REG 5 - Regulatory and organizational issues of decentralized water management

Information, education and participation in decentralised water management – challenges, success factors and practical experiences

Melanie Muro, NKE Public Participation

Description of session objectives, structure and outcomes

There are many factors that influence successful decentralised water management. Stakeholder involvement and public participation are important tools to achieve the goals and objective set out by decentralised approaches to and arrangements for decentralised water management. By the same token, decentralisation is usually assumed to provide better opportunities for participation by local communities in decision-making by opening up new channels for citizens input and encouraging participation in the management or ownership of assets, resources and services. Participation is thought to both enhance the quality of decisions, e.g. by contributing local knowledge, as well as their implementation by increasing environmental awareness, acceptance and conflict resolution as part of the planning and decision-making process. Yet, in practice participatory approaches often fail to reach their goals due to inadequate process design or preparation. Water managers committed to involving the public in the planning or management process face the challenge that there is no agreed 'best' format for participation meaning that participation mechanisms need to be tailored to the specific needs and objectives of each context.

The objectives of this session on public and stakeholder participation were as follows:

- To establish a common understanding of key concepts and principles of stakeholder engagement.
- To explore how different institutional arrangements can affect participation and planning outcomes.
- To share and discuss practical participation experiences to identify challenges and key factors for success.

The session employed a mix of presentations and group discussions to explore and illustrate how effective participation can be implemented and promoted in the context of decentralized planning and management of water resources and was structured into three parts:

- Introduction
    - *Public participation - When, why and how?*
    - *How to make it work? – Exploring challenges and strategies for realizing the potential of participation*
- Breakout session (facilitated exercise):
    - Sharing of experiences
    - Identification of key challenges and possible strategies to respond to these challenges
- Plenary session: Presentation of group discussions

Participants identified the following *key challenges* for successful stakeholder and public participation:

1. Lack of legal and institutional basis for participation.
2. Lack of participation initiatives at local level.
3. Limited political commitment and resources to fund participative initiatives.
4. No continuity of processes or follow-up actions once processes are completed.
5. No funding/funding for sustained participation (only one-off processes).
6. Insufficient participation capacities and skills public/stakeholders <u>and</u> authorities.
7. Beneficiaries have limited awareness of (project/planning impacts) and therefore little motivation to participate.
8. Roles and responsibilities of all actors involved are unclear.
9. Lack of transparency, openness, information-sharing.
10. Not all relevant interests and beneficiaries are included/represented.
11. Lack of participation traditions and culture.
12. Mixed ownership of water resources.
13. Lack of public awareness/understanding of interconnectedness of water system and uses.
14. Lack of institutional trust.
15. Public is not involved in evaluation of policy impact or service performance.

Participants identified the following strategies to tackle some of these challenges (number of challenge include in brackets);

- Institutionalizing participation at local level (1 and 2).
- Establish a regular schedule of meetings (4, 5, 11, 14 and 15).
- Establish mechanisms to allow for co-financing of participation processes by beneficiaries (3 and 7).
- Allocate clear roles and responsibilities to participants and authorities (8, 9 and 14.)

Annex 1 – Detailed notes from the break-out session

GROUP 1 (English-speaking group)

