

Bonn 2011 Conference
The Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus
Solution for the Green Economy

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**Social Dimension- Accelerating Access through people´s
centred policies**

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CONCEPT NOTE

Social Dimension -Accelerating Access through people centred policies especially in water sector

Research has made clear that not only do the rural poor rely heavily on natural resources; they also increasingly live in areas of high ecological vulnerability and relatively low levels of resource productivity such as subtropical drylands or steel mountain slopes. Estimates indicate that if current trends persist, by 2020 more than 800 million people could be living on marginal lands (Hazell and Garrett, 1996; Baumann 2002).

Since, people especially the poor, are at the centre of the Bonn 2011 process as the conference agenda and focuses on the positive impacts of sustainable and inclusive management of water for and energy of human wellbeing. This concept note brings attention to the need of having people centred policies by capitalizing on their indigenous knowledge. It attempts to build on arguments that challenges we are facing today such as climate change, water scarcity, food insecurity are not new and population especially in rural areas in developing countries are at the frontline. However, some societies have evolved over year the traditional solutions in response to the challenges such as of water scarcity and food security using their indigenous knowledge about the environment and ecosystems they are living in.

The author considers the indigenous knowledge and local practices as an opportunity towards finding solutions for the sustainable management of natural resources. Increasing pressure on land and water resources with the changing climate is one of the many challenges the world is facing today. Many development and academic experts mostly focus on, river basic management and trans-boundary water issues and there is less attention on the traditionally managed small reserves of water on which many lives and livelihood depends. Not many parts of the world have big rivers and dam projects to meet the water needs of the population and there are ecosystems where increasing drought and rainfall variability has affected water availability both for drinking and irrigation

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purposes. Within the declining water availability scenarios there are many societies who have evolved indigenous solutions and have adapted to changing environment and challenges faced today.

This concept note while acknowledging that people are “knowledgeable” and their participation in policy making will enhance the effectiveness also emphasize that there is need to recognize and legitimize the usefulness of such opportunities by the policy makers at the state and at the global level.

We are living in the world where new solutions, new technologies, new knowledge is evolving every day, the question is are we willing and prepared enough to preserve what we already have and build on existing indigenous knowledge before trying something new. To have policies that work for all is a challenge developing countries are facing more than the developed countries due to the huge gap that exist between the different social groups with access and accessibility issues especially regarding use of natural resources. The weak governance structures, poor economy, corruption, growing population among others are few challenges developing states are faced with.

On a conceptual level the above mentioned challenges coupled with the rapid pace of globalization has left national governments and donors in situation where monitoring of true implementation of water policies has become a question mark and they are uncertain of what is actually happening. The lack of a narrative, whilst perhaps enabling an unbiased approach to each ‘development situation’, makes planning difficult at a strategic level. On a practical level, it is difficult to reconcile the participatory processes and broad, with the logistical details of planned development interventions (Farrington and Lomax 2002). In this line of argument author consider the role of states as a point of departure. By acknowledging the challenges and signing the UN Conventions to achieve sustainable development is not enough, rather working under set of principles where state policies are translated for real action that are for all rich and poor. We have seen this that even with the presence of UN initiated policy process to work for sustainable development many countries are faced by internal and external social, political and economic challenges to meet the Millennium Goals.

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This points out towards serious problems faced by the people who are directly affected by the consequences of these challenges. Even the best policies on paper sometimes are unable to bring change to the people. The concern however remains whether to rethink the policies or to identify the bottlenecks in implementation. Hence, it's important to have "policies within policy" that involves maximum participation of those for whom policies are made. This can only be done once states have political will to and are ready enough to recognize the needs of the people. Once they (people) will be informed and given chance to participate in policy formulations, many opportunities such as their (people's) indigenous knowledge of managing the natural resources, their (people's) specific needs to sustainably use the resources, their (people's) access and control can be improved. There is no such blue print to make this happen however, it imposes great challenge to all the actors involved particularly the policy makers.

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