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Amman Seven Principles and Policy Recommendations for Improved Local Water Governance

Integrated Water Resources Management

Transparency

Equity and Accountability

Local Participation

Stakeholder Coordination



Regional Forum on Local Water Governance
Amman – Jordan, June 6-7, 2007



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Amman Seven Principles on Local Water Governance

Background

With the belief that stakeholder involvement, particularly of the water end-users, is an essential step towards improved water service delivery and sustainable water resources management; the Regional Forum on Local Water Governance, held in Amman-Jordan on June 6-7, 2007, looked into the policy and institutional arrangements necessary to enable local government and community organizations to engage in a planning and management of water resources that are equitable, effective, and sustainable. The outcome of the Forum's discussions were summed up and consolidated into the Amman Seven Principles on Local Water Governance and are presented here in this booklet together with their justifications and recommendations for policy and practice. These recommendations are primarily geared towards making such stakeholder involvement effective; and creating an enabling environment for participatory local water governance.

Building upon the outcomes of four¹ regional and national events, the regional forum came as the culmination of a two-year consultative process in which the policy recommendations set out in this booklet were developed. They therefore incorporate critical feedback and input by several hundred leading practitioners from the three countries in which the EMPOWERS Project² was active, as well as the region at large.

The forum itself was held under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and organized by the EMPOWERS Partnership with main sponsorship from the European Union MEDA Water Programme. Echoing the title of the forum, "Water Is Everybody's Business", the forum brought together 200 participants from 17 countries representing high level policy makers from the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA), and water experts and practitioners reflecting the various government agencies, international, regional and national NGOs, donors as well as the civil society.

¹ EMPOWERS Partnership organized several regional and national events to develop these recommendations. An initial set of recommendations were developed based on EMPOWERS Regional Symposium on "End-User Ownership and Involvement in Local IWRM" held in Cairo, Egypt in November 2005. These were subsequently discussed intensively during national policy meetings in Egypt, Jordan and Palestine in late 2006 and early 2007.

² The aim of the EMPOWERS Partnership is to improve water rights and long-term access to water by populations who currently experience scarcity and insecurity. It does so through ensuring that all stakeholders participate in important decisions about water, and by increasing dialogue and coordinating actions at all levels; with special emphasis on empowering people and institutions at intermediate (district and governorate) and community levels. While EMPOWERS works to promote IWRM at the local level and develop experience and practical tools to plan for Local Water Governance, the project also involves national level stakeholders to ensure that local activities relate to national policy formulation. The EMPOWERS Partnership was implemented from September 2003 to August 2007 in Palestine (Jenin Governorate), Jordan (Balqa Governorate) and Egypt (Beni Suef Governorate).

Forum Objectives and Outcomes

With a focus on enhancing “Policy support for local level ownership and involvement in Sustainable Local Water Governance in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through participatory planning and stakeholder approaches”, the forum had three objectives:

- To explore modalities for embedding participatory stakeholder approaches in local and national planning and policy formulation in different countries of the MENA Region.
- To enhance a policy environment conducive for such approaches in countries of the MENA Region.
- To initiate initiatives to up-scale participatory stakeholder planning approaches in more countries of the MENA Region (including funding support).

The forum deliberated on the challenges of local water governance and the need to adopt new innovative approaches for addressing growing demands on scarce water resources in the MENA Region. It came to build on the findings of previous international conferences including: the Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development (International Conference on Water and Environment 1992); Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992), the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000), Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (World Summit on Sustainable Development, 2002); and in the spirits of the World Water Forums (held in 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006). Drawing on the above;

The forum urges the countries, the international community, research institutions and universities, local groups, non-governmental organizations and citizens to adopt the Principles and recommendations for policy and practice presented next:

The Regional Forum on Local Water Governance would like to make a call onto the readers to support the seven principles and related recommendations that are presented in this booklet.

To show your support/undersign or comment on the Principles and recommendations please contact us at www.empowers.info/page/124

The complete forum proceedings, including conclusions of the panel and subgroup discussions that lead to the material presented in this booklet, are available at www.empowers.info/page/2941

Amman Seven Principles on Local Water Governance

June 2007

- I. Local water governance should be based upon the integrated participation of all stakeholders and end-users at all levels.
- II. Local water governance requires that special efforts are made to include vulnerable groups.
- III. The efforts of all actors (government, partners in development, civil society) should be harmonized and should contribute to achieving agreed and locally owned visions and strategies.
- IV. Capacities of stakeholders should be developed at different levels to enable them to participate in water resources planning and management.
- V. Water information should be considered a public good; and access to information be enabled for all citizens.
- VI. Locally appropriate solutions and tools should be developed through the use of participatory research and action.
- VII. Awareness must be developed for informed participation in water governance.



