Although this may add a layer of complexity in the learning process, at the same time, it permits more holistic assessment of several different perspectives and can be more responsive and adaptive than the application of quantitative indicators. (ELI 2006)

5.6 Learning and adaptation

In MSDs learning and adaptation is an important factor for change. In fact it is one of the key principles based on which dialogues are conducted. Through sincere dialogues, stakeholders develop new values and act upon them. The MSD processes should therefore actively engage in promoting learning and adapting. Hemmati (2002) noted that every multi-stakeholder process is about learning - participants should be prepared to learn from and about each others and to learn how to work together as a team and come to creative, integrative solutions. This also applies to the design of the MSD process itself – every process should take a learning approach towards its procedures and the issues developing over time. (Ibid: 210). This would help adaptation of the communication designs towards a more creative space where dialogues can result in genuine progress.



6. Conclusions

MSD processes in river basin management have emerged as a response to the high social and environmental costs too often incurred by inadequate and inequitable governance systems. There is a growing body of literature that has demonstrated the need for equitable participation processes, i.e., including the poor, women and other marginalised stakeholders in decision making for effective and efficient water management. As shown above, there is also wide recognition by national and international policies that MSD processes need to be poverty and gender sensitive. It is, however, evident that given the politically contentious area that river basin managements entail and given the unequal power relations that exist between the poor men and women and other stakeholders, the operationalisation of an inclusive approach proves to be a highly complex process. The tools and mechanisms to achieve this will only be successful if there is political willingness of all parties involved to implementing them and to actively committing to bring about a change in the current culture of the MSD processes employed at the river basins.



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