

Aide-memoire of a meeting on Climate Change and WASH **Friday 6th February 2009, the Hague, the Netherlands**

Background and objectives of the meeting

Over the last year or so, it has become increasingly clear that the WASH (Water supply, Sanitation and Hygiene) sector may expect a range of impacts as a result of climate change. A number of WASH sector organizations have started analyzing these possible impacts and discussing the need for specific adaptation measures. This is reflected for example in the engagement of different sector organizations in a climate change session at the 5th World Water Forum (WWF5) at Istanbul, studies undertaken by the sector and specific conferences and meetings organized in 2008, dedicated to this topic, e.g. the conference “water and climate”, organized by IWA (International Water Association) and CPWC (Co-operative Programme on Water and Climate) in Amsterdam in Nov 2009.

As a result of these initiatives the idea arose to organize a meeting with some of the main WASH sector organizations involved in these. The objective of the meeting was to exchange experiences and positions of these organizations in the debate on the impact of climate change on WASH, and particularly to explore whether there would be an added value in establishing a thematic working group which would jointly undertake activities in this field.

Participants

The meeting, hosted by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, was held on 6th of February 2009. 10 participants joined the meeting, representing: CPWC, IRC, IWA, the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP)/WASH Secretariat, Tearfund, WaterAid and WSSCC. Each of the participants gave an extended introduction to their organisations including their past and ongoing work in the field of climate change and WASH:

CPWC: Raimond Hafkenscheid introduced how he had been involved with a secretariat for Dutch initiatives in the WASH sector; now, via CPWC, he is involved in similar initiative on climate change. Hence, CPWC has an interest in linking the two subjects, and in fact the two separate worlds of organisations involved in climate change and organisations from the water sector. It does so by identifying gaps and directing information and knowledge programmes to fill these, e.g. ensuring that knowledge developed on climate change in the Netherlands is taken up internationally. In addition, CPWC represent climate issues in international water fora, like WWF5 and the World Water Week. In all of their work, focus is very much on adaptation, less on mitigation.

IRC: IRC has three areas of work: knowledge development through applied research, capacity development, particularly of partner resource centres, and the provision of global information products and services. The focus of all its work is on WASH services, with particular emphasis of strengthening local governance of WASH services. But, within this, we work on a range of some 10 sub-themes. IRC's thematic work is often done through international thematic groups. Experience has shown that these have worked quite well in getting issues on the table through joint advocacy, as well as in developing new knowledge in a collaborative manner. When climate change came onto IRC's screen last year, it was initially seen from a local IWRM perspective. Now it is more understood from a local

governance angle. For IRC it is important that we can make clear what climate change is about, particularly how it relates to other challenges facing the WASH sector.

IWA: IWA is a network organization of water supply and wastewater professionals and has some 10.000 members world-wide. 20-25% of its members are from the South. With new staff in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it is expected that demand and needs from members in these regions can be harnessed. As a member association, its main focus is on providing information and knowledge to its member segments (consultants, manufacturers, researchers, utilities, etc). It does so in three ways: 1) generating knowledge through 50 specialist groups driven by the members and their interest; 2) exchanging knowledge through events; and 3) publishing knowledge through journal series and books through its own publishing house. The secretariat staff provides support to the members as well as driving selected key issues through its various programmes, including one on climate change and one on development. In the field of climate change, IWA has its own specialist group on climate change as well as four associated task groups: on drying climate, low-lying (deltaic) areas, mountainous regions (melting snowpack) and mitigation measures. During 2009 a new climate change journal will be launched. In addition, many other specialist groups are focusing on topics which are relevant for specific adaptation and mitigation measures, as well as there are many water and energy initiatives within IWA.

NWP/WASH secretariat: NWP is a network organization, representing the Dutch water sector as a whole, with the particular aim of strengthening the position of the Dutch sector internationally. Under the NWP, a secretariat has been established to coordinate activities of the Dutch sector in the field of WASH. It carries out activities such as match-making, mobilizing funding and providing advice to members. It is also keen to initiate new areas of interest to members, and would like to explore whether adaptation to climate change is a relevant topic for the Dutch WASH sector.

