Long WORKSHOP REPORT

Number and title of workshop:
WS 3.2: Corrupted Knowledge or Knowledge on Corruption? Lessons Learned from using Collaborate Evidence Based Multi-Stakeholder Research to Promote Water Integrity

Coordinator: Maria Jacobson (SIWI)

Date and time: Thursday 11 November 2011, 17h30 – 19h30

Moderator: Dr Håkan Tropp, SIWI

Rapporteur: Doris Bäsler, Transparency International

Panellists (Name, institution, title)

- Kibriyo Jumaeva, Programme Analyst on governance, UNDP country office, Tajikistan
- Dr Dang Hoang Giang, Vice-Director, Center for Community Support Development Studies, Viet Nam
- Cate Nimanya, Executive Director, NETWAS, Uganda
- Mona Salem, Information and Decision Support Centre, Egypt
- Dr Erik Nielsen, Manager of Country Based Programs, Water Integrity Network, Germany
- Maria Jacobson, Project Officer, SIWI

Summary

Corruption in the water sector presents a critical challenge to sustainable livelihoods. Challenges are particularly important in countries where water is scarce, and especially the poor are affected. To influence policy and decision-making processes in the sector, evidence-based research (evidence vs perception) and multi-stakeholder ownership (platform creation for non-confrontational exchange at multiple levels) are key to anchor efforts within existing national policy frameworks (promoting harmonisation), and to develop action-based change programs (integrated with existing sector priorities and internally driven).

If such a collaborative multi-stakeholder approach is applied, corruption in the sector can be effectively addressed.

Key objectives of the workshop, understood as part of an effort to initiate long-term change and seeking to share lessons learned in a number of case studies applying such an approach, were to:

- Propose strategies to overcome the stumbling blocks impeding effective multi stake holder engagement;
- Showcase and facilitate effective partnership building and collective action; and
- Incorporate new actors and innovative strategies in the fight against corruption.

Key <u>lessons learned</u> identified by the panellists in discussion with workshop participants included:

- Understanding of national context is crucial (political environment, level of corruption, space for civil society voice)
- Local facilitators must be legitimate and trusted by all stakeholders
- Government engagement is critical
- Multi-stakeholder processes are time-consuming, even if worth it in the end
- Strategies for implementing and follow up need to be in place
- Institutional sustainability is essential to maintaining national ownership
- Donor support is critical both at a financial and political level

Thus, key components to effectively promote good water governance include strong local ownership leading to a level of evidence and information that can anchor research and advocacy in national policy frameworks, and also engage other actors beyond the water sector to ensure that research will be translated into effective recommendations, and action.

Summary of presentations

(267) Kibriyo Jumaeva highlighted in her presentation that corruption – a Soviet legacy and consequence of civil war – is a very sensitive challenge in **Tajikistan** gravely affecting the country's development agenda. Public statements against corruption rarely translate into concrete action, although international conventions have been ratified and both an anti corruption agency and a national anti-corruption strategy is in place. Low civil society involvement and weak institutional capacity in a highly centralised decision-making system combined with a weak judiciary further exacerbates the problem.

Although Tajikistan is among the most water-rich countries in the world, only 59% of the population (47% in rural areas) has access to safe drinking water. The poor quality of water that is available has contributed to a high prevalence of water-borne diseases. The ongoing Sector Integrity Risk Assessment aims to map potential corruption risks (both in terms of incidence and impact) and identify 'red flags' of corruption in water provision to alert the government and public. To ensure full political commitment, a multi-stakeholder advisory group was formed to review the process and provide recommendations on how to best influence policy. A research group is responsible for preparing and implementing the actual research based on stakeholder mapping to prepare for focus group discussions which will inform the development of questionnaires for a larger survey targeting both water consumers and providers. Preliminary findings will presented to 'decision-makers' for validation. Although engaging all relevant stakeholders has been a challenge, trust has been built through the project's multi-stakeholder platform that has informed participatory decision-making in a transparent and accountable working atmosphere. However, it remains to be seen whether the government will make available the required resources for the implementation of the agreed action plan.

(258) Dr Dang Hoang Giang noted that **Vietnam** was doing worse in most economic and corruption indicators than other countries in East Asia and the Pacific. Political freedom is severely restrained, with the press state-owned and civil society still being in its early stages of development. As a result, corruption is on the rise alongside economic growth but difficult to address head-on. National anti-corruption mechanisms are not functioning and civil society is still in an embryonic state, with most NGOs focusing on service delivery but not understanding themselves to also have an advocacy mandate.

