

Water Sector Colloquium - 14 September 2005

Discussion of the presentation:

“Debunking the capacity myth: finding, mobilizing and growing the capacity for water resource management”

By Dr. Heather MacKay and Mr. Jan Koster

There was a major interest in the topic and a sense that something concrete needs to happen regarding a more systematic approach to capacity-building.

Are we lacking the high level leadership to move forward?

- Not necessarily: elsewhere middle level people have become active and started prompting politicians.
- A good way to start is with a pilot project: others will jump on board.

A problem in South Africa is that we have too many layers of government and too many silos each doing its own project management and public participation.

- South Africa is definitely overstructured and needs to revisit its service delivery policies. However integration cannot just be dealt with as an add-on.
- WISA should consider paying for an individual through whom an initiative in this regard could be taken.

With the vast amounts spend on Professional Service Providers, a greater effort should be made to get benefits for capacity building.

- Definitely so, but it should always be more than just numbers.

A major problem is that we never share our capacity-building experiences.

Donors have invested large amounts in capacity building and have had considerable successes, e.g.:

- Masimbambane programme: huge successes in some provinces, less in others;
- DPLG capacity-building framework: however often the enabling framework is lacking e.g. there is no incentive in Local Government to undergo training.
- What is needed is institutional capacity-building and retention of institutional knowledge.
- There was general agreement that we have to do with a systems problem and that we will have to create an enabling environment.

An example of capacity-building in Taiwan and Korea in the sixties was provided, where more than were needed were trained. Many left the country but eventually came back when development had taken place. Some of the lessons are:

- We must be willing to take risks and not just ask what it will cost.
- We need to be tenacious because certain things cannot be fast-tracked.

In the Colloquium conclusion, the Heather MacKay proposal for a WISA appointee to take the capacity-building initiative forward was confirmed. The Colloquium Management team also proposed to continue the discussion in some ‘brainstorming’ way.