

# Local Actions for a Global Challenge

4th World Water Forum Takes Place March 16–22, 2006

Photo: SIWI

The 4th World Water Forum will take place March 16–22, 2006, in Mexico City under the main theme “Local Actions for a Global Challenge.” The organisers of the 4th Forum share the belief that, regardless of their root causes, water-related problems have their greatest impacts at the local level. As a result, local actions are key for generating concrete results that, when amalgamated across sectors and regions, will move us closer to meeting the water-related targets set by the Millennium Development Goals, the WSSD Implementation Plan and Local Agenda 21.

## Harnessing practical, intellectual, financial and political means

Approaching water issues from a local perspective embraces the strong conviction that contemporary societies harbour a tremendous potential for addressing them, provided they are capable and willing to enable local action. Thus, the preparatory process and the activities of the 4th World Water Forum will seek to harness the practical, intellectual, financial, and political means to support local action on a global scale. The aim is to reach commitments to remove the barriers for local action and create opportunities for its thriving.

When reflecting on local action, it is important to consider it as a process which is not necessarily individual, small-scale, insular, or parochial. On the contrary, it usually requires multi-stakeholder participation, networking, synergy and collaboration amongst many different types of social actors and policy sectors. Perhaps a good way to proceed in the description of why local action is important in water policy processes is through the deployment of the subsidiarity principle.

In the field of water policy, the subsidiarity principle refers to the notion that decisions and actions upon each specific water issue or problematic should take place at the lowest competent authoritative level and as close to the citizens as possible. Accordingly, for each issue or problematic there is a most efficient and effective institution-

al-social array that should function at the lowest and most appropriate politico-administrative level, taking into account the prevailing demographic, physical, political, socio-economic, cultural and technical conditions. This situation implies that there are no universal solutions!

It is important then to emphasise that institutional-social arrays embarking on local actions are never devoid of history and future and the paths they take seemingly hinge on their capacity to adapt, innovate and procure a sense of collective purpose that every so often turn them into authentic democratic and vigorous political communities.

A local perspective should then recognise and address, for example, the value of new financing schemes supportive of local action, democratic and empowering institutions and political processes, the need to embark in capacity building and social learning processes, the importance of technological innovation and application science, the need to create ad hoc targeting and monitoring schemes, etc.

The 4th World Water Forum will review these and other decisive factors in the accomplishment of common goals, searching

to enable an improved involvement and empowerment of local actors in the social construction of solutions to water issues and a more appropriate channelling of domestic and international support for local actions worldwide.

## World Water Week contributes to Forum development

A seminar on the 4th World Water Forum was held during the 2005 World Water Week in Stockholm and facilitated a discussion and exchange of views with participants on the importance of selecting, from the large number of potential topic-sessions already registered, good quality and balanced sessions and local actions to be presented within them. It also allowed the exchange of ideas on how to link this thematic process with the ongoing regional preparation, so as to provide substantive and coherent input to the Forum’s Ministerial component.

For more information about the Forum, visit <http://www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx>. For information on SIWI activities during the Forum, visit [www.siwi.org](http://www.siwi.org) in the months and weeks leading up to the event. ■



Photo: Jan Lundqvist