Policy Justifications

Competition for water is continuously intensifying, and it is becoming more and more difficult to find simple technical solutions to water-related problems. Increasingly, solutions involve tradeoffs, management of demand and enforcement of regulations. All of the above have a much better chance of success if they are identified and implemented as part of a system of improved local water governance that is problem and service delivery focused and has the active involvement of stakeholders or their representatives.

There is a widespread crisis of water governance in developing countries. Despite trends towards national level planning for IWRM and policy shifts towards decentralisation, many countries, especially developing ones, are faced with low levels of stakeholder involvement, and highly fragmented water sectors involving many players. Excessive centralization still persists, and there is an unclear division of responsibilities between the central and local government. Intermediate level government staff and end-users are usually confronted with top-down implementation of instructions, little autonomy and intermittent communication.

Appropriately trained and qualified staff at the different levels are absent. As water cannot be considered in isolation without its linkages with energy, environment, economy and people; and while climate change and variability adds another layer of uncertainty which decision makers and water managers need to consider in their challenging work - monolithic technical institutions still prevail and with limited capacities to facilitate multi-stakeholder interaction and participatory processes that are needed under the above circumstances. In addition, there is an overemphasis on trouble-shooting and complaint management while capacities for long term strategic planning are limited.

The specific needs for quality drinking and irrigation water, as well as water rights of poor communities and women are largely ignored.

Validated information on water resources, water supply infrastructure, demand for, and access to water services is either not available or incomplete, while simple systems to update information are almost inexistent.

Taken together, these issues constrain effective planning, decision-making and management of water resources and services. There is an important need to address these issues in order to tackle the increasing scarcities and conflicts in a region, at local, governorate and national levels. Addressing such issues and enhancing local water governance imply important commitments at both national and governorate policy levels.

The forum recognises the urgent need to adopt new paradigms and approaches, including:

Improved local water governance, which we understand to include all aspects of management, decision making and participatory planning around sustainable water resources management, water demand management, and water and sanitation service delivery, is crucial to achieve equitable development and management in countries with scarce water resources.

Good governance is essentially a political process which requires transparency, accountability, and integrity.

- Therefore, a political space is required to implement concrete and innovative participatory approaches to local water governance. Many different actors, from national governments to local end-users, have an important role in creating the necessary enabling environment (policy, legislation, accountability, funding, capacity development).
- The starting point as well as goal is therefore, the realization that integrated water resources management can only be effective and sustainable if responsibilities of relevant government agencies are shared with communities and other local stakeholders who directly use, draw benefits from, but are also largely dependent upon such resources.
- It is important that action is taken to promote such shared local water governance by developing methodologies and approaches tailored to the needs of local water resources developers, managers and end users, while taking into account national interests and priorities.
- As water shortages intensify, the many competing interests that exist in the use and allocation of water have to be respected and taken into account through a process of dialogue and concerted action. Differences in interests have to be reconciled by allocative and regulatory policies that are accepted and implemented by the formal and informal institutions that exercise authority over water.
- Local level ownership and accountability needs to be strengthened. Accountability for management measures – a requirement to improved access to and use of water resources - needs to be strengthened at both the level of end-users, communities, and local government agencies. This often depends on the degree that direct benefits, adequate knowledge and access to resources and information are ensured. *Access and control at local levels over an important resource such as water can be considered as a basic human right. Indeed “Water is everybody’s business” and shared control implies a seat at the table, including for the underprivileged.*

Policy Recommendations

Principle I:

Local water governance should be based upon the integrated participation of all stakeholders and end-users at all levels

Given that local ownership and control over the use and management of water resources by end-users is a prerequisite for sustainable IWRM and good water governance, it is recommended that this be enabled through participation in management and governance related activities (planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation). Water's special nature means that while essential, participation at the local level is on its own not enough. Scale related issues including, but not limited to, up/downstream equity, require platforms for integrated decision making at levels from the international (trans-boundary) to the local. It is essential for good water governance that the visions and strategies developed at different levels are informed by, and do not contradict each other. Water management cannot be seen as being either purely 'bottom-up' or 'top-down'. Rather, the principle of 'subsidiarity' should apply: that is management decisions are decentralized to the lowest appropriate level. What is essential is the flow of information between the levels to ensure internal consistency.

