



Taking Issue

The Sustainable Development Issues Network

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Visit the SDIN morning strategy meetings for reports from working groups, information sharing and strategic discussions. SDIN Morning Meetings are open to all NGOs.

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AT CSD FOR THE FIRST TIME

Several hundred representatives from major groups and more delegates were present when Chair John Ashe of CSD 13 opened the second set of the first clusters of the new CSD Monday April 12th. John Ashe outlined a number of initiatives that will play out during this CSD, including a Chair's vision.

In bold strokes he outlined his vision:

My vision is to first to take decisions on substantial practical measures and ensure resources to implement them. This will be an important contribution to the September summit and serve as a precedent for future CSD's and other functional commissions.

And second to take decisions on international cooperation on how to make the UN system support developing countries in their efforts to make effective use of resources nationally and internationally

The Chair's firsts

The Chair also said there were a number of new and innovative actions taken to fulfill the vision. Among the so called "firsts" were:

Member states accept Major Groups not be treated as separate entity but free to take the floor along with governments Innovative user-friendly Matrix First time finance ministers to be in a CSD Panel

The G-77 Priorities.

Many participants were curious about the positions of the G-77. In a succinct statement, the current chair of G-77, the Jamaican Ambassador highlighted 5 of the G-77 priorities. They were (in abbreviated format):

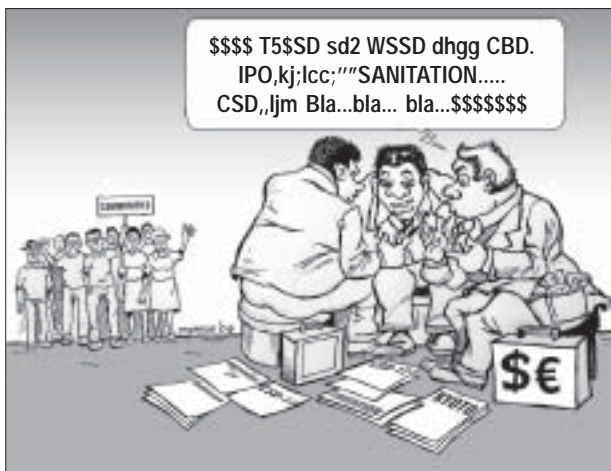
- Strengthen means of implementation, through inter alia, significantly increase ODA, debt cancellation, facilitating access to and transfer of appropriate and environmentally friendly technology; and using local capacity including indigenous knowledge
- Strengthen education and public awareness, arrangements for planning and policy formulation and for broad based involvement and participation

- Integrate and mainstream the three issues in national development policies, plans and programmes, including budgeting processes.
- Integrate water, sanitation, and human settlement plans into disaster mitigation and preparedness policies and plans, with particular attention to the security of women and girls, as well as other vulnerable groups
- Strengthen efficiency in resource use including through better donor coordination, reduction of tied aid, and elimination of policy conditionalities, reduction of transaction costs, better coordination at the national level and the delegation of responsibility, as far as possible, to local and community levels with effective management and controls.

The EU priorities

Another of the formidable blocks of nations in the world, is the EU. The 25 nation strong union had prioritized 8 points for this CSD. They were (in abbreviated format):

- Mainstreaming environmental sustainability in nationally owned development strategies and to begin to implement them by 2005
- Enhanced donor coordination and harmonization among all stakeholders at the national and international level, between the international finance institutions and the UN





organizations, and especially among donors, taking into account the Paris Declaration

- Improved interagency coordination both within and outside the UN system, linking specific actions to relevant actors for implementation
- Adopting a participatory and integrated approach in planning, implementation and follow-up of all future development actions and projects in the areas of water, sanitation and human settlements
- Adopting a participatory and integrated approach in planning, implementation and follow up of all future development actions and projects in the areas of water
- Promoting the development of urban planning and management to provide sustainable urban structures including water, sanitation, secure tenure of land, access to basic services and affordable housing

