



A SWOT analysis of the water sector in the Belgian development cooperation programs

The Water Without Borders event took place in Brussels on November 28 2019, gathering actors from civil society, NGOs, public and private companies, and governmental institutions. In that context, stakeholders were invited to participate in break-out sessions to discuss the “Stakeholder coordination in international water cooperation: Strength, weaknesses and opportunities”. Four groups were formed to discuss the issue on a regional-basis: NW Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and Latina America and the Caribbean. Each group gathered from 10 to 20 actors with water knowledge in the region.

Each group was asked to conduct a SWOT analysis and consider the following questions:

- How can we further advance the agenda of SDG6?
- Which ones of the SDG6 targets appear to be universal and which ones need a regional approach?
- What are strongly related SDGs that need attention for a sustainable approach?
- What lessons in particular can we draw for Belgium to further improve its policies and interventions.

The document hereby provides an itemized list of the elements mentioned by the participants.

NW AFRICA

Strengths

- Closeness: cultural & geographic
- Community-based approach – citizen science
- Example: “Together for Water project – public events & social media
- Willingness to cooperate between EU and N-African companies

Weaknesses

- Political unstable – Bureaucracy - Corruption
- Practicalities difficult to cooperate
- Language barrier for cooperation with Europe – English / French –
- Poor link between university – NGO – Businesses
- Academia has limited incentives to cooperate
- Lack of treatment technology for saline groundwater & waste water
- Lack of sharing data
- Insufficient finance

OPPORTUNITIES

- Local rooting / connection success factor for projects
- Citizen engagement – ownership – Community decision
- Set a price on water – better stewardship
- Develop a local economy around the project ... to improve longevity
- Better data sharing – Citizen science
- Technology for saline / waste water



- Invest in Renewable energy
- Budget for training in using the technology
- Regional centre of excellence – Service providers & providing local feedback
- Public-Private partnerships to develop the water sector
- Facilitate exchange of staff with Europe (visa)

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Strengths

- VLIR-UOS + ARES
- Shared history
- Twinning at city level
- Strong technical expertise + private companies
- Large NGO-landscape (+ and -)
- Travel time + shared time zone
- Shared languages
- Existing partnerships between NGO's and enterprises
- Large diaspora from Africa
- Language knowledge of Belgians

Weaknesses

- Lack of structuring; lack of a coordinated approach
- Belgium: << 60% of private companies
- The cost of water is insufficiently discussed even in this workshop
- Lack of visibility: we didn't know each other
- Little political attention for water
- Quality – quantity – pollution are too separated
- Little attention for biodiversity
- Too low budgets
- Weak governance, fragile states

Opportunities

- SubSahara Africa is an emerging market
- Joint strategic framework by DGD is a good basis no country basis, water should become a theme
- The “climate” discussion; Drought and flood events as opportunity for awareness & higher resilience
- Lot of technical knowledge available: opportunities for synergies + innovations
- Water-food nexus
- Include mobile solutions for water (e.g. Haiti example this morning)
- More people from SSA in next meetings to get local insights
- Integrated & interdisciplinary approaches
- Data availability in Brussels from colonial days: Opportunities to work at EU – level;



Threat / Opportunities

- Increasing pollution (e.g. Tanganyika lake & oil palm)
- The different nexus: Climate change, food protection, ... are both threats and opportunities
- War & political instability
- Growing population (but could also be an opportunity if well managed // Growing cities
- Growing influence of China
- Many SSA governments are not keen on M&E

Links with other SDGs

- SDG14: Life & water
- Consider other conventions like Aichi targets for biodiversity
- SDG 13 climate
- SDG 16: peace & strong institution
- SDG 17: Partnerships !
- In fact all SDG's; but dilution effect, although water has a large impact on the other SDG's
- Risk of a transversal theme

What lesson can we draw from Belgium?

- Communicate what we have: info + data sharing
- Do SDG6 together
- Let's look for more synergies in our richness of institutions
- Brussels taxes water use : inspiration for other regions
- Walls to stop immigration; more investments needed to solve root causes on Africa
- Our platform should be need based instead of being supply driven
- Stakeholders'needs & participation ... Belgium has something to offer

ASIA

Strengths

- Transboundary cooperation – e.g. big river basins. E.g. Mekong River Commission.
- China's presence as an advantage: increasing technology and innovation. China can be a force for the wider region.
- There are more developed countries in Asia than in Africa – VN, China, India (parts of) – many high potential countries.
- Legislation strong in some cases. Eg India: zero liquid discharge legislation is very strict

Weaknesses

- Ethical and legal issues – more than in Africa probably. When dealing with HR for example. Balance between business and development.
- Corruption (VN, CAM)
- How far can the Belgian govt support firms dealing with this?



- Reluctance of EU firms to go to Asian countries (no legal certainties, no legal protection of technology).
- Even development institutions are reluctant to go to these countries (eg Eur Investment Bank) – they could break the ice, but as long as they do not go, others won't go

Opportunities

- Australia and NZ – good connection with Asia
- Belgium has a less strong connection for now – we can explore it, but it's not our core area.
- We should also focus our efforts (eg limit the number of partner countries in which Belgium works, but then use synergies (universities, companies, NGOs, governments..))
- Don't shy away from trilateral collaboration (organisations which can do that: govts, local water partnerships, Employer's Organization)
- What is the USP (unique selling point) of Belgium – and how to combine that with good knowledge of other countries? (think of our advanced technology in water re-use for instance).
- Improve market access for all, draw attention to what challenges could be abroad.

Threats

- Climate change
- Crowded Asian cities
- River deltas (major cities Chennai, Singapore, Jakarta)
- Impact of CC may be bigger in Asia than in Africa (Bangladesh, Vietnam) – delta flooding, glacier melting, saline intrusion.

LATIN AMERICA & CARRIBEAN

Strengths

Local

- Cultural importance of nature (PM), environment, biodiversity, ...
- Regional network of organisations related to water (OXAS), conferences (Latinosan, Rio Water Week) (with some black spots, lack of means)

Belgian

- Technology and knowledge transfer
- Education (VLIR, ARES capacity building in HE)

Weaknesses

Local

- Water distribution system not in general available
- Lack of means to cooperate an implement water policies
- Water losses in food production in LA (water footprint issues)
- Corruption issues



Belgian

- Need for development in Belgium... eg drinking water spillage...
- Lack of funding
- Lack of cooperation among regions (in Belgium)

Opportunities

Local

- Interest in water problems (is several countries)
- General knowledge about river basins, integrated water management, inspiration from other south success

Belgian

- Knowledge about river basin approach, technological knowledge, ...
- Use of (academic) network that was developed

Relation with SDGs

- Link with all SDG's
- Very diverse per system, country, area in country and info background/expertise
- ...important for WQ, WQ important for...
- Most important ones: Health (3), Energy (7), Life below water (14)
- Importance of (large) cities in Latin America
- Smaller cities are growing fast, important to be pro-active than retro-active in smaller cities to avoid problems (similar to current situation in large cities)