Tearfund: Tearfund is a large international development and relief charity, with activities in 50-60 countries. It supports programmes on the ground, including disaster relief, through field offices, working with local partners. In addition, it has an advocacy department working on both policy advocacy and campaigning. Within the policy team, there are 4 thematic clusters: water and sanitation, climate change, HIV/AIDS and economic justice. In this it collaborates strongly with other UK NGOs, including WaterAid. Within its field programmes, there is increasing discussion about climate change and a move towards some adaptation activities, although they are not formally 'branded' as such. Within Tearfund's policy work, interest originally focused on mitigation, but in the last few years more emphasis has been placed on the importance of adaptation, in particular with regards to linkages with Tearfund's work on disaster risk reduction (DRR). Tearfund began a scoping exercise looking at existing work on adaptation – water links in 2007, and was surprised to find very little work carried out to date in this field. Tearfund began the research project, "Separate streams? Adapting water resources management to climate change", in 2007 and completed the work in November 2008. The work comprised case studies in Niger and north-east Brazil (see also next section). This was presented at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-14) in Poznan, Poland, in December 2008. It was noted that Tearfund was the only organisation to host an event on climate change and water. The COP

process to date has been primarily focussed on levels of adaptation financing and potential financing measures, as opposed to detail on implementation.

WaterAid: is a WASH NGO with offices in 17 countries in Africa, South Asia and the Pacific. Like Tearfund, it carries out programmes in the field, and has a policy side. On the programmatic side, the entry point is adaptation, not only to climate change, but also to other stresses, such as increased agricultural water use. In programmes, attention is paid to issues of sustainability of the source, mediation in conflicts with other user groups, and accessing of hydrological data. Bangladesh is the first programme, where the WASH programme is framed in the climate change context, as it is a very vulnerable country in terms of issues such as water resources, sanitation and hygiene, shifting disease burden, and environmental health. On the policy advocacy side, the primary target is strengthening the capacity of governments, in areas such as their regulatory role over water resources management, rules for competition between sectors and data collection and management. Climate change has a role in this. In 2009, some research will be carried out for WaterAid by BGS (British Geological Service) and ODI (Overseas Development Institute), on linkages between WASH and climate change. The Terms of Reference for this work (which are still being finalised) include a global literature review, and 4 country case studies. Focus will be particularly on the governance implications of climate change in the WASH sector.

WSSCC: the WSSCC is a network and membership organisation, focused only on sanitation in the developing world. Membership is on an individual basis, and members come both from North and South. It operates three programmes: advocacy (WASH campaign), networking and knowledge management. In carrying out its programmes, it works with national networks (WASH coalitions) of government agencies, NGOs, international agencies and other relevant stakeholders. These coalitions mainly have a role in coordination within their respective countries, not in implementation. With the advent of the National Sanitation Fund, this may change a bit. The coalitions have helped shaping the programme, and will have a role in distilling lessons learnt and advocacy. WSSCC also supports thematic networking, through working groups. Although supported by the WSSCC, these may be coordinated by others. Initiatives for new networks come up frequently. Climate change has come up from the membership, and hence the WSSCC would be happy to host a working group on this topic. Being hosted in WHO, the WSSCC has a link with the UN system, and has the status of special partner of UN Water. One of UN Water's task forces is on climate change. WSSCC could make that link. Apart from thematic networking, WSSCC has an interest in advocacy around climate change within developing countries, whilst also ensuring that the climate change agenda doesn't take over the basic WASH agenda, but rather supports it.

In this round of introduction two other relevant initiatives were mentioned:

- The End Water Poverty campaign. This is a broad-based public campaign, which works alongside WASH coalitions, but with some overlap. Each year the campaign reviews its focus. This year is on sanitation, but there is growing interest in putting climate change forward.
- Global Framework for Action. The GFA is an effort of UN agencies and international agencies to further harmonize their approaches within the water sector, through for

example one annual report and one annual meeting on WASH. It may be relevant to consider whether climate change should be part of its agenda.

Presentations

After the introductions, three presentations were held which explained how three of the organisations conceptualise the linkages between WASH and climate change, and what they find in the field and literature on this. These presentations included:

- Climate change and WASH services; the linkages and implications for adaptation measures, by Åse Johannessen (IWA).
- Separate streams? Adapting water resources management to climate change, by Jane Cacouris (Tearfund)
- Climate change and WASH; strengthening WASH governance for adaptation, by Stef Smits (IRC)

All three power points can be made available as annex to this document. The study by Tearfund is also available at

www.tearfund.org/webdocs/Website/Campaigning/WATSAN/Separate_streams_web.pdf

The papers presented by Ase Johannessen and Stef Smits will be available as perspective documents for WWF5.

Discussion

The presentation of the papers led to a broader debate on key issues to be considered in the linkages between climate change and WASH. Without aiming to come to conclusive statements on these issues, the main points of debate identified include:

Climate change may have a range of impacts on the WASH sector; but is not the only driver for change. All presentations show a wide range of possible impacts of climate change on water resources availability and on WASH services. However, climate change is one of many factors. Other “outside” factors such as macro-economic fluctuations, demographic change, urbanization or increased agricultural water demand also have big impacts on WASH services, often more significant than climate change. The combination of all these factors leads to impacts which are locally uncertain and highly variable. This implies a need for the WASH sector to move towards adaptive management more generally, and not to climate change adaptation only.

Practical adaptation for sustainable WASH services. Despite all the uncertainty mentioned above, a number of practical adaptation measures have been identified. These include for example increase storage and buffer capacity, or developing more robust technologies. In addition, the case studies have also shown local responses and coping strategies with changing water availability. Such experiences need to be better documented. The question is whether such investments in practical adaptation may go at the expense of investments in access for those who don't have access yet, or whether such investments should be seen as investments in sustainability of services that are provided.

Integrated Water Resources Management. Many of the impacts of climate change will be felt through changes in water resources availability, e.g. because more or less water is available, or because of changes in demand. The IWRM concept provides a framework for dealing with the competition over water resources. Climate change puts more urgency on

the WASH sector to position itself in IWRM initiatives. There is an increased recognition that IWRM has often been conceptualised at too high a level of scale, and has remained mainly in the policy realm. That doesn't mean that the IWRM concept is not useful at the local level. Climate change adaptation in the WASH sector can therefore benefit a lot from positioning it in an IWRM framework. This also allows then looking at adaptation in other water needs of the poor. The poor not only need domestic water supply and sanitation, but also water for small-scale productive needs, which may also be affected by climate and other global changes. In climate change adaptation, these different water needs should ideally be considered. A point for further discussion is whether as a group, we should focus on WASH only or these broader water needs of the poor.

Most attention on impacts of climate change has focused on water, less on sanitation. Yet, there can be impacts on sanitation services as well, e.g. by flooding of toilets. For example, in a country like Bangladesh that may have an important bearing on the types of toilets to be built, and their sustainability. In addition, there may be changes in other water-borne diseases, with implications for environmental health. More work is needed to assess these potential impacts on sanitation and environmental in a structured way.

Disaster preparedness and relief. Climate change adaptation will not only imply preparation for long-term changes, but also disaster preparedness and disaster response strategies. In fact, such preparedness strategies should be part of "normal" WASH sector business. Climate change may contribute to breaking down the separation between development and disaster relief activities in the WASH sector. At the same time, it is realised that the organisations working in the disaster sector have built up a lot of expertise, which may be relevant to unlock for the broader WASH community.

Financing WASH adaptation strategies. Significant amounts of adaptation funds are likely to become available. There is a risk that parallel "adaptation" structures will be set up to manage and disburse these events. Participants at the meeting considered it crucial that these funds for the water sector would be managed by the WASH sector's structure. At the same time, it is realised that the structures of the WASH sector are very weak. Many countries are not able to spend available funds to reach the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), particularly because of weak absorption capacity at decentralised level. Therefore, adaptation funds should also be applied to strengthen the capacity of the WASH sector itself. This means that the WASH sector needs to position itself in the adaptation debate, and ensure that adaptation funds are used wisely to strengthen the existing sector. At the same time, global advocacy may be needed to ensure that adaptation funds do not go at the expense of pre-existing commitments to the WASH sector.

Capacity development for improved governance; yes, but how? The point above also implies that the WASH sector needs to continue getting its own house in order, by strengthening its own governance capacity. General governance issues such as transparency and accountability are crucial in that. In addition, it is about the sector's capacity to fulfil its basic functions and role of planning and implementation of WASH services, an issue we know is crucially weak at the moment, particularly at decentralised level. So, efforts should go into such capacity building. In this, there is need for a range of capacity building methods, including peer-to-peer learning approaches, training, on-the-job training, etc. It will be

relevant to consider how best capacity for strengthened governance can be built, taking into account additional challenges of climate change.

Clarifying and demystifying WASH climate change linkages. Despite the issues raised above, there are still many rumours going around in the sector on the linkages between climate change and WASH, ranging from the alarmist to scepticism about the relevance. It is therefore important to have an open debate in the sector to clarify these linkages, demystify them, and putting these linkages into the broader sector perspective, as attempted above. Hence, there is an important role for clear information products on this topic. This would need also to include translation of climate change jargon from the conceptual level into a language that is better understood by practitioners who might already be busy implementing adaptation measures. Many times practitioners would not need adopting additional practices, but rather adjusting them and their planning approaches. It would save time and resources not having to re-educate water professionals as if they needed to adopt entire new practices. Finally, this also implies improving availability of and access to (hydrological) data, so that a more informed debate can be held locally about these impacts.