- Promoting multi-level and multi actor governance, including decentralization at the lowest appropriate level, ensuring national ownership and responsibility in planning for all programs and actions, and supporting LA and local initiatives, with special attn being paid to the role of women and youth
- Coherently addressing the differences and interlinkages between rural and urban settings
- Increasing investments and socially acceptable cost recovery mechanisms, using ODA as a lever for attracting private investments

The US priorities

A much anticipated statement for the opening of this year's CSD was the one from the United States of America. The US had also a number of priorities highlighted. Among them were (in abbreviated format):

- New 2-year CSD format had build political momentum and expanded the reach of the

UN through Partnerships and made innovative efforts to integrate MG

- Achieving the MDGs will require among others, the integration of all knowledge pools to collaborate on SD
- CSD can play a role in assisting these "implementation networks" whereby a range of players can get together to implement joint priorities
- CSD is charting a new course and the message it can deliver is "to show how a reformed UN process that integrates actions of governments, international orgs and a range of NG players can deliver concrete results."

During two intensive days of interventions and comments by the delegations and major groups, these priorities will find their ways into the Chairs text and when that text is published on Thursday, we will all be given a chance to see what impact these priorities have made on the CSD deliberations this time around.

THE WOMEN MAJOR GROUP DELIVERED A STATEMENT ON THE 12TH APRIL 2005 ON SANITATION

We endorse the Chair's draft text covering sanitation issues and would like to add the following:

Poverty prohibits people to pay for even basic connection and water services, as well as building toilets. Safe land tenure and property ownership especially for women fits into rights based 'human settlement' approaches and will stimulate municipalities and individual households to invest in sanitation facilities.

It is a precondition for access to water, sanitation and finances.

Setting national and local goals for sanitation access and using financial incentives such as subsidies or tax-incentives (fitting into national policies) will stimulate private families, local communities and businesses to invest in non-polluting toilets and develop information campaigns on water, hygiene and sanitation.

Equipping and empowering women to play their part should be an integrated part of plans and measures regarding sanitation. Ongoing programmes aimed at behavioral

changes AND vocational training – and not just short-term projects – are needed.

Water is not necessarily required for good sanitation. Eco-sanitation solutions use less water, are less polluting, often low cost, and in many cases more women friendly.

The world health organization can give information and guidance for allowing resource recovery from human waste through appropriate national and international guidelines and regulations.

The agricultural sector provides a market for nutrient rich products recovered from human excreta.

Government and NGO efforts for reconstruction after disasters – whether men made or caused by nature – should include adequate gender and cultural sensitive sanitation facilities. Involvement of the local community and incorporating the women's perspective in deciding about the design, location etc. of these facilities is imperative and will make the investment sustainable.

Women's biology requires different sanitation facilities; adequate facilities that take this into account will bring girls to school, make it

possible for women to work and in general improve their health.

Therefore, it's imperative to have women participate in the design, building and maintenance of sanitation to find workable solutions for their situation.

It will:

- Create adequate facilities in terms of hygiene and reproductive health
- Take into account privacy demands and help prevent sexual assault,
- Help find solutions for cultural restraints
- Will turn the facilities into a good sustainable investment in health and will reduce among other things the long-term cost of healthcare.

We have to proceed from principles to practices, from paper to action. 'Please dispose sanitary towels in the bin' is a paper instruction in many places in women's toilets. Good instruction- what about the possibility to practice?

International commitments on gender, poverty and water have to be put into practice. Formal and informal women organisations can and will assist in this.



Fighting for survival

The connection between War, Military and Environment, a cross-cutting issue for Major Groups

The side event on 'The Connection Between War, Military and the Environment' organized by The Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, kicked off to a bad start with the star speaker, Michael Renner, Senior Researcher at World Watch Institute absent due to illness. However, the group ploughed on nonetheless, creating a successful dialogue and coming up with 7 main outcomes, which can be used as an outline for the way forward.

Missing agenda?

