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Water diplomacy: Making water cooperation work

The availability, allocation and access of water resources determine the well-being, prosperity and stability of societies worldwide. However, the demand for water rises along with population growth, urbanization, and increased domestic and industrial use, while climate change acts as a threat multiplier for water and food insecurity. According to the UN,¹ in 2025 nearly 2 billion people will live in conditions of absolute water scarcity, and two thirds of the world's population will be in areas of water stress, which is already leading to situations of unbalanced distribution and tensions among users.

The scale, urgency and complexity of these challenges requires an inclusive, comprehensive and international approach combining diplomacy, innovation, partnerships and new funding mechanisms. Multi-track water diplomacy is required to navigate the complexities of building cooperation, undertaking collaborative or joint investments in shared river basins, and addressing local or community-based conflicts.

This policy brief reflects the outcomes of brainstorming sessions on water diplomacy during the World Water Week 2015 and the '*Water diplomacy in South Asia*' workshop (WG4) during the Planetary Security Conference 2016 and presents an 'Agenda for Water Diplomacy'.

The main objective of the policy brief is to foster knowledge exchange on how to improve multi-track water diplomacy and transboundary water cooperation, with some examples from South Asia. The main target groups are the larger communities of practice on water diplomacy, transboundary water cooperation, governance, security and justice.

1 World Health Organization, UN Water (2014) UN-water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking-water (GLAAS) 2014 – report: Investing in water and sanitation: increasing access, reducing inequalities, 2014.

Brahmaputra Basin

“The hydro-political landscape in South Asia is centred on the access to and use of 20 major rivers, of which the Brahmaputra, Ganges and Indus are the largest rivers. The Brahmaputra Basin for example is at the centre of a complex geopolitical situation. Four riparian countries, namely China, India, Bhutan and Bangladesh, claim sovereignty over various parts of the Basin resulting in international dimensions to the management and distribution of the resources. Historically, there have been disputes between India and Bangladesh over the sharing of water from the Ganges, while more recently some of the more important tributaries of the Brahmaputra Basin, most notably the Teesta, have been the source of political tension. Most commentators view India’s relationship with Bhutan as relatively harmonious, with long traditions of cooperation. More recently, there have been emerging concerns about the utilization of the Yarlung Tsanpo / Brahmaputra between India and China.” (Yasuda et al. 2017)

During the Stockholm World Water Week 2015, over one hundred experts were consulted in brainstorming sessions in order to identify the specific needs, as well as tools and methods needed, to further improve and enhance the field of water diplomacy. These brainstorm sessions were organised by leading organisations in the field of water diplomacy, governance and law.

In addition, during the water diplomacy workshop at the Planetary Security Conference 2016 these ideas were taken forward in several breakout groups with specific attention for the role of water diplomacy in South Asia.

Challenges to cooperation over water sources

The global demand for freshwater is increasing as a result of population growth, urbanization, climate change and increased domestic and industrial use, which in turn reduce access to freshwater resources. In many instances a sustainable and equitable management of shared resources is however lacking. The unequal access, in combination with other societal issues (such as poverty, unemployment, corruption and structural discrimination) may deepen the divide between actors and increase the potential for conflict at different levels within and between the countries in various parts of the world, including South Asia (see text box 1).

A water conflict is therefore a dispute between countries or groups over access² to water or the right to access water for a specific purpose. The quantity of usable fresh water for drinking, irrigation or other purposes might be restricted due to drought, over-usage, or pollution. Yet conflicts over water currently arise largely as a result of people’s desires to protect their claim to water (which includes the actual and potential water use). Water conflicts are most commonly intertwined with other conflicts. Numerous studies make it clear that water, food, and energy challenges are primary contributors to international and domestic conflict.³ At the same time, water disputes rarely occur in isolation and are typically part of an already complex and, potentially,

