



## **REFLECTIONS ON 4<sup>TH</sup> WORLD WATER FORUM, MEXICO CITY, MARCH 2006 A SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' FEEDBACK**

Following the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, 42 FAN members who participated in the Forum were asked to complete a questionnaire to gather feedback on their impressions of the Forum. 25 questionnaires were returned. The comments and suggestions are summarized in this report and the questions are included at the end.

All of the respondents agree that, for them, it is worth attending international meetings like the Forum because it gives them the opportunity to expose and strengthen the voices of civil society. They feel it is important to attend such meetings as part of a global network, recognized by the global community, such as FAN, because it gives them more clout. They consider FAN to be an honest organization with a genuine interest in helping small and medium size CSOs and an important player in terms of global water management advocacy. They believe that participation is effective as long as objectives are clear from the outset and the opportunity is used to maximize learning, sharing, networking and influencing.

### ***FAN preparations for the Forum***

Respondents were particularly impressed by FAN's effective involvement in the preparatory process. They noted that securing the 5 NGO sessions and funding to pay for CSOs to present their local actions was the result of FAN's effective action; critically monitoring the preparatory process, attending meetings and persistent negotiation, such as writing letters to the Secretariat. Many of them commented that, without FAN, it would have been impossible for so many local actions and actors to have participated. It was also noted that FAN made good use of limited resources to bring so many NGOs and local actors together.

Leading up to IV WWF, respondents appreciated that FAN secretariat kept them informed about the progress and content of the Forum. They were aware of the scope and framework of the Forum and therefore better able to create clear strategies for participating.

Many were impressed with the way FAN coordinated the session preparation and greatly appreciated the guidance and technical support provided to them in terms of pre-session planning and preparing their own case studies. It was acknowledged that the comprehensive preparation process reflected the experience of the FAN Coordinator.

The FAN Coordinator stimulated and facilitated the networking and exchange of ideas and made positive contributions to strategy building. Members appreciated that they were given room to develop their own ways of working, thus turning the participation on the IV WWF and preparatory process into a genuine learning and capacity building experience for them.

Many appreciated that coordinating so many people across cultures and countries is a huge task and were impressed with the level of professionalism demonstrated by the FAN team, paying special attention to their individual needs. Most of them

commented on the excellent logistical arrangements in terms of travel, accommodation, registration and securing visas.

### ***Suggestions for future preparations***

- Hold a meeting one year in advance to help to strategize and work towards a joint NGO statement to be an official input in to the meeting
- Establish a minimum political agenda for FAN members for example one that is pro-poor and people centered. Forming a common front could have made a stronger impact.
- Facilitate opportunities for CSOs to formulate more proactive and systematic strategic activities; to think about what to advocate, how to advocate and with whom
- Continue to support current members but also facilitate the participation of many more CSOs, including those involved in advocacy and campaigns
- Integrate the work of different regions and find ways to strengthen links between member organizations. This should include exploring ways to overcome the language barrier; a noted obstacle between South Americans, Africans and Asians

### ***FAN at the Forum***

All respondents commented that FAN's presence enriched the Forum by creating the unique platform for organized civil society to demonstrate their experience and knowledge and communicate the local level perspective to a significant number of people in the sector in sessions and at the FAN stand. FAN also served to create personal relationships between members and provided key information on the sessions and events.

They appreciated the exposure through the FAN space at the Water Fair as well as the sessions. They used the stand to publicize their work with leaflets and videos; to network, exchange info/ideas and meet up with other organizations and government representatives.

Many mentioned the fact that so many FAN members were nominated for Kyoto prize demonstrates the value of FAN's presence at the Forum.

### ***FAN network Meeting***

Most FAN members felt that the wrap up meeting was a good opportunity to define future activities. However, some felt that, as participants had come so far at great cost, bringing such varied experiences, it would have been beneficial to have a longer opportunity to exchange experiences and learn from one another.

### ***Monitoring outcomes***

FAN members are keen to see FAN monitor the outcomes of the Forum to ensure that their messages, recommendations and major demands are being considered.

### ***Suggestions for FAN at future Forums***

- Work with the media. Organize a press conference and/or have daily press bulletins in order to make public the fact that NGOs are at the Forum and to explain their goals and purpose.
- Provide more guidance about which sessions would be useful to attend

- Encourage members to play a more active role. Nominate some FAN participants to disseminate more information and updates to each other during the Forum.
- Organise a field visit to a local member's operational area to discuss water issues with local communities and institutions
- A longer strategy meeting for at least a day after the Forum should be held so that members leave with clearer strategies and a way forward for the future.