The project therefore decided against a "head on" approach to address water corruption such as an outright corruption survey, and instead focused on customer satisfaction with water services to start awareness-raising (in collaboration with the Viet Nam Fatherland Front) via a citizen score-card approach that involved provincial governments, water companies and water users. Score cards evaluate eg continuity of water supply, water pressure, quality, ease of access, cost, quality of customer services and complaint resolution mechanisms. The project will be rolled out over three years and develop into an annual survey in all 63 provinces, in which results will be used to rank provinces against each other and seeking to visualise results in an easily accessible form (building on forerunner initiatives such as the Provincial Competitiveness Index and the Public Administration Performance Index). Political constraints will be avoided by addressing service quality, indirectly targeting corruption while empowering users, and giving them a voice within a multi-stakeholder platform. The underlying academic concept is a modification to Klitgaard's corruption formula that defined corruption as Monopoly – Transparency – Accountability.

(292) In the **Uganda** water sector, as presented by **Cate Nimanya**, accountability and corruption is a major challenge partly due to weak downward accountability in local governments and poor community participation in decision-making. A huge implementation gap despite a strong policy and institutional framework manifested through dysfunctional institutions, poor financial management and the inability of citizens to demand change has resulted in a national water crisis. However a relatively free press, active civil society and commitment from the government to improve governance provided an environment conducive to conduct evidence-based research. An example of this commitment was the setting up of a multi stakeholder good governance working group within the Ministry of Water.

Against this background, two water integrity studies were undertaken to give a better picture of the nature and extent of corruption and to stimulate joint action. The first study was a qualitative study which identified weaknesses in the institutional and legal framework that governs the sector with regards to corruption which were later validated in a quantitative National Baseline Survey focusing on the actual experiences of corruption among water users and water service providers.

The research which was highly participatory, based on extensive consultation and guided by the multi-stakeholder good governance group. The study recommendations have informed an anti-corruption action plan for the sector that is now being implemented. Three outcomes of the project have been achieved: First of all, it led to the open acknowledgement by top policy makers of corruption as a problem for the sector. In addition, a common understanding of how corruption harms the sector and what can be done to reduce it was developed. Finally, the workshop provided a unique forum for frank public discussion regarding corruption between stakeholders who rarely share the same table.

(286) Egypt, as presented by **Mona Salem**, is one of the Middle Eastern countries still achieving only a low CPI score, with other indices such as the Global Integrity Index also highlighting a high perceived level of corruption in the country. Nevertheless, there is increased government commitment to address corruption as evidenced in the establishment of governance research centres and the increase in corruption cases that are being uncovered. However, civil society engagement remains weak. To better understand in-country perception of corruption, a national CPI was launched in 2007 by the Information and Decision Support Center, evaluating perception of corruption in 24 public institutions and sectors and ranking the 26 governorates of the country. Local authorities, education and health services were among the sectors perceived to be the most corrupt, with the water sector perceived as "medium corrupt". A more in-depth corruption assessment is now being carried out to better understand the governance framework in health, education and water, focusing on indicators including transparency, accountability, effectiveness, participation and the rule of law. As part of this research, international and regional governance assessments are, with approval from the concerned ministries, scanned and refined with the help of professional consultants. Task force working groups assure the representation of all stakeholders, and to identify data sources and choose the appropriate research methodology. The first release of the Water and Sanitation Governance Index is expected in 2011.

Potential resistance of public officials to provide precise and regular data, and government bureaucracy are expected to present challenges to the data collection process. Direct relation to the Cabinet of Ministers, as well as scepticism about international donor funding, might jeopardize the credibility of results, and funding challenges might put the sustainability of the index at risk.

Main Outputs

The workshop agreed that the there were a number of elements that were key to effectively addressing corruption and good governance in the water sector.

First and foremost, any advocacy has to be underpinned by in-depth information and better evidence, i.e. facts based on local research that can provide the basis for any recommendations subsequently developed. To develop this local pool of knowledge, and to anchor any research and advocacy in national policy frameworks, strong ownership by key actors at various levels - local and national as well as government, private sector (where involved) and civil society is key.

However, at the same time efforts aimed at policy reform in the water sector have to go beyond actors from within the sector itself. To be effective and sustainable, the work has to involve also institutions such as anti-corruption commissions, ombudsman offices, procurement authorities etc., as the water sector does not present an isolated entity but at all times remains part of society overall, and thus of a national integrity system.

When such multi-stakeholder partnerships can be built, and in-depth local research is leading to and translated into practical recommendations and effective action, reform in the water sector to ensure greater transparency, accountability and integrity is possible.

Recommendations, Follow-up Actions

Further to discussions of the presentations, the workshop agreed that it was essential to find a way for sharing available methodologies and tools as widely as possible, so that the dialogue can continue and new programs can be developed benefiting from existing and tested methodologies, and lessons learned.

Additional country water integrity programmes will be added by WIN and SIWI in the coming years, and a set of detailed guidance notes developed in collaboration with WIN, SIWI, TI and possibly other organizations such as UNDP and ODI, will be produced in 2011.

As part of this effort, participants are encouraged to visit the following websites where a variety of useful tools and information can be accessed: http://www.watergovernance.org/, http://www.waterintegritynetwork.net/, http://www.gaportal.org/

Highlights

Signed and date submitted

Doris Bäsler (Rapporteur), Håkan Tropp (Moderator): 27 November 2010