

Integrated Water Management



Prospects and challenges for the next decade



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CONVENTION ON WETLANDS
CONVENTION SUR LES ZONES HUMIDES
CONVENCIÓN SOBRE LOS HUMEDALES
(Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

What is not in this presentation



- Results of recent global water assessments
- Predictions of future water use and availability
- Likely consequences of climate change for water resources, wetlands and human wellbeing
- Technical planning and policy options for addressing some of these consequences

What is in this presentation



- What do we mean by “water equity” and why is it important ?
- What is the relationship between water equity and IRBM ?
- How is this relevant for Ramsar ?
- What does Ramsar’s water guidance offer ?
- Challenges for the future.



Some thoughts on equity



- Equality is just a first step towards equity
 - Perceptions of both equality and equity are subjective
 - Conflicts arise when people feel they have been treated unfairly, relative to others around them
- Equity is a dynamic state, and the goalposts will always be moving

The equity “package”



1. Equity related to the **water** itself
 - simple equality for basic human needs
2. Equity of **access** to water for beneficial uses
 - offstream and instream uses
3. Equity of access to **ecosystem** services



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Ecosystem services 101



- Most water-related services, including water supply, are directly or indirectly dependent on healthy, functional wetland ecosystems.
- Water-related services support many subsistence livelihoods
 - value of this support is frequently not considered in national accounts.
- Wetlands require water (quantity, quality, timing) in order to sustain a flow of ecosystem services



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Working towards equity



- Delivering water is technically straightforward, though not always easy.
- Delivering ecosystem services is much more complex;
 - supporting interventions from multiple sectors, working in collaboration
 - mechanisms for ensuring equitable decision-making
 - mechanisms to ensure protection of supply of goods and services (eg environmental flows)
 - mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of costs and benefits associated with goods and services
 - institutional flexibility to address the ever-changing “dynamic equity” balance
- Delivery of ecosystem services is probably best effected within IWRM or IRBM frameworks



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Status of wetland ecosystems in WRM policy



Approaches are still evolving:

1. Whatever water is left once all reasonable demands for basic human needs and beneficial uses have been met can be allocated to the ecosystem
 - *still implicitly supported by countries pushing for rapid industrialization and development using water-intensive industries and crops.*
2. Ecosystem is a competing user, will get water allocation if the value of this as a beneficial use is shown to be equal to or greater than other proposed water uses.
 - *more common among countries beginning to retrofit EFs in fully subscribed or nearly closed basins.*
3. Ecosystem is the resource (natural capital) from which the benefits and services are derived, and must be protected first.
 - *gaining ground amongst countries with heavy dependence on subsistence agriculture & fisheries.*
 - *can conflict with basic human needs allocation, depending on people's expectations for basic human needs.*



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Change can happen....



Actual policy statements from various eras of water management in South Africa:

- 1978: Every drop of water that reaches the sea is wasted
- 1988: The environment is a competing user. Water can be allocated to the environment after all other needs have been met
- 1992: The environment is a recognised user, with legitimate claim to water, but this must be justified.
- 1996: The environment is the resource from which water is derived, and must be protected.



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How is this relevant for Ramsar ?



- The wise use concept is consistent with “dynamic” equity and multi-sectoral policy.
- Ramsar has a suite of technical and planning guidance that can contribute to integrated water management
 - especially the natural infrastructure component.
- Uptake and implementation is still relatively weak.



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Lessons from RBM cases



- Ramsar guidance and case studies on integration of wetlands and wetland ecosystems into river basin management (DR19)
- Emphasis on implementation.
- Provided good lessons, relevant for IWRM and IRBM.



Get the ducks in a row



- The longer implementation is delayed, the greater the risk of failure, and the greater the discontent of people who have a stake in the implementation.
- **Sequencing** is one of the most important factors in avoiding blockages and delays in implementation.



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All of these are on the “critical path” for implementation.....



- Understanding of biophysical and hydrological constraints & opportunities
- Enabling legislative & regulatory environment
- Suitable institutional environment
- Supportive civil society environment
- Credible data
- Knowledge (conventional & indigenous)
- Infrastructure
- Financing, capacity and skills



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Plan for problems before they arrive



- There seems to be a set of typical obstacles or challenges to integrating wetlands into RBM.
- There are numerous creative local solutions for overcoming these obstacles.
- Plan for the obstacles.
- Enable the creativity.



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Challenges for the future....



- Technical planning and policy tools are emerging, to meet some of the water challenges facing us.
- Wide range of useful experiences from local and small river basin levels.
- Successful implementation of ecosystem-based approaches at river basin level can show the way for institutional development and policy at national and international level.
- Three big challenges:
 - Policy coherence
 - Water law
 - Institutions



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Policy coherence at multiple levels



- **Horizontal coherence** across multiple sectors:
 - possible at Convention level,
 - difficult but not impossible at country level with commitment and support
 - achievable at site or river basin level with commitment and support
- **Vertical coherence** from Convention level down to site level remains challenging in many countries
 - Need capacity and support for governance mechanisms that allow “downward cascading” of policy
 - Need capacity and mechanisms for encouraging implementation on the ground – “upward cascading”
- Larger scale regional and global policy implementation will also require “**diagonal coherence**”, where the consequences for one community or country depend on the policies and actions of geographically distant communities or countries



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Institutional environment



- Institutions will need to be
 - flexible, adaptable, have a formal mandate to work across sectoral boundaries;
 - able to consider multiple conflicting objectives;
 - have authority and responsibility to plan and implement.
- Many existing sectoral public agencies are not well suited for this.
- River basin management agencies could potentially grow into this role, but many are still currently not truly cross-sectoral.



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Water law



- Most current water law does not adequately address the role of wetland ecosystems in the hydrological cycle.
- Water allocation provisions tend to focus on longer-term certainty and rights.
- Water allocations for environmental flows require flexibility and adaptability to ensure flow regimes closer to natural.
- Changes in hydrological regimes due to climate change will accelerate – can our water allocation laws cope with this ?



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In conclusion.....



- Ramsar's suite of water guidance provides many useful tools for addressing the “natural infrastructure” component of integrated river basin management.
- Parties should actively disseminate and support the uptake of DR19 and other water guidance.



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