



SESSION REPORT

TITLE OF THE SESSION

FT4.06 Capacity Building in the MENA Region: Ministerial Panel

SESSION CONVENERS

InWEnt Capacity Building International
AWC Arab Water Council

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

1. Members of the Ministerial Panel

Dr. Mahmoud Abu-Zeid, Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt

Dr. R. Zargar, Deputy Minister for Water Affairs, Iran

Dr. Benzekri El Mehdi, State Secretary in Charge of Water, Morocco

Dr. Fadle Sa'ed Al-Gawash, Minister of Water Affairs, Palestine

Walid Abdel Rahim, Minister of Agriculture, Palestine

Dr. Abdul Qader Hanash, Assistant Deputy Minister for Water and Environment, Yemen

CONVENORS GENERAL REMARKS ABOUT THE SESSION

The main objectives of the session were

- to promote human resources development through capacity building at the example of the local actions programmes by InWEnt and the Egyptian Hydraulics Research Institute in the MENA Region;
- to receive feedbacks by the expert panel of ministers and the experts in the plenary;

- to serve as a platform of exchange, to contribute to harmonisation with other local actions in the region and to help to establish new partnerships; and finally
- to come up with concrete conclusions and recommendations on strengthening local action for capacity building.

SYNOPSIS

The lead questions that were posed by the Chair to the panel members were the following:

- Where do you see the challenges and opportunities with the approaches presented before in the two local actions for your country?
- What are the added values of regional programmes in comparison to local and national ones?
- What is the current status of knowledge and experience transfer within the MENA Region? Is it enough? How can it be improved in terms of processes? Who should do it?
- What initiatives exist for donor harmonisation? What are the lessons learnt? What do you expect of it? How can the harmonization be further increased to specifically address national priorities and needs?

LOCAL ACTIONS PRESENTED DURING THE SESSION

LA0097 Capacity Building for the Water Sector in the MENA Region. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), improvement of the water sector performance has become highly imperative. The region is facing increasingly water stress due to limited availability and high population growth. Inappropriate technologies and inefficient management techniques often cannot supply urban and rural water users sufficiently. The water scarcity varies, but per capita availability is often less than 1000 m³ annually, a figure considered essential by the World Water Commission. Access to water is anticipated to diminish unless significant processes of reform are made. Some countries in the MENA region lack basic water institutions; others display fragmented institutional structures, or overlapping decision-making structures, which often exclude users' demands and civil society. Moreover, water is a matter of regional cooperation – many MENA countries face similar challenges, and many share basins and rivers.

Thus, reform of the water sector requires not only the adoption of an Integrated Water Resources Management and of modern water policy guidelines, but the promotion of regional and international cooperation as well. Participation of all stakeholders concerned is another core element for

keeping the region's waters flowing. This includes capacity building and empowerment of the public and private sectors as well as community organizations to realize and fulfil their roles.

InWEnt-Capacity Building International, acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, has formulated a four-year Program on Capacity Building in the Water Sector for the MENA Region, focusing in eight countries: Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Yemen, to contribute to water sector performance improvement by providing widespread capacity building measures. Altogether about 40 activities are planned.

The objective is to support reform processes which make a significant contribution to a sustainable use of water resources and to combat poverty. In order to achieve this objective, we strengthen technical and methodical competence and aim at building platforms for regional cooperation. Our target is to connect experts and decision-makers working on different levels and actors of civil society through the establishment of lively networks.

The outputs of the program will include the improvement of human and organizational performance of the water sectors concerned, the awareness of policy-makers of the priority issues involved, and a functional regional network within the MENA Region.

LA Regional Training and Education Center. The MENA Region is characterized by the arid climate. This climatic zone frames the water sector in a particularly challenging picture.

Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) of Egypt is a gigantic institution with around 70,000 employees. Since 1982, its internal capacity building needs have been mandated to the Regional Center for Training and Water Studies in Arid and Semi-Arid Zones (RCTWS) and its predecessors, until 1994 called the Training Department and until then by 2002 the Training Center / MWRI.

Now the RCTWS is a large-scale institution with international recognition and established partnerships with organisations such as the UNESCO. The mission of the center is to contribute to capacity management in the field of IWRM, water engineering and water-related sciences. The activities are directed to managers, professionals, engineers, technicians and administrative staff in Egypt as well as Arab, African and other Arid and Semi-arid Countries of the Region. The main function is to create, design, prepare and to carry out regional training and education programs in all relevant aspects of IWRM for various level of expertise, which meets the demands of the 21st century.

The training and capacity building activities have been organised under three portfolios or plans which are the Nile Basin and African Plan, the Regional

Plan for Arid and Semi-Arid Region, and the National Plan. The key activities include

- Developing the skills of the Ministry's staff members in accordance with Egypt's national policies.
- Providing specialized training to help professional and non-professional staff members working in different water sectors public work activities to upgrade their skills and knowledge.

The activities are voluminous with around 165 training programs offered yearly.

An example of a relevant training program in this context is the Applied Training Program for Nile Basin Countries, hosted by RCTWS, which contributes to strengthening the capacity of water professionals in the Basin, including women, to adopt the IWRM practices. Central features include the facilitation of interchange of expertise and experience among basin institutions and professionals to strengthen the Nile water fraternity. This includes the stimulation of a dialogue among riparian countries, in order to allow the undertaking collaborative enterprises for mutually beneficial purposes.

