

MEETING CHALLENGES OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN DRINKING WATER & SANITATION (Working Group 17, November 27)

1. *Overview Session*

Current efforts at decentralization and scaling up in the watsan sector need to be intensified and integrated. The convergence of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene is still to emerge. In this context, the importance of knowledge management (KM) demands recognition. Water users in particular need KM resources, support and skills in their effort to assume and discharge new responsibilities.

'Knowledge Management' is a phrase constantly used and constantly confused with information management and the application of ICT. While knowledge management includes these aspects, it is distinct in its understanding of knowledge as an individual, intellectual process. There is an urgent need to understand KM correctly, and thus to use it more intelligently.

KM should be respected and used as an essential component of democratic governance, and as important to achievement of goals of justice and equity in watsan access and control.

The capacity for knowledge management that exists at community levels should not be underestimated. This is thus the bottom-up and top-down processes are interdependent. A willingness to learn is as important therefore as the ability to teach.

2. *Educational Initiatives for Watsan*

The sector's priorities need to be carefully integrated into environmental education efforts, as in the case of water education now underway in Australia. This can involve:

- Understanding and using behaviour change processes at every level of decision making.
- There is a need for innovative opportunities to constantly update the knowledge of teachers and trainers in the sector
- Change in behavior of service providers who consider knowledge sharing as a favor
- Re-education in the sector becomes important to the sector as service providers are technology driven rather than seeing themselves as facilitators
- Citizens should be encouraged to be managers of waste, and not only its producers.
- The goal of educational and advocacy efforts must be able to mobilize diverse groups of poor men and women to participate in water management and planning at different levels to gain real control over the resource for meeting livelihood needs.

3. *COPs, Networks, Partnerships*

IT applications needs emphasis, providing major new opportunities for developing networks in KM, as in the Wes-Net example in India.

Dissemination skills need to be fostered and encouraged if watsan institutions are to develop and evolve as KM/knowledge resource centers. For this the group recommended:

- Coalition approach rather than creating new organizations.

To flourish, resource systems/centers require systems of joint ownership that can encourage transparency of information gathering, dissemination and use. The Pravah (WWW.)network of watsan NGOs in Gujarat is a useful example.

Networks should function as champions of knowledge creation, based on sound research, and engage in wide dissemination

4. *Hygiene & Sanitation*

Sanitation promotion cannot succeed without access to water. Shrinking water sources seriously threaten sanitation promotion and action, demanding priority attention to conserving and replenishing our diminishing water resources.

Sanitation success depends on re-constructing minds, not just constructing toilets. Solutions and approaches that seek hygiene attitudes and behaviors succeed only when they are based upon and sensitive to local conditions and cultures. Success in seeking sustainable sanitation actions thus depend on this sensitivity, rather than the one-size-fits-all approach that remains all too common.

This demands (a) listening to households and communities in order to draw on traditional wisdom before setting plans and agendas for action and (b) reaching and involving engineering institutions and professionals toward the social and cultural imperatives of sanitation action.

Education efforts in hygiene and sanitation deserve priority as essential not only for improving health, but equally for their importance in fostering human dignity, equity, inclusion and empowerment.

Schools are the essential catalyst of change. This demands urgent attention to the need for every school to have basic sanitation facilities, separately for boys and girls, that can give credibility to hygiene education in the class room.

Schools should inculcate the dignity of labour in sanitation tasks, including cleaning toilets and other waste.

The preventive aspect of watsan education needs to be promoted to ensure priority for the resources required to take watsan activity to scale, by stressing its powerful impact on human health and productivity.

Systems are needed that can encourage access to hygiene/sanitation information, technology and resources. Wes-Net ([Url:www](http://www.wes-net.org)) in India is one of several good examples that can be replicated worldwide.

Several institutions around the world have developed curricula and materials for hygiene and sanitation education and training (eg ESI in Ahmedabad, India [url:www](http://www.esi.org)). Networking is needed to encourage the sharing of these resources and experience.

Networking for urban sanitation demands greater attention, as current experience in problem-solving is limited. Access to documented experience, technology options and training facilities are required on a much larger scale than presently exists.

The concept of private/public partnerships is particularly important and appropriate to urban watsan, where the scale of required investment is quite distinct from rural watsan.

There is a divide on matters of urban and rural watsan that requires to be urgently bridged. Greater equity is needed in matters of determining need as well as in ensuring access to technologies and financial resources.

Women's watsan requirements need the most urgent attention, and these should include the requirements of bathing spaces and menstrual hygiene that are most often ignored.

Efforts to control child morbidity and mortality need to take watsan into account.

The watsan needs of a growing number of children who have to survive outside of secure home environments demands urgent attention.

Encouraging the wearing of shoes can be an important means for reducing the spread of infection.

The recommendations from this Conference should be integrated into current planning for the SACOSAN Conference of South Asian Ministers in 2008.

Utilize the opportunity of 2008 as the UN International Year of Sanitation

5. Mainstreaming Gender

Misunderstanding persists on the meaning of 'gender' and 'gender mainstreaming', even at higher levels of decision-making. The first task is to ensure that these concepts are clear and shared consistently by all stakeholders.

The inadequacy of data, reporting systems and indicators for monitoring and evaluating activity toward mainstreaming agenda is a need that must be urgently addressed. There is a need for M&E that can effectively monitor gender issues at every stage of the project cycle, rather than being applied at the end of the project.

Formal and informal channels of education need to be actively engaged if gender issues are to be integrated into social consciousness.

Mainstreaming gender must be acknowledged as an integral part of good governance, demanding a high level of political will.

There is need for studies through water institutions at every level to determine issues of access from a gender perspective. Gender studies needs encouragement and integration through formal education systems, as one essential element within environmental learning.

There is a need to involve men more actively in the gender dialogue, which is still confused as dealing exclusively with women rather than on relationships and harmony between genders.

Livelihood needs of men and women need to extend beyond drinking water to recognizing water as a means of production (eg. livestock, crafts).

GWA's 'Equity Gauge' now under development in South Asia as an analytical tool for gender/water studies should be widely shared. (The tool looks at work patterns, water entitlements, cost-sharing, participation in decision making, employment benefits, skills and capacities as well as the reasons for gender inclusion or exclusion).

Systems of reward for positive gender practices are needed as an incentive to accelerate understanding and application of good practices.

6. Advocacy for Policy Action & Change

The key to effective advocacy action is joint action towards specific change objectives. This demands the preliminary of public advocacy before policy advocacy.

Advocacy is a skill that must be learned. Developing advocacy skills (including dialogue) is a key need, still nascent in most of civil society. Opportunities for building the capacities required for effective advocacy need to be identified and developed. Essential for this is the understanding of behavioral process.

Training in advocacy in the 'south' should draw increasingly on southern examples and learning that reflects the experience of developing societies, rather than continue to be based on 'northern' models.

Knowledge institutions, such as those of research and management, need to be brought closer together to promote inter-disciplinary sharing that can strengthen the cases that are built for advocacy.

A sound knowledge base is the first essential for effective advocacy. Therefore knowledge management know-how is a key element that can depend on an ability to sift the assumptions on which key decisions are often based. These can often be inaccurate. A foundation of sound research (including action research) thus needs to be assured for advocacy campaigns.

Advocacy is a continuous process, not a one-time shot. Therefore mechanisms for feedback and sharing, particularly from and to the voiceless on whose behalf advocacy is conducted, are of critical importance.

Demonstration needs recognition as the most powerful tool of advocacy.

The sanitation sector should be seized by civil society as a space available for advocacy through demonstration. Unlike water, it has not yet been seized by the powerful.