A number of specific recommendations can be made relating to this principle:

- I.1. Develop a clear model for water development and management, with platforms for stakeholder participation at relevant levels from the trans-boundary to the local.
- I.2. Create a culture of participatory water planning and management within relevant institutions at all levels through mainstreaming of participatory approaches, methodologies and guidelines.
- I.3. Identify and implement mechanisms for public (or representative) participation in planning for the management of water resources, including:
 - I.3.1. the development of appropriate programmes and practices;
 - I.3.2. the allocation of adequate budgets, resources and capacity to decentralized levels; while providing these levels with an appropriate level of financial and administrative independence;
 - I.3.3. the creation of the necessary legal frameworks, with a particular focus on the development of legally recognized mechanisms for participation, and the legal recognition of local water management bodies (such as water user associations).
- I.4. Develop mechanisms and incentives for service providers to actively listen to and take into account the opinions of water users.

Principle II:

Especial efforts are required to include the marginalized groups in decision making

Larger, more organized, and wealthier water users will always find ways to make their voice heard during discussions and decision making about water management. However, for many poor and marginalized groups (especially poor women), special efforts are required to ensure and enable their participation. This is particularly the case where the increased trend towards privatization (and cost recovery generally) may bring additional burdens to the poorest, leading them into becoming more marginalized. Central and local governments have a special responsibility for ensuring that those groups do not suffer from additional burdens.

A number of specific recommendations can be made to this end:

- II.1. Ensuring flexibility when enforcing the requirements of making contributions to project costs, and paying user fees.
- II.2. Explicitly targeting the enhancement of the economic status of women and other marginalized groups through implementation of water based income generating projects.
- II.3. Establishment of women's associations, and providing them with a role in water related decision making.
- II.4. Water is everybody's business and shared control implies a seat at the table: To allow for the effective participation of local communities, in particular the marginalised, in decision making, adequate resources must be allocated for capacity building and awareness raising programmes on water related issues, and on the rights, roles, and responsibilities of the different stakeholders.
- II.5. Ensuring transparency in the distribution of projects, taking into consideration marginal locations. Increasing transparency in the selection of beneficiaries, based on objective needs-based criteria.



Principle III:

The efforts of all actors (government, donors, civil society) should be harmonized and should contribute to achieving agreed and locally owned visions and strategies

The efforts of all actors (government, donors, civil society, water users) should be harmonized to contribute to achieving agreed and locally owned visions and strategies, which are themselves embedded in and linked to similar visions and strategies at higher levels. Once a series of interlinked water development visions and strategies exist at levels from the local to the international it is essential that all key actors harmonize their actions and avoid overlapping or contradictory activities (regulatory, technical, and administrative) to achieve the vision.

To achieve this, a number of specific recommendations are made:

- III.1. Ensure that national IWRM plans, and other water development policies and strategies are reflected in linked strategies and plans at intermediate and local levels; and that local level plans are developed in a fully participatory manner.
- III.2. Ensure that at all levels of government, a clear commitment exists to achieving goals based on agreed visions and strategies, together with the necessary monitoring frameworks to clearly identify progress.
- III.3. Generate buy-in to local plans and strategies by decision makers within both national and international agencies through continuous advocacy for the attainment of the right to have enough and healthy water at a suitable price for all citizens.
- III.4. Create adequate management information systems to support integrated planning and allow monitoring and feedback on the achievement of strategies at all levels.
- III.5. Ensure community participation in the development of local strategies, supported by facilitators who are experienced in planning and evaluation at all points in the planning and implementing processes.
- III.6. Create platforms (or new institutions) to bring together different water agencies, particularly those relating to water and agriculture, and;
- III.7. Apply pressure on donor institutions (multilateral, bilateral, and INGOs) to harmonize their approaches and reduce bureaucracy.

Principle IV:

Capacity should be developed in relevant stakeholders at intermediate and end-user levels (media, local government, NGOs, CBOs) to enable their involvement in water resources planning and management

To enable decentralized local water governance, capacity building and organizational change is required, particularly in decentralized levels of government. Capacity for communication and facilitation is of particular importance, and should be developed to enable full end-user participation, build trust and mutual understanding among the various stakeholders at the different levels, and to narrow the gap between policy and practice. To this end, it is essential that resources be allocated for capacity building and awareness raising programmes, especially targeting mid-level and low-level management of governorate and non-governmental institutions.

