

DELTA IN PRACTICE SESSIONS: EXTENDED WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Theme 6: Awareness, capacity building and community resilience

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Deltas in Practice Theme 6. Awareness, capacity building and community resilience

DP 6.1 Resilient adaptation: how to practice what is preached

Thursday 25 September, 9.00-10.45

Antwerp Room

The problem with all measures addressing the consequences of climate change is uncertainty. A considerable chance exists that they will only be used decennia after implementation (or never). This requires much of their implementation process; the support and understanding for these measures needs to be time-resistant and embedded in the long-term memory of the communities that they protect.

This workshop will be organised from the perspective of those communities. In the setup of a round table conversation, three international, field experienced, panel-guests will engage with a hardened researcher. The guests at the table will be asked about their experiences and ideas on must haves and stumbling blocks to reach resilience to climate change. Together they will discuss the, if at all, importance of government policies and of scientific scenario-modelling.

The objective of this workshop is to find a way to combine community work, scientific research and government policy and approach the ‘holy grail’ of minimal investments and maximal yields in climate adaptation. Although in all probability there is not one best way to do this, the discussion with a broad spectrum of stakeholders will produce valuable insights. Known controversies between theory and practice, like “is the optimal strategy also feasible”, will be addressed. Participants in this workshop will gain a notion of what elements and actions need to be taken into account when creating a community that is inherently resilient and implementing measures that are time resistant when implemented.

Participants of the workshop will be able to join the discussion via our ‘communicating walls’. There they can prioritise and emphasise topics that were discussed and suggest their own ideas on must haves, stumbling blocks etc. The three panel members will react on these written comments at the end of the session.

Deltas in Practice Theme 6. Awareness, capacity building and community resilience

DP 6.2 Water & Heritage: Protecting deltas, heritage helps

Wednesday 24 September, 14.00-15.45

Van Walsum Room

Exposure to water related hazards, together with an increasing population density and richness in cultural and natural heritage puts civilisations, particularly in world's deltas, at high risk. Rapid urbanisation of delta areas without respecting the historic water structures that have evolved over the ages make these areas even more vulnerable.

For a world struggling to find solutions to pressing challenges, heritage helps by providing valuable examples of successful strategies. A better understanding of place and historical continuity and ingenious use and reuse of tangible and intangible heritage can offer solutions for the future. ICOMOS Netherlands works on bringing the water and heritage fields together through promoting a multidisciplinary dialogue and case studies, working towards best practice guidelines. The outcomes of this workshop will be recommendations on this process. Examples of follow-up activities are the ICOMOS General Assembly and Scientific Symposium in Florence 2014 and a Sidestone Press publication.

Deltas in Practice Theme 6. Awareness, capacity building and community resilience

DP 6.3 Science-to-Action: Aligning science with stakeholder and community needs in the Mekong and other delta systems

Friday 26 September, 09.00-12.00

Van Walsum Room

including break

The workshop is guided by three questions:

(1) What positive or negative trends do stakeholders observe with respect to their delta?

Participants will identify trends in the delta's physical and biological environment, community health, local and regional economies, and other factors of importance.

(2) What information do stakeholders base these assessments on? Categorising these assessments on a spectrum from high-quality data to educated guesses will be a key to characterising the reliability of these assessments and directing future research and data collection needs.

(3) What critical knowledge or data gaps do we, as stakeholders and scientists, jointly identify as hindering progress? The workshop will identify particular uncertainties, which if minimised, could substantially improve the knowledge base upon which actionable decision-support modelling tools and sustainable development strategies could be formulated.

Several short presentations will outline our general understanding of the issues at stake, including current and future economic and bio-geo-physical pressures on the Mekong Delta System. This workshop will be structured to encourage group discussion, drawing on the diverse expertise of workshop participants. The session will aim to define the areas of greatest research needs and make recommendations for future work. Applicability of findings in the Mekong Delta system to other deltas will be emphasised.

