

World Water Week Daily

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Sanitation needs a higher profile to achieve UN targets

If the sanitation target in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to be achieved, sanitation has to become trendier to the public, governments and donor agencies, a packed room heard at the UN-endorsed seminar *Drive to 2015*.

Sanitation is one of the most delayed MDG targets and is at risk of not being reached. The UN set up the advocacy initiative, Sustainable Sanitation – The Drive to 2015, to try and push the cause of sanitation further before the MDG deadline of 2015.

“I’m not very good at political correctness, but let’s face it, we are here to talk about shit,” said Juanita During, from CREPA (Centre Régional pour l’Eau Potable et l’Assainissement à faible coût). “It is not pretty, it doesn’t smell nice and we want to get away from it, but it is a matter of life and death. We need to make sure that sanitation and hygiene is trendy, hence the catchy acronym: SHIT.”

Field specialists questioned why, with all the expertise and skills in the field, sanitation has fallen so far behind.

“I’m amazed I actually have a job on this, as sanitation should be obvious to all, and yet millions still die due to a lack of it,” said During. “To begin with local people need to have ownership of it if we are to make progress.”

Several panelists, including Almud Weitz, from the Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) Indonesia, supported this approach. “It’s great to have wonderful shiny strategies from outside that look perfect, but we have to give up some level of perfection to ensure sanitation projects and strategies are locally owned.”

Betty Atuku Bigombe, Minister of State for Water in Uganda, said that from a government perspective, politicians have to ensure sanitation does not get lost between government departments. “Sanitation becomes a budget orphan, split between health, water and education and as such no ministry has



Juanita During, CREPA

total control of it,” explained Bigombe. “Sanitation needs to be given greater importance and not just lumped in with water.”

The targeting of megacities, and using their economies of scale, was another approach that could be used to make the issue more current and trendy, said Andre Dzikus, from UN-HABITAT. “We are regressing in terms of sanitation coverage and the world is actually slipping back on this issue but one way to tackle this is to use cities to find a mechanism that actually reaches the poor and slum dwellers,” said Dzikus.

A focus on cities was supported by Shinya Ejima, from Japan International Coopera-

tion Agency (JICA), who confessed that donors had not previously prioritised sanitation. “I can assure you that this has changed and we at JICA are now focusing more on sanitation, as can be seen through our public-private partnerships in Hanoi, Vietnam and Jakarta, Indonesia.”

Past approaches also need urgent review. Andreas Proksch from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) wrapped up the proceedings to a rousing cheer of support from delegates when he argued for “no more pilot projects, and no more projects without the support of government as a way forward to reach this target”.



Panelists called for a higher profile for sanitation

Private sector to play bigger role in water development



Speakers said companies must take on an enhanced role

Companies must play an integral role in providing ideas and support to address the problems in the food-energy-water nexus, said top business leaders at the *Role of Business* seminar.

“Companies are realising that water is important to them and their functions, as are their shareholders and customers, as it can affect their business,” said Anders Berntell, Executive Director, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI).

“I don’t often speak to the water community but I know that our paths will be crossing more and more as we deal with this era of volatile transitions,” said Jeremy Bentham, from Shell, in his keynote address.

Delegates heard how 75 per cent of the cost of water is energy related with food requiring a high energy and water intake for production. “As an example, every calorie of beef takes 40 calories of energy to produce, and every kilogram uses 15,000 litres of water,” said Bentham.

While the private sector can bring knowledge, skills, help and funds to the water industry, final responsibility must still rest with governments. Peter Brabeck-Lemathe, Chairman of the Nestlé Group, said: “Industry, and in my case, the food industry, has to play a part, and must for its own future but leadership must still be provided by governments.”

UN-Water launches special report on water management for Rio+20

One hundred and twenty-three countries have already provided submissions to a new report on water resources management, which will be unveiled at the Rio+20 Summit in June 2012.

The UN-Water task force, led by UNEP under the chairmanship of Thomas Chiramba, began work on the report in March 2011, and has already received input from two-thirds of the countries surveyed.

“We have to have a zero draft by the 1st of November and the final report by February [2012] so there is considerable time pressure,” said Peter Bjornsen of UNEP-DHI at yesterday’s briefing. “But if there are additional responses we will do our best to fit them in.”

Notable absentees from the 70 countries yet to respond include the USA, South Africa and India.

The report is divided into two levels: level one, aimed at all participants, is compiled from a written survey, and level two involved structured interviews with 30 countries providing more in-depth case reporting. The 30 countries were chosen primarily for their geographic spread and include China, Spain, Tanzania, Brazil, Ghana and Jamaica.

“It is very clear that the most developed countries place water for the environment very high in their agendas but for the least developed countries is it comparatively very low on their priorities,” said Gordon Young, special adviser to UNEP, who revealed some of the initial findings from the report.

Companies are ignorant of water scarcity at their sites

At the seminar *Water Intensive Companies: Benefits of Managing and Reporting Water-Related Risks*, hosted by Norges Bank Investment Management (NBIM), speakers highlighted the worrying statistic that most companies are unaware that their operations are taking place in water-scarce areas.

Sustainable Asset Management, which is based in Switzerland, has surveyed company operations in water-scarce areas. “On the one hand we look at the exposure, so we look at the company’s awareness of its exposure to the water-related risk and then we determine the level of their exposure,” said Marc-Olivier Buffle, Senior Analyst Industrials & Water Sector at Sustainable Asset Management. “Then we look at how the company can manage their risk. If a company is slightly exposed to water-related risk but doesn’t think about it, or is not even aware of it, then they will receive a low score. A high percentage of companies that we talked to did not know how many of their operations were in a water-scarce area.”

Increasingly scarce water supplies and water pollution are growing risks for many of the companies that institutional investors invest in. Managing these risks is important for the companies’ financial results and long-term investments.

“In terms of investing, it all depends on the management. One company will be able to manage through the risks and the other will not,” said Marc Robert, Chief Operating Officer, Water Asset Management, USA.

Sasja Beslik, Head of Responsible Investments and Governance at Nordea Bank, Sweden, echoed this view: “For us, we will determine exactly how we could make or lose money from a company, depending on how they manage their water-related risk.”

Companies are already suffering from water restraints and shortages, and it is clear that there needs to be an increased focus from shareholders and stakeholders on water issues and water-related risks.

“One of the countries we are focusing on is China,” said Loïc Dujardin, Senior Analyst at NBIM, Norway. “When we talked to mining companies or power generation companies, the first thing they told us is that water is actually their first main operational concern.”



Sasja Beslik, Nordea Bank

Stockholm Industry Water Award



Peter Forsman, Chairman of the Stockholm International Water Institute, hands the Stockholm Industry Water Award diploma to Peter Brabeck-Lemathe, Chairman of Nestlé

World Water Day 2012 to focus on food security



Kebede Ayele, Director of IDE-Ethiopia

The theme of the 2012 World Water Day *Water and Food Security* was the basis of a high-level debate yesterday, led by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, which will coordinate next year's World Water Day for the UN.

FAO Assistant Director General, Alexander Müller, praised the breadth of the panelists who represented UN agencies, smallholding farmers, biodiversity interests, academia, youth and women, but having heard the debate, he warned that there was now a need for action.

"There is an increasing agreement on the challenges ahead but if we agree on the challenges, there is no excuse for not acting," said Müller.

Professor Jan Lundqvist of the Stockholm International Water Institute said it was important to put the notion of food productivity in context. While there has been a per capita increase in food production in the last 15 years, the number of undernourished people has also increased. "If we recognise that large amounts of food are being lost in storage or never reach markets, then efficiency of food production is clearly now lower than if we just concentrate on the figures for production per se."

Panelists agreed there was a need to protect and enhance the role of smallholding farmers in terms of access to water resources. Mohammad Ait Kadi, Chair of the Technical Advisory Committee of the

Global Water Partnership, said agriculture represented 25 per cent of the GDP and 50 per cent of the labour force in his country, Morocco. "One dollar invested in agriculture creates ten times the employment of one dollar invested in industry," said Ait Kadi, "But we don't have the resources to sustain this type of agriculture and what is happening in the Arab world will only become worse because of the transfer of water away from agriculture."

Kebede Ayele, Director of the IDE in Ethiopia, who represents the interests of smallholding farmers, said his organisation treated farmers as customers not beneficiaries of its programme. The IDE is seeking to help farmers invest in labour to generate sufficient income so that they can acquire pumps for irrigation to produce more profitable crops.

"In addition to sustainable production, we should not forget about access to markets for poor households as farming must be seen as a business," said Ayele.

Professor Tony Allan of King's College, University of London, said it was important to get water and food security on the political agenda but that meant actors working more closely with governments.

"Farmers know it would be silly to go to water specialist and they go straight to politicians so we need to get into the political system if we want to get water access onto the agenda," said Professor Allan.

What has been the highlight of World Water Week so far?



"There have been some excellent water and climate change sessions and a great focus on tools for decision-making. Also the variety of frank comments from the donor community has been really refreshing." Dr. Tracey Farrell, Conservation International, USA.



"It is the first time I have attended and I have been very impressed by such a large conference and how they have gathered together over 2000 people. The people from the different sectors being together has been a real highlight." Sombo Yamamura, Japan Water Forum, Japan.



"What I really liked was the opening ceremony with Mr. Joan Clos from UN-HABITAT. I really appreciate what he said that technology is not the challenge, it is social mobilisation and financing." Julian Eyrard, Action Contre La Faim, France.



"I come from India, where we have a huge population and water is scarce. Through the interaction at various workshops, I have learnt about so many new water saving technologies that I can now go back to India to tell my colleagues about." Suresh Vithal Sodal, Maharashtra Water Resources Regulatory Authority, Mumbai, India.



"I have really loved the focus on sanitation. The focus on sanitation has been immense and that is the way to go as sanitation is lagging behind the water sector. The way it has been brought out in this conference is a plus." James Miir Maiteki, National Water & Sewerage Corporation, Uganda.



"With the Stockholm Junior Water Prize, it has been really exciting to see all the young people that are out there creating true sustainability for the sector because they are the next generation, who will really improve the livelihoods of people from around the world." Erin Wright, Water For People, USA.



"The best session was the session on food security especially the presentation by Tony Allan, who has an academic background but he is also aware of the global water agenda. He doesn't come with the same messages and he brings something new to the table and that is very refreshing." Gareth James Lloyd, UNEP-DHI, Denmark.



"In terms of meeting people and getting business done, I have done more in three days than I can do in three weeks' worth of email exchanges." Rick Connor, World Water Assessment Programme, Italy.

Latin America and the Caribbean need more donor support

Experts spoke of the importance of further investment in the water and sanitation sectors at yesterday's session focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite significant progress being made, the accelerated expansion of cities is imposing enormous economic, environmental, social and political challenges on Latin America and the Caribbean, and creating demand for integrated planning and management approaches.

"We have made great progress in our city Quito and much of this is down to the investments that have been made by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)," said Xavier Vidal, Executive Director of the Environmental Sanitation Programme Phase II, Quito, Ecuador. "The IADB has contributed greatly, including providing funding for the construction of a new wastewater system and USD 25 million for the Pichincha Hillside Project. But we and the Latin America and Caribbean region as a whole still need a lot more investment from other donors."

Vidal illustrated the numerous obstacles that his organisation has had to overcome to redevelop water and sanitation services in Quito. He described how uncontrolled urban expansion has put a huge strain on the

sector, as well as influencing the illegal land markets. Landslides have occurred next to illegal settlements on the hillsides, leading to mud and debris flowing down towards urban areas.

"Since the Pichincha Hillside Project began in 1996, we have made massive improvements," said Vidal. "We are actively pursuing participation from community and local institutions as well as significantly redeveloping drainage infrastructure."

Fernando Veiga from Agua Somos, Bogota, Colombia, emphasised the importance of raising awareness of the true value of water among the people that use and need it. Citizens learn how vital it is to preserve the water sources that supply the metropolitan area.

"One of the key aspects of our mission is raising awareness," said Veiga. "We have initiated campaigns aimed at finding our target audience and reaching out to the masses. We have a mass media plan and set up a website to inform our citizens."

Although overall the countries in the region have made reasonable progress in terms of coverage of water and sanitation services, medium and small cities and towns are still struggling, according to Ger Bergkamp,



Xavier Vidal, Environmental Sanitation Programme Phase II

Regional Group and Programmes Director at the International Water Association.

"Small and medium towns and cities have barely improved and are still suffering badly from the poor quality of the water and sanitation provision," said Bergkamp. "What we are lacking in Latin America and the Caribbean is the opening up to other regions and other experiences from other parts of the world. For example, in China, a lot of work is being done on the decentralisation of water and sanitation, from which we could learn a lot."

Urban groundwater should be better managed

The benefits of groundwater need to be properly managed through greater spatial planning and increased awareness to ensure its sustainability for growing cities, a workshop on a three dimensional approach to land and water discovered yesterday.

Speakers stressed the importance, and benefits, of groundwater, as a cheap, safe and plentiful resource, provided it is well managed. The problem, according to Professor Stephen Foster from the World Bank's Ground Water Management Advisory Team, is that management is often lacking.

"Groundwater is a resource that affects everybody, making up 97 per cent of the world's freshwater, and 60 per cent of the world's drinking water supply, yet it is the responsibility of nobody," said Foster. "Urban groundwater should be managed, even if no major utility supply interest exists, as the laissez faire approach has proved costly and hazardous."



Professor Stephen Foster, World Bank's Ground Water Management Advisory Team

The workshop also heard how a greater connection between rural and urban municipalities is required to share land resources, to tap into groundwater supplies outside of municipal boundaries.

Dr. Pradeep Naik, from the Ministry of Water Resources in Bahrain, emphasised the need for greater stakeholder awareness of the value of groundwater. "General apathy by the public to this highly valuable and often

ignored resource has to be addressed through education," said Naik.

Education is useful, but it needs to be continuous, added John Feighery, from Columbia University, USA. "In Bangladesh, for instance, building latrines is big business, they are everywhere," said Feighery. "The clean-out and maintenance of these latrines is unfortunately often lacking, which makes their benefits redundant."