Specific recommendations relating to this principle include:

- IV.1. Creation of mechanisms to support government institutions in making the necessary changes, and developing their policies.
- IV.2. Capacity building programmes in the effective facilitation of local water governance processes, for example through the creation of national level groups of trainers.
- IV.3. Development of the capacities of selected national civil society associations (NGOs) to play the role of the “facilitator” in local water governance, and recognition that this is a valid and credible role for NGO intervention.
- IV.4. Organisational and technical capacity building programmes targeting the community based organisations.



Principle V:

Water information should be considered a public good; and access to information should be enabled for all citizens

Participation of all stakeholders, including water users, in water governance can only be made meaningful if there is equal and open access to information regarding the status of water resources and water services. This is equally true at the transboundary and village level. There are strong tendencies to treat water information as a strategic (and hence restricted) good, however this is completely incompatible with efforts to develop integrated and participatory water governance.

For water information to be useful in the decisions making processes surrounding water governance, it needs to be:

- Reliable;
- Uncontested;
- Freely available;
- In a format that is relevant to the particular stakeholder.

To achieve this principle, the following actions are necessary:

- V.1. Advocate for the recognition of water-related information as a freely accessible public good.
- V.2. Build the capacities in management and treatment of information; particularly in data collection and analysis and in transforming the same into useful information that can be then disseminated to others.
- V.3. Systematically follow up and evaluate the impact of water related programs and projects. In addition, collect and make available data regarding the water status at all levels; and establish feedback mechanisms between intermediate level institutions and end-users;
- V.4. Promote a culture and ethics of providing feedback vertically and horizontally; and requiring inter-agency/inter-departmental information sharing;
- V.5. Harmonize the use of different information collection and storage approaches between countries, levels and institutions. This is particularly important for electronic data (i.e. GIS) which is currently highly fragmented.

Principle VI:

Locally appropriate solutions and tools (IT, PRA, participatory planning) should be developed through the use of participatory research and action

As well as capacity and proper support from the national level, local water governance also requires a wide range of tools and methodologies, only some of which currently exist, or have been made relevant to a certain region. Those developed by the EMPOWERS programme on participatory planning for water resources and stakeholder dialogue for concerted action go some way towards filling this gap as do those developed by others. However, they have been tested on a relatively limited scale and need to be re-contextualized for use in other countries and settings. Development of such tools, preferably within the context of ongoing nationally driven decentralization programmes is a priority. It is also important to develop a mindset among local government and other institutions that is open to actively searching for, experimenting with, and learning about innovative approaches as part of their daily work.

Specific recommendations relating to this principle include:

- VI.1. Further development and replication of the approaches, methodologies, and tools such as those developed by EMPOWERS and others working on water governance.
- VI.2. Creation of easily accessible (electronic) sites where tools and experiences are collated and explained in the local language.
- VI.3. Advocacy and capacity building of local actors to adopt an adaptive and learning based approach to their work and to actively experiment with new approaches.



Principle VII:

Awareness must be developed for informed participation in water governance

Effective participation in water governance can only happen when all actors are aware of the relevant issues, challenges and constraints facing water development in their region. Awareness covers a huge range of topics from the specialist to the more general. Key amongst them are awareness of the basic functioning of the water cycle, and up/downstream linkages; rights and responsibilities of water users and service providers; implications on other users of water, particularly of pollution; and the need to recognize the value of water services to eco-systems. Awareness raising takes many forms, from mass media to inclusion of key aspects in school and professional curricula.

Some specific areas of focus include:

- VII.1 Development of educational materials and resources for all levels and sectors (mass media, children, youth, local government, etc.).
- VII.2 Development of mass media campaigns relating to
 - VII.2.1. IWRM and the current status of water scarcity in a region and the likely future trends of water availability and use;
 - VII.2.2. the importance of multi-stakeholders participation in water management;
 - VII.2.3. innovative approaches for water demand management; and
 - VII.2.4. reporting of best practices and lessons learned.
- VII.3. Establishment of a regional network on participatory and local-level approaches to water governance.
- VII.4. Collection, consolidation and making available of existing environmental education materials developed in a particular region, such as the MENA Region.
- VII.5. Inclusion of non-traditional (non-engineering) aspects of IWRM within higher education curricula (including facilitating local-level participation, water demand management, cultural and socio-economic aspects of water governance).
- VII.6. Development of specialized training programmes in local-level IWRM for practitioners with emphasis on public participation approaches.
- VII.7. Encouragement of research institutions to focus on demand-led research (end - user guided and policy oriented), and of decision-makers to adopt research results in formulating policies.

