

Today's Snapshot



We all need to take action to meet the challenge of water resource scarcity and degradation and the lack of access to water and sanitation

Children's artwork for the Youth Forum

The 5th World Water Forum comes to a close: it is time to take action!

The 5th World Water Forum comes to a close on Sunday. This final newsletter covering the events of the week has sought to inform and mobilise all the readers and stakeholders of the sector. The Forum ends with recommendations and hopes for the future: in particular, to reduce the inequality of access to water and sanitation. We must all carry the messages, in the North and the South, to users and political decision makers to stimulate change in the sector. The 5th World Water Forum was a place to listen and to dialogue. Let us continue that dialogue in each of our organisations, to listen to the demands of the populations for whom we work in order to better meet their needs in a sustainable manner.

Decentralised Cooperation: consolidating practices and increasing synergies with donors

On Friday, at the French pavilion a side event was organised by the Association of Mayors of large French Cities (AMGVF, www.grandesvilles.org), and Cités Unies France (CUF, www.cites-unies-france.org), with the support of pS-Eau.

The first "Local Part" presented a review of stakeholders in decentralised cooperation, their actions and the impact in the field. The Mayor of Angers presented their actions in the peripheral areas of Bamako; Lyon Urban Council presented its programme to build capacities of local water management stakeholders in Madagascar ; Nantes Metropole presented

lessons learned from its experiences of applying the Oudin Law. The City of Paris insisted on the need to coordinate actions and involve users. The city of Nancy-Maxeville highlighted the way all stakeholders in a given area are mobilised around the issue of water.

The subsequent animated debate highlighted the need to focus decentralised cooperation actions on rural areas which are often overlooked. In light of Mayors' lack of resources and technical staff, there is a marked need to share the skills of French local authorities. In more general terms, three key needs were identified to which decentralised cooperation actions should attach greater importance: the awareness of citizens in the North, the training of partners in the South and the maintenance of water and sanitation service installations.

A second "National Part" recalled the way the framework for decentralised cooperation evolved in France, in particular the key laws of 1982 and 1992 as well as the specific law for actions for water and sanitation, the Oudin Law of 2005. This second part of the event gave a detailed review of the diversity of operations carried out by the different levels of decentralised governance in France: *département*, region, syndicates of drinking water or sewerage, and water agency.

Jacques Oudin, author of the law that bears his name, indicated that the sums mobilised are not enough to support large scale projects. Among the possible options for pooling resources in order to increase impact in the field, participants mentioned the mobilisation of several partners around a regional initiative or the support of basin organisations which can bring consistency

to actions as well as providing valuable expertise.

The debate also underlined the lack of awareness of the Oudin Law by the local authorities and the need to benefit from lessons already learned. However, there are structures for exchange and debate that exist in France: the *groupe d'échange* of the National Commission for Decentralised Cooperation, the National Water Committee and pS-Eau. It is up to the local authorities to mobilise, to use the guides and tools that exist which propose lists of actions and stakeholders in decentralised cooperation. (www.pseau.org/cdng). A publication launched during the forum (www.pseau.org) identifies various mechanisms of solidarity for water from around Europe. Indeed, it seems necessary to better share among European countries the diversity of practices and to exchange and coordinate to increase the impact of actions and obtain greater support from donors.

Indeed, the third "Europe and International" Part focused on improving synergies between donors and decentralised and non-governmental cooperation. To meet this challenge, donors do seem to recognise the importance of decentralised cooperation. It constitutes a further lever, fulfils a key role in capacity building and is one of the rare mechanisms capable of accompanying partners in the South in the long term. This generalised approval nonetheless comes up against the problem of how to coordinate actions in the field and ensure that the actions of donors and decentralised cooperation can work together. On this point, the participants agreed that with relatively uniform and centralised French ODA, decentralised cooperation should be appreciated for

what it is: a wide range of actors, actions and methods of intervention.

In line with the Paris Declaration on aid harmonisation, this diversity and freedom of action which directly supports local authorities and stakeholders should not lead us to forget the need to respect national frameworks, the only guarantors of long-term effectiveness. Donors present at the event highlighted the fact that decentralised cooperation effectiveness is multiplied ten-fold if it is used as a lever to mobilise larger sums from financial institutions.

Budget aid, sectoral aid, decentralisation of aid, the key issue seems indeed to be supporting local and national institutions so that a democratic debate can ensure that external aid goes where it is intended.

The other key point of the debate was the need to make aid to local authorities of the South more accessible, whether it be by avoiding the pointless increase in difficulty of procedures for submitting proposals or by avoiding cross financing of multilateral programmes.

In conclusion, Charles Josselin, President of Cités Unies France and former minister of cooperation, formulated recommendations focusing on the wholehearted recognition of decentralised and non-governmental cooperation as a contributor to access to water and sanitation for all. He highlighted the importance of donors bringing further financing to these actions thanks to this recognition. The deployment of decentralised cooperation actions and their sustainability also need a better circulation of information at European scale on the initiatives based on solidarity as well as set budgets so actions can be planned in the long term. Finally, the last recommendation concerned the need for a

multi-faceted cooperation that is provided by decentralised cooperation with a view to meeting the many different facets of development.

Water for the Cities of Tomorrow

Today, more than 50% of the world's population lives in cities, in a context of increasing demographic pressure. Based on this fact, the Seine Normandy Water Agency (www.eau-seine-normandie.fr), with the support of other partners, organised a side event on "Water in Tomorrow's Cities" at the French pavilion. The event discussed future perspectives on the role and place of water in towns and cities for the period 2020-2050. Participants agreed on the need to integrate water issues into urban planning strategies from the outset. The harvesting of rainwater and recycling of waste water were identified as promising options in contexts where resources are far away or becoming scarcer. Debates concentrated on issues relating to sustainable development and technological

effectiveness. From these debates, two key outlooks for the future came to the fore, which should direct water policy for the coming years: on the one hand the use of new resources in the light of climate change, and on the other the raising of public awareness of environmental issues to encourage new relationships with water.

Last Minute News: the concerns of local authorities present in Istanbul

As this newsletter was being finalised, local and regional authorities manifested their concerns as regards the ministerial declaration of the 5th World Water Forum. The latter does not cite local authorities as key players in water management issues. From local authorities' point of view, the declaration of Istanbul represents a clear regression of the recognition of their role and responsibilities in terms of access to water and to sanitation services (www.cities-localgovernments.org).

For the latest on the final events of the 5th World Water Forum:

www.worldwaterforum5.org