

WORLD WATER COUNCIL

AFRICITIES – Special session – Wednesday, September 20, 2006.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The participants of the special session on facilitating the strengthening of local authorities for meeting the water challenges, after their discussions,

Considering that

- In Africa, 300 million people do not have access to safe water and 313 million people do not have access to basic sanitation, especially in informal settlements and slums.
- It is now proven that following the methods used, Africa will not reach the MDGs for water and sanitation. Therefore, there is a need for a paradigm shift that will question the approaches and strategies followed so far and review the financial and institutional mechanisms used.
- Water is mainly a local issue because it is locally that people experience shortage of water even if water comes from far away. As the closest to the population, Local Government is therefore the most appropriate level to ensure access to water and sanitation services.
- If local action is important then effective decentralisation is the key element. It is important to understand how in reality decentralisation is conducted. Local governments will never be able to provide fair and efficient services if they are not fully enabled.
- The lack of capacity of local authorities is reported one of the main constraints in achieving the MDGs in Africa. Central governments have transferred the responsibilities for these provisional services more and more to their Local authorities as part of decentralization processes. However, this transfer of responsibilities is often not accompanied with the transfer of human resources, technical know how and fiscal powers.
- Sustainability calls for a people based approach and a new governance system which is more participatory.

Recommend

In general:

- All actors to focus on a concerted strengthening of the human, financial and technical capacities of Local Government and their water authorities.
- Relevant authorities or agencies for water services provision improve their coordination through joint planning, programming and budgeting processes.
- To ensure that money for water is effectively used for water and that this is accompanied with effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms. Mechanisms should be put in place to allow people to have a better control on the use of money allocated for local actions.
- For this local action to be sustainable it should built on strong legitimate institutions with clear written mandate, rules and procedures. That is why we call for a partnership between local stakeholders under the leadership of local governments.
- There is a need to start or intensify the dialogue between central governments and local governments on this governance issue in water.
- To enhance exchange of experiences and knowledge through interlinking of the regional organisations dealing with water utilities, local government and other associations through the establishment of an African Water Council.

Central Government:

- To give higher priority to water in their development plans and budgets,
- To make every effort in order to implement true decentralisation policies.
- To develop their policy and regulatory framework to enable Local Government to get adequate access to human and financial resources required to develop and manage their water services in a sustainable way.
- To enable, through adaptation of the legal framework, Local Government to develop water services in informal settlements and slums.

Local Government:

- To adopt water development strategies based on long-term plans to ensure financial, technical and environmental sustainability of water and sanitation services where individual projects can fit in to avoid projects which are not based on the demand and vision of local people. This includes the financial autonomy of water services (all allocated water revenues must be used for water).

- To give higher priority to water in their development plans and budgets, not only to get more people served but also to maintain the infrastructures and services.
- To be strengthened in making of policies and regulations to enable transparent and accountable management of water services.
- To engage in full scale action in sensitizing communities on possibilities of water service delivery, their rights and obligations. After raising awareness, to involve these communities in the process of planning and financing of services delivery through dialogues.
- To adapt their legal framework to develop water services in informal settlements and slums.

The donors and International financing institutions:

- To focus their aid efforts on strengthening the Local Government and their authorities through facilitating development of and access to local financial markets, leverage other money, transfer of knowledge and transparent and accountable water governance.
- To support financially the elaboration of comprehensive water services development plans and strategies ensuring that local action is conducted in a coherent manner.
- To support strengthening of the local capacity to research and develop local solutions.
- To better use funding mechanisms for projects preparation and for a program of capacity building.