AWARENET

ARAB
INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT NETWORK

Executive summary

September 2002

Introduction

AWARENET is a network of institutes collaborating on improving and disseminating knowledge on concepts of Integrated Water Resources Management in the ESCWA region[1]. The members of represent institutions operating at national, regional and international levels. The idea of establishing a network was initiated by ESCWA and further developed by ESCWA and UNESCO-IHE, the Water Education Institute of UNESCO. This resulted in a workshop, which was held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut, Lebanon in March 2002, where major water training providers and consumers in the region (representatives from Water Ministries, NGOs and Universities) were present. One of the main objectives of the workshop was to set a regional platform for discussion and communication and to lay the foundation for future regional co-operation. In other words: establish a network of water training and research institutes and public agencies active in the water sector. The workshop concluded with the following project proposal based on a collaborative effort of the participants.

Water related problems in the ESCWA region

The participants at the workshop converged on identifying Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) as an effective tool for solving water problems in the region. IWRM is a process, which promotes co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximise economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems (Global Water Partnership). The Global Water Partnership has developed an IWRM toolbox that can be downloaded from the Internet offering a compendium of over 50 policies, actions and tools for putting IWRM into practice. Based on this toolbox an assessment of relevant IWRM topics and training needs was carried out prior to the workshop. A survey was undertaken in seven countries in the region; over 10 interviews, with senior policy-makers in the water sector were conducted in each country. This pilot scale need assessment was supplemented with existing research and studies on water sector in the ESCWA region, such as the Arab Water Vision, which identify the following issues as major challenges facing the ESCWA region:

- Limited awareness about IWRM due to shortages in adequate and relevant formal education, training and research on the subject. The main issue at stake is the quality of the education and training delivered rather than the quantity. While there seems to be no shortage of training courses in the region, the quality and relevance of the training programs remains problematic in most countries
- Fragmented water related institutional framework with ill defined or overlapping mandates

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[1] The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia consists of the following 13 member countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, West Bank and Gaza Strip and Yemen

- The absence of comprehensive national water policies. Current policies are often unfeasible or unrealistic due to limited technical, financial and institutional resources available for implementing them
- Water-related legislation is often outdated and cannot keep pace with changing conditions on the ground, such as increasing scarcity of water and continuous deterioration of water quality
- Unavailability and inconsistency in data on water resources due to extreme variability in annual rates of natural recharges or diversity in water evaluation methodologies
- The prevalence of unsustainable patterns of water consumption, in the absence of effective water conservation techniques or improved system efficiency

Project Strategy

One of the main conclusions of the workshop was the need to promote awareness about the importance of implementing IWRM and strengthening knowledge on the subject among water professionals and technical personnel in water-related ministries and public authorities. This is the quintessence behind the establishment of AWARENET, which would serve as a vehicle for promoting the implementation of IWRM on a wider scale and in a more systematic way throughout the region. Indeed, there are hardly any case studies available on the implementation of IWRM, and national assessment undertaken in the lead to the workshop indicate that there are urgent needs for knowledge and training on IWRM, but presently, only few research and training institutions are capable of delivering such a training. Therefore, the overall objective of the project can be summarised as follow:

Overall Objective (long term)
AWARENET should improve the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in the countries of the ESCWA region

Project Purpose
AWRENET should improve awareness among professionals working in water and water-related institutions (water ministries, municipalities, universities, training and research institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders) and build-up their technical, institutional and managerial capacity in implementing IWRM

Hence, a regional network of stakeholders has the following advantages:
- A network can identify and consolidate thinly spread regional knowledge and capacity;
- A network can effectively and efficiently disseminate knowledge and build synergy of action among stakeholders or network members, which is an empowering process;
- A network stimulates regional communication and co-operation, which is a vital objective for ensuring a sustainable development process in the Middle-East region.

Project Activities

In order to increase the awareness the following activities need to be carried out:

1. Creation of the knowledge network
2. Improve knowledge exchange
3. Establish objective research programmes
4. Improve the quality of the output generated by the network

The creation of the knowledge network represents the Inception Phase of the Project, and consists of three activities. The first activity is the knowledge mapping. The knowledge

currently available in the region needs to be mapped per country. This will yield a regional knowledge map, which will serve as an entry point to identify explicit and tacit information and knowledge available on water-related issues at the regional level. The knowledge map will identify resource persons in existing large or small networks, projects, communities of practice and will provide information on their knowledge, their activities in the water sector and the persons they co-operate with on water projects, programmes or joint publications. The second activity that needs to be carried out is an extensive need assessment, which will build on the results of the pilot scale needs assessment carried out prior to the workshop. The third and final activity in the Inception Phase is a Training Supply and Demand Market where public institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders will meet the training providers in the area of water in the region, i.e. universities, research centres and training Institutes. These three activities will serve as input for the second phase of the project, which is the Network Phase. In the initial stage of the Network Phase, the network will be structured in a more detailed manner. A Steering Committee will be formed consisting of representatives from the network member institutions; membership agreements will be made and a Platform Facilitation Unit, directed by a Network Manager will be established in the region. The activities identified above will be translated into a number of programmes and each programme will be financed by a Fund:

Programme	Fund
Establishing the network	Network Fund
Training Programme	Training Fund
Training of Trainers Programme	Training of Trainers Fund
Staff Exchange Programme	Staff Exchange Fund
Post Graduate Fellowship Programme	Fellowship Fund
Distance Learning Programme	Distance Learning Fund
Research Programme	Research Fund
Quality Programme	Quality Fund

In order to ensure a sense of ownership of the network among member institutions, a number of institutional and organisational considerations should be adopted. Each of the above listed funds should be managed by a committee (steering committee), which will be chaired by members of the network. The Platform Facilitation Unit should be hosted by the network member institutions on a rotational basis; similarly, the appointment of the network manager should be on a rotational basis. By extending the sharing of responsibilities among member institutions, it would promote an active involvement of the members in all aspects of the network and strengthen their sense of ownership of the whole process. Thus, AWARENET is conceived as a self-sustaining regional network from an organisational point of view; however, due to the nature of the activities co-ordinated and carried out by AWARENET, continuous fund raising will remain necessary in the future.