

Semaine Mondiale de l'Eau 2019

Session « Civil Society: Change makers and allies with Government in reaching SDG6 »

A l'occasion de la Semaine Mondiale de l'Eau 2019, à Stockholm, la Coalition Eau a contribué à l'organisation d'une session officielle « [CSO, change makers and allies with government in reaching SDG6](#) », avec ses partenaires internationaux (African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation, End Water Poverty, FanMex, FanSa, Government of the Netherlands, IRC, SaciWATERs, Sanitation and Water for All, Simavi, WSSCC).

Retrouvez le blog (en anglais) d'Anjani Kapoor (SWA) ci-dessous ainsi que sur le site de [Sanitation and Water for All](#) [ici](#)

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a key role in ensuring no one is left behind as we strive to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But what are the benefits, opportunities, and challenges that CSOs face as they work with governments and other actors to deliver on water and sanitation targets of the SDGs? Some of the other critical questions are: who do we exactly mean when speaking about CSOs? How are we using the word 'CSO'? Who are CSOs speaking on behalf of? What is their mandate? and, What is the role of CSOs in accountability? These key questions brought together several CSOs and key Government representatives for a session on accountability at the 2019 World Water Week in Stockholm.

Setting the scene for the session, Patrick Moriarty from [IRC WASH](#) defined CSOs as "organised civil society that can come in many forms, some informal and some as formal entities such as Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Faith-based Organisations (FBOs), among many others. This is when a group of individuals come together for a common purpose, as in to fulfil a particular mandate driven by a particular need." These organisations bring out the voices of the most marginalised to the policy circles, stressed Snehalatha Malaka from [Freshwater Action Network South Asia](#) (Civil Society Network).

Referring to the outcomes of the [Global Study on National Accountability Mechanisms for SDG6](#), Snehalatha said:

"Almost all CSOs and government officials in the 25 partaking countries agreed that participation in accountability mechanisms for SDG6 have a positive impact when carried out in an effective, meaningful way... **We know WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene] is inherently a multi-stakeholder sector and when CSO voices are strong and present, governments perform better.**"

When asked about the direct example of how FANSA won the support of Government, Snehalatha explained how South Asian CSOs organised a plenary session at the [7th South Asian Conference on Sanitation](#) (SACOSAN VII) to give voices to the most marginalised (such as transgenders and people with disabilities) and Governments took commitments to allocate budgets to leave no one behind.

Should CSOs keep an independent position to hold Government accountable ?

Stressing the need for increased collaboration between Government bodies and CSOs, the Principal Secretary of water & sanitation in the Indian State of Jharkhand, Aradhana Patnaik quotes the success of 'Swachh Bharat Mission' (Clean India Mission) :

« This is truly a people's movement, based on 4 pillars- political will and leadership, public funding, partnerships (with CSOs and INGOs) and people's participation. »

Meanwhile, Senior Policy Advisor in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Brechtje Paardekoper made a strong case for dissent in civic space :

« Around the world, it's alarming that the voices of CSOs are being regulated and silenced- the civic space is shrinking. Many WASH CSOs have a tendency to want to sit at the table. I believe, in order to be listened to they need to be also ready to leave the table. »

"A CSO is governed by its mission and vision, and that's how CSOs are independent. However, the key role of the CSO is to hold Government accountable," said Patrick Alubbe, Executive Director of a national CSO, Kenya Water for Health Organisation (KWAHO).

On being asked about how Government can ensure a seat at the table for those left behind, Patrick responded :

"Governments have the responsibility to create enabling environment, in terms of policy, participation and regulations. It is also crucial to monitor the work of all actors, including CSOs, in the sector."

HOW ARE CSOS CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL POLICY PRIORITIES AND TARGETS IN THE WASH SECTOR ?

This brain game session started with three panelists from civil society organisations presenting a case study :

1. **CSOs as service providers** : Ramiseti Murali, Executive Director, [MARI](#), a CSO working with grassroots level organisations, based in Hyderabad (India) shared an interesting experience from the Krishna district where household level toilet accessibility for 8510 families, belonging to the poorest and marginalized communities, was ensured. "These people were initially left out in the efforts to push Open Defecation Free (ODF) progress in the district under the government *Swach Bharath Mission*. The disadvantaged and vulnerable households, could not take advantage of the Government supported programme because the poorest families do not have the financial means to pre-finance construction of the toilets as the financial incentive would only be available once the family could prove the conclusion of the construction. Also, the disabled, elderly and sick people needed help to construct the toilets. MARI engaged 5 local CSOs to carry out the rapid assessment in 33 clusters to identify the left out families. Tata trust provided funding for a Revolving Fund for advancing the construction of toilets by the poor. MARI built the technical and community mobilization capacities of CSOs and supported them to work with village-level local bodies

to promote toilets construction and usage. **By getting household level toilet accessibility for this last mile segment, a significant contribution was made to the Krishna district in attaining an Open Defecation Free status.”**

2. **Contributors to National Monitoring framework :** Vincent Ouma, Head of Programmes, [Kenya Water and Sanitation Civil Society Network](#) (KEWASNET) said, “Our CSO Network contributed significantly to establishing the baseline and the National Monitoring framework for SDG6 in Kenya, more importantly making sure that the monitoring framework addresses the situation of the most marginalized groups. Following the adoption of the monitoring framework, KEWASNET has embarked on capacity building for CSOs to apply the framework in their work.”
3. **Advocating for increased Budgetary allocation for WASH :** Herbert Kasilillah, Chairperson, [Shahidi wa Maji](#) from Tanzania, shared his experience on how his organisation is working with national and development partners in contributing to improving the national regulation that resulted in an enhanced national budget for water sector and improved access to the water resources by vulnerable groups. “We provided the evidence by commissioning a budget analysis (2014-2018) that provided insights on the total budget for water resources management and how budgets are planned, allocated and spent within the National Directorate of Water Resources and its nine Basin Water Boards. We engage in national dialogue such as the Joint Sector Review and in technical working groups where we advocate for a fair share of the water resources allocations for the most marginalized groups such as the pastoralists.”

To wrap up the session, Erma Uytewaal (IRC) said that the cases presented during the session show the examples of how CSOs are building and cultivating their relations for successful collaboration with their respective governments to leaving no one behind. She added, “For leaving not one behind in the WASH sector, CSOs also need to create more space for dissent. CSOs could become more effective by seeking collaboration with organizations and networks with a strong track record in advocacy, campaigning and lobby beyond the WASH sector.”

This session was convened by African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW), Coalition Eau, End Water Poverty (EWP), Fresh Action Network Mexico (FANMex), Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA), Government of the Netherlands, IRC, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA), Simavi and Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC).