



Water and Climate Change

This week's GDLN session of e-waterexpo.net at the Water Tribune focused on what can be done today to deal with the impacts of climate change. The session consisted of two parts: a connection from Washington DC, with Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Australia in Asia and two days later linking Zaragoza with Tanzania, Uganda, Ghana in Africa and Costa Rica, in Latin America

Abel Mejia, water manager at the infrastructure department of the World Bank, opened the first part of this week's session by emphasizing the need for cooperation in the field of climate change. He noted that the Water Tribune in Zaragoza was a unique

dependency on agriculture, addressing the impacts of climate variability on human life, coastal resources. Moreover, it is critical for urban development as a result of the increasing proportion of Africa's population which is concentrating in (coastal) mega-cities, such as Dakar, Cairo, Lagos, Dar es Salaam, and Maputo. These mega-cities have poor infrastructure for dealing with the effects of flooding, droughts, water security and other extreme weather events. A fair example of what local authorities can do in the immediate future came from the City of Seattle. The City's Administration developed a policy a few years ago on how to deal with the immediate and future effects of climate change. In Zaragoza, Nancy Ahem, Deputy



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opportunity for the World Bank to meet and listen to scientists, representatives of non-governmental organisations, water professionals and ordinary citizens. Zaragoza's World Expo brings together not only water experts, but also introduces the problems we face in water in world today to the public at large", says Mejia at Water Tribune.

Habiba Gitay, senior environmental specialist at the World Bank Institute and organiser of this week's session on Water and Climate Change said that, "When dealing with impacts of climate change, people often think about scenarios and models that provide the projected changes in climatic parameters. However, the time horizons for these types of outputs are 2050 to 2100. Although this can provide a general idea of the projected climate that countries might be facing, they are not necessarily useful for short to medium term planning".

In the first part of the session, the focus was on the need for effective water management which is critical in the context of Africa's

Director of Seattle Public Utilities explained the ratio on why and the methods were applied by the City. (For more information please visit www.seattle.gov/util).

The impacts of climatic extremes are well known to water resource managers, especially in arid and semi-arid regions or flood prone areas. However, climate change, along with the increasing average temperatures and changes in annual and inter-annual distribution of rainfall, has increased the frequency and intensity of extreme events.

Climate variability has long been viewed as an environmental issue and not of prime concern to governments and societies, although it is fundamental to the welfare and development of humanity. Interesting and varied approaches have been used by countries around the world, resulting in better management of the risk of ongoing and future changes in climate and the reduction of risk of erosion of development gains.

Local Capacity Development

The need for more capacity building was one recommendation from the participants, a familiar request since African societies are continuously developing local adoption strategies to cope with extreme weather events, such as drought. The regional climate variability and the subsequent impacts on water, agricultural production and human life will severely strain their coping capacity.

Recently, the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA), a program funded by the Canadian and UK governments, introduced a multilayered approach to deal with the need for capacity building. Project level capacity is enforced through a series of education, training and knowledge-sharing activities that link individual project partners and extend learning to a wider and cross-regional community. Depending on the context, users may be small-scale farmers, local officials, national ministries or other individuals or institutions that directly benefit from the shared questions. The aim of the program is to strengthen researchers, local stakeholder groups and organisations to inform policies that will benefit vulnerable groups by providing solid, locally enhanced and workable knowledge



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Dealing with Climate Variability

Dealing with climate variability is not a simple task, especially for the developing world. Africa, for example, is endowed with diverse and abundant atmospheric resources. These resources include rainfall, air, solar radiation, and wind. Unlike land and marine resources, atmospheric resources are found in all African countries, although at varying levels, distribution and frequency. The African continent has enough land to undertake small- and large-scale activities to strengthen household security, national development, trans-boundary cooperation and regional integration to transform trade, and create new opportunities for sustainable development, which is sensitive to the environment, social and economic issues.

There are, however, many threats and challenges, which continue to undermine such progress, limiting its potential. These include pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, climate variability and change, water scarcity and lack of sanitation, extreme weather events such as drought and floods, ineffective land-use planning, limited or weak governance systems, corruption, armed conflict, overexploitation of natural resources, and limited foreign direct investment. Limited domestic investment and wasted opportunities and loss of revenue due to leakage in sectors such as tourism are also important factors.

Developed countries must lead the way in taking action by: adopting ambitious emission reduction targets; promoting rapid technological progress to mitigate the effect of climate change; supporting programs to combat deforestation and honouring their aid commitment to the developing countries, especially in the area of water and sanitation. These are all elements of the Bali Action Plan, which was agreed in December 2007.

