

Stakeholder dialogue and Participatory Strategy Development for Better Water Governance in Balqa Governorate

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Key words

Stakeholder Dialogue, Strategic Planning, Capacity building, Good Governance, IWRM (Integrated Water Resource Management), Accountability, Decentralization.

Purpose

The general purpose of this paper is to describe how capacity building is achieved through the EMPOWERS methodology. To do this, it will describe how the process works with three different levels within Jordanian society, namely the community, governorate and central government levels. It will also describe how the capacity for accountability is built from the foundations of the project and how decentralisation is enhanced and ultimately encouraged.

Jordanian Context

Jordan faces a drastic water shortage. The renewable water available per capita is around 160m³ per annum. The country's high population growth rate means that this figure is rapidly decreasing.

In Jordan water management is in the hands of top-down institutions, the legitimacy and effectiveness of which have increasingly been questioned. Thus, increased competition for the finite resource is aggravated by inefficient governance. IWRM brings coordination and collaboration among the individual sectors, plus a fostering of stakeholder participation, transparency and cost-effective local management.

In Jordan the government realized the problem of water shortage in the late seventies or early eighties, and many measures were taken. Most of these measures were acutely addressing supply management, building structures and additional augmentation measurements. It has been realized that there is no single action that can be taken; rather an integrated approach should be adopted in order to enhance water availability, improve the quality and ensure its sustainability.

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Introduction to EMPOWERS

Water governance relates to the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources and the delivery of water services at different levels of society (Rogers and Hall, 2003). Or put more simply, water governance is the set of systems that control decision-making with regard to water resource development and management. Hence, water governance is much more about the way in which decisions are made (i.e. how, by whom, and under what conditions decisions are made) than the decisions themselves (Moench et al., 2003).

Water governance covers the manner in which allocative and regulatory policies are exercised in the management of water and other natural resources and broadly embraces the formal and informal institutions by which authority is exercised. The relatively new term for discussing this combination of formal and informal institutions is *distributed governance*. There is a profoundly political element to water governance and as such systems of water governance usually reflect the political realities at national, provincial and local levels.

Using a process of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) planning and development activities are implemented with local communities. Usually IWRM is used to plan for the management of large geographic units, for example river basins or major watersheds and results in higher levels of policy and planning outcomes at regional, national or governorate level. The Euro-Mediterranean Participatory Water Resources Scenarios Project, better known by its acronym "EMPOWERS", uses the same methodologies but at district and village level and involved end-users actively in decision-making.

EMPOWERS sees its role as a programme of experimenting with innovative approaches, developing new models from these, then seeking their wider replication, and scale-up, in order to achieve a more widespread impact, all require the influencing and cooperation of a wide range of other agencies. The achievement of real and lasting benefits is not something that can be easily achieved by one agency operating alone. It requires the building of new and innovative partnerships, which include governmental, civil society, private sector and donor agencies.

As the Global Water Partnership puts it:

“IWRM is a challenge to conventional practices, attitudes and professional certainties. It confronts entrenched sectoral interests and requires that the water resource is managed holistically for the benefits of all. No one pretends that meeting the IWRM challenge will be easy but it is vital that a start is made now to avert the burgeoning crisis.”

EMPOWERS is a four year regional program funded by the European Union that works with some of the poorest people in Egypt, Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza. In Jordan, EMPOWERS targeted the Balqa governorate and it has worked to develop local and national partnerships according to the idea that water scarcity is just one of the root cause of the problem which may be solved through more harmonized administration.

Through EMPOWERS, women and men in the villages, district level authorities, governorate level actors, private companies, academics, national policy makers and other organizations, come together to debate, to plan, to argue and to resolve the issues of water supply so that livelihoods can be sustained and all have a say. For many of those are reached and included

in the EMPOWERS project it is the first time their needs and their water demands have been added to the increasingly critical equation.

