

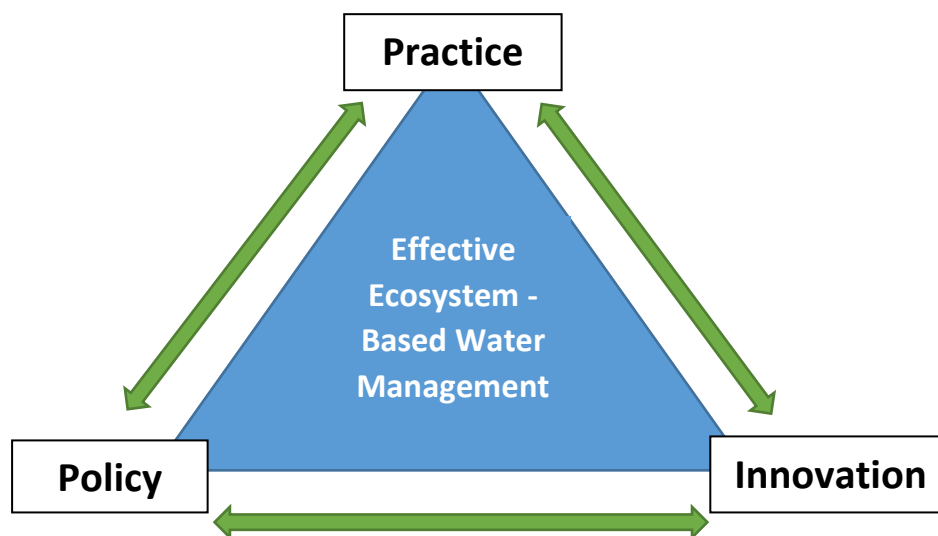
# Stockholm World Water Week 2018



## Seminar 4 Conclusions (Thursday 30 August 2018)

### Ecosystem-based water management: from innovation to practice

This seminar addressed how the practice of 'ecosystem-based water management' can achieve more sustainable outcomes on the ground when we bridge the knowledge, governance and communication gaps that exist between the people developing innovative tools, the policy-makers designing legal frameworks and the practitioners implementing activities on the ground.



Specifically, the seminar:

- > Provided an overview of best practice in ecosystem-based water management, with reference to case studies in Ethiopia, the U.K., South Africa and New Zealand, and made the stark observation that the ecosystems-based approach is currently absent from the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- > Identified novel tools (e.g. for policy support, data management and capacity building) that have ecosystem-based water management at their heart and discussed pathways and barriers to their uptake by policy-makers and practitioners.
- > Explored the types of policies that allow for, incentivize, or require ecosystem-based water management as a way to scale up application of this approach at a local, national and global level.

The main barriers and catalysts for change identified from each perspective (practice, innovation and policy) are summarised below:

## Practice

1. Ecosystems are integral to human development. Healthy ecosystems support clean, reliable water supplies for people and nature.
2. We (practitioners) need to make ecosystem-based water management operational (i.e. ready to use) for stakeholders. We should develop and deliver this in a collaborative way.
3. There is more disclosure from companies than ever before regarding their supply chain approach to ecosystem-based water management. This is driven by the need to be accountable to their stakeholders, primarily investors, after disclosing their commitments (a virtuous cycle). Companies are starting to align their strategies with the SDGs and are becoming more aware that employees need to be healthy and happy for the sustainability of the business.
4. 'Equity' means different things to different people. Direct engagement with stakeholders can generate 'equitable' access to water resources based on what they feel is fair for themselves.
5. Working from an ecosystem-based water management perspective can be a complete lifestyle shift. Managing this can be complicated and maintaining the approach can therefore be hard. Being realistic and sensitive to the existing culture is essential.
6. Ensure the right knowledge is reaching the right people – where possible, facilitate the trickle down of key paradigms from the UN. Consider the use of Citizen Science for involving people in ecosystem-based water management. Ask stakeholders what they want the water for, and recognise the longer process required to facilitate a participatory process for water governance.
7. Always consider the costs of maintaining infrastructure – including ecosystem-based "green infrastructure" – after the initial upfront costs. What financing structures are sustainable for the specific circumstances?

## Innovation

1. There is a huge proliferation of tools available already in the public domain to help facilitate the effective planning, implementation and tracking of ecosystem-based water management, and we need to build a better bridge to practitioners to encourage greater uptake.
2. Whether users are charged for access to tools/data makes a big difference in how much they are used. We have seen that free and open access supports uptake, but how do you fund their creation and maintenance if tools are free?

3. Free and transparent access to information and tools also reduces the power imbalance between powerful people who know what is going on and those with less access to information (for example, communities and individuals who are more marginalized, rural, or less powerful politically).
4. The development process for science tools provides a way to engage with policy-makers and practitioners. Collectively agreeing first on the science and available information builds bridges between diverse stakeholders for further cooperation in the future.

## Policy

1. Ensure governance processes are adequate – water crises are often governance crises.
2. Ensure government policy is coherent with a nation's / area's needs – participatory stakeholder engagement is ineffective if a government's policy contradicts with the needs of people and the environment.
3. Design policy with, at a minimum, the legal framework to support ecosystem-based water management (for example, in enforcing minimum water quality standards).
4. Identify and address the obstacles for politicians to adopt an ecosystem-based approach, such as risk averseness in the face of short-term election cycles. You can have the best information systems and indicators but often governments don't use them – it is important to address these and other factors that lead to complacency and preventing them from engaging.
5. Do we need to engage more with psychologists and behavioural experts? It is by appealing to people's belief systems and values that we can encourage them to make changes.

## **Take-home messages:**

1. "Innovative tools + effective laws = better ecosystems-based water management".
2. "Keeping ecosystems alive keeps people alive" is an effective message to communicate to all stakeholders to keep them engaged.
3. Genuine stakeholder participation is critical at multiple levels - participation in governance processes, in the development of tools and in implementing programs.
4. It is an inherently risky undertaking to develop and test new tools and to implement new governance systems and policy instruments. Someone

has to be willing to be a strong leader, get out in front and take a risk. It takes time, effort, resources, and strong leadership to drive real change.

**Notes:**

This 3-part seminar was a collaborative effort, planned and delivered by members of the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) Scientific Programme Committee, The Nature Conservancy, The Natural Capital Project and Cap-Net UNDP.

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**Full copies of presentations and biographies can be found on the World Water Week 2018 website, linked here:**

[Session 1](#) (Practice), [Session 2](#) (Innovation) and [Session 3](#) (Policy).