



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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WATER RIGHTS DOWN THE DRAIN, THE (POSSIBLY) SORRY LEGACY OF CSD 13

A rights based approach is too difficult to handle. The concept contains legal consequences we have no way of tackling. If this is taken too far, governments may be sued for not providing clean and safe water – Incredulous we may be, but these statements come from savvy delegates, well informed specialists in international relations.

Governments may be sued for not providing clean water, delegates say. And shouldn't they be? Between 25 and 30 000 people, of whom a large majority are children, die every day of easily preventable, waterborne diseases thriving in polluted water. Whose responsibility is it to prevent these deaths? Who is the responsible party for causing these deaths? These were among the questions people from the Major Groups asked themselves after they realised that the last glimmer of hope was erased: The rights based approach was out of the text Thursday night, once and for all it seemed.

Last Friday

Last Friday, when negotiations of the Chair's first draft had started, Leighton and Jones (both lawyers) wrote in Taking Issue: "A rights based approach to water policy formation is beneficial not only because it incorporates diverse views from a wide range of input and expertise, but also because it necessarily takes into account those whom policy and strategy are designed to empower, particularly the poor, women, children indigenous peoples, minorities and refugees."

200 000 have died since then

Since then, we have carried articles revealing to all that in fact a number of countries do have enshrined in their constitution a rights based approach to water; South Africa and Belgium being but two of these examples. If they can do it, so can CSD.

Since then, the NGOs morning strategy meeting decided to run an intensive lobby campaign on the rights to water directed to delegations.

Since then, a great many countries have admitted that they surely would have accepted this text, but that they already had committed themselves to other texts alternatives within their respective groups.

Since then, delegates decided to delete the rights based approach.

Since then, another 200 000 people, mostly children have died from easily preventable waterborne diseases thriving in polluted water.

Move forward

Delegates – it is about time to commit, be brave, honour your commitment to your people and to the organisation for which you are presently working – the UN, and reinstate the rights based approach. It's done in other texts. It doesn't hurt. When CSD was concocted, among its many purposes was to make sure that first the Rio process and later the Johannesburg process would move forward.

When CSD 11 finished, this mandate was reiterated and strengthened.

We are about to finish the second year of the first cycle of the new CSD-. The delegates are about to finish this new CSD moving backwards, not into the future, but way into the past.

You have our commitment

Delegates of all nations, there is still time to make the first policy text from the new CSD historically strong. You ask for commitments, and for that you need committed text. A minimum effort would make you, the delegates historically courageous – all it takes is to add a rights based approach to the text. And when you do, we are there to commit and support you.

...jgs

BRINGING THE CSD HOME

After two weeks of intensive negotiations, CSD-13 comes to a close today. As delegates pack their bags, hop into planes and head back home, what messages are they taking to the people who sent them to New York? Are they messages of hope or despair? Or is it business as usual and patting on the back because they managed to influence the change of a comma here, punctuation there, a gender sensitive term there? Will the document that comes out of CSD-13 be representative of all their aspirations, hopes, and expectations? Will governments take lead in implementing the policies outlined in this document? Or will this important document be left to gather dust on the shelves of government offices and the UN library?

Intense discussions

Deliberations during this session have been tough, no doubt. Intense lobbying has gone on, both inside the UN conference halls and on the corridors. And the drafting committee has been very accommodative. Taking inputs from all the interest groups

represented at CSD-13. It would be unfair to say that the outcome has not been inclusive. The harder part only now begins. The challenge lies in translating the policies into actions, and mobilizing resources to support this. Where will the financial resources come from? Will it be through the tried and not so effective bilateral financing? Will it be through public/private partnerships? The choices are varied and it is upon each government to make their own independent choice, guided by the principles of CSD-13 of course.

Translating words into action

For Africa, especially, results of CSD-12 and 13 will only become visible when the millions of people without access to clean drinking water are able to readily enjoy this resource, either freely, or at prices they can afford. When governments are able to resettle the thousands now living in deplorable urban slums into habitable sanitary housing, then we would be bringing the results of the CSD home. This calls on governments to be bold, to be committed and focused. The hurdles will be many and varied. It is not a task for the faint-

hearted. Otherwise the CSD will have degenerated into just another talk shop where civil society and governments meet to engage in oratorical discourses.

Moving towards CSD-14

But even meeting all the set targets for water, sanitation and human settlements will not be an end in itself. CSD-14, a review session on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution and climate change will be beckoning. Parties must not sit on their laurels. The world must move on. Thematic papers on CSD-14 must be commissioned and discussed, even as implementation of CSD-13 is commenced. Both processes must run concurrently. None must outshine the other. So when delegates next congregate in New York in 2006, each must be able to point out progress not just in implementing policies of CSD-13, but also how this has contributed into achieving the millennium development goals. Then and only then, shall we make the CSD a results-driven process.

- SW

QUESTION OF THE DAY



How tired are you on a scale from 1-10 ?
(1 being very awake, 10 being fast asleep)

Zachary Bleicher, Stakeholder forum, United States (Outreach)

- I am a 15, every day I sleep less.



Richard Jordan, International ICT Bridge for Caring Communities, United States

- I am a 1, I am wide awake! My secret is that I have been a proofreader for 8 years and I had to stay up all night reading legal documents.



Federica Pietracci, CSD Secretariat, Major Group Coordinator, United States

- I am a 6.5. My secret is no coffee, just tea, 3 liters of water a day and protein bars.

“Twice should be enough” – Confucius

Two special presentations offered stark and thought-provoking messages to the 140 odd ministers at Thursday morning’s CSD-13 interactive discussions.

By Saradha Iyer

Both were different from Wangari Maathai’s heartfelt plea for “rethinking our place on the planet” and Jeffrey Sach’s ‘let’s get serious’-message.

Dr Mikhail Gorbachev’s ideas were premised upon the fundamental right of people to water (the timing of this was altogether ironic, given that the one and only reference to the rights based approach had been deleted from the CSD-13 negotiating text the night before). He deplored treating water as a commodity or using such a vital resource to generate profits for transnational corporations (TNCs). The entire emphasis in his speech was on the moral dimension of the problem of access to water as well as the fact that it is not about voluntary help or charity but a question of equity and justice for all.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Orange’s statement was delivered by the PR of the Netherlands. In an even more hard hitting message His Royal Highness criticized

delegates for not acting or not keeping their promises nor practicing what they preach. He also reiterated that political commitment needs accountability. In what must feel like soothing music to NGO ears, the Prince called for a focus on “the people we are doing it for”. And he also emphasized working at the local/rural level with women and NGOs. If it is important for NGOs to be involved, then we need to have an integrated strategy. Should this be part of funding requirements?, he asked. Is this something for all to ponder?

On major infrastructural projects he pointed to some middle ground in the on-going debate saying that “if countries work together and draft a strategy for the entire river basin, many problems can be solved”.

In sharp contrast, the response to the two presentations came from Australia whose minister underlined the need for economic growth as the means to achieve the MDGs and

protect the environment. “Well functioning markets will deliver”, and “you can not legislate for empowerment and commitment”, was his message.

What the session as a whole brought out was that there remains a big divide and a major disconnect, between what is being said and what is acted, or not acted upon, between what goes on in side-events and NGO circles, and what decisions are taken by policy makers. And so the Confucius saying which His Royal Highness quoted “twice should be enough” - (Confucius said this to a man who always thought three times before acting - it means if you want to achieve something it is better not to postpone the step between thinking and doing for too long) – is likely to fall on deaf ears.

Come many more CSDs we will still be orbiting in different circles and saying and hearing only what we want to say and hear.

Take a walk for CSD

Some statistics behind the lively NGO participation.

This CSD, well over 500 representatives from various Major Groups participated in the CSD. The average walk way for an NGO delegate begins with the entrance at the security gate, then through the corridors past Vienna Café, to Conference B, on to Conference Room 1, back again several times into the Vienna for coffee, tea, cappuccino, or several of the same. The walkway continues at lunch to the UN cafeteria, and back again, with a possible quick stop at Conference B, a number of return trips to Vienna, and somewhere around 7 at night, the NGO delegate, tired but happy (?) leaves the UN. During such a day, the NGO delegate has in fact walked an average of 2000 metres. Add the average distance to and fro the NGO’s hotel, the daily walking distance is approximately 3 500 metres, or 3,5 kilometres. Multiply this with the number of CSD days - which is 10, and you find that the delegate has indeed walked around 35 kilometres. And by finally factoring in the fact that the morning NGO strategy session has had an average of 112 persons present, we end up with the stunning fact that together we have walked around 3 500 kilometres. This means in fact that the CSD community has together covered the distance from the Atlantic seaboard of the American continent to somewhere up in the Rocky Mountains. And perhaps that’s where we are stuck with an incomplete document.

More statistics:

The first two-year CSD cycle has had close to 190 interventions during the official sessions from the Major Groups. Using an average of 2 ½ minutes per intervention, and adding the Interactive sessions form the Review Session during CSD 12 as well as for the two High Level segments, Major groups have talked to delegates for close to 15 hours during these official sessions.