- 2 According to Swyngedouw (2009): “In fact, uneven access to or control over water is invariably the outcome of combined geographical conditions, technical choices and politico-legal arrangements and water inequalities have to be understood increasingly as the outcome of the mutually constituted interplay between these three factors.”
- 3 Brock, H. (2011) **“Competition over Resources: Drivers of Insecurity and the Global South.”** Oxford: Oxford Research Group; Gleick, P.H., Ajami, N., Christian-Smith, J., Cooley, H., Donnelly, K., Fulton, J., Ha, M., Heberger, M., Moore, E., Morrison, J., Orr, S., Schulte, P., Srinivasan, V. (2014) **“The World’s Water”**, vol. 8: The Biennial Report on Freshwater Resources. Washington, DC: Island Press.

violent conflict.⁴ These situations become more complicated to manage once the water source in question crosses boundaries between different countries, administrations or legal entities. For example, 261 river basins are currently shared by more than one country, and more than 300 groundwater aquifers cross international borders. In cases of (potential) conflict, relevant parties will need to find ways to address the tensions in order to prevent escalation. However, some parties may profit from or even promote the societal unrest and conflict, as there may be opportunities to gain political influence, discursive closure, and reinforcement of the ruling party.

Besides being a threat to national and regional security, unequal access to fresh water is considered a major threat to global peace and stability.⁵ Water, therefore, should be a concern for (inter)national security and human security and not only at the local level. This has been highlighted several times by international organisations such as the UN and the EU. In 2013 both the EU Council and the intelligence agencies of the United States noted that in the coming 10 years tensions and conflicts over access to water are likely to become more frequent. This could endanger international peace and security. Unsurprisingly, water crises and the failure to adapt to climate change are first and second on the list of greatest global threats, as highlighted during the last World Economic Forum in Davos (2016). The need to collectively address the relationship between water and disaster risks was emphasised by the UN Secretary-General's water and sanitation Advisory Board (UNSGAB) in 2015.

4 Huntjens, P. (2017) "**Mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian Water Conflict: A practitioner's view.**" In: Islam, S., Madani, K. (Eds.) *Water Diplomacy in Action: Contingent Approaches to Managing Complex Water Problems*. Anthem Press; 1st edition (January 2, 2017); De Man, R. (2016) "**Transboundary wastewater governance between Israel and Palestine: Options based on uncertainty identification**", Working Paper 15 (The Hague Institute, 2016).

5 Jägerskog, A., Swain, A., Öjendal, J. eds. (2015) **Water Security**. Sage.

Responses

Ideally, conflict prevention should minimize the possibility for conflicts to escalate and to inflict material and immaterial damage.

In case conflict prevention is not adequate, and a conflict does escalate, direct interventions in a conflict are necessary.

Direct interventions in a water related conflict range from 'soft' (participatory and diplomatic) intervention methods to 'hard' (judicial, economic, political and military) sanctions and interventions.⁶

Conflicts over water may continue for decades without resolution. Sometimes, with or without the help of external mediators, the conflict may be solved.

In an optimal situation, the conflict may be transformed into a situation where stakeholders are able to successfully cooperate (but all other shades of optimal and sub-optimal solutions exist).

Arriving at a shared definition of both the problem as well as possible solutions is difficult due to the range of diverging values and interests. A robust approach to address water-related conflicts would therefore not only need to include the best available scientific knowledge, but also acknowledge and include the local understandings of reality and related uncertainties. Practice shows that water-related conflict prevention and resolution is largely the outcome of processes of research and fact finding, negotiation, mediation and conciliation that are rooted in an in-depth understanding of the social/ cultural/ economic/ environmental conditions and the political context. This should be supported by a sound assessment and integrated analysis of the water system.

On a transboundary level, diplomacy is most often used to prevent conflict escalation and to improve cooperation. Apart from the efforts of official diplomats, also civil society and academia play an important role in establishing connections and building trust between different parties. Disputes between states can be solved in different

6 Woocher, L., 2009. **Preventing Violent Conflict: Assessing Progress, Meeting Challenges**. Special Report 231, USIP.

Complexities of a water conflict

The conflict transformation process is not well understood. That is because water issues are complex. Theoretical foundations of cooperation over shared resources and best approaches to implement water diplomacy in practice remain weakly developed.

While drivers for conflict (such as drought, upstream dam construction, pollution) and conflict maintainers (e.g. grievances, current livelihood dependencies) may continue to exist and cause a conflict to erupt and continue, conflict escapers may offer acceptable ways out of conflict for the parties involved. (For more on conflict drivers and escapers see Shepherd and Mehta, 2006).