Political advocacy. At the same time, it is important to ensure a nuanced message on the WASH climate change issues is taken into the political debate. However, this requires first that, we, as sector organisations develop clear policy advocacy messages and a strategy on where and how we want to take these. Most likely, there will be messages for the climate change adaptation community, to ensure that NAPAs address water in an integrated manner, and to the WASH community to provide an overview of what can be done within the WASH sector (within a broader water resources management framework), particularly in the context of global debates such as on water as a human right, and the Global Framework for Action (GFA). Last but not least, one may need to consider putting messages forward in broader developmental policies, such as the PRSPs.

In conclusion

Climate change adaptation in the WASH sector has been described as “business as usual, but better”. Surely, much of what needs to be undertaken, such as strengthening governance, adaptive management, investing in sustainability and implementation of IWRM, would need to happen irrespective of climate change. Yet, many of these reforms are still far from business-as-usual in the WASH sector. Besides, the type of changes that would be needed, differ from place to place. So, it was felt that what needs to be done goes beyond business-as-usual, but requires a paradigm shift towards addressing fundamental governance weaknesses of the sector, in dealing with uncertainties. The urgency of climate change can contribute to expediting such a paradigm shift. Further debate will be needed to define what such a paradigm shift towards more adaptive and sustainable WASH services would entail, and how climate change can be turned from a threat into an opportunity to contribute to this. To start the debate, a more structured analysis of the WASH and climate change linkages is needed, and clear messages on approaches to adaptation need to be formulated.

Next steps for the group

One of the explicit objectives of the meeting was to discuss whether there would be an added value in establishing ourselves as a thematic working group (possibly under the umbrella of the WSSCC) to take the debate on climate change adaptation in the WASH sector further. To start of the discussion on this, Ton Schouten (IRC) provided a summary of past experiences with thematic groups, such as the ones on Scaling Up and Multiple-Use Services (MUS). Such groups normally have a specific thematic focus, and try to place a certain topic on the sector agenda. These groups bring together different types of organisations, such as research institutes, practitioners, advocacy organisations, and even international organisations. Together they carry out activities, such as the development of advocacy messages, conceptual development, case study analysis, mini-conferences and symposia, development of information products (including translations). This is supported by secretariat functions to keep the network active. Normally, the groups meet 2-3 times a year, but also undertake activities in between, either as individual members, or with the group as a whole, e.g. around international fora, such as the Stockholm Water Week.

After this short introduction, a discussion was held on the objectives or what we would want to see achieved in the field of climate change – WASH linkages. It was felt that our main objective should be ensuring that good use is made of adaptation initiatives in the WASH sector, following the points of debate made above. Specific objectives that a thematic group could aspire to are:

- Developing of advocacy messages within the WASH and climate change adaptation sectors
- Promoting a common understanding within the WASH sector on climate change adaptation strategies
- Providing information and knowledge services on climate change adaptation in the WASH sector, both at the practical and at the strategic level

In order to so, the first step that would be needed is to obtain further clarity amongst ourselves on the WASH climate change linkages, and developing a position in this debate. On the basis of that, we can then develop advocacy messages, and start clarifying and demystifying the issue at sectoral level. In this process, it would be important to bring in the perspectives of other players, such as the End Water Poverty campaign, ODI, Water for People, some of the country coordinators from the WSSCC and experts on climate change, e.g. from the IPCC. This may require a second meeting.

Concretely, the following steps were agreed:

- IRC to develop an aide-memoire of the meeting, within 3 weeks after the meeting
- There are various sessions at WWF5 on climate change and it would be important to make sure that the deliberations of this meeting are included in these
- After Istanbul, we will set up a conference call to decide on next steps, based on the feed-back obtained there. This can then include an agreement on a next meeting, whom to invite etc.
- At the same time, we should start thinking about a side event at Stockholm Water Week. If ideas become clear on this in the coming weeks, we will keep each other informed about that.

Annex 1: list of participants

Name	Organisation	Position	Email
Marloes Bakker	CPWC	Programme Officer	m.bakker@cpwc.nl
Raimond Hafkenscheid	CPWC	Program Director	r.hafkenscheid@cpwc.nl
Stef Smits	IRC	Programme Officer	smits@irc.nl
Ton Schouten	IRC	Section Head Knowledge Development and Advocacy	schouten@irc.nl
Darren Saywell	IWA	Development Director	Darren.saywell@iwahq.org
Ase Johannessen	IWA	Development Programme Officer	Ase.johannessen@iwahq.org
Luuk Diphooorn	NWP	Project Officer	l.diphooorn@nwp.nl
Jane Cacouris	Tearfund	Policy Officer - Water & Sanitation	Jane.Cacouris@tearfund.org
Oliver Cumming	WaterAid	Policy Officer	olivercumming@wateraid.org
Carolien van der Voorden	WSSCC	Programme Office - Networking & Knowledge Management	vandervoorden@who.int