1. Experiences

- **Egypt:** Board of user associations represents local user associations (1000s in Egypt) and reports to the ministry; associations include representatives of farmers, authorities and municipalities. Their exact role and function is not formalized but will be soon through a reform of the national water act; there is also a lack of funding for these local groups; at regional level, the Ministry has established five regional fora to support the implementation of the national water plan.
- **Israel:** Participant reports from one area where the source of domestic water supply was changed from a groundwater aquifer to desalinated water resulting in a colour change of the water; domestic users were concerned and started complaining to the water supplier; in response, the responsible authority set up public awareness campaigns and supplied comprehensive information to the public to explain the change of water sources and the discoloration; this process is ongoing.
- **Jordan:** there are only project-related participation activities as there is no integrated or comprehensive water management plan or strategy.
- **Palestine:** Palestine has established a comprehensive participation process to accompany and support the development and implementation of the National Strategy for the Water Sector. During the development of the strategy, bi-lateral meetings and workshops ensure the integration of stakeholder views in the design; the implementation of the Strategy relies on the active involvement of various actors, such as NGOs who implement specific activities. Each activity is in turn overseen by a Steering Committee which includes representatives of a diverse set of interests and organisations.
- **Syria:** Experiences with the design and implementation of one WASH project were reported. A WASH Buerau was set up in a village including farmers, technical experts, representatives of the health services and key community leaders. The objective was to decide on funding priorities for water supply (old wells/pumps) and then implement technical options and a tariff system. The Bureau successfully improved water supply and implemented a tariff system which was widely supported by the community. Reasons for success include transparency of the decision-making process and the engagement of key community leaders. The community was continuously invomed and involved through publications, social media, announcements by the mosque, surveys etc.

2. Challenges

1. Ownership of water resources
2. Lack of public awareness of interconnectedness of water system/downstream-upstream problems
3. Lack of funding of participation processes
4. Functions/roles are not clearly defined/formalized
5. Lack of capacity/skills of authorities/staff to engage with the public
6. Lack of institutional trust
7. Evaluation of policy impact/Service performance

3. Challenges

Not discussed.

GROUP 2 (French-speaking group)

1. Experiences

What? Elaboration d'un Forum de l'eau (représentants des usagers at acteurs en Tunesie)
Why**?** Usages multiples ressources limitées; exploitation abusive et non-concertée;
Who? organisme public, société civile, associations, groupement d'exploitants

What? Etablissement des contrats des nappes
Why? Sauvegarde des ressources d'eau souterrain du point de vue qualitative et quantitative;
Who? Départements ministériels, collectivités locales, ONG…
How? Plusieurs réunions de concertation et de sensibilisation.
When? Devant la situation critique de surexploitation des nappes, c'est devenue urgent

What? Elaboration de la charte lors de l'allocation de ressources
How? Sensibilisation, identification des usages, information, formation, implication.
When? 2015-2016.

2. Challenges

1. Lack of participation initiatives at local level
2. No continuity of processes or follow-up actions once processes are completed
3. No funding/funding for sustained participation (only one-off processes)
4. Lack of identification/definition of key institutions, stakeholders and beneficiaries
5. Incomplete information of beneficiaries
6. Lack of capacities and skills
7. Loss of participation traditions
8. Lack of respect for legal basis
9. Lack of legal and institutional basis
10. Lack of participation culture

3. Strategies (relevant challenges in brackets)

- Institutionalizing participation at local level (1 and 9)
- Schedule regular meetings/formalize meeting plan (2)
- Co-financing of participation processes (3)
- Allocate clear roles and responsibilities to participants and authorities (4)

Annex 2 - Photos from the break-out sessions

Egypt

Ministry

5 fora to implement nat'le water resources plan

Board of user association (local level)

User associations
- farmer
- authorities
- municipalities

No legal status (about to limited funding change)

NGO

Jordan

only project - related particip.

Egypt

Palestine

P. throughout planning + implement. process

Nat'l strategy for water sector

Participation

Development

Workshops Meetings

Steering committee

Implementation of projects / activities

e.g. NGO implementing activity

Syria

Decide funding priorities for village water supply

"WASH Bureau"
- Farmers
- Technicians
- Health
- Neighbourhood representatives

In charge of £
→ Implementation

Sucess factors
• Transparent funding/ spending
• Engagement of key SH

Broad P
• Public information
• Social media
• Mosque

Israel

Change from GW to
desalinated water

⮡ public acceptance

⮡ raise awareness

⮡ education / information
sharing

Challenge	Strategy
o Ownership of water resources	
o Lack of public awareness (regional differences)	
o Funding	
o Function / role	
o Capacity of authorities / staff / operators to engage w/ public	
o Institutional trust (Evaluation of performance)	