



DELTA IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE II

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE, SCIENCE, CITIES AND BUSINESS
 ROTTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS, 24-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Deltas in Practice, policy-practice sessions	
Deltas in Practice Theme 6. Awareness, capacity building and community resilience	
DP 6.5 Landscape level planning to reduce disaster risk and enhance community resilience in Delta areas	
Chair	Prof. Thea Hilhorst, Wageningen UR, the Netherlands
Organised by	Marie-Jose Vervest, Program Manager Wetlands International , the Netherlands
Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jane Madgwick, CEO Wetlands International, the Netherlands ● Dr. Ritesh Kumar, Director Wetlands International South Asia, India ● Eddy Wymenga, Director Altenburg & Wymenga, Ecological Consultants ● Bruno Haghebaert, DRR Advisor Netherlands Red Cross, the Netherlands
Session topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integration of best practices from Disaster Risk Reduction, climate adaptation and ecosystem-based approaches at various levels from the community to the landscape level and across the risk reduction cycle.
Objective of the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The aim of this workshop is to explore and identify opportunities and challenges for integrated disaster risk reduction and enhanced community resilience in delta environments more broadly. Policy makers, scientists, engineers, and civil society organisations working on disaster management share their experiences and present the case for more integrated approaches to reduce disaster risk. Focus is on making use of wetlands ecosystem services.
Main conclusions and lessons learnt from the presentations	
<p><i>Challenges and need for an inter-disciplinary approach towards Disaster Risk Reduction</i> The great majority of disasters are water related. And many of them do not have to do with climate change but more with ill-informed development, embankments and fragmentation of river systems. We messed up our wetlands, many of these are considered 'waste lands' and are drained to provide space for urban infrastructure with sometimes dramatic floods as a result (example: New Orleans & hurricane Katrina). We have to tackle the root causes of disaster risk to save lives and livelihoods. Therefore we have to work at different scales. It is also about partnerships. Communities can play a big part when they are enabled to do so by their government. The solutions have to be nature based and people centred.</p> <p><i>Film 'Camel Caravan in Waso Nyero River Basin, Kenya'</i> The film shows how in Kenya the indigenous people organised a Camel Caravan to get the attention for water availability problems downstream the river.</p> <p><i>Landscape level planning & restoration of river systems to reduce vulnerability in Mahanadi Delta</i> People in Mahanadi Delta had traditional ways to live with the floods which were considered beneficial as these provided rich sediments for farming and fisheries. The socio-ecological river system in the delta used to be in a good balance. However, in the 70's British engineers started building embankments and dams in the rivers for irrigated agriculture, hydropower. This 'hydrological fragmentation' of the delta system resulted in large scale water logging, detrimental floods and serious droughts. Local farmers and fishermen do no longer benefit but increasingly suffer from floods affecting their livelihoods and assets. The delta, which previously was synchronised with the floods, now has become vulnerable to flooding. We have to take a step back to understand the Delta again. We lose vision on the landscape as we focus on households;</p>	





DELTA IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE II INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE, SCIENCE, CITIES AND BUSINESS
ROTTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS, 24-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

we need to scale up to coastal management. Together with Partners for Resilience, Wetlands International India has been implementing a 5 year programme to support local communities improving their livelihoods and being better prepared for these hazards, restore ecosystems, intervene at the landscape level to open up embankments and river mouths, strengthen dikes and influence policy makers at the river basin and delta level.

Holding back drought by influencing large scale irrigation programme investments and community interventions in Inner Niger Delta Mali

In the Inner Niger Delta in Mali people (farmers, fishermen, herders) are living with the annual flood pulse of the Niger River, when the rains start in upstream Guinea. Climate change (resulting in less rainfall) and upstream interventions such as some large scale dams upstream (irrigation & hydropower) are leading to less predictable flooding and reduced volumes of water downstream. This leads to increased vulnerability of communities and the ecosystem.

The focus of interventions of Wetlands International and partners in the past decades:

- Long term commitment (starting in 1998)
- Working on (inter)national, regional and local scales
- Involving and informing communities IND
- Acquisition of key data and analysis of:
 - o Hydrological upstream – downstream relationships
 - o Relation flooding – natural resources – Ecosystem Services – livelihoods
- Report and present to policy makers & water boards Mali
- Involving and informing communities IND

Key lessons from an integrated approach to Disaster Risk Reduction

The aim of the programme was to reduce the impact of natural hazards on the livelihoods of vulnerable communities. For this purpose, a partnership was established between humanitarian (Red Cross, Cordaid, CARE), climate (Climate Centre) and environment (Wetlands International) organisations. The Partners for Resilience have been implementing a joint program in 9 countries for the last 3,5 years. Some of the lessons from this collaboration were presented. Key challenges were to change 'mindscapes' of the staff and management of the partners so that they are open to work interdisciplinary.

Main conclusions of the discussion

- We think 'development' is the answer but often it is the cause of problems. Climate change is often 'blamed' for causing hazards such as detrimental floods and droughts while ill-informed development projects such as f.e. hydropower dams or embankments are causing the problems.
- Communities have to be given a voice. As was clearly shown in the film on the Camel Caravan in Kenya, local communities know exactly what is going on and what is causing their problems but do not know how to address this. NGOs can provide them with some key facts & figures and facilitate them to dialogue with local/national policy and decision makers. Politicians respond to risks, if a risk is made clear to them they might be more willing to take action.

Main result or conclusion of the session

We need to take care of wetlands on a large scale because as a 'natural infrastructure' these ecosystem can help reducing disaster risk. The people that live downstream need to be given a





DELTAS IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE II

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE, SCIENCE, CITIES AND BUSINESS
ROTTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS, 24-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

voice.
Most exciting insights or outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate change is often used as cause of a problem when actually it was mismanagement of natural resources or ill-informed development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We messed up our wetlands and we have to tackle the root causes to save lives and livelihoods.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Locals have to be empowered