The NGO strategy session between 9 and 10 every morning has been well attended. An average of 112 persons have attended daily. A much valued information tool, has been the report backs from the many sessions with the delegates. During the first week there were 26 report backs, during the second week, 32. Representatives from all continents carried out these report backs.

Caucus meetings.

Close to 45 caucus meetings have been organised, an average of ca 9 persons have attended these meetings, thus showing that almost 400 persons attended these meetings at one time or another.

Interactive statement development.

NGOs have been asked to come with NGO statements. The first one was delivered on Friday, where all major groups were asked to respond to the Chair’s text. This was also a first in the history of CSD. The second time each of the major groups came up with their own statement, was for the dialogue session during the High Level Segment.

Over 100 persons participated in the formulation of the first NGO statement, and close to 90 participated in the drafting of the second statement. An editorial group, unanimously elected by the morning meeting, finally wrote up both statements.

Interactive discussion during the morning meeting.

On an average basis, some 30 - 35 people have interjected, questioned or discussed during the morning meeting on a daily basis. Thus some 350 persons participated during discussion periods in these morning meetings.

The Chair and Chairing.

The morning meetings have all been chaired on a rotation basis. During the 10 days of meetings, 8 different persons have chaired, all five continents have been represented. Men have chaired twice, women the rest of the time.

The Chair of the CSD visited the morning meeting three times to discuss various items, this is also a historic first!

Taking Issue

10 Issues of Taking Issue have been produced. All together 110 pages with almost as many articles covering the three themes of CSD, with an angle from all regions were written, printed and published.

In addition the Taking Issue team has interviewed more than 50 persons participating at the CSD.

...jgs

ARE YOU A SUSTAINABLE CONSUMER?

Last day, and then we're all leaving. Hoping that whatever comes out of CSD-13 it will somehow help the world toward a more sustainable development. But how are *you* helping the world become more sustainable?

Are you a sustainable consumer? Probably not. Is that ok? Well, not really. Especially not if you've spent the last two weeks preaching about possible solutions to the many issues facing the world today. "YouthXchange training kit on responsible consumption – THE GUIDE" first came out during the Johannesburg World Summit in 2002. It has also circulated here at CSD-13. Stating the somewhat sadly obvious, the brochure says that "if we continue our current patterns of consumption, the future will not be bright". It's not only about ecological sanitation for the poor people of the slum. It's about ecological toilets for people in western countries as well. So for all of us, it really is all of us, without a clean conscience when it comes to sustainable consumption....:

Did you know that...

- The world's 20% richest people consume nearly 75% of the planet's natural resources.
- The wealth of the world's 225 richest individuals equals the annual income of the bottom 47% of the world's population, or 2.5 billion people.
- One person following a meat-free diet prevents more than 4000 m² of trees being destroyed per year.
- There are more cars in just one US urban area – greater Los Angeles – than in the whole of India, China, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh put together.
- Drivers in Bangkok are estimated to spend an average of 44 days a year stuck in traffic.
- On average, every person living in a developed country throws away 1kg of rubbish every day.
- For every ton of paper recycled, 17 trees and 21 000 litres of water are saved.

- Experts say that global cuts in CO2 emissions of around 60% will be necessary by 2050 if catastrophic climate change is to be avoided.
- 97% of the earth's water is ocean water, unusable to man.
- To provide every child in the world with a primary education will cost an extra \$6 billion, the same as 4 days of global military spending.
- It has been estimated that if the rest of the world were to consume like the developed world, we would need the equivalent of 4 extra earths.

In the words of Michael Jackson: "If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and make a change"

So therefore, as something to remember and keep in mind when shopping and enjoying the last days in New York, here are a few of the many suggestions from the Training Kit

INTRODUCING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Sustainable consumption is about finding workable solutions to imbalances – social and environmental – through more responsible behaviour from everyone. In particular, SC is linked to production and distribution, use and disposal of products and services and provides the means to rethink their lifecycle. The aim is to ensure that the basic needs of the entire global community are met, excess is reduced and environmental damage is avoided.

Not an easy concept to define, most definitions of Sustainable Consumption have the following common features:

- satisfying human needs;
- favouring a good quality of life through decent standards of living;
- sharing resources between rich and poor;
- acting with concern for future generations;
- looking at the 'cradle-to-grave' impact when consuming;
- minimising resource use, waste and pollution.

on how to become a more sustainable consumer:

- Only take dietary supplements if you really feel you need them. Choose ones made from natural ingredients rather than chemical imitations.
- Think carefully about how often you need to wash your clothes. Avoid dry-cleaning clothes, as the fluids contain highly polluting chemicals.
- Use eco-friendly, cruelty-free products whenever possible, and always use the minimum amount (in general a little less than recommended).
- Stop or cut down on smoking.
- Remember to exercise regularly; you can't store up fitness for your old age.
- Walk, cycle or roller-blade. It's fast and it will get you fit.
- Car share/car pool whenever you can. You'll reduce road traffic, save petrol and cut pollution levels.
- Use public transport.
- Repair things rather than throw them away.
- Recycle paper, cans and bottles by taking them to your local recycling centre. Compost household waste.
- Have a shower, not a bath.
- When replacing toilets and washing machines, ask for models with low water-use.
- Don't flush but throw away your tampons, sanitary towels, nappies and condoms. Especially if you live in an area where sewage is pumped untreated into the sea. Think about that next time you go for a swim.
- Think before you buy. Think about what you need, not what you want.
- Buy direct. If you have access to the internet, shop 'virtually' whenever possible and cut down on transport and transport-linked pollution. If used intelligently, the internet can contribute to more sustainable consumption.

QUESTION OF THE DAY



What can be done to stop the smoking in the Vienna Café?

Johanna Ritscher, Red Cross Youth Society/ Representative of the National Youth Council, Sweden

-The smoking in the Vienna Café kind of reflects lack of commitment and action, as there are non-smoking signs everywhere. If the same is going to happen with the Chair's text, I will be very, very, sorry, disappointed and angry. But who knows, I might be surprised.



Pamela Puntteney, CSD Education Caucus, United States

- We need to come up with something very creative to get the message across. We should involve the Youth and have a brainstorm session about it, outside of this building where 'free thinking' can take place. We also need to bring in the media, people that know how to bring the message loud and clear. The content of the message could be something with respect for other people or the right to health.



A few years ago, at least there was a separation in the Vienna Café, upstairs you could smoke, downstairs was a non-smoking area.

Deepak Prakash Baskota, National Cooperative Federation of Nepal, Nepal

-I do not like the smoke. I want to have coffee, tea or a snack but because of the smoke I do not want to stay there. We have to request the visitor to stop smoking around the café. Maybe there could be a UN programme on stopping the smoking in the Vienna Café

Clean air stimulates thinking and helps develop good documents.

STOP SMOKING IN VIENNA CAFE



THE NEXT CYCLE

- **CSD 14** (New York, 2006)
Focus: Review year, Energy for Sustainable Development, Industrial Development, Air Pollution/Atmosphere, Climate Change
- **CSD 15** (New York, 2007)
Focus: Policy year, Energy for Sustainable Development, Industrial Development, Air Pollution/Atmosphere, Climate Change

To consult the Guidelines for National Reporting to the Fourteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development:

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/natinfo/csd14_guidelines/guidelines_en.doc

FALSE HOPES, FAILED PROMISES

The Manila Water Privatization Case

The privatization of the water services in Metropolitan Manila in 1997 was hailed as “the first large-scale and successful privatization of a water utility in Asia”. Using the emergency power granted to him by the Philippine Congress under the 1995 National Water Crisis Act, then President Fidel V. Ramos adopted privatization as the solution to the inefficient and debt-ridden public water service managed by the Manila Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

By: Neth Dano, TWN

The move to privatize the city’s water system is meant to bring in foreign investment needed to expand water services; lessen the fiscal burden on the national budget; provide more efficient, de-politicized and less corrupt service; and repay the loans of MWSS which accumulated to \$800 million.

The Paris model

The privatization strategy, designed by International Finance Corporation (IFC) at the tune of US\$6.2 million, involved the division of water services in the metropolis into the west and east sectors following the Paris model. The strategy aimed to foster yardstick competition and avoid monopoly. The 25-year Concession Agreements were awarded to the two lowest bidders: the east sector, the bigger one, went to *Maynilad* which is a partnership between the Lopez family and Suez Lyonnaise (now Ondeo) and *Manila Water* which is a collaboration between the Ayala family, UK’s United

Utilities, US’ Bechtel and Japan’s Mitsubishi. Both partnerships are led by two of the richest and most politically powerful families in the country.

The privatization deals, as stated in the much-vaunted Concession Agreements signed by the two conglomerates, raised the following promises:

- lower water rates;
- 100 percent water coverage within 10 years;
- No real increases in water rates within the first 10 years, except with inflation;
- New investments amounting to US\$7.5 billion over 25 years;
- Un-interrupted daily water service within 3 years to all connected customers;
- Non-revenue water reduced from 56 % to 32 % over the first 10 years;
- Non-waste water program coverage to 80 % within 25 years
- Some US\$4 billion in income tax revenues over 25 years

- Shoulder repayments of MWSS old debts amounting to US\$800 million

Increased water rates

Indeed, water rates were reduced to about 60 % for the west sector and some 40 % for the east sector compared to the 1997 rates, at the outset of the privatization take over. This was largely because both Maynilad and Manila Water offered dive bids to win the Concession Agreements, which many predicted as unsustainable. True enough, barely 3 years after the private companies took over, they petitioned for several rates increases citing the Asian financial crisis, foreign exchange losses, and re-basing exercises. Between October 2001 and January 2003, water rates in the west sector have increased four times the original bid rates, while the east sector jumped five folds.

Conflicting claims

There are conflicting claims on the performance of the private consortia in



terms of coverage, service and efficiency. A survey done by MWSS in 2000 showed that 55 % of Manila residents thought that there is no change in the water service, 12 % thought that the service is worse, while 33 % said that they noticed improvement. MWSS also claimed that the companies bloated their calculation of the number of people served and expanded the definition of “water connection” to make it appear that they are delivering their targets.

Contrary to the promise of service efficiency, non-revenue water resulting from leaks and pilferage in the west sector especially, increased from 60 % in 1998 to 68 % in 2002. The promise of wider and better water service for the poor is severely constrained by the high cost of installation at around US\$80 which is simply unaffordable for households that are earning below US\$2 a day! Maynilad, in particular, also required applicants for installation to have a security of housing tenure for at least 5 years, which exclude shanty communities that are about to be demolished.

Paying concession fees

Despite the increases that the government has agreed to, in violation of the original provisions of the Concession Agreement, Maynilad (west sector) unilaterally stopped payment of its monthly concession fee of US\$4 million in October 2001, citing massive losses due to the very low rates! In December 2002, the consortium filed a notice of early termination of its Concession Agreement and sought the return of at least US\$303 million investments that it has already made. This led the government to seek the intervention of the International Appeals Panel for Major Disputes. The arbitration panel ruled in November 2003 that: there is no case for termination; the Concession Agreement shall remain in force; and directed Maynilad to pay the concession fees that it owes the Philippine government with interest.

By then, the company owed US\$91 million to the government in unpaid concession fees. Since the Philippine government remains as the legal debtor of the maturing loans of MWSS, it had to borrow US\$100 million from Deutsche Bank to pay to the WB, ADB and JBIC.

Biased compromise agreement

Instead of complying with the order of the Arbitration Panel, Maynilad filed for a Petition for Rehabilitation before a local court. The government initially opposed the petition, but later agreed to a compromise through Amendment No. 2 to the Concession Agreement adopted in March 2004. The amendment provided a virtual bail out of Maynilad’s losses by Filipino taxpayers! It stated that the \$91 million unpaid concession fees by Maynilad will be converted to equity shares in the holding companies owned by the Lopez family, and that the government can only draw \$50 million from the \$120 million performance bond of the consortium. The compromise agreement was so biased against public interest that it drew widespread criticisms and controversy which forced MWSS to withdraw its concurrence. The amendment is still under negotiation and expected to be finalized by the end of April 2005.

Reaping profits

While Maynilad suffered massive losses and mismanagement, its counterpart in the east, Manila Water, reaped profits from its operations. In 1999, it posted profits of 40.92 %, despite the existing laws setting a 12 % cap on profits in public utilities. The consortium also benefited from the rate increases allowed by the government between 2001 and 2003.

Undermining the right to water

The Manila water privatization case is a living example of how water privatization has undermined the basic rights of people to water by making it inaccessible and unaffordable. It is also a classic case of how the general public was excluded from

the decision making process on privatization, largely through the government’s deliberate attempt to block public access to information and to participate in the arbitration process. It also brings to fore the issue of corporate social responsibility, accountability and liability. Can companies just opt out of their commitments if they find the venture unprofitable? How can they call for governments to adopt a predictable legal environment when they themselves change the rules in the middle of the game?

A LIVELY SESSION

By Saradha Iyer

The interactive session with Major Groups proved to be the most animated 90 minutes in all of CSD-13. Major Groups received strong unequivocal support from Norway, Cape Verde, Brazil, Sweden, South Africa, Azerbaijan and Canada. The EU delegation, by intervening too early, preempted the Major Group presentations and appeared to be speaking at cross-purposes instead of interactively. Nevertheless, their call for active participation, including the need for Major Groups to contribute to negotiations and be part of the future CSD cycles is much appreciated.

In specifically underscoring the negative impact and unethical practices of transnational corporations, the Azerbaijan delegate bolstered calls by women, indigenous peoples, farmers, trade unions and NGOs against outright unfettered privatization of basic services. We hope his concerns are taken on board by CSD-13 and beyond!

AGENDA 21 CSD NEEDS TO ENCOURAGE TRAINING AND FUNDING OF CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

By: Jasmeet K Dhaliwal

At the World Summit in Johannesburg, the role of civil society and NGO's was greatly appreciated and encouraged. However there is little independent assistance to civil society groups to emerge, grow and capacity build. Most assistance is dependent on State institutions or bodies financed by the developed countries. There are subtle agendas in this form of assistance which makes it difficult for many hopeful groups in developing countries from taking initiative to develop their capacity and knowledge base.

Enormous Knowledge Base

UNCSD should seriously consider setting up regional training, education and small funding provisions to encourage civil society groups to benefit from the enormous knowledge base available within UNCSD network. This form of assistance should be available to individuals and groups considering setting up an NGO or other form of action group. Currently the

system expects civil society groups to train, fund and become active by themselves and engage in CSD or seek assistance from large institutions.

Encourage Civil Society

Sustainable development is an extremely important issue in the world now. It cannot simply be left to the politics of the day or the ability of civil society to organize itself. The serious problems of sustainable development, especially access to clean water and water conservation, can only be tackled if the UNCSD takes a pro active role in encouraging civil society to take initiatives. Regional centers can publicize their existence and abilities to attract interested parties to benefit from training. Such individuals and parties can then set up NGOs and similar groups to give further expression to Agenda 21. But CSD should take primary responsibility to encourage civil society action in becoming self responsible for sustainable development.

A Proactive Role

Perhaps the first world project that can be taken up is that of water. By promoting water as a human rights issue, there will be greater demand upon UNCSD to take a lead in assisting member states in this field. This proactive approach has worked in some other areas of the UN such as Health and to some extent Human rights. Sikh Human Rights Group feels that a non-political proactive role should be considered by CSD as a future mandate. It can provide technical skills, capacity building and organizational networking. To make sustainable development a part of everyday civil society life, the initiative has to come from politically neutral international efforts. UNCSD can mandate the Division for Sustainable Development to take on this role.

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THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ARE DOING IT TOO!

Taking Issue reported in the last issue about a network of local governments in Africa. Here is information provided by a regional governments network called nrg4SD.

What is nrg4SD and its aim?

Nrg4SD is the international Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development. The network was formed by the regional governments that attended the Johannesburg WSSD, to share information and experience about sustainable development policy-making at the regional level of governance. The Network aims to be a voice for, and to represent, regional governments at the global level, promoting sustainable development at regional level around the world.

What do they mean by regional?

The term region is understood in a wide sense as a territory, where a system of governance exists and which is the largest and first level of political subdivision within an individual state represented at the UN but which is above the municipal level. In many parts of the world this is the State level of government, but there are so many different terms around the world for this sphere of government that they settled on the term 'regional government'.

They believe regional government is important for SD

Regional governments are often the main implementing bodies for global agreements on sustainable development because of their range of responsibilities. Regions are close enough to the people to tailor their action to the people's needs but strategic enough to make links between areas of policy.

Thematic Priorities

One main priority is networking through cooperation projects between members and other international networks or associations, institutions, organisations and other stakeholders. Nrg4SD develops products and tools such as policy papers,

a common set of regional sustainable development indicators, reports, and nrg4SD conferences to be applied and used by the regional governments.

What the Network has done so far

The network takes an active participative role in the negotiation process of relevant international conferences in the field of sustainable development. Nrg4SD presents written official positions in the sessions, intervenes in multistakeholder dialogues on behalf of regional governments, and organizes side-events.

Nrg4SD at CSD13

The Belgium statement of the high level segment of CSD 13, 21 April 2005, presented by H.E.Mrs Els van Weert State-Secretary for Sustainable Development, stated that '...our regions work together with other sub-national regions of the world within the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development, also called NRG4SD, to achieve sustainable development through cooperation and exchanging experiences and best practices'

For more information: www.nrg4sd.net



From nrg4SD: Luc Bas and Tashneem Essop, H.E. Mrs Els Van Weert

TOILET BUSINESS

In cities, water toilets account for 20-40% of the water consumed. A flush toilet uses between 6-20 liters of water per flush. It's a complete waste! And there are so many better alternatives around.

It may seem odd when you think about it. If you are a lucky who takes flush toilets for granted. A toilet flushing without water, or with less than a liter of water. How can it be possible? Well, how do you think they do it on planes? Cruise ships? Buses? They get it done somehow, no?

The next thing may seem even odder. Excreta is a resource. Wastewater is also a resource. Disgusting thought? Does your nose cringe? Get over it!

A few facts:

1. Most domestic organic waste flows can be safely controlled, reclaimed and turned into bio-energy and fertilizers.
2. Theoretically, the nutrients in domestic wastewater are almost sufficient to fertilize all the crops needed to feed the world's population.
3. Urine needs only storage, time depending on the climate, before it is suitable for use as a hygienic fertilizer.
4. Recent improvements in compost technology have made the treatment of human waste safe, efficient and odorless.

Ex-popstar from India Ken Gnanakan's ecological toilet centre in a slum in Bangalore is the perfect example: The urine helps grow bananas, the faeces become compost that helps grow medicinal plants, the project has created 10 new jobs and the women are safe from being assaulted while relieving themselves in the bush.

Half a liter only

Comparing the age old invention of the flush toilet to today's more ecological alternatives, toilets that by the way are commercially available to us all, one may wonder why we haven't changed our ways yet. Compared to the 6-20 liters a conventional toilet wastes...

- Composting/dry toilet: 0 – 0,1 liter per flush
- Urine diverting toilet: 0,1 – 4,0 liters per flush
- Water saving toilets: Vacuum – 0,5 – 1,5 liters per flush, Gravity – 1 liter per flush

Technology forgot nature...

The Norwegian University of Life Sciences who are leading within the field of Ecosan solutions, have found a very fitting quote to explain what it is all about: "The development of human society with nature, for the benefit of both". (W.J. Mitsch and S.E. Jorgensen in "Ecological Engineers", 1998) The problem, says professor Petter Deinboll Jenssen, is that we're developing technology for the short-term benefit for man, forgetting about nature. During his presentation "Appropriate sanitation in the developing world" at the learning centre on Wednesday, the engineer called for a new holistic approach to technology. – For me as an engineer, this represents new challenges and possibilities. This is the new way engineers have to work. We have to discuss with people to tailor solutions appropriate for the given context.

On its way out

Unfortunately, with few exceptions, ecological engineering is not a part of the curricula at engineering schools. The options to supplement and even replace traditional sewer systems with inexpensive, decentralized, resource saving systems are not widely known. But the world has to catch on soon, say Petter and his colleagues at the University. It just has to. There are too many positive benefits, too much money to save, water to be saved, resources to be saved, environment to be saved. And not only by implementing these new technologies in the developing countries. The developed world needs to come along as well.

It may not be widely known yet, but if you just read this article to the very end, you're now officially in the loop: The old flush toilet is on its way out. It has to be. It's just gotta go!

The implementation of ecological sanitation leads to:

- **Improved health** by introducing new methods of handling faecal matter
- **Affordable solutions** with low capital and maintenance costs
- **Increased food security** by better fertilizer availability

- **Substantial water savings** by using water saving toilets and reuse of greywater
- **Economic development** by generation of local business opportunities
- **Bio energy production** by integrated solutions for wastewater and organic waste
- **Stakeholder involvement** and system acceptance (considering social, cultural, technical and environmental issues)

The fertilizer value of the nutrients discharged to the sewer systems in Norway = 30 million USD per year. The fertilizer value of the blackwater from 900 Mio people in rural China = 2,5 billion USD per year.

"In order to meet the demands of sanitation for all, prevent environmental degradation, and to make long-term economically efficient investments, new approaches to wastewater management must be implemented. Ecological Sanitation is a promising approach whose potential contribution for achieving the MDG's is increasingly recognized among international development organizations."

Is your nose still cringing a bit at the thought of your own excreta becoming fertilizer for the food you eat...? You will have to get over it, but your reaction is very normal, genetic some would say:

Excrement naturally repels people. 'Natural' in the sense that the repulsion is an involuntary reaction. The reason is as much evolutionary as cultural. In the course of human evolution, those unfortunate to come in contact with excreta were exposed to a plethora of pathogens, and consequently less likely to survive than those who did not come into contact with excreta. Therefore, some assume that man's instinctive repulsion is genetic in nature.

*Source for quotes and facts boxes:
The Norwegian University of Life Sciences*

QUESTION OF THE DAY

The first two-year cycle of the new CSD has come to an end, has progress been made?



Sayida Vanenburg, WEDO/Dutch Youth Council, the Netherlands

- In a way I think there has been some progress. I have been told that as Major Groups we had more interventions, especially in the first week, compared to the CSDs that took place before Johannesburg.

Another positive thing is that the Chair visited the morning meetings a couple of times, which set a good example for future CSD chairs to interact with the Major Groups.

A negative aspect is that I feel that valuable days were lost without starting the actual negotiations. As a result, Major Groups are excluded from the negotiations as they take place in small rooms and after the official working hours.



Ana Sugranyes, Habitat International Coalition, Worldwide Citizen

- There has been no progress at the official level as our most important concern about the rights-based approach did not get through. Furthermore, the whole document sounds supportive of general trends of privatization and of making all basic services a commodity. If this trend continues, everything will be business and at least half the population will be out of it, that is not acceptable

Many documents should be improved with the participation of people. We need a good mobilization of resources, ODA and national resources without debt. Also the assets of the people need to be recognized.



Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, CIEL, United States

- From the perspective of the side-events, many people feel more positive about the concrete exchange of information between advocacy people and people that work on the ground. They feel better about this sharing of information than for example 10 years ago.

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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ELCI, Environment Liaison Centre International

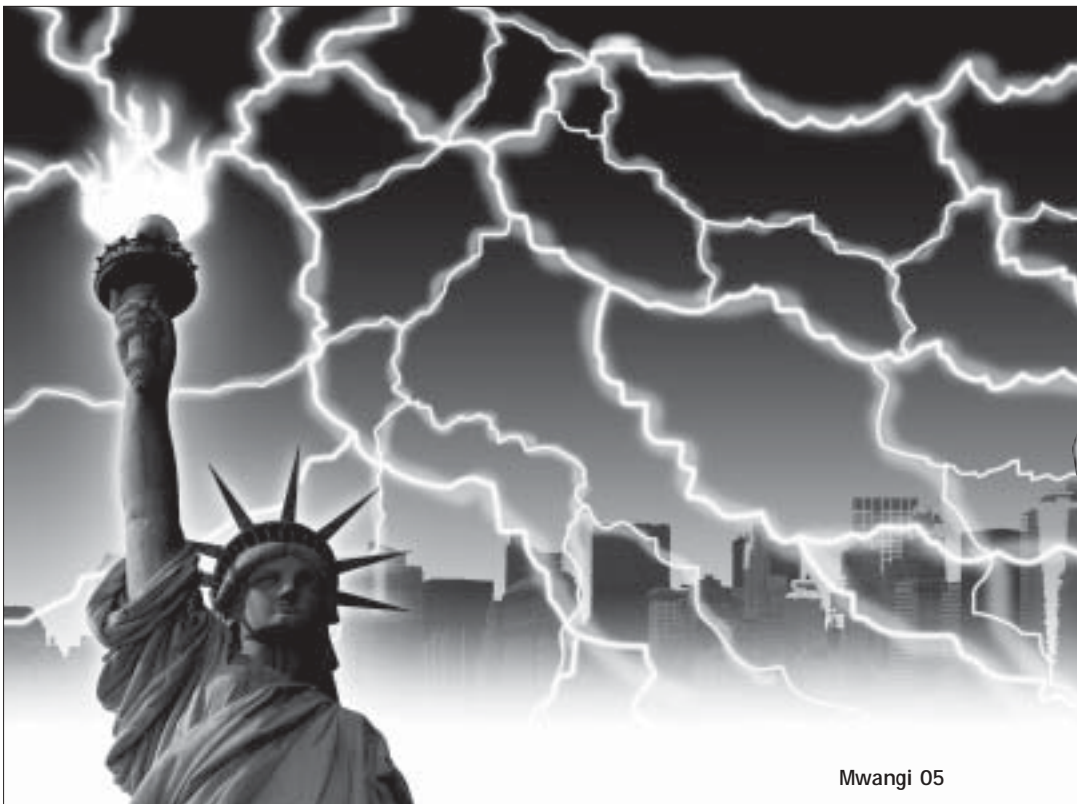
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... AND CSD SAID, "LET THERE BE ENERGY!" AND IT CAME TO BE SO



Mwangi 05

CSD-14 WILL FOCUS ON ENERGY, INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, AIR POLLUTION/ATMOSPHERE AND CLIMATE CHANGE. HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL THEN.

