

NGO Priorities for Action on Water and Sanitation and Habitat
Background Paper for UN-Commission for Sustainable Development
Session 13 2005

Agendas and action programmes on water, sanitation and habitat, have been accepted in various international forums. In practice, however, NGOs have evidence that in many countries:

- The human rights to adequate, affordable water, housing and sanitation are not respected
- Participation is widely accepted but not adequately implemented
- Fragmentation of responsibilities for water and sanitation between government agencies is very problematic
- Community-based management is successful but not promoted
- Prioritisation for the poor rarely occurs
- Impacts on the environment are not considered - IWRM plans are missing
- Insufficient consideration of cultural diversity and gender;
- Objectives don't link to local financing structures and capacities;

Thus, NGOs identify the following actions to achieve the goals of CSD13:

Governments significantly increase their political and financial commitment to the sector taking a poverty and rights-based approach with defined criteria for implementation.

Considering that access to sufficient water for basic human needs and housing are established human rights, incorporate them into national law, backed by specific measurable plans for implementation.

An integrated sector-wide approach becomes the basis to coordinate across government ministries, bringing together agencies responsible for water, sanitation, environment, health, agriculture and education, including the cross cutting theme "sustainable consumption and production" and involving all stakeholders.

IWRM is used for management and planning; providing a model for the long term environmental security of water resources, requiring a long-term political and technical push and to be operationalised locally.

Many community groups and NGOs are successfully managing local resources and are willing and able to do more to support actions, communicate impacts, local demands and knowledge. This valuable resource requires promotion and support by governments and access to information and decision making. Stakeholder-led platforms that monitor and discuss policies on water, sanitation, hygiene promotion and habitat have proven successful in many different contexts.

Develop culturally and gender sensitive approaches to sanitation; a major cause of poverty through ill-health.

Unresolved transboundary and local conflicts over quantity and quality of waters prevent access by people who need it to live. Responsibility for resolution must be addressed urgently at all levels.

The goals of CSD13 can only be delivered by governance structures that allow local communities to participate and provide a basis for equitable allocation of water. Strategic frameworks and delivery plans should include steps aimed at:

Ensuring the participation of local communities, farmers, business and NGOs in a multi-stakeholder framework where:

- All relevant actors are involved in planning, implementation, monitoring of projects/policies as equal partners from the outset
- Different interests and responsibilities are acknowledged,
- Particular attention is paid to the involvement of community groups, women and children

Strengthening institutional capacities aimed at:

- Changing the mindset
- Optimising the use of the knowledge of local communities and institutions.
- Education and social marketing campaigns on sanitation, hygiene and wise use of water

Setting up dialogues, networks and mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting, aimed at sharing experiences, determine the lessons learned and translating them into policy.

Monitoring and reporting on progress, distinguishing between impacts according to different gender, ethnicity and cultures.

Infrastructure development is required, with the environmental and social sustainability principles respected, including:

Recognition and implementation of existing safeguard policies for large scale infrastructure, such as the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams, as due diligence, by governments and financiers.

Use full cost-benefit analysis to assess various options before implementation

Upscale the use of 'soft' engineering techniques for water resource management and work within natural systems.

Mobilising resources for long-term investment in the sectors requires actions at all levels, but heed the needs and desires of local stakeholders, don't make them pay for a service they can't afford or need.

Developed country governments to reverse declining levels of ODA to the sector and focus on countries most in need. Coordinate multilateral and bilateral programmes working on the same target group, and/or region.

Set up tariff structures for water use, but this must not prevent poor people's access to affordable services. Include methods for valuing their contributions "in kind" towards operation and maintenance. Water and related services must never be traded as a commodity

Private sector participation is not the solution to the financial gap and must never be imposed as a condition of grants or loans. Water is a public good, therefore regulation of and control over water must always remain with the public sector.

Systemise the collection of accurate data for consolidation into national budgeting and planning, prioritising then needs of the poorest.

Build on the successful pilot cases of innovative mechanisms for paying for **ecosystems services**

Increasing access to sanitation and hygiene promotion is problematic but there are many good examples to be adopted, such as:

- city-wide sanitation strategies with adapted solutions for whole population,
- social marketing and educational programs of hand-washing & hygiene
- scaling up of the grass-roots led total sanitation campaign begun in South Asia and by WASH

- supplying people with technology choices that accord to their needs and demands, including decentralised systems, eco-sanitation and dry toilets, and send information to help them choose.

Reform of out-dated laws in a participatory process is urgently needed, NGO final statement CSD 13together with capacity building and training for all actors to comply with and monitor legislation, also:

Legislate for IWRM and water efficiency strategies that conserve watersheds and guarantee equitable sharing of water between users, underpinned by an effective environmental regulatory framework.

Provide land tenure for poor people in urban slums in particular improving the legal recognition of women's rights;

Provide a legal framework for local municipalities and civil society groups to safeguard their rights, quality standards and affordability when third parties are involved in provision of water or housing

Undertake reforms to separate out the powers of water service providers and regulators which should always remain in public control.

Recognise small-scale private sector water suppliers, within an environment where all service providers are regulated. New service providers can't be promoted without a resourced regulatory framework being in place.

Regulate to prevent infill of water bodies from urban sprawl and depletion of the water table from mega-cities

UNEP and UN-HABITAT cooperate to provide capacity building and guidelines on urban management.