

Issue-Based Workshops

Promoting global dialogue has been an integral aspect of the Dams and Development Project's (DDP) work programme. This is channelled in three main ways: the Dams and Development Forum meetings, issues-based workshops, and convening of special events at international meetings. The issues-based workshops provide an international multi-stakeholder platform for discussing key topics identified by the Dams and Development Forum members, building on the direction provided by World Commission on Dams (WCD) strategic priorities. They serve the purpose of unpacking the WCD strategic priorities, as well as reaching consensus on outstanding controversial issues at national, sub-national and local levels.

The five issues-based workshops convened to date focussed on: Options Assessment, Financing Dams and Sustainable Development, Addressing Existing Dams, Ensuring Compliance, and Gaining Public Acceptance. Each workshop produced a set of recommendations and issues to be considered at the national level with a view to influencing policies and procedures on the planning and management of dams and their alternatives. In addition, the main outputs of the workshops will be used in developing non-prescriptive practical tools for decision-makers. The proceedings of all workshops are available on the DDP website (<http://www.unep.org/dams>) and they have been published and distributed as an information sheet.

Comprehensive Options Assessment, 22-24 September 2003, Geneva, Switzerland.

The objective of the workshop was to facilitate an international multi-stakeholder debate on options assessment in order to assess the state of the art, to outline the challenges, to produce criteria for implementation that are broadly accepted, and to articulate strategies to facilitate incorporation of options assessment into the planning process.

During the workshop discussions, it emerged that decision-makers would benefit from performing comprehensive options assessments because these processes:

- Improve development outcomes and ensure that these outcomes are responsive to needs;
- Achieve wider legitimacy for selected options and reduce controversy and;
- Create a sense of ownership by the stakeholders.

The main challenge in this regard is to bridge the gap between aspiration and reality. Comprehensive options assessments need to take into account governance systems, the extent to which country legal systems enable effective consultation procedures, regulatory structures and reforms as regards the participation of the private sector, lack of information, cost and time required for data collection, and the need for assessment tools such as models that facilitate better and deeper understanding of the processes.

The main outcome of the workshop was a statement defining comprehensive options assessment and identifying a set of principles and recommendations to facilitate a more specific stage of discussions at the national level.

Financing Dams And Sustainable Development, 20-21 April 2004, London, United Kingdom

The overall objective of the workshop was to identify ways of minimizing risks related to the financing of dams and their alternatives, thereby achieving more sustainable projects. These risks included financial and investment risk, reputational risk, risk to livelihoods, and environmental risk. The workshop focused on improving the flow of financing to investments that promote sustainable development of water and energy services, particularly for developing countries and communities that have limited financial resources. Furthermore, it was noted that the challenges for financing dams and sustainable development depend on the stage in the project cycle where key financing decisions are taken. The role of government in building confidence among stakeholders in the financing process was also addressed, and a number of recommendations were made, including:

- Government should provide a clear policy framework for the planning and development of water resources, and enabling conditions to enhance financial flows for equitable and sustainable investments;
- Government should provide an inclusive framework for options assessments beyond their regulatory oversight functions;
- Governments and the private sector should encourage inclusive processes for selection, development and management of dam projects to build public confidence in the outcomes, reduce risks, delay or abandonment of individual projects, and improve the effectiveness of projects.

The key outcomes of the workshop included a summary statement expected to contribute to an increased understanding and awareness of the steps that can be taken to manage better the risks associated with financing dams and their alternatives.

Addressing Existing Dams, 14-15 June 2004, Nairobi, Kenya

The workshop dealt with the systematic assessment of the performance of existing dams; the optimization and efficient production of dam benefits under changing circumstances; the role of stakeholders in the monitoring of dam performance; and closing the gap between aspiration and reality.

Dam safety, emergency preparedness and management, assessing and optimising performance, and dealing with unresolved environmental and social issues were the main topics discussed. Addressing existing dams not only involves improving their performance in various dimensions – technical, safety, economic, social, environmental – but provides the opportunity to identify and remedy outstanding environmental and social issues. At the same time, it allows the identification of appropriate practices and lessons learnt that will help to improve policies and decision-making of new infrastructure, bearing in mind that today's new dam will become tomorrow's existing dam. The output of the workshop comprised of a set of recommendations and issues to be dealt with at national level associated with each of the main topics addressed.

Ensuring Compliance, 15-16 June 2004, Nairobi, Kenya

The workshop dealt with different perspectives and measures to ensure compliance with applicable regulations, criteria, guidelines and agreements at all critical stages; planning and management of dams and their alternatives; roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and the public and private sector; and institutionalization of regulatory and non-regulatory measures to ensure compliance. Among the roles and responsibilities identified were those at government level-establishing compliance systems and meeting certain conditions at the planning stage, of donors in policing the implementation of the projects funded, the self-regulatory role of industry, the role of professional societies in disseminating best practices, the role of civil society in integrating third parties, and the watchdog role of NGOs.

Some constraints on compliance systems identified at the workshop included the costs, in terms of time and money; uneven power and capacity in terms of balance among the major actors involved; a lack of well-defined environmental and social standards; the effectiveness – or lack thereof – of compliance tools; and lack of access to information.

The tools discussed included appropriate regulatory frameworks, standards and guidelines, regulatory bodies, independent panels, monitoring systems, incentives and deterrents. The identified weaknesses included the lack of capacity for implementation, governmental political will for enforcing license provisions, open access to information, and public participation in certification programmes.

The output of the workshop was a set of recommendations and issues to be dealt with that reflect principles, criteria and strategies concerning the improvement of implementation of compliance mechanisms at the national level.

Gaining Public Acceptance, 5 October 2005, Nairobi, Kenya

The overall objectives of the workshop were to discuss the nature and features of gaining public acceptance and related processes/procedures; seeking their clarification and prioritisation for further consideration at local level with a view of integrating them into policy, legal and regulatory frameworks. In addition, the workshop aimed at assessing challenges and opportunities in national and regional contexts for institutionalising the gaining of public acceptance and identifying examples of relevant practices in this regard.

Based on previous DDP work regarding characteristics, elements, and attributes of gaining public acceptance, four key components were proposed as the basis of the workshop programme: stakeholder identification, access to information, informed participation in decision-making process, and measure of acceptance. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and its public participation component were considered as one main vehicle, through which public acceptance could be achieved and integrated into regional and national policy and regulatory frameworks. Environmental impact assessment includes social effects and is usually approached as a lifecycle analysis. In their recommendations, the participants addressed a range of issues involving stakeholders' hierarchies, the role of local communities, availability, timeliness, format and responsibilities for access to information; level, scope, tools and opportunities for enhancing the dialogue between developers and stakeholders; and measuring public acceptance in terms of process and outcomes.



For more information please contact:

UNEP - Dams and Development Project

Street address: United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi

Postal address: P.O. Box 30552, Nairobi, Kenya

Telephone: +254 (0)20 762 3942 Fax: 254 (0)20 762 4763

e-mail: ddpinfo@unep.org www.unep-dams.org