

Local Action for Integrated Water Resources Management

Workshop and Field Visit

26 - 28 July 2006

Phakalane Golf Estate and Hotel Resort, Gaborone, Botswana



Final Report



Hosted by the Kalahari Conservation Society (KCS) in Gaborone, Botswana, from 26 to 28 July 2006 the workshop and field visit on 'Local Action for Integrated Water Resources Management' convened 43 representatives from local governments, municipal associations, national governments, international organisations, and institutes specialising on environmental and particularly water issues. With only a few exceptions, the participants came from Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, i.e. from the countries sharing the Limpopo river basin.

After a welcome address by Mr Joe Matome, Chairman of KCS, Mr Boikobo Paya, Director of Water Affairs in Botswana, officially opened the workshop. Ms Maria Lisa Santonocito of the European Commission provided the keynote presentation.

The workshop was organised in the context of the European Commission financed project 'LoGo Water – Towards effective involvement of local government in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in river basins of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region'.

1. Objective and content of workshop

Overall objective of the workshop was to explore how local governments can contribute to the management of their water resources through an 'integrated' approach, i.e. through *Integrated Water Resources Management*. The principles of integration refer, for example, to a wider involvement of stakeholders, the simultaneous consideration of different water uses, upstream/downstream effects and impacts, and the cross-sector coordination of different local government departments.

IWRM is indispensable for a local government's sound performance in key areas of its responsibilities. Among others, those responsibilities are the provision of equal access to clean water for all, taking precautionary environmental health measures for the community, making adequate decisions in land-use planning, or handling solid waste and waste water in a way that is neither harming people nor the environment.

The participants of the workshop were introduced to the background, principles and benefits of IWRM and learned about tools and challenges of stakeholder involvement. They also exchanged their views on the opportunities, constraints and needs of local governments to engage in IWRM.

2. Summary of interesting points raised during the discussions

The workshop was conducted with several small group sessions so that all participants had ample opportunity for sharing their own experiences and expressing their opinions and suggestions.

The following paragraphs only capture selected results of the manifold discussions. The LoGo Water partners will keep these results of the workshop in mind during their future project activities.

Needs and challenges

- **Local governments and the water cycle**
It is important that local government politicians and practitioners get a better understanding of the impact of their own activities on the water cycle, and – vice versa – on how the water cycle affects their activities.
- **Dialogue with stakeholders**
Local governments have to become aware about the impact of the activities of other local and regional actors – or stakeholders - on the local situation and the resulting need for these actors to become part of water resources management.
- **Learning by stakeholders**
Taking people on board of a stakeholder process does not necessarily mean that they have the right competence in all issues addressed. People learn while being part of the process, but some specific information and training sessions might also be necessary.
- **NGOs contributing to better information sharing**
Enhancing water resources management needs a reliable basis of information. Using different sources of information increases its reliability. NGOs often play an important role in information sharing and knowledge management.
- **Getting communication right**
Effective communication is essential for the meaningful involvement of all relevant stakeholders. The identification of stakeholders might be relatively easy, whereas the real challenge lies in making the best use of their involvement by establishing

functioning mechanisms for communication. People who are not included or not satisfied with their involvement can be destructive to the process. Effective IWRM therefore highly depends on the right way of 'talking with people'.