In the last 4 years the world's military expenditure has increased by 5% per year, on an already enormous budget and between 20-30 armed conflicts have been continuously going on in this period. 'Military Production and Consumption is a serious impediment to sustainable development as it causes pollution, occupies resources that could otherwise be spent on activities promoting sustainable development, and can be a factor in causing armed conflicts and wars'. However, 'Even though the Rio Declaration (in Rio Principles 24 and 25) mentions military and peace issues, these issues have hitherto not been addressed by the CSD. And even though the CSD deals with production and consumption patterns related to sustainable development, military production and consumption have to date not been on the CSD agenda'

The Way Forward

- The connection between war, military and the environment should be brought out through the NGO statements,
- It will then be helpful for the formulation of the NGO statements

The Nobel Peace Prize winner, Wangari Maathai said that *'there can be no peace without equitable development; and there can be no development without sustainable management of the environment in a democratic and peaceful space'*. The organisers would like to congratulate Wangari Maathai for emphasizing to the world, the connection between war, military and environment.

that will be put together in June for the MDGs, as this should be recognized as an over-riding issue,

- That there is a need for a coherent and comprehensive articulate concept on human security,
- To urge **all** major groups to take up this issue of the linkages between war, military and the environment, not just at this CSD process but for the MDGs and other meetings happening in the UN calendar,
- There needs to be more foresight on this issue and this discussion needs to be

stepped up a gear now, in preparation for next years CSD 14 and onwards where the issues of energy and climate change are very relevant to this linkage,

- The fact that there is a lack at CSD of addressing the ecosystem is a major worry and should be pushed for discussion,
- Agenda 21, Chapter 20, sets out hazardous wastes; this could be an entry point to be used when discussing military hazardous waste (Gulf War Syndrome, Uranium mining)
- It needs to be recognized that there are lots of resources stating this linkage between war, military and the environment from the Governmental Experts: 'The Relationship between Disarmament and development in the Current International Context' (A/59/50), UNEP to academics and of course, human experiences. - HJ

MAKE WATER, NOT WAR



THE IMPORTANCE OF RURAL LAND ACCESS

In addressing water, urban poverty and sustainable development. The link between secure access to land and rural poverty reduction has become a commonly discussed theme in regional and global fora.

By: Jing de la Rosa, The International Land Coalition (ILC)

The discourse on land has been expanded to reflect many other assets needed for improving rural livelihoods. Those assets include access to credit, inputs, training and extension services, and markets. It has been recognized that problems of land access are not only economic, but also linked closely to political processes and political exclusion, basic services such as health and education, and the marginalization of culture and identity.

Reducing both urban and rural poverty must account for the relationships that rural people have with urban areas. Where rural land access does not exist, migration to cities increases urban poverty. This process can even exacerbate urban violence. This flow of “landless refugees” – landless farmers migrating to urban areas in search of work – now extends across national borders.

The connection between rural land access and urban poverty, and inter-linkage between access to land and water, are not as commonly discussed. These connections, however, are linked to the current CSD-13 Session with its focus on water, sanitation and human settlements, and are becoming increasingly important for policy-makers to address.

Stronger links between urban and rural areas can contribute to regional development and compliment improved access to land by rural households.

Policy reform to improve land access by poor rural families should thus be viewed as a key to sustainable national development, not only because it encourages economic growth and equity among rural populations, but also because of its potential to reduce the negative elements of unmediated urban expansion.

The link between land and water is often a key concern in regions where access to both has been governed through customary tenure systems. Where land reform or processes to formalize land rights occur, there are often challenges to preserving access to water, particularly where water access is based on collective or a mix of individual and collective rights.

Rural women in many parts of the world rely heavily on this connection between land and water access for their livelihoods. In the southern Africa region, for example, women comprise a growing majority of farmers, but often lack secure rights to the land and water they use for their agricultural work.

For this reason, civil society groups in the region have formed the Platform on Women’s Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa, with the goal of bringing community-based knowledge of the links between land, water and gender to the forefront of national and regional processes. In Zimbabwe, the Platform is advocating for an expansion of the national land rights framework to allow for group titles, in order to strengthen the

cooperative resource management needed for smallholder irrigation.

