

Issues Paper on Water Use and Management

Global context: Water Use and Management

Water is the most vital of all natural resources for sustenance of life on earth.

There are several reasons why water is a major challenge of governance. First, fresh water is a multi-purpose natural resource the abundance of which is taken for granted in some parts of the world and the lack of which is felt in so many other places. For many years people and their governments have been mainly concerned with the challenges of water quantity: the distribution of available water for irrigation and later for industrial and other uses, the containment of water in arid regions or the protection against water. Concerns for water quality, also a distributional challenge is of much more recent origin.

Water management is a multi-level challenge and involves different actors from public services and private sector. In some cases water management is a central government concern and in other cases it is initially a concern for local/regional authorities.

Water management is not solely a national government concern but a challenge of governance. Public authorities are not always able to accomplish what is needed to secure the minimum availability of fresh water. The concept of water governance refers to steering or administering arrangements expressed at the collective levels in society that are created to serve collective needs.

The World Water Forum defines the water governance as a body of policies, rules, regulations, and practical procedures that recognize and set out the specific roles and responsibilities of stakeholders – in the case of water management: the community, the private sector, the public sector and the individuals.

The challenges of water management vary according to the discipline of the experts: the economists focus on marketed value of water (pricing water – price regulation), environmentalists consider ecological problems, historians approach development of water management over time, political scientists regard water scarcity as potential source of power struggles, and public management scholars reflect on the managerial challenges, rules and regulations.

Water management as multi-dimensional challenge for Public Administration

The concept of water management refers the technical capacity and institutional arrangements needed to meet the political goal of providing safety from and use of water.

The main aspects of the water can be described as follow:

- Water quantity management
- Water quality management
- Dike management: containment of water
- Transport management.

To the traditional or internal functions of water management influence other policies regarding: physical planning, environmental policy, rural planning, housing etc. The water management is then linked to other managerial or geographical challenges: one example is the management of river basins in different regions of the world.

We can also identify several aspects of water management linked to the multiple users:

- Household use
- Production
- Transport
- Protection

National and regional/international challenges

The **water sector** is currently undergoing major processes of transformation at local, regional and global scales. The current situation is challenged by uncertainties, e.g., in water demand (diminishing in industrialized countries, rising in developing countries), by worsening water quality, by pressure for cost-efficient solutions, and by fast changing socio-economic boundary conditions.

One expects additional uncertainties, due to climate change, such as a shift in the pattern of extreme events.

Hence, new strategies and institutional arrangements are required to cope with risk and change in general: processes of transformation and change; institutions and rule systems; necessary transformation processes.

We need a better coordination between the States and inter-national cooperation for facing the new challenges.

Water Summit which will be organized in April 2011 will address the following topics:

What are the world's best performing utilities doing right?; Is there a scalable for-profit model that really delivers water services to the poor? How is climate change really affecting the water cycle? What will desalination look like in 30 years' time? Can industrial and municipal water users work better together? What can we learn from the oil and gas sector? Does water foot printing work?

These issues are also to be considered and integrated in our reflexions on Water management.

At European level, the European Commission places considerable importance on access to water and sanitation and water management in its development cooperation policy and there has been a threefold increase in the EU's development assistance to water related programmes between 2002 and 2008.

The EU Water Initiative aims to facilitate and improve policy dialogues between stakeholders from in- and outside the water sector and to stimulate political prioritization to meet the Millennium Development Goals for access to water and sanitation and integrated water resources management. Through its different regional and thematic components EUWI operates in a truly multi-stakeholder fashion. It is very noticeable that among the lessons learnt in this year's report the involvement of stakeholders stands out as a critical factor for the success in improving water governance.

Within the EU water resources are managed according to the Water Framework Directive. With support from the EUWI, countries in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA region) region, are adopting a similar methodology to improve their water management. A new and expanded work programme for the EECCA region is leading to encouraging results to strengthen water governance, also emphasising adaptation to climate change and the development of plans for sustainable financing.

In Latin America, there are also programs for Water management as integrated water resources management.

We have to observe the different initiatives **in other regions** of the world and the institutional apparatus and arrangements made for producing, transporting, using and protecting water.

Key issues to be discussed

1. Lead Administrative Responsibility: avoiding playing into the hands of bureaucratic or sectoral interests;
2. Central/Local Division of Responsibilities and financing; the administrative challenges to be overcome; and control of devolved functions;
3. Service Delivery: responsiveness to citizens/users – access, pricing, professional support, etc; effectiveness and efficiency; equity and ethics; multi-ethnic considerations; appeals and redress;
4. Operational coordination e.g. in managing water pricing, or immigration related security issues, or taking into account legal structures;
5. Policy Decision taking – Institutional Structure: ensuring policy integration and the balance of interests; backing with adequate technical knowledge, from both internal and external sources; choice of policy instruments; policy monitoring;
6. The International Dimension: handling inter-country relationships and negotiations – getting the act together; establishing a national policy position; influencing international regulatory decisions and rule making, participating in supranational bodies;
7. Staffing and HRM: responding to in house needs for specialist expertise; multi-ethnic composition; training requirements;
8. Resources: ensuring a sufficient and workable budgetary framework;
9. Relations with the Media so that they play an informative, positive, even contributory role, especially as regards water use and management..