

Exciting World Water Week in

Much of the discussion these days by leading experts about the “global water crisis” focuses less on water *per se* than on how it is managed. For example, the recently launched United Nations World Water Assessment report focused on the importance of governance in managing the world’s water resources and tackling poverty. Such governance systems say who gets what water, when and how, and decides who has the right to water and related services.

The World Water Week in Stockholm will take just such an approach – that the crisis can be solved if the discussion is expanded “beyond” water – when it takes place August 20-26, 2006, under the overarching theme “Beyond the River – Sharing Benefits and Responsibilities”.

As a whole, the week will examine how “sharing the benefits” rather than simply “sharing the water” can lead to economic, environmental and social benefits which protect and conserve the common environment and at the same time improve indi-

vidual livelihoods and reduce poverty.

Broken down into its different parts, the week will also facilitate an in-depth look at different water-related subjects critical to the welfare of the planet and its peoples in the 21st century. A wide range of water and sanitation-related issues are taken up during the week, much of it obviously interconnected. In this article, Stockholm Water Front highlights just a few of the main areas of focus; for more information, consult the Second Programme Announcement and Call for Registration, or visit www.worldwaterweek.org.

Good governance

As the UN report highlighted, governance is very much more than just a buzzword these days: it is the key to how water resources are managed and thus how the benefits which are derived from them are shared. Governance mechanisms which encourage cooperation among stakeholders in addressing increasing levels of water scarcity, pollution and negative impacts will be examined in the seminar “Multi-scale River Basin Governance”.

The seminar “Challenges in Governance of Water” will look at those processes which hinder effective water governance, and seeks to deepen the debate on how to improve water resource management through democracy, subsidiarity, arbitration, coalition-building, ensuring water security, and involving marginal communities.

Critical to the improvement of governance in both the developed and developing worlds is the idea of combating corruption. The seminar “Fighting Corruption for Sustainable Water Use: Linking Global and Local Strategies” will thus be an important one. Since corruption in the water sector is linked to society at large, effective measures developed against corruption in other sectors will be examined to see how they might be applied in the water sector.

Water for food

Developing and managing water resources to help end poverty and hunger, feed an additional 2 billion people by 2030, while reversing trends of ecosystem degradation, is a most significant challenge. During a series of seminars in Stockholm, the Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture will reveal the results of its five-year critical evaluation of the benefits, costs and impacts of 50 years of water development for agriculture. The water management challenges that communities are facing today, the solutions people have developed and the actions needed in research that lead to better management and investment decisions in water and agriculture to address both human and environmental water needs, will be brought up.

In addition to the Comprehensive Assessment events, other workshops, seminars and side events will broach the topic. A workshop entitled “Changing Diets and Their Implications for Water, Land and Livelihoods” will help to clarify the roles of freshwater in producing a balanced and nutritious diet that includes livestock and fish products, reduces poverty and enhances ecosystem services.



Photo: Michael Moore, STWI

A complex to be explored will be how to develop and manage water resources, feed an additional 2 billion people by 2030, end poverty and hunger, and reverse trends in ecosystem degradation.

Stockholm is Set

Photo: STWT

Another workshop, “Sharing the Benefits of Ecosystem Services and the Costs of Ecosystem Degradation”, takes up this dynamic from another angle: the benefits that are derived from different ecosystems, including food producing ecosystems, for the poorest segments of society. Young professionals, with their fresh perspective, will address the issue in a similar seminar, “Co-management of Water for Livelihoods and Ecosystems”. With ecosystems clearly being so important, another seminar entitled “Environmental Flows: Creating Benefits for Ecosystems and People” will elucidate further the concept of flows and their role for nature and people, and in relation to ecosystems and food production, for example.

Transboundary tools

Livelihoods around the world are related increasingly to transboundary and transbasin water contexts and a global society with an urban majority. Some 145 countries are classified as riparians to these transboundary basins, and about 45% of the world’s population live in internationally shared river basins. Furthermore, at least 38 transboundary groundwater systems have been identified.

Given this, the “High-Level Panel on Benefit Sharing in Transboundary Waters” will feature top-level experts examining how transboundary water management through a benefit sharing approach, as opposed to an approach in which one focuses on water allocation and water rights, yields more peaceful and sustainable solutions. Benefits which could improve livelihoods include hydropower, improved environmental stewardship, increased trade, increased production, more jobs and raised incomes.

The workshop “Tools for Benefit Sharing in Transboundary Settings” will break down the issue further. Topics set for discussion include the potential benefits from collaboration in transboundary settings; the implications in a regional, national and local development context; and the differing responsibilities to ensure that a fair distribution of benefits and costs is achieved.



Photo: EC-ECHO-Marrinus Jansen

Aceh, Indonesia, inundated after the tsunami of 2004, represents an extreme example of water-related disasters, which can take many shapes and forms. How to cope with them will be discussed in Stockholm.

“Social and Environmental Change in a Transboundary River Basin: Linking Regional Drivers and Livelihood Vulnerabilities in the Greater Mekong Region” is a seminar which will look at specific aspects in a major basin, and “Transboundary Groundwater – The Hidden Asset for Riparian Cooperation in Africa” will examine how to create regional benefits beyond common technical management approaches and resource protection.

“How Can Integrated Water Resources Management be Extended Beyond Borders?” will examine IWRM in an extended geographical context. The issues discussed in this seminar will form an integral part of the 2006 UNDP Human Development Report, which for the first time will have an explicit water focus.

Finally, “Hydro-Hegemony” will examine power aspects related to water: just as history is written by the victor, so transboundary relations are directed by the basin

hegemon. How can those who are weaker in such an instance still access the benefits? The seminar will explore this and other aspects.

Disaster preparedness

An important focus of the week will be on extreme events, and how they become social disasters. The workshop “Safe Water Storage and Regulation During Floods and Droughts” will look at social and technical strategies for mitigation measures to reduce the consequences of floods and droughts. Another workshop, “Extreme Events and Sustainable Water and Sanitation Services” will identify what measures are required, and can be implemented, to ensure that the adverse effects of extreme events are minimised or mitigated.

The seminar “Climate and Water-related Risks” will look into strategies for coping with extreme weather events and where more efforts are needed.