Strengthening the capacity of African stakeholders to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 amidst Climate Change

INTRODUCTION

Water-related risks and Climate Change threaten African societies and economies

To help African countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), international organisations such as the Africa Progress Panel, and the African Union stress the need to accelerate investments in agriculture, fishing, energy, and other sectors. However, those sectors cannot function without water. Water crises, one of the five greatest environmental risks the world is facing today, are already affecting several African countries, reducing food production and increasing hunger. To achieve SDG 6 amidst Climate Change, it is crucial to strengthen the capacity of African stakeholders to manage water resources sustainably, while ensuring the protection and restoration of ecosystems which have a vital role in the hydrological cycle. These are prerequisites for economic development and social well-being within the constraints that Climate Change imposes. This policy brief focuses primarily on capacity development for water resource management.

AfriAlliance combined a top-down approach (policy analysis) and a bottom-up approach (workshops, surveys and interviews) to analyse the specific capacity needs, in view of Climate Change, of African water practitioners from three key stakeholder groups involved in water management, namely water utilities (WUs), river basin organisations (RBOs), and civil society organisations (CSOs). A better understanding of how they (and governmental bodies in charge of water policies design, implementation) perceive the effects of Climate Change on their organisations’ activities, and what barriers and bottlenecks they face, is a crucial first step for strengthening their capacity to fulfil their mandates in the context of Climate Change.

Given the geographical, climatic and cultural diversity in Africa, achieving SDGs 6 and 13 depends on sound understanding of what the general capacity needs identified at policy level actually consist of at local level, and on collaboration and partnerships (SDG 17).

KEY MESSAGES

1. Collaboration to achieve SDGs 6 and 13 depends on a sound understanding of what the general capacity needs identified at policy level actually consist of at local level.

2. Strengthening the capacity of water managing organisations to envision how Climate Change will enable them to design (and implement) strategies for water security.

3. Information on the conditions of water resources and how they may be affected by Climate Change is needed to implement Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

4. In order to participate in IWRM, communities need to understand climate and water issues and support the search for solutions for the problems they face.

5. Good governance is crucial to ensure water security amidst Climate Change.

6. Strengthening capacity at different levels to achieve SDG6 amidst Climate Change (SDG13) requires collaboration and partnerships (SDG17).
Dealing with day-to-day water management leaves little room to plan for Climate Change

The AfriAlliance research results indicate that many African water practitioners have not been able to identify and mitigate the challenges that Climate Change poses for Africa. Therefore, they have not yet devised adaptation strategies. For example, water utilities, already affected by low human and technical capacity, are overwhelmed by factors external to their control - such as low tariffs and climate extremes - that can impair their ability to fulfill their mandate. Reduced budgets and loss of water revenues have contributed to the poor state of water infrastructure in many African countries. The effects of the effects of weather extremes and increased maintenance costs. Pollution of water sources, resulting from poor regulation and enforcement, reduces the efficiency of water treating processes, and contributes to poverty, migration and conflict. Limited capacity of local and national authorities, and poor coordination among sectoral policies reduce their ability to plan how to allocate resources to meet the increasing demand for water, lengthening the capacity of water management organizations, to identify solutions for their current needs and to envision how Climate Change will affect specific activities enable them to design their strategies for water management. Box 1 illustrates ongoing work to strengthen the individual and institutional capacity of water-related sectors in Southern Africa.

Implementing IWRM is difficult without information on water and climate

Concerns about the effects that Climate Change may have - or is already having - on sustainable water management and on access to water and sanitation have grown over the past year. However, this has not resulted in the implementation of coherent responses to meeting SDG 6. An IWRM approach seeks to involve decision-makers and stakeholders across sectors as well as across local, national and regional scales in deciding how to develop and manage water resources in order to achieve social and economic well-being without compromising the environment. However, stakeholders groups (WMOs and CSOs) highlighted that the lack of information about local weather, climate patterns and the conditions of water resources limits their capacity to manage water efficiently. The following needs are identified for strengthening the capacity of individuals and institutions in the Southern Africa region.

• Increase the relevance and involvement of stakeholders in solving water problems through participation; provision of timely and relevant information; and extension of capacity in the SDG 6B realm.

• Enhance and sustain regional cooperation and reduce water scarcity through the development of water policies.

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• Problem-provision of action-oriented postgraduate educational programmes and short professional training courses for decision-makers, managers, and practitioners.

Box 1

Knowledge and participation to face Day Zero: The City of Cape Town’s Water Crisis

In early 2018, Cape Town experienced the effects of the worst drought in its history. With the urgency of the situation, the City had to find ways to speed up the procurement process for water-saving measures. Water-use restrictions were implemented from February 2018. Water was transported from the city’s largest dam (Red Devil Dam) into the river to the reservoir that supplies the city. This involved consultations and agreements with farmers as well. The City also explored the development of the Department of Water and Sanitation to finalise the complex water licensing requirements and permissions for water use and mobilizing.

Box 2

Capacity needs in Southern Africa

Countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are fully engaged in global and regional processes for water resources management. With 15 transboundary river basins in the region, water is seen as a catalyst for good governance, regional integration, poverty eradication, peace and stability. The SADC region is characterized by vulnerability and limited capacity to cope with weather extremes, limited technical capabilities and weak scientific understanding of water management. The region is also a hotspot for conflicts and a lack of information about local weather, climate patterns and the conditions of water resources limits their capacity to manage water efficiently. The following needs are identified for strengthening the capacity of individuals and institutions in the Southern Africa region.

While on-going efforts focus on strengthening the capacity in the SADC region to generate knowledge and deliver products and services to local stakeholders, there is a pressing need to institutionalise feedback loops and scale-up relevant changes in knowledge, practices and policies. Bridging gaps between the supply side (represented by capacity development initiatives) and the demand side (provision of timely and relevant findings from various initiatives) will increase relevance and effectiveness of initiatives.