LA0178 Capacity Building and Networking for the Water Sector in the Nile River Basin. Rapid population growth coupled with limited water resources and environmental degradation are facts affecting most of the transboundary river basin countries in Africa. About 50% of the Nile Basin countries are categorised within the poorest ten countries in the world.

In 1995, as a direct response to these challenges, The Hydraulics Research Institute HRI and UNESCO-IHE-Delft took the initiative to start regional training courses at HRI to transfer the scientific and technical expertise in Hydraulic Engineering and related subjects to countries of the East African region.

The project has succeeded to create national networks in six countries and six regional research clusters (including thirteen research groups); each to study and focus on a specific research topic and to be led by a Nilotic country: Egypt (GIS and Modeling), Sudan (River Morphology), Ethiopia (River Structures), Kenya (Flood Management), Uganda (Environmental Aspects), Tanzania (Hydropower Development). It is worthwhile to mention that all the ten Nile basin countries are contributing to the research activities and benefit from the training activities in the various clusters. This phase of the project ended in June 2004.

Based on the achievements of the first phase of the projects, an initiative on "Establishing a Nile Basin Capacity Building Network for River Engineering (NBCBN-RE)", as a second phase of the project, is launched, with the support of the Dutch Government. This Initiative has regional ambitions in building and strengthening human resources and institutional capacity for a sound development of water resources in the Nile basin.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Policy connection: Many training and capacity building needs emerge from sectoral reforms and technological advance. Training is a key part of administrative and government reforms, which are acute in a majority of MENA Countries.
- The asset of linked levels: Linking the different organisational levels from local to national and regional has proven very valuable. In some cases the awareness and capacity building for high-level decision makers including politicians has proven to be very cost-effective. Also grassroots level activities dealing with indigenous skills and informal mechanisms have in certain cases proven successful. Horizontal and vertical integration is an instrumental requirement for thriving programs.
- Two sides of a coin: Human performance improvement goes together with organisational performance improvement.
- From application to orientation: strengthen governance competence in order to anticipate development and to take appropriate decisions towards the future which is full of uncertainties and in which the challenges may differ substantially from the contemporary ones.
- The missing link: Regional knowledge, networking and dissemination – the asset of comparative knowledge

KEY MESSAGES

There was a broad consensus on capacity building needs in local, national but in particular in the regional dimension. Regional activities seem to mushroom and the need for such programs is obvious.

The regional dimension was seen particularly valuable in the MENA Region today. The sharing of experience and data, creating networks, and so forth are issues that would bring the water sector of the MENA Countries forward and broaden the national focus to a regional one.

South-south co-operation could be enhanced by the development of regional financing instruments and institutions. The MENA Region includes several high-income countries and the finances for regional programs could come much more from the regional sources than the case is today. The MENA countries are infamous for allocating exceptionally low share of national budgets to education and training.

Donor harmonisation was seen necessary in the discussion. This need popped up in several comments, from a number of countries. Equally pressing is the need to coordinate the multitude of capacity building and training activities, both in the national

and regional scale. Dialogues exist but the need to boost the dialogues was seen important.

There is a pungent need for the assessment and invention of regional activities and coordinating them in order to cut overlaps, increase efficiency and to allow more strategic-type of operations.

In this context, allocating the developemnt of a regional capacity building strategy and the coordination of its activities under a single institution—the Arab Water Council or some other one—was mentioned in several interventions.

The training programs respond to a wide array of capacity building needs. In many cases, the highly educated trainers are a bottleneck and therefore university links have been increasingly recognised. Long term training programs seem to be short in supply.

Many training activities are being linked to research, and the tendency seems to be to move from knowledge management to knowledge development. The MENA Region is still seen too much as a knowledge consumer but it should move towards being a producer of knowledge. At the same time, a caution is at place for keeping the applied research close enough to practical needs.

The organisations that act in the water sector should recognise that capacity building is a part of their business. Ownership and commitment in human and financial terms calls for amplification.

Water sector is a sector in its own right, but at the same time water is an important aspect within many other sectors. Social sciences, economics and environmental sciences are among many fields that water experts must increasingly cope with throughout the MENA Region.

Distance learning, the use of internet and other modern communication means is in rapid development in the region, as all the three local actions showed. The possibilities are however still not fully tapped but instead there exists an extensive growth potential.

ORIENTATIONS FOR ACTION

- It should be recognised that whereas water resources are extremely scarce in the MENA Region, the water problems are dominantly related to governance and management shortcomings. Human resources shortcomings are a key part of the water scarcity problem. Therefore, education, capacity building and organisational development constitute a crucial cornerstone for the development of the water sector in the MENA Region.
- The MENA Region has a growing number of successful and fruitful regional capacity building and training programmes such as the three ones that were reported as local actions in this session. The need for such programmes is obvious and increasing. One option could be to attribute such coordination task under one single regional organisation. These programmes should be

coordinated more than now. A more strategic and comprehensive approach would be beneficial in order to overcome the existing problems of small units, fragmentation, competition and so forth.

- The financing models and mechanisms call for substantial development. The regional investment to capacity building is exceptionally low in the global comparison, although the region includes several economically flourishing countries and areas. The commitment and ownership of clients of capacity building organisations should be enhanced and developed, and the growing role of the private sector should be recognised in this context.