

## ADB Water Week

### Report of the Meeting on the Water and Poverty Initiative

Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 9.00 – 12.00 a.m.

#### Introduction

The meeting was a side event at the ADB water week, the purpose of which was to review developments under the Water and Poverty Initiative (WPI) since the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum and discuss the directions for future development of the WPI.

Wouter Lincklaen Arriens introduced proceedings and chaired the discussions, John Soussan reviewed the main aspects of development of the WPI and Pieter Smidt contributed to discussions on the Water for the Poor Partnership in Viet Nam.

The main lines of development of the WPI since the 3WWF are:

- Consolidation of the **concepts and knowledge base**, especially through the publication of the Water for All series (which will be an on-going series for future key WPI publications), the draft strategy paper “Water for the Poor: Partnerships for Action” and the agreement to prepare a paper on water and poverty as part of the Poverty Environment Partnership. It was agreed that the ADB website would act as a web-based “home” for the WPI. Links to partner organisation websites can be included.
- **Mainstreaming within ADB** of pro-poor targeting in the design and implementation of water sector TA and loans and related policy and sector work, supported by ADB’s Cooperation Fund for the Water Sector. This has included extensive consultations with ADB’s operational departments, resulting in expressions of interest to pursue these initiatives in several countries other than Viet Nam.
- The development of **country initiatives** on water for the poor, starting in Viet Nam following the letter of intent signed in 3WWF between the Minister for MARD and the President of the ADB. This initiative has been followed up through close collaboration with MARD and other partners (MONRE, CERWASS, Viet Nam Water Partnership, several NGOs, the Netherlands Embassy, DANIDA, the World Bank). Specific activities in the development of the partnership include a National Dialogue on Water and Poverty (facilitated by the Viet Nam Water Partnership), support to the development of the National Water Resources Strategy, support to the design of four pipeline ADB projects in the Central Region and discussions towards the development of activities to enhance capacities for water management at the provincial level.
- The identification of further follow up actions, including **support to the AfDB** to develop pro-poor water partnerships and discussions on **major themes** where the WPI can lead the development of innovative strategies for action. The support to the AfDB will link to the African Water Initiative that AfDB has launched and will focus on the identification and design of poverty-focused activities at the policy and national strategy level, through awareness and advocacy activities and in the design of pro-poor investments in water management.

## Agreements for Action

Extensive and positive discussions on all of these issues took place in the meeting, including a consensus of support for the WPI and specific points on how to move the process forward. General commitment to the continuation of the WPI was agreed, but with a broad consensus that the form and structure should be developed to one that focused on the achievement of actions based on mobilizing the complementary skills, experience and mandates of different partners. It was agreed that a twin-track approach was appropriate, with one track focused on the further mainstreaming of the approach through ADB's operations and the second track focused on catalysing poverty-focused water management in other partners and other institutions. The following specific options for moving the agenda forward were identified and agreed:

1. **ADB** was agreed to have a continuing pivotal role, in particular mainstreaming poverty reduction in its water sector operations. It was agreed that this will take three main forms:
  - **Country Initiatives**, building on the Viet Nam experience. Further countries will be visited in the near future.
  - Integration of WPI concepts and principles into the **design of individual TAs and projects**, based on requests from operational departments.
  - Further inputs into the development of ADB **policies, strategies sector work and awareness program** on water.
2. Initiatives from **other partners** to develop operations and advocacy based on the WPI approach. Two specific opportunities were discussed: the launching of a civil society-government dialogue in India, proposed by SEWA, and support to an IUCN project on IWRM in central Viet Nam. The scope for WPI support to similar initiatives from partners was seen as important for the future development of the WPI.
3. Initiatives to further develop important **themes** where particular challenges to enhance the contribution of water management to poverty reduction and the attainment of the MDGs. The earlier discussion amongst knowledge and advocacy partners on the inter-related issues of sanitation-water quality-wastewater management-health and hygiene was agreed to be one major issue where the WPI could catalyse innovation. A second issue identified in discussions was the use of domestic water for livelihood and productive activities, with this linked to nutrition and food security. It was agreed that this issue would be specified further through consultations amongst partners.
4. The scope for linking the **knowledge and advocacy partnership** into the operations of the ADB and other agencies was discussed, with strong support for some form of "resource centre" approach where expertise could be drawn-down on a demand basis. It was agreed that the scope for and modalities of this approach would be discussed further. The need to directly link the potential of the knowledge partnership into actions and the importance of avoiding high transaction costs were agreed if the partnership was to be further developed.

Follow up actions in each of these areas will be taken in the next few months, coordinated by John Soussan with the support of the ADB's Cooperation Fund. A short strategy paper on the future development of the WPI will be prepared and circulated to WPI partners on each of these areas of action. Support to the different areas of action will be sought from donors to complement that provided by the ADB.