Governments and international organizations have expressed their commitments to improving the access by poor rural men and women to land, water and related productive resources at many times in many fora. Yet despite repeated commitments only sporadic efforts have been made to monitor the level and nature of actual results. The International Land Coalition along with its intergovernmental, civil society and government partners, is developing a Land Reporting Initiative. This initiative will address key indicators that can be used to evaluate access to land nationally, regionally and globally. This LRI is the focus of a Land Coalition side event organized at this year’s CSD, held on Wednesday 13 April, with the aim to further consult stakeholders and participants attending the CSD in developing the initiative.

As this article suggests, in developing an evaluation framework that looks at rural land access, it is also important to consider links between the urban and rural sector, as well as between land and other key resources. By taking an inclusive approach to evaluating land access, land policy reform can be better integrated with improvements in other basic sectors, and support structural changes at both national and global levels that can increase the power and income of poor men and women and improve their livelihoods.



Standpoint of the African Civil Society on Water and Sanitation

To address the perennial twin problems of water and sanitation and attain the Millennium Development Goals, the civil society on the continent is advocating a multi-lateral approach involving all stakeholders in decision-making and project implementation. Below are some of the highlights made during a side event at the CSD-13.

Grim reality on the ground

The world is facing a real water crisis with more than one billion people who have no access to clean water and about 2.5 billion lacking adequate sanitation due to utter poverty, forced migration, pollution, waste, etc

In Africa, with an ever-growing population, the situation is particularly disturbing in the rural areas where only 40% have access to clean water and 45% to sanitation. In the cities, there is a large gap because the poor pay up to 10 times dearer the water they consume. As a result 6000 children die every day due to lack of proper hygiene.

However, one notices a slow implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Application Plan of the Sustainable Development Commission related to water and sanitation, the non-compliance with laws, standards, codes and reforms, the disrespect for the different international commitments such as the International Convention on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC).

Need for capacity building

In order to overcome this dilemma, the African Civil Society has opted for different parties' capacity building by establishing processes for involving non-governmental and community-based organisations in sectoral projects, regulation and reforms in the sector that are initiated by public and local authorities.

An opening to public desks and more flexible and simplified procedures of access to the African, European and ACP initiative fund should enable the civil

society to contribute to measures aimed at attaining target 7 of the Millennium Development Goals through implementing local and national solutions.

For an improved access to water and sanitation by 2015, such solutions should be used as the basis for future policies to supplement Sectoral Programmes often funded by the World Bank and other development partners in the form of credit portfolios, and which are rather inadequate in so far as they involve to a lesser degree the different parties concerned at national level, and also increase the countries' debt.

Increased public spending

In view of the need to recognize human rights, States should increase public expenditure for the sector. To this effect, Poverty Reduction Strategy Policies should prioritize the funding of water and sanitation services.

On the other hand, as usual with debt write-off, a substantial part of the debt services should be turned into equipment and

services for better access of the poorest populations to clean water, hygiene and sanitation, and to alleviate the burden of women and children who are most affected by poverty.

Law reforms

Even though most countries are carrying out reforms in the field of water, few of them have established a regulation system that can control the large profits of the big companies operating in the water market, profit from the sector can pay for improvements.

The same holds for the new laws and water codes that are being developed and where the main concern of civil society is the need to take into account the river water pollution by big industries established in urban areas as well as through the important consumption, and pollution due to agricultural industries.

Civil society is anxious to see the Council of African Ministers in Charge of Water (AMCOW) take account of the need for community involvement in an integrated management of water resources and basins, to ensure sustainable environment and economic development and prevent social conflicts that might arise in the regions as a result of inadequate water management.

Water governance

Similarly, civil society is concerned with water governance for the purpose of greater transparency and equity, and power transfer to local communities, to ensure efficacious, efficient production and management of low-cost houses and prevent forced displacements of human settlements that have a negative impact on access to water, hygiene and sanitation.



Malik Gaye, Africa Civil Society Network on Water West African Focal Point Coordinator

UN Millennium Eco-system Assessment (MA) Synthesis Report

ECO-SYSTEMS IN DANGER

Humans have changed ecosystems more in the last 50 years than ever before. Animals and fish are dying, new diseases are popping up and spreading, and it's getting a whole lot warmer...