Challenges Faced

- Little communication or cooperation between different departments within the Governorate. Each works separately and plans vertically with their ministry without horizontal coordination with related departments in the governorate. The decentralization process has faced problems over internal politics and authority.
- Planning takes a long time and people are readily willing to volunteer unless they have a clear idea of their role, its commitment and how they will benefit from the experience.
- Participatory approach cannot be achieved unless suitable skills are acquired. These include facilitation, negotiation, appreciation of information, the art of dialogue and the acceptance of others. These skills can be acquired through the process but need a lot of patience and understanding to the local customs and power relations and need a good level of trust and respect within the working team.
- At the beginning of the process people at the village level do not have the skills required and a shortage of resources limits the possibilities for development. There is a great need for a leader from the village who can be relied upon by the members of the team.
- Using many tools and methodologies can be confusing if the purpose and final goal are not in perspective – this counts for the village participants as well as for the project facilitators.
- Multi-task multi-level projects overloaded the EMPOWERS team members. The focus shifted continuously between planning, implementing, conflict resolution, tendering process, monitoring and evaluation. Delegation of authority is very useful and empowering but faced numerous challenges such as limited authority, skills and expertise and dealing with different procedures (donors, implementers, government procedures and regulations).

EMPOWERS Methodologies

EMPOWERS operates through two related and overlapping processes called *The Planning Cycle Framework* and *The Stakeholder Dialogue for Concerted Action*.

The key to the success of the project is less about the results of these processes, but rather in building the capacity of the participants to learn from participating in the process and be able to continue working towards the successful management of their water resources in the future.

The Planning Cycle Framework

This first step provides a methodology that ensures the development of holistic planning where the needs of end-users are brought together with intermediate-level water managers from the local governorate and water-related ministries.

The approach and methodology facilitated by the EMPOWERS team is easy to use and effective in bringing out key issues and helping those involved to identify practical strategies for action. Bringing together representative groups of end-users – both men and women, rich and poor, land owners and landless and dominant and marginalized. The planning process identifies and develops location-specific long-term visions and strategies for water resource management. These are based on a careful reflection of water-related problems and the development needs of the community. The process is supported by several tools for collecting and analyzing relevant information such as RIDA analysis (Resources, Infrastructure, Demand and Access), stakeholders' analysis, and PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal).

The process attempts to incorporate the uncertainty of the future by considering a series of different scenarios.

The logic of the decisions is tested through a process of discussion and reflection. Pilot projects further check the potential of the stakeholders who have not worked in this way to further develop trust and coordination. Thus the participating stakeholders at local and intermediate levels are able to make the technical and political decisions to begin the process of effective development and management of their water resources.

In EMPOWERS, pilot projects could be of a technical, methodological or socioeconomic nature. Pilots are designed to provide the stakeholders with successful models that can be emulated on wider scales. They are not particularly sought for themselves but as a part of building capacity in the quest of the best ways for improving the long-term access and rights to water by underprivileged populations.

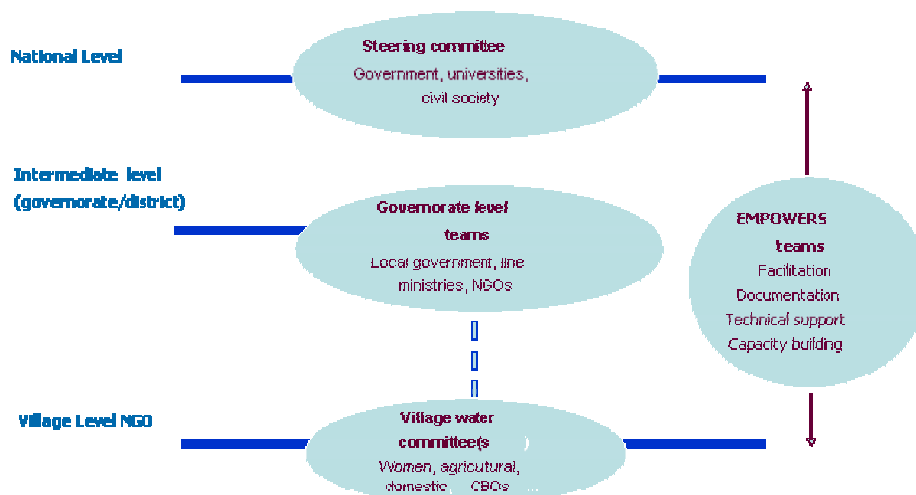
Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action

The Planning Cycle process described above feeds into this second process which brings together national and local level decision-makers to further debate what is a critical national concern. Using a facilitated approach a range of influential actors, such as politicians, academics, NGOs, environmentalist and representatives of the private sector are challenged to come to a strategic consensus on how to work together to tackle specific issues of shared concern. Output from the village exercises is used in meetings to highlight the need for innovation and policy revision. Different opinions, perceptions, preoccupations, assumptions, and prejudices among the participants are made explicit and discussion between them encouraged. The whole process is intended to open the debate regarding the urgency of the situation, the need to remove barriers for innovation, to explicitly consider the poorest end-users and better understand the whole fabric of national water policy.

Again, through the process of holding these discussions, the ultimate aim of building the capacity of the participants to continue this work in the future is gradually achieved.

The impact of the project has been to improve the exchange of information, social organization, and decision-making process between stakeholders and has raised awareness with respect to constraints and opportunities that affect the performance of actors as innovators. It has brought end-users and policy makers together to recognise that their current problems and future solutions are interlinked.

Figure 1. The Stakeholder Dialogue and Concerted Action process functions at these three levels within society with the EMPOWERS team acting largely as facilitators



To achieve this impact the mentality that rules water management has had to be challenged. Every member of the water management structure has to attain a degree of mutual understanding and a clear unified vision of how their roles and responsibilities all contribute to the inalienable human rights to water and dignified living standards. Key to this goal is the development of the different actors' capacity to participate in the management structure and fulfil his rights and obligations. The EMPOWERS methodology presents a simple, practical and resourceful approach to reach this consensus and activate the power of change at the local level and to empower the people to make local initiatives that can help themselves and the government to raise their living standards and take control of their lives.

A part of the process involved conducting workshops with different stakeholders. The primary objective of these workshops was to build the capacity of selected members of local communities and local government to use participatory methods for planning, implementing, and monitoring their community projects and activities. A secondary objective was to provide hands-on experience with these methods. This was achieved by identifying and analyzing the current water-related problems of the community, debating possible solutions and preparing an action plan to change the situation.

Capacity building through the EMPOWERS Methodology

The key intended attributes of the EMPOWERS approach to the *Project Management Cycle* (and its use within a process of *stakeholder dialogue for improved water governance*) are that:

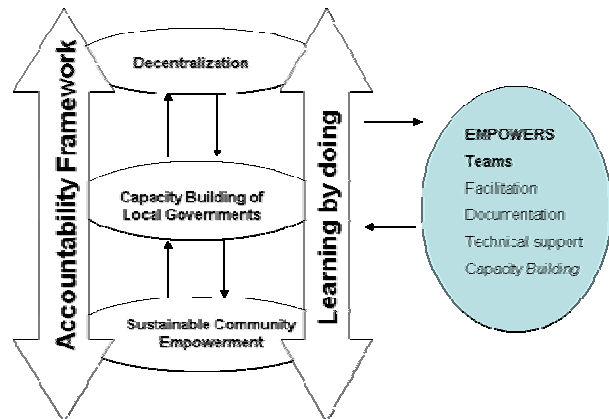
- It is problem and vision focused. That is, it addresses clearly identified problems, within the context of achieving a clearly articulated long term vision
- It sees the creation of a commonly owned and accepted body of key information – qualitative and quantitative - as being essential to the development of effective planning.

- It acknowledges that there will always be multiple paths to resolving problems and achieving visions, and that deciding between them is a political issue.
- It recognises that different levels of risk are associated with different courses and that effective planning seeks to minimize immediate and long-term risks.
- It brings to the foreground the voice of local communities and end-users and tries to advocate the rights of the under-privileged among them.
- It is designed to support processes of adaptive management.

So taking this issues under consideration when analysing capacity building processes through EMPOWERS approaches, three levels of capacity building can be identified at the three levels it work with.

Local level sustainable empowerment

At the local level, with different user groups in the targeted communities, EMPOWERS tries to empower the local community to be able to participate in the decision making process concerning their water resources or at least to be heard from the local government when distributing the services and allocating projects and resources in the area. This process starts by exploring the substantial skills that communities already have and the existence of the ability of innovation through various tools. Among these tools PRA, stakeholder analysis and RAAKS.



The workshop participants said that they appreciated the simplicity and action-oriented approach of the exercises. This allowed us to generate detailed information on community issues, aspirations and perceptions and helped the participants to identify their needs. Through these methods, even illiterate community members were able to take an active part in the consultations and contribute to their outcome. Recognizing the potential of these methods as effective tools for addressing water issues in addition to community issues, the participants requested to learn more about them.