- Needs of the poor
Especially needs of poor people are often not addressed with the necessary attention, and they tend towards losing out when it comes to the development of solutions. Specific emphasis needs to be put on getting their voices heard and on involving them in the process in an equal manner.
- Technical knowledge not presented in user-friendly way
Expert knowledge on water issues is often presented in a technical language that is not comprehensible for local government practitioners.
- De-mystification of IWRM
Local government and other local stakeholders are usually interested in providing their contribution to water resources management, but at the same time feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the IWRM concept. IWRM needs to be 'de-mystified'. This can be done, for example, by providing:
 - simple, illustrative documents in the form of guidelines and tools; and
 - case studies that make IWRM 'real' for local government, i.e. that link IWRM to their institutional realities.
- Local governments and regional or catchment level water institutions
The role and involvement of local governments in the new water institutions at regional and catchment level needs to be enhanced. Local governments should be represented as full members of these institutions. But more thoughts need to be given on how this representation can work out best.
- The role of politics
Power games, one-sided political interests and hidden agendas can distort some people's good intentions for improved water resources management and are not easy to overcome. On the other hand, water *is* politics, and decisions about water management are political by definition. It is therefore crucial that these political processes are as transparent as possible.
- Financing
Having the necessary finances for better water resources management in its own local government budget increases self-determination and empowers local governments to take decisions that are tailor-made to their local situation.
- Lack of accountability of civil servants
Whereas poor local government performance can make politicians lose their position, civil servants often remain in their jobs. Furthermore, they often report to the national level, not to their mayors.
- Development of African solutions
Ultimately, African politicians, practitioners and water experts have to develop their own solutions in water resources management and decide by themselves which approaches developed in Europe could be of use for their situation.

Opportunities

- Political will in place
There is visible political will in the region to support local government participation in water resources management.

- A lot of ways to get started
The principle of integration can be applied across a range of different scales; it is not necessary to wait for catchment level or national initiatives. Applying IWRM principles can start from local or small-scale situations.

3. Evaluation by participants

Approximately 40 % of the participants used the workshop's evaluation form to provide the organisers with their written feedback.

All of them confirmed that they had gained new insights into IWRM through the event. This mainly referred to the specific notion of integration and its importance in water resources management. Also the practical examples of the application of IWRM principles were appreciated.

The majority of the sessions were rated as "very useful" both in terms of the presentation of information, but also in terms of the opportunities for getting actively engaged in the discussions. The role game simulating a local council meeting and a public hearing turned out to be most participants' favourite session.

On the other hand the participants also mentioned some issues that they did not find sufficiently addressed or that were missing altogether. Among these are the involvement of women, NGOs and the private sector in IWRM, transboundary integration, financial aspects, and matters related to the communication between the different stakeholders.

Some of the participants felt inspired through the workshop to take some action when returning back to their work places. In most cases, there were consideration on the involvement of certain stakeholders in on-going activities, such as inviting municipalities to a Basin Committee or mobilising the community on issues that have an impact on IWRM.

The evaluation questionnaire also asked for recommendations concerning the local government guidelines for IWRM which are currently under preparation. Participants highlighted the need for a user-friendly format of these guidelines and a focus on practical steps and also examples on how to engage in IWRM. Equally important is the national and regional coordination of such guidelines and a clear link to the national legislation that defines the mandates of local government. Collaboration with municipal associations such as SALGA in South Africa can help embedding the guidelines in national policies.

The participants encouraged the project partners to keep the momentum going that was created through the discussion during the workshop. It was also suggested organising further events of this nature, maybe even annual workshops. In any case, the participants have expressed their interest in being kept posted about the further progress of the project and other developments in the IWRM sector that are relevant for local governments.

Once again, the importance of a close link to the national municipal associations was emphasised.

The project partners have taken note of the positive feedback and – until at least the end of the project in Dec. 2007 - will link the participants in a LoGo Water network. The members of this network will be regularly informed through the LoGo water newsletter and also receive all main outputs of the project.

4. Media coverage

The workshop received great attention from the media.

An extensive report was broadcast by Botswana television twice on the second day of the workshop (Setswana news and English news). This included an interview with Barbara Anton of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the coordinator of the LoGo Water project.

A further interview with Eben Chonguica from IUCN, Mozambique Office, which was held during the field trip on the third day, was shown on the following day.

The Botswana Guardian, a national weekly newspaper, featured the workshop in their edition of 28 July 2006.

This report has been compiled by Barbara Anton and Francesca Schraffl, ICLEI European Secretariat, in coordination with all LoGo Water project partners.

More information about LoGo Water can be found at:

www.iclei-europe.org/logowater



Visit to the Department of Water Affairs

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