Box 3

Strengthening the capacity of local communities to participate in water management is key for water security

SDG 6b calls for increased participation of communities in water management. From their efforts to engage stakeholders, some African practitioners have reported that as cross-local, national and regional scales, and institutional learning, failure to integrate IWRM in national policy and practice has affected the sustainability of the Water Framework Directive and other policies. Therefore, the capacity of River Basin Organisations, research institutions, and other stakeholders has to be strengthened so that they can monitor water resources and climate at multiple geographical scales. This will help generate information on the current state of water resources and how changes in climatic patterns may affect them.

The participation of all concerned stakeholders according to local culture and customs is essential for IWRM to succeed. However, water management is often implemented as a top-down approach, with little involvement from local stakeholders. Consequently, African governments have been urged to ensure that water is managed in a way that benefits the entire population. 1 As a result, the need to involve local stakeholders in solving water problems and reaching goals on development, regional and global levels is becoming progressively more important.

Box 4

Good governance is crucial to increase water security in times of Climate Change

SDG 6a aims for more collaboration to strengthen capacity on water and sanitation-related activities and programmes. However, several African countries struggle with poor governance resulting from corruption, lack of transparency and poor accountability, among others. This has resulted in the local provision of services. Resilience and adaptive capacity of the environment and social impact assessments for investors, donors and governments is needed to ensure that water resources management efforts are strengthened. Consequently, African governments have been urged to ensure that resources are managed in a way that benefits the entire population. The capacity of River Basin Organisations, research institutions, and other stakeholders has to be strengthened so that they can monitor water resources and climate at multiple geographical scales. This will help generate information on the current state of water resources and how changes in climatic patterns may affect them.

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In conclusion, the implementation of IWRM is difficult without information on water and climate. The following needs are identified for strengthening the capacity of stakeholders in the SADC region to generate knowledge and deliver products and services to local stakeholders, there is a pressing need to institutionalise feedback loops and scale-up relevant changes in knowledge, practices and policies. Bridging gaps between the supply side (represented by capacity development initiatives) and the demand side (provision of timely and relevant findings from various initiatives) will increase relevance and effectiveness of initiatives.

Box 2

Water managers and water users need information to create strategies to allocate water resources and to evaluate the effectiveness, especially when facing water scarcity. Box 2 illustrates how information is helping the City of Cape Town, track water allocation in response to the recent drought in the region. It also shows how information serves to engage stakeholders in dealing with the water crisis.

In order to implement IWRM, information is needed on the condition of water resources and how they may be affected by Climate Change. Therefore, the importance of using information to reduce water conflicts, political instability, poverty, migration, and conflict has to be recognized. Consequently, African governments have been urged to ensure that water is managed in a way that benefits the entire population. 1 As a result, the need to involve local stakeholders in solving water problems and reaching goals on development, regional and global levels is becoming progressively more important.

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African practitioners ask for greater alignment of donor priorities with
national political agendas and for projects of Civil Society Organisations
(CSOs) to strengthen local, national and regional capacity to use resources
efficiently. Increasing knowledge and capacity development is a slow and
complex process, which often conflicts with the short-term focus of
funding10 and evaluation of programmes. Therefore, to strengthen capacity
at multiple levels, investors and donors need to consider long-term support
with a vision to creating synergies among Climate Change adaptation, water
security and the improvement of livelihoods. Supporting community-based,
multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder approaches that integrate indigenous
knowledge and create long term partnerships will help achieve that vision.

All stakeholders have a role in achieving water security and protecting water-related
ecosystems in times of Climate Change

All stakeholders need to collaborate to strengthen local and national capacity in
African countries for managing water resources within the constraints imposed by
Climate Change. These efforts effectively cut across SDG6 (water and
sanitation for all), SDG 13 (Climate Change) and SDG 17 (partnerships).

Decision makers/ implementers and knowledge organisations
• Support water managing organisations and stakeholders in understanding
  the effects that Climate Change has on their operations and in designing
  strategies for adaptation.
• Work closely with water managing organisations and water users to identify
  their specific needs for water management and Climate Change adaptation
  and to develop relevant solutions.

Donors, investors, and governments at various levels, and knowledge and
capacity development organisations
• Increase dialogue and collaborate with water stakeholders to align priorities
  for strengthening capacity and developing infrastructure.
• Support the consolidation of regional and national networks for water
  and climate monitoring and the creation of information sharing portals
  where data and information are shared openly with users to improve
  management decisions from local to regional levels.
• Promote the integration of traditional knowledge and uptake (via information
  and training) of appropriate cost-effective indigenous water harvesting tech-
  nologies such as traditional micro-catchment runoff harvesting (contours
  bunds, zaï, half-moon, micro reservoirs) to increase supply for domestic use
  and irrigation. Promote adoption of multiple irrigation alternatives (surface
  irrigation, sprinkler irrigation and drip irrigation) rather than relying on a single one.
• Include Climate Change, environmental and social risk assessment in
  investment projects and oversee the participation of local communities
  along the project cycle.

Communities
• Gain greater understanding of how Climate Change may affect their water
  resources and collaborate with other stakeholders to design and implement
  adaptation strategies, including the restoration of ecosystems.
• Work with knowledge organisations and Civil Society Organisations to
  identify the factors that obstruct or facilitate knowledge sharing and the
  transfer of technological and non-technological solutions to use water
  resources more efficiently in times of Climate Change.
• Consider benchmarking visits between different local groups for people to
  share and learn from best practices.

All stakeholders, including donors, investors, various levels of government,
knowledge organizations and civil society need to join forces to demand
and implement greater accountability in order to improve water governance.

REFERENCES