These escapers may range from technological advances in the re-use of water, desalination, wastewater treatment or more efficient irrigation, to financial support to find agreements, judicial remedies and treaties, and the development of the necessary governance arrangements to ensure that shared water resources are managed efficiently, sustainably and equitably. These conflict escapers are sometimes offered by changes in the context of the conflict (e.g. increases in rainfall, changes in the political landscape) and technological innovations. Sometimes escapes are offered through direct interventions in the conflict.

The interdependencies of water issues with different decision-making arenas and geographical and temporal scales make it difficult to steer an issue towards a certain solution. The complexity of a (water) conflict is further increased through differences among the stakeholders in framing and interests (Liu et al. 2007), which influence the selection and interpretation of facts. To deal with uncertainties, people make individual assumptions based on their own interpretation of reality and the knowledge that is available to them. These individual understandings may create problems when people need to address a common problem, such as the governance of shared waters. Hence, new tools are required for an approach that diagnoses water problems across sectors and administrative boundaries, and at different levels of governance. To this end, water diplomacy professionals need to be able to identify intervention points, and propose sustainable solutions that are sensitive to diverse views and values, and can accommodate ambiguity and uncertainty as well as changing and competing needs.

ways under international water law, which includes judicial settlement. An example of a dispute decided by the International Court of Justice and by arbitration is the case of the Kishenganga dam between India and Pakistan.

While some interventions by diplomats and civil society have been successful, considering the number of treaties signed, more than 60% of the 276 river basins worldwide have no treaty to direct the course of conflicts. On the other hand, difficulties arise when treaties – especially old treaties – are too specific and are seen as out of date. Yet another complication is that those considering the resolution of an international water dispute by adjudication or arbitration realise that they lose control over the resolution of the dispute. This can be a

reason for parties not to turn to adjudication or arbitration. At the same time, in some cases this can also help parties who cannot settle a dispute by agreement.

However, as regards establishing new agreements or implementing certain tools, some hurdles remain. The first obvious challenge is that the consent of states is needed before international law can be implemented. There is no way to force sovereign states to comply with it, and there is no obligation to settle disputes. This also constitutes an important issue with regards to the entry into force of some legal instruments. For instance, the UN Watercourses Convention was discussed for almost thirty years before being adopted by the UN General Assembly on 21 May 1997 and has taken over seventeen years to be

ratified by 35 countries needed for its entry into force on 17 August 2014.

The challenges to prevent and resolve water-related conflicts remain therefore large, in particular at the interface between global change (climate change, resource depletion, population growth, economic development) and conflict / state fragility.

Analysis

Diplomacy and comparable tools are currently applied by a variety of state and non-state actors to facilitate such cooperation. To improve the effectiveness of diplomacy, it is of key importance to identify the factors that influence cooperation at different levels. Although practitioners are well aware of the challenges that hinder water conflict prevention and resolution, answers to these challenges are not readily available. The main challenges for water diplomacy in the hydro-political landscape in South Asia are:

1. The ability to build trust among competing stakeholders

Stakeholders have different and sometimes conflicting claims with regards to water. Moreover, there is often insufficient communication between the various actors involved, who often also adopt inflexible positions. Some particular challenges for South Asia are:

- Deeply entrenched suspicion and distrust between countries about motives (e.g. about dam construction and hydropower development)
- Distrust reduces the willingness to exchange data about basins
- Upstream-downstream surface water conflicts in the context of power asymmetries
- Cooperation on the water issue is often part of grand politics (border issues, security and economic trade)
- Lack of cross-sectoral and transnational dialogue leads to a failure to identify opportunities for cooperation (energy cooperation, flood forecasting, inland water transport, food production and environmental management)

Trust is seen as the cornerstone for cooperation, but it is not something that can be easily developed or managed: trust and distrust is the result of long-term interaction between people, it depends on personal relations and is influenced by past performance. Notwithstanding the lack of controllability, certain conditions may stimulate the emergence of trust. The brainstorm sessions identified that trust comes with a true exchange of opinions and feelings. This exchange should explicitly involve non-traditional stakeholders, such as the business sector and marginalised groups, including women. For this to happen, a safe place is needed, where openness and cooperation is stimulated.

