

World Water Week Daily

Wednesday, August 19, 2009



Ceren Burçak Dag of Nisantasi, Turkey was handed the 2009 Stockholm Junior Water Prize from Mr. Peter Forssman, Chair of the Stockholm Water Foundation at a ceremony in Victoria Hall last night. She was rewarded for her project "Rain: An environmentally-friendly energy alternative".



Mr. Arjun Thapan of the ADB speaks on Asia's growing pains: Its water security is being challenged, paradoxically, by its own successes.

Eye on Asia

With two-thirds of the world's population, Asia serves as an outsized microcosm of the world's water upsides and downsides. 90 percent of wastewater is not properly treated; approximately 580 million people lack access to safe water; and household plumbing remains, for many Asians, a pipe dream. *Focus: Eye on Asia* featured some success stories, such as Manila Water. 10 years ago, it assumed the control of that megacity's dysfunctional water supply and sanitation provider. Today, full time access to water supply is the norm instead of the exception. One expert observed that "most governments treat sanitation problems as an embarrassment instead of a challenge," when they should realise that "wastewater is not a cost, it is an engine of energy and nutrients." Examples of innovation were cited as well, including eco-lagoons of Bali and duckweed water treatment systems in Bangladesh. A panellist summed it up by saying "What happens with Asia's water in the next 25 years will tell us how the plant is faring."

Watch Where you Tread

How much water goes into the production of a cotton T-shirt? 2,700 litres according to Derk Kuiper of the Water Footprint Network. By mapping the value chain of product through its supply, hard data on operational and induced water footprints can become available. In order to do this, corporate participation is essential. The *Water Footprint: A New Entry Point for Water Policy and Corporate Water Strategy?* seminar identified the implementation of strong policy ideas as a key problem in water management. "We know we have a water problem when quantity and quality issue develop and lead to changes in the ecosystem....and these problems are not going away," warned Stuart Orr of the WWF. However, it is only through the rigorous testing and revising of the water footprint methodology that the

information generated will become more useful to corporations' and governments' risk management policies.



Mr. James Griffiths of the WBCSD discusses strategies for corporations to reduce their water footprints.

Unlocking Transboundary Deadlocks



The conventional truth is that democracies tend not to engage in violent conflict over resources, and that inter-state linkages foster further cooperation. The Workshop *Benefit Sharing and Transboundary Waters* pointed out that decades of transboundary river negotiations between Netherlands and Belgium and Mexico and USA came to fruition after

being broken down into sub-agreements that included matters unrelated to watercourse management. In contexts where power asymmetries between upstream and downstream riparians stifle progress towards benefit sharing, donors who provide funding streams to a “basin bully” should consider the role they can play in breaking the deadlock.

Would a human rights approach to water and sanitation help improve the world water crisis?



“If governments could ratify and accept that water is a human right, it would help to better target the people that really need help. Additionally, if access to water is made a human right, there would be legal backing in targeting the poor.”

Otieno Pireh, UN-Habitat, Kenya

“Yes, but not without a shift from the current emphasis on financial interests and self-interests. There is an aspiration towards improvement without a willingness to change own practices. It’s a great ideal, but hard to achieve.”

Jane Gibbs, Umwelt Pty Limited, Australia



“It will help to improve the situation because it gives individuals an entitlement for accessing water and it gives very concrete guidance in implementation of the human right.”

Thomas Levin, German Technical Cooperation, Germany

Snap Shots



Mirey Attallah reflects on water and energy linkages in Middle East.



Up close and personal knowledge exchange at the Poster Sessions.



Catarina de Albuquerque has a lot of ideas on water and rights.

Pipe Dreams

The *Global Dialogue on Sustainable Strategies in Water Utilities: “Walking the Talk”* brought together a panel of water utility managers and experts, who presented the realities of providing water services at urban and state levels. Howard Neukrug, Director of Philadelphia Water, stressed the importance of moving from grey solutions to green ones. “Cities have to shift from trying to move water out as fast as possible, to how to reuse water most efficiently.” Pipes cannot

be a manager's only tool. Increasing storage within the urban environment while reducing surface run-off is more efficient. This philosophy was shared by the other panelists who all aim to increase the resilience of their water supplies by implementing sustainable policies. However, as a word of warning came from Amy Shanker, who stated that in light of the current financial crisis, the “recession could entrench the dialogue of the deaf.”

When the Sanitation Chain Fails, Humans are Left to Fill the Holes

In the glittering IT centres of India, manual scavengers are still being lowered into sewers to clean sewage filters by hand.” The Worst Job in the World” by activist Bezawada Wilson was screened at *Manual Scavenging: A Forgotten Reality in Sanitation*. Wilson commented afterwards that “it is not a film, it is the life of these people.”