



GLOBAL WORKSHOP

ON BUILDING CLIMATE - RESILIENCE THROUGH IMPROVING WATER MANAGEMENT AND SANITATION AT NATIONAL AND TRANSBOUNDARY LEVELS

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Palais des Nations, Geneva and online

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CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SESSION 1

Increasing resilience of water and sanitation to the effects of climate change, including through the Protocol on Water and Health

- Climate change impacts water cycle by disrupting weather patterns, leading to extreme weather events, unpredictable water availability, exacerbating water scarcity and contaminating water supplies in short, medium and long term. Such impacts can drastically affect water quantity and quality, ultimately affecting human health. Temperature changes and rainfall alter ecological niches, spreading and distribution of some water-borne illnesses and disease vectors while rising sea levels affect water and sanitation service security and safety.
- Building and maintaining water supply and sanitation systems that are resilient to climate shocks should rely upon the commitments of policy governance and integration with other sector and progress (e.g. green and digital transition) and requires integrated perspective on water, sanitation, climate and health with the applying of risk-based approaches and tools, such as water and sanitation safety plans.
- Within the fundamental inter-sectorial approach, water and sanitation operators play an important role in increasing resilience to climate change. Strong climate-sensitive regulatory frameworks are key enablers in the process.
- The Protocol on Water and Health is a powerful multilateral instrument that helps countries systematically address water and sanitation-related health risks arising from a changing climate.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SESSION 2

Water, sanitation and health in national climate policies

- Water is a common thread linking the key global goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with national commitments on climate change.
- Integrating water and sanitation-related climate adaptation policies is crucial for strengthening the resilience of our economies and societies, health and well-being.
- National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) serve as the umbrella plan of action for adaptation at country level, embracing all other relevant national plans and sectoral strategies, as well as plans at subnational and, where relevant, regional/transboundary plans. Water, sanitation and health should be given high priority in the NAPs and also in the NDCs.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SESSION 3

Disaster risk reduction through transboundary cooperation

- An integrated multi-hazard risk approach is needed to adequately address disaster risks, in line with the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction, linking for ex. floods and droughts which often happen in the same basin. Natural disasters can trigger technological disasters for ex. industrial accidents. Basin-wide contingency planning is therefore recommended. Health aspects of disasters are often disregarded but should also be considered, for example mining accidents affect water quality and thereby health.
- Cooperation at the regional and transboundary level is important in addressing disaster risks to prevent mal-adaptation and make DRR more effective, for example by sharing data, basin-wide early warning and monitoring systems or prioritization of measures to jointly address disaster risks. This can increase trust and promote transboundary cooperation more broadly. Making existing transboundary agreements climate-resilient is a related challenge. The Water Convention plays an important role in helping countries jointly address climate change and disasters.
- Increasing funds are available for adaptation and it is therefore important for the water community to submit good project proposals on water, WASH and climate change, including regional and transboundary water cooperation, highlighting the climate rationale, and to mainstream these issues into NDCs and NAPs.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SESSION 4

Transboundary cooperation and health policies

- Some transboundary agreements such as on the lake Victoria, Amazon and Senegal basins include health or WASH issues, with an increasing trend, maybe due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Health and water quality issues can actually promote transboundary cooperation
- Some basin organizations, especially in developing countries, which work on broader development topics, are dealing with health-related issues, mostly WASH and access to water, but also some are implementing water quality measures such as pollution prevention, joint norms and standards etc. This may be related to their broader mandate to also support development. They support disease surveillance, prevention of infectious diseases for example by distributing mosquito nets, distributing medicine
- It is important to involve local communities in disaster risk reduction, water management and transboundary cooperation, e.g. through awareness-raising, education, trainings etc. Story-telling can enable better understanding of the importance of basin-wide cooperation and reduction of impacts on shared waters. Impacts need to be demonstrated within an actor's immediate sphere of influence to then show how these translate at transboundary level which is quite abstract otherwise. Showing daily impacts and the role individuals play filters up to transboundary level. Working with community focal points or leaders is also crucial, including for health-related issues.

CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SESSION 4

- Integration of WASH and Health policies in transboundary cooperation requires regional coordination with strong support (Technical and financial) to enhance development, harmonization and implementation of regional and international transboundary policies.
- Transboundary cooperation is a long process impacted in both positive and negative ways by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-existing cooperation relationships have generally been able to continue, although in altered formats. New cooperation frameworks have, conversely, been challenging to establish, and many meetings could not take place. Digitalization of cooperation methods has been accelerated: enhancing the democratization and inclusion of many cooperation meetings and processes; yet this has also diminished the possibilities for more complex in-person negotiations. In some cases, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted higher cooperation between border cities around shared rivers and water supply and sanitation, e.g. between Uruguay and Brazil. There are opportunities of building back better by ensuring integration of disaster risk reduction into policies, strategies and river basin management plans by linking biological, technological, and natural hazards.
- Consider public health, ecosystem health and animal health in an integrated manner. Nature-based solutions can help to reduce disaster risks.
- Water supply and use in companies and at home also significantly contributes to Greenhouse gas emissions (up to 10%). Water is crucial for climate change mitigation which should place water in global climate discussions.