The local capacity exists, but needs empowerment to be harnessed. Considerable institutional capacity already exists in communities and local governments. This capacity has been cloaked by a lack of local empowerment to use it. Any definition of capacity that focuses only on technical capacity will miss the huge potential that exists. Existing capacity is best defined as the ability to solve problems. People who have survived by trying to solve problems in difficult economic and political conditions have considerable capacity to put their experience and skills to work, once they are empowered.

Capacity building in communities is an important objective, but needs to be preceded by mobilization of community capacity that already exists but becomes evident only when communities are empowered. Empowering communities means that communities should have voice, decision-making powers, and access to resources.

The key characteristics of community empowerment through EMPOWERS are:

- Organizing and improving community participation
- Creating sustainable networks and communication mechanisms with various stakeholders' especially local government.
- Find shared strategies for the development of the local water resources.
- Financing pilot projects to create a tangible evidence of the importance of strategic planning
- Targeting interventions to ensure the participation of socially excluded sections

Community empowerment will be unsustainable if it is not embedded in institutional structures. It is crucial to have linkages between the community and other stakeholders, and community empowerment needs to be accompanied by local government empowerment. It is important to ensure adequate political, administrative and fiscal decentralization. Local government need to have both the authority and resources to plan and coordinate local-level strategic plans and provide local frontline services.

The Main Role of Strategic Planning in Community Empowerment

- Empower communities with the ability to self reflect, identify own needs, challenges and resources, engage in productive conflict resolution, tap into own capacities, and make authentic collective decisions.
- Promote an information sharing culture within and among communities for learning and mobilization purposes, and demonstrate to communities the power of information sharing and awareness raising;
- Promote and extend the voices of the poor for participation in public dialogue, inclusion in community and development affairs, and demand for greater and better service within their own communities and from local governments and institutions;
- Facilitate two-way information dissemination and exchange related to design and management of community based micro-projects;
- Facilitate two-way education and learning about water management topics for behavior change toward sustainable integrated water resources development and empowerment;
- Facilitate community access to water information, access and values; provide community members with knowledge and information useful to conducting local water resources management;
- Institute new communication channels within and across communities, and between communities and local authorities, that could be leveraged beyond the particular operation;
- Generate “dialogue” between communities and their local representatives for collaboration;
- Facilitate a realistic, relevant, culturally sensitive, and effective outreach to community groups regarding their roles, responsibilities, benefits and tradeoffs related to their strategic plans.

Strengthening Local Government

In recent years, Jordan has embarked upon a process of decentralization of authority and responsibility for the implementation of development and poverty alleviation initiatives down to governorate and municipal levels.

The Governorate Development Programme (GovDP) and the Municipality Reform Plan (MRP) provide an indication of the trend towards the devolution of authority to promote social and economic development to a sub-national level. Both initiatives are in their infancy but they are receiving significant support from the country decision makers and from international donors.

There is an underlying assumption that a process of decentralization is required to remove some of the blockage that currently prevent macro-economic policies from leading to substantive progress at the micro-level. Classic analysis holds that the removal of such obstacles requires intervention at the middle level in order to open up decision making.

In theory there are potential benefits for the poor. Officials at the sub-national level, whether appointed or elected, are more likely to be more responsive to local voices. Similarly local people are likely to be better informed concerning decisions that affect their well-being. This empowers them to demand improvement where there is evidence of poor performance.

Local government actions can energize communities and community engagement can improve local government performance on multiple levels. Despite inherent synergy between decentralization and community-driven development, in practice there are often divergent tendencies. Decentralization reforms are often erratic with political devolution of powers, but without the necessary economic devolution and capacity building to enable local governments to carry out their new mandates effectively (World Bank, Public Sector Governance: Decentralization Website).

The devolution of authority to the governorate level in Jordan was limited to administrative powers in which the planning, implementation and monitoring of the local development responsibilities is placed in the hands of the local government specifically through the governor and the executive council of the governorate. This decentralization of decision making is not entirely authentic because the local government lack control over financial issues and they are tied to the centre in financing development projects.

So to reach the stage of full decentralization the capacity building of the local government must include the following elements:

- Designing local government strategic planning processes to reduce capture and build transparency and accountability.
- Broadening local government decision-making towards local governance by involving other stakeholders including civil society.
- Increasingly, evidence suggests the importance of forging CBO-local government partnerships - where CBOs work alongside constitutionally established and procedurally delimited local government, the utility of both entities can be enhanced. Local government can be well grounded and organically connected with the citizens they serve, and CBOs can help citizens to connect more constructively with larger processes of state.

Partnering can help CBOs promote external linkages, enhance effectiveness and reduce costs, while local governments can gain through expanding service delivery and deepening the participation of citizens in local activities. However, effective partnering requires addressing structural/legal flaws in local government design that impose on local government accountability or capacity, and ensuring an enabling environment for CBOs and civil society to operate.

The EMPOWERS approach focuses on strategic planning development at the governorate level to build the capacity of the local government to be able to fulfil its responsibilities and their new role, but focusing in one sector that is vital and the most important for a country like Jordan with the possibility to expand to other sectors.

The Capacities that are being addressed by EMPOWERS for the local government to start this process, in water sector, are:

- Capacity in facilitating interaction and decreasing gaps between local communities and government agencies
- Experience in working with local communities (community development, capacity building)
- Capable and experience in communicating with government agencies
- Interdisciplinary and diverse staff capacities
- General (but not necessarily very specific) knowledge about water sector
- Familiarization with EMPOWERS approaches (ADCA, RAAKS, PTD, PRA, Participatory Planning framework)

Although it is a long process, local government departments with the participation of representatives from local CBOs and government ministries are on the right track. Strategic water plans have been developed and are now in the process of being adopted by the governor and the involved ministries.

Accountability

This is one of the key capacities which EMPOWERS attempts to build. Accountability is a twofold concept in which people come to acknowledge their responsibilities towards those around them while at the same time becoming aware of their right to hold other people to account for *their* responsibilities. This in essence is crucial to the *empowerment* of a population.

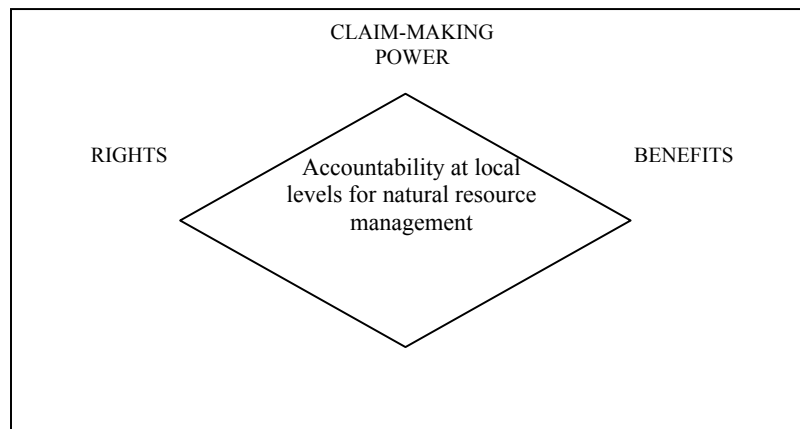
Accountability therefore needs to be built in the first place on an individual level, demonstrating the importance of each person in the system taking account for their actions. This can then be built up to show what an effect this can have on the entire management system, and must be emphasized that accountability, just as other measures for natural resource management, has to be defined at all levels from local farmers up to national governments and donor agencies.

Accountability is therefore important when assessing the degree that local people in communities are willing and able to take ownership for the management of their local water resources. To avoid any confusion, such ownership is not necessarily the same as ownership over the water resource itself.

Accountability and ownership will only be assumed by individuals or local community groups when they have:

- access to and control over resources
- knowledge and capacity to implement this control

claim-making-power to make sure that these conditions can be fulfilled/maintained



This figure shows the preconditions which are necessary for local people to assume accountability for natural resource management activities (Laban, 1994).

In-depth social analysis is needed to assess whether such conditions are in place. This is done with reference to gender and different wealth and power groups, to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable have an equitable share in water and can exercise control and ownership over it.

These different groups are assessed in terms of whether they fit the following preconditions:

- Awareness, Capacities and Knowledge.
Aware of the water situation in their community, can analyze the situation and identify problems.
Able to arrive at local solutions and have skills and knowledge to implement them.
- Benefits.
Receive the benefits of water sources and necessary infrastructure for their drinking and agricultural needs and for disposing adequately of waste water.
Sensitive and aware of different socio-economic interests and rights of their community.
- Access Rights and Control.
Aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities towards their water resources.
Claim their rights to access available water resources and to adequate information.
- Facilitation and Leadership.
Ability to organize themselves in a structured form in order to find proper solution to their problems.
- Group process.
Organized groups that work together and develop strategies to advocate rights and claim benefits.
- Claim Making Power.
Organized community groups with high levels of leadership to make sure community groups and end-users can assume accountability and ownership for their water resources and infrastructure.

Decentralization and institutional arrangements at the national level

Decentralization encompasses a wide range of elements, but evidence suggests that three conditions must be met to effectively improve governance:

- Significant responsibilities and powers for local service delivery should be devolved to the local government in line with their capacities and potential, based on a principle of subsidiary (political decentralization)
- Resources, through own revenues (especially local taxes) and grants from higher-level government, sufficient to meet these responsibilities should be devolved to local governments (fiscal decentralization)
- Proper channels of communication to encourage strong accountability (institutional decentralization)

The benefits of decentralization include:

- The enabling of citizens to influence decisions that affect their lives
- The ability of local governments to respond dynamically to communities
- Allocative Efficiency - Matching of local needs and preferences with patterns of local public expenditure (assuming substantial fiscal autonomy)
- Community/local level checks and balances ensure both CBOs and local government can be held accountable to their respective constituencies.

By building the capacity of governorate staff to work hand in hand with local communities to achieve an improved equitable water management system, the EMPOWERS Jordan project has helped to demonstrate what is possible under current decentralization. This enhancement of governorate level abilities proves to central government how the decentralized responsibilities may be utilized for the benefit of everyone at the local level. Furthermore, since one of the key strategies of the EMPOWERS methodology is sustainability, we hope that central government will look upon the enhanced capacity of governorate level staff and new working relationships at the community level as an incentive for further decentralization in the future.

Conclusions

- To create a sustainable system of integrated water resource management it is important to understand the different roles of men and women and to target action appropriately
- There is a general lack of capacity for the collection of data and for the transformation of this data into useful information. There is also a need for improved coordination among environmental, demographic, social and development information activities at the intermediate and national levels.
- The capacity building of program managers and researchers in operations research is a priority, and sustained effort is required to address it.
- It takes a great deal of time and effort to change the attitudes of the decision makers at the intermediate level towards work with local communities. We crossed the first step of breaking the ice and opened the dialogue between the two parties.

- We need to focus more on building the capacity of the local CBOs to intermediate between the local community and the government institutions. Their current role is limited to providing subsidiaries and charity work and there is a need to promote other conventional roles.
- There is a high willingness of government employees to discuss openly with local community members and to work with them closely but there is still a sense of insecurity in dealing with it publicly.
- Inspiration and suitable leadership is the way to make changes rather than through direction.
- Without management training the ability of people in the different participating agencies to scale up is very limited.
- There are significant gender differences in use access and management of water. It helps to explain why some cultures or communities are more successful than others in managing water.
- It is necessary to analyse rural development, land use and environmental policy to assess the various benefits and impacts on the community.

Recommendations

The recommendations set out below was developed by the participants of the November 2005 EMPOWRS' regional symposium on "Water is everybody's business"; End-user Ownership and Involvement in Integrated Water Resources Management in Cairo, are aimed at creating such an enabling environment. They include that:

- Local water governance must be based upon the participation of all stakeholders and end-users
- Capacity to enable end-user involvement must be developed in relevant stakeholders at intermediate level (media, local government, NGOs, CBOs, ...etc)
- In particular, capacity for communication and facilitation are required to enable full end-user participation and to narrow the gap between policy and practice.
- Water information must be considered a public good; and, access to information by all citizens must be enabled (feedback to communities etc.)
- Special efforts are required to:
 - ensure that marginalized groups (men and women) are not excluded
 - to build upon the special knowledge and role of women in water management
- Ensure that locally appropriate solutions and tools (IT, PRA, participatory planning.) can be developed through the use of participatory research and action
- Educational materials and resources for all levels and sectors are essential to improved local water governance (mass media, children, youth, local government etc.)

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