UN Millennium Eco-system Assessment (MA) Synthesis Report – a first in a series of seven syntheses and summary reports and four technical volumes that assess the state of global ecosystems and their impact on human well-being - was released a few weeks ago. The Assessment was conducted by 1300 experts from 95 countries and took 4 years to produce. **The Report has four main findings:**

- (i) Humans have changed ecosystems more in the last 50 years than ever before. This has resulted in major loss in the diversity of life, with some 10-30% of mammals, birds and amphibian species currently threatened with extinction. More land was converted to agriculture since 1945 than in the 18th and 19th centuries combined and more than half of all the synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, first made in 1913, ever used has been used since 1985.
- (ii) Ecosystem changes may have been in pursuit of economic changes but the gains from growth have come at the expense of increasing costs when other services, provided by the environment, are degraded.
- (iii) The degradation of ecosystems will worsen significantly during the first half of this century. Ecosystem changes such as deforestation influence the abundance of human pathogens such as malaria and cholera, as well as the risk of new diseases.
- (iv) The degradation of ecosystems can be reversed if there are changes in policy and institutions. But these changes will be large and are not currently under way.

Something to think about

The 2005 UN Report shows that expenditure on armaments has reached a trillion a year.

The global Fund for HIV/AIDS is asking for less than three-tenths of 1% of that - but cannot seem to get it.

The Eco-system Report advocates policy options to conserve ecosystem services positively. Forest protection for example, conserves wildlife and also supplies fresh water and reduces carbon emissions.

Catastrophic change

However, the Report also describes the “tipping points” which if reached could bring about catastrophic and unalterable change:

- **New Diseases:** As populations densities increase and living space extends into once pristine forests, the chances of an epidemic of new infectious agent grows. Global travel accentuates the threat and the emergence of SARS and bird flu are prime examples of diseases moving from animals to humans.
- **Alien Species:** The introduction of invasive species- whether animal, plant or microbe-can lead to a rapid change in ecosystems. Zebra mussels introduced into North America led to the extinction of native clams and the comb jelly fish caused havoc to 26 major fish species in the Black Sea.
- **Algal Blooms:** A build up of man made nutrients in the environment has already led to the threshold being reached when algae blooms. This can deprive fish and other wildlife of oxygen as well as produce toxic substances that endanger drinking water.
- **Coral reef collapse:** Reefs that were dominated by corals have suddenly changed to being dominated by algae, which have taken advantage of the increase in nutrient levels running off from terrestrial sources. Many of Jamaica’s coral reefs have now become algae dominated.
- **Fishing stocks:** Over fishing has caused a collapse in stocks. A threshold is reached when there are too few adults to maintain a viable population. This occurred off the east coast of Newfoundland in 1992 when its stock of Atlantic cod vanished.
- **Climate Change:** In a warmer world, local vegetation or land cover can change

causing warming to become worse. The Sahel region of North Africa depends on rainfall for its vegetation. Small changes in rain can result in loss of vegetation soil erosion and further decreases in rainfall.

On a positive note, if we can only figure out how to do it and commit to it- the overriding conclusion of this Assessment is that **“it lies within the power of human societies to ease the strain we are putting on the nature services of the planet, while continuing to use them to bring better living standards to all.”**

By Saradha Iyer - *Third World Network*

The Women’s Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) invite you to a CSD 13 side event:

Gender, Natural Disasters, and Human Rights Wednesday, April 13
6:15-7:45 pm
UN Conference Room 2

“Role of Faith Communities in Education for Sustainable Development-Water, Sanitation, Human Settlements”

WHERE: Conference Room C
WHEN: Wednesday, April 13,
6.15 - 7.45pm

Stakeholder Forum Side Event From CSD to the Millennium Development Summit; Challenges for the Next Decade

**Wednesday 13th April
1.15 - 2.45pm,
Conference Room 6**

STOP SMALLPOX ENGINEERING

Non-Governmental Organizations urge the World Health Organization to put smallpox in the history books, instead of in the genetic engineering lab where things could really get out of hand.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is justly proud of the global effort that brought about the eradication of smallpox in 1977; but the truth of the matter is that the job was never finished. The United States and Russia still retain stocks of the smallpox virus (*Variola major*), an easily transmitted disease and ancient scourge of humanity that is a potent biological weapons agent. Smallpox kills one quarter or more of the people it infects and leaves many that do not die disfigured and blind.

Opening Pandora's box

In 1999, the remaining stocks of smallpox virus were slated for imminent destruction. But Russia and the US balked at the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution calling upon them to destroy the virus. Instead, the US has accelerated smallpox research. Now, it wants to open the Pandora's Box of genetically-engineered smallpox. A plan to genetically engineer the virus could be approved by the WHA in May 2005. If implemented, this plan would pose serious biosafety risks and open the road to an artificial reconstruction of the virus for biowarfare purposes.

Repeating history

Fewer and fewer people, and their leaders, have personal memories of the horror of smallpox, or even the scars left by vaccination, which had ended in most countries by the late 1970s. As if the world is condemned to repeat history through forgetfulness, WHO has now lost the political will that it once had to finish the job of smallpox eradication. Much of the blame can be laid at the feet of WHO's decision to leave oversight of smallpox research in the hands of an unbalanced and highly politicized "technical" advisory

committee that is dominated by a small number of countries and scientists with a personal interest in pursuing smallpox research. It was US pressure that rammed the proposal for genetically-engineered smallpox through that committee, and now the World Health Assembly is in an inglorious position of being on the verge of endorsing what may prove to be the undoing of one its own greatest achievements.

A danger to the world

Civil society and like-minded governments must urgently come together to turn the tide. The creation of genetically-engineered smallpox and hybrids of smallpox and other viruses (called chimera) pose serious public health, biosafety, and biological weapons dangers to the entire world. With increased smallpox experimentation, the world stands closer to the accident or deliberate act that would cause a release of the virus.

Contained to only two labs in Russia and the US, smallpox has a unique multilateral research oversight structure that has no parallel with any other disease. Because of the unique situation of smallpox research, if WHO approves these experiments it will not only increase the threat posed by smallpox itself. WHO will also broadcast the signal that it is internationally acceptable to have genetic engineering of other germs, including experiments in which new and more dangerous forms may result – or even be intended.

If endorsed by the WHA, the intergovernmental encouragement of the creation of designer disease will come at a particularly dangerous time. Particularly in the US, the scope and quantity of research on biological weapons agents is growing, and now exceeds the cost of the effort that created the atomic bomb (the Manhattan Project), adjusted for inflation.

Destroy within two years

An international alliance of non-governmental organizations has launched a campaign to urge the World Health Organization to reject a proposal that would permit the genetic engineering of smallpox and to instead ensure that all remaining stocks of the virus are destroyed within two years.

The NGOs, led by Third World Network and The Sunshine Project, have opened a website, www.smallpoxbiosafety.org, where organizations and individuals can send letters to the WHO Director General. The website provides links to health ministries, so that people can also contact their government's representatives to the WHA. Debate on the proposal will take place at the World Health Assembly (WHA), which meets in Geneva, Switzerland beginning of May 16th.

Individuals and civil society organizations should take action and voice their opposition to WHO and their national public health authorities, urging them to reject the recommendations of the committee and to instead ensure prompt destruction of all remaining virus stocks.

By Saradha Iyer - Third World Network

QUOTE FOR THE DAY

“treat the Earth well. It was not given to you by you parents. It was loaned to you by your children”

- Kenyan Proverb

QUESTION OF THE DAY



MAJOR GROUPS ARE NOW CONTRIBUTING TO THE OFFICIAL NEGOTIATING PROCESS. *Does their participation make sense?*

Patrick Muraguri, Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI) / African Reference Group on Water (ARGOW), Kenya.