Deltas in Practice Theme 6. Awareness, capacity building and community resilience

DP 6.4 Deltas and estuaries in peril: towards a global "Community of Practice" on the ecosystem-based-management of deltas under global and climate change

Thursday 25 September, 13.30-15.15

Diamond Room I

Managing human activities in coastal systems and contributing river-catchments sector-by-sector has proved insufficient. Global deltas, accommodating a growing number of over 500 Billion

people and urban infrastructure, are facing rapid environmental change and increasing risk of natural hazards and deteriorating natural capital. Recent reports indicate that marine and coastal ecosystems are on the brink of long-term unsustainable development.

In order to fill in the information gaps and support countries and UN system partners to build capacity and develop strategies and policies to address key drivers of ecosystem degradation, UNEP seeks to establish a “Community of Practice” on the sustainability and ecosystem based - management of global deltas. Following the framework of UNEP’s Global Environmental Outlook (GEO) Assessment process, the session will discuss a draft white paper on ecosystem-based management of deltas and best practices, and seek support to develop a comprehensive global UNEP programme on informing on the link between sustainable ecosystems and development in deltas under global and climate change and recommending appropriate policy measures.

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DP 6.5 Landscape level planning to reduce disaster risk and enhance community resilience in delta areas

Wednesday 24 September, 16.15-18.00

Goudriaan Room II

Disaster risk is rising rapidly. The poorest and most vulnerable people are hit hardest. Many hazards are becoming more frequent and less predictable as a result of climate change. At the same time, environmental degradation erodes nature’s ability to regulate them, and provide food and water. The result is that more people are caught in a vicious circle of poverty, risk and vulnerability which drives mounting economic losses and imposes ever greater costs of relief and rehabilitation on governments and donor agencies.

Where disasters compromise development progress, ill-informed developments can intensify the impacts of natural disasters. Vast amounts of public money are spent every year on policies that make devastating floods inevitable. This calls for more integrated and inter-disciplinary approaches to disaster risk reduction. Where disaster response and relief, community development and preparedness remain key pillars of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), practitioners increasingly recognise the need to also address the root causes of risk and vulnerability. Ecosystem degradation is often one such root cause. Deforestation, over exploitation of water resources, draining of wetlands and other practices that degrade ecosystems often stems from flawed spatial planning or inappropriate water management policies. Addressing the complex underlying causes of disaster risk, requires integration of best practices from DRR, climate adaptation, and ecosystem-based approaches at various levels from the community to the landscape level and across the risk reduction cycle, from immediate disaster relief to longer-term mitigation and prevention measures.

Since 2011, Wetlands International collaborates with Netherlands Red Cross, Cordaid, CARE and the Red Cross Climate Centre in the **Partners for Resilience Alliance**, implementing one of the first large-scale programs bringing together expertise from humanitarian, climate, development and environment sectors. It offers a holistic approach to risk reduction and climate adaptation focusing on practical interventions and policy change in 9 countries.

This workshop will present the case for more integrated approaches through examples of community level interventions and landscape scale planning in two large deltas: Mahanadi Delta, northeast India and the Inner Niger Delta in Mali. These cases will highlight how actions at the local scale can be effective in developing resilience to climate change and hazard risk and how up-scaling can lead to policy change at delta or river-basin scale and to increased government investments in ecosystem-based DRR.

We will exchange experiences between different sectors (policy makers, scientists, engineers, civil society organisations) working on disaster management and, through discussion, will explore opportunities and challenges for enhanced community resilience in delta environments more broadly.

Websites:

<http://www.partnersforresilience.nl/>

<http://www.wetlands.org/Whatwedo/Reducingdisasterrisks/tabid/2752/Default.aspx>

<http://africa.wetlands.org/Whatwedo/NigerRiverandDeltas/tabid/2944/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

<http://www.south-asia.wetlands.org>