### ***Common expectations prior to the Forum***

- To increase understanding of the work of FAN
- To interact with other FAN members, learn from each other and the range of sector stakeholders
- To meet important cross sector actors such as technicians, government officials, industry people and other CSOs and enter in to dialogue and negotiation with them.
- To establish new and useful contacts and become familiar with opportunities and constraints in order to enhance their work in country.
- To promote their work and help to enhance the visibility of CSO contribution to the Water and Sanitation sector at the International level
- To gather information and gain an up to date picture of current water debates
- To act as a link between global processes and local communities.

### ***Impressions of the Forum***

A certain degree of dissatisfaction in terms of the way the Forum was conducted was evident. Participants expected more of an open space for civil society and expressed disappointment that they were not invited to participate in the ministerial meetings, inauguration and closing ceremony.

On the whole, respondents felt that their own participation was extremely worth while and that the Forum was a unique opportunity to strengthen FAN's links across the World. Participants gained knowledge about global perspectives on issues which will help them to position their organization more appropriately at a local level. They consider the Forum to be a great space for building relationships with organizations from all over the world; to meet those doing similar work, to learn from and teach others and meet those that complement the work that they do. The South American organizations were inspired to continue to strengthen the networking process in their region with the foundation of FAN-Sudamerica. On this note, respondents suggest that civil society participation in such meetings must continue to grow to more fully represent the organizations all over the world developing similar efforts and experiences.

The Forum was seen as a useful way to link up with national decision makers and government representatives, international stakeholders and senior officials from the donor world. One member gave the example of meeting up with an important contact who was always too busy to meet in Kenya. In Mexico he had plenty of time to talk to them! Members used these opportunities for lobbying on issues such as recognition of the human right to water.

Respondents are confident that FAN members achieved their objectives in our sessions. Those who presented a local action valued the opportunity to represent

their local communities, bring expertise from their region and promote their work. Their participation enhances their reputation back home, gains recognition of their work and provides the perspective of civil society. Members found other sessions that they attended to be interesting and worthwhile and were pleased to be able to share experiences and strategies and enrich debates.

However, respondents expressed a real concern about the overall impact of sessions. The mechanism for feeding messages from the sessions in to the outcomes of the Forum was not clear. It was also not clear how the Forum outcomes would lead to lasting policy change.

### **Summary of respondents' views of key policy messages from the Forum**

- Water is a human right
- The link between poverty and water and sanitation is crucial and should act as a binding factor for social, gender and economic inclusion.
- The water crisis is a global problem and not just one of developing nations. Intensity of growing water conflicts between nations and regions is a priority to address.
- Civil society must play a more prominent role in water governance. Local people are able to solve local development and conservation problems with support. A collaborative partnership driven process is key but governments still avoid real and full participation with NGOs.
- Local governments lack political will and financial resources. Huge gaps exist between the claims of national governments and actual realities concerning water and sanitation. Governments must prioritize financing water and sanitation if they are to match their reaffirmed commitment for MDGs
- Urgent call for CSOs to continue to build and demonstrate alternative people-centered models of water distribution, management and resource augmentation
- Call for more legal and institutional guarantees of public participation. Factors that facilitate meaningful participation in IWRM include decentralization, gender mainstreaming, effective partnerships and effective methodologies
- Need to accelerate the development of appropriate low cost or no cost technologies. Solutions need to be easy to implement if they will not be implemented.

**FRESHWATER ACTION NETWORK  
Reflections on 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum**

Please answer with bullet point comments in the box below each question and add any further comments at the bottom

Name:

Organisation:

What was your impression of FAN coordination and organisation prior to the Forum?

What did FAN do well?

In what ways could FAN improve?

Before the meeting, what were your expectations of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum?

What was the value of FAN's attendance at the Forum?

What was the value of your attendance at the Forum?

Did FAN members achieve their objectives in sessions where they made inputs?

What key messages emerged from the Forum?

Did you forge any new links or relationships with other organisations?

What opportunities were there for learning outside of the meeting rooms?

What should FAN do more of at future international meetings?

What should FAN do less of at future international meetings?

Do you think international meetings like the Forum are worth attending? If so, why and under what conditions?

Other comments

THANK YOU