- Yes, it makes sense. Major Groups are talking from their practical experience on the ground. Major groups have very strong points based on their on the ground experience, they provide the good and bad practices. However, I am wondering whether it makes sense to the government delegations. When you listen to the governments they are not actually responding to the question of the Chair, they merely read their prepared statements that do not respond to what is happening on the ground.



Emmanuel Prinnet, Association 4D, France

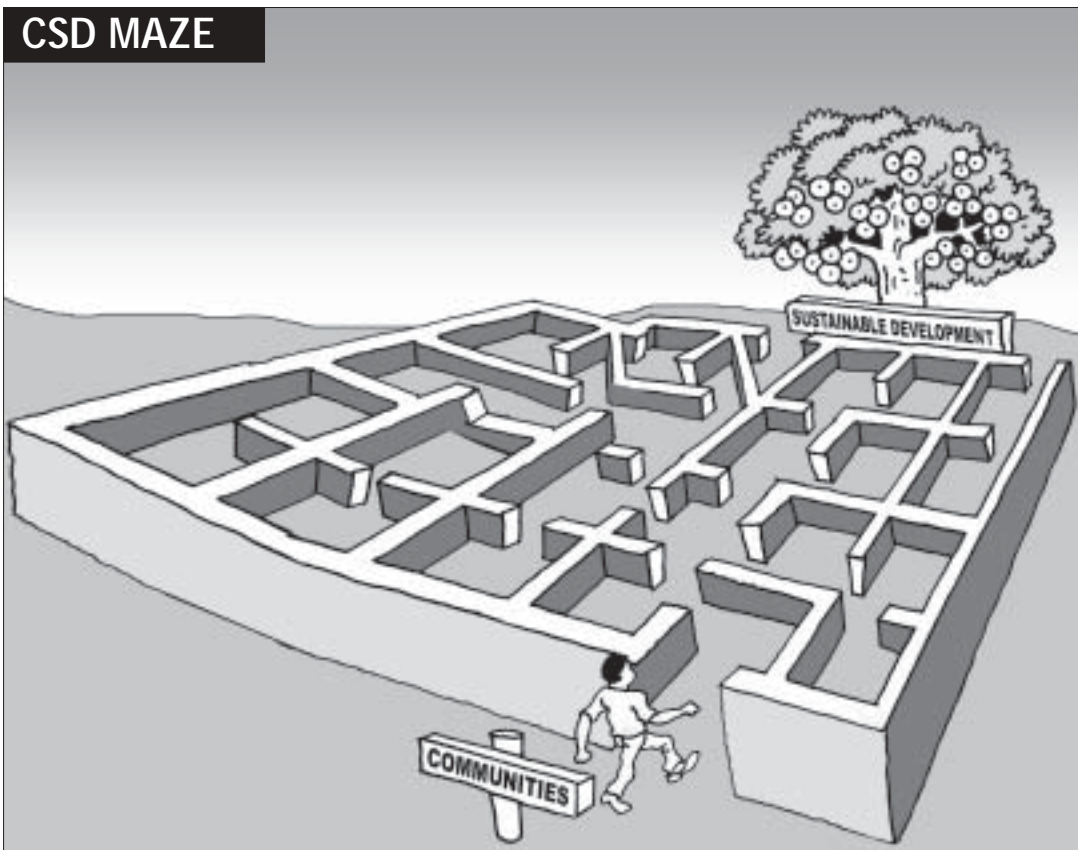
- Of course it makes sense, it is essential. Civil society participation is an essential part of democracy. States are accountable to Civil society so we should be able to intervene and react and make proposals.



Shiney Varghese - Institute for agriculture and state policy, United States

- Yes it makes sense, it gives civil society the opportunity to let governments know how we can all work together to achieve the goals on water through sustainable means.

CSD MAZE



Contribute to *Taking Issue*

To publish articles in this newsletter, please submit your text before 5.00 p.m. to one of the SDIN facilitating organisations' staff.
Or, send an email to: kirstenkossen@yahoo.com, or phone us on: +47 47 01 83 37

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TWN, Third World Network

ELCI, Environment Liaison Centre International

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