As trust not just rests on words, but also on action and results, parties should follow-up on agreements, for example by identifying concrete incentives or small pilot-projects on each side (such projects should deliver results which can be seen by “the people in the street”). Often, the first thing missing before projects can start is mutually agreed upon data. Joint data collection exercises, with support of third party mediation, may enhance relations as well as increase the knowledge base for further actions. Data collection activities may go hand-in-hand with capacity building activities. Particularly with regard to water issues interdisciplinary research is needed that connects current practices, policy framings and key scientific understandings. Last, cooperation does not end in one-time agreements, but is a process in which trust and relations are tested as conflicts erupt.

2. The ability to organise multi-sector and multi-level interactions

Water is intrinsically linked to food, energy and the environment, and if it is addressed in isolation from these other sectors - and climate change in particular - the solutions to our water problems will be uninformed and almost certainly result in perverse outcomes (which could potentially weaken rather than strengthen water cooperation and diplomacy objectives).

Benefit-sharing in the Brahmaputra Basin

The case of the Brahmaputra Basin illustrates the potential of basin-wide cooperation among all the riparian countries in conjunction with economic cooperation, allowing cross-sectoral cooperation and benefit-sharing. Such cooperation integrates all sectors involving water, ecology and economy in its scope and can potentially create mutual gains for the riparian countries and bring solutions to sustainably manage the river basin. Any type of development within the basin, including infrastructure (in particular for hydropower, flood control, irrigation and navigation), needs to be based on a whole-of-basin approach (Huntjens et al., 2016; Yasuda et al, 2017).

For example, the development and the level of flow and sediments needs be coordinated jointly to maintain the ecology of the river system, as well as to ensure navigation. Benefits derived from these infrastructures need to be fairly shared among riparian states. Taking a cross-sectoral approach in water cooperation can open space for sharing benefits from different sectors. Downstream and midstream countries (e.g. Bangladesh and India) can benefit from upstream hydropower generation by offering its trade routes (navigation, road and rail) and access to port facilities in return for energy supply by the hydropower generating country (e.g. China and Bhutan). Arrangements for benefit-sharing may include benefits to the river (e.g., improved water quality, environmental protection, etc.), benefits from the river (e.g. hydropower, irrigation, etc.), benefits because of the river (e.g., reduced risk of conflict, increased food and security, etc.), and benefits beyond the river (e.g., integration of markets, benefits of regional trade, etc.) (Sadoff and Grey, 2002).

As the complexity of the water issues increasingly requires the involvement of stakeholders from multiple sectors and levels, the effectiveness of decision-making can easily be reduced as different worldviews and interests collide at the negotiation table. Decision-makers may therefore tend not to open-up the decision-making process to non-traditional stakeholders. However, if only a selective group of state actors is in charge, the legitimacy of the decision made may be limited in the eyes of groups excluded from decision-making. In a more constructive way, non-traditional stakeholders may challenge prevailing assumptions, reduce uncertainties, and contribute to creative thinking for solutions. A recurrent challenge in societies with a long history of mutual violence and distrust is establishing an open, neutral and evidence-based dialogue.

Managing these interactions may involve a variety of processes, such as:

- Harmonising policies related to the land-water-food-energy nexus;
- Fine-tuning of top-down policies and visions with bottom-up approaches and challenges related to decentralisation;

- Participatory planning processes based on broad and horizontal stakeholder participation;
- The media should advance alternative narratives (as securitization tends to close the discursive space for non-traditional stakeholders) focusing on inclusion and awareness-raising about the shared interests of the riparian countries and the needs for cooperation. Experiences demonstrate that exchanges of experts and journalists between rivaling countries increase the mutual understanding.

3. The ability to manage a growing multi-actor policy environment

The international arena is not exclusively the domain of ministries of foreign affairs and diplomats anymore. So much so that the sheer number of actors and instruments engaging on water security has, in practice, resulted in a more complex operating environment.

Gender inequity in negotiations

The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 recognises the importance of a gender perspective on peace and security and the role that women play in sustainable peace and security. However, statistics on peace processes indicate that 93% of participants in peace negotiations and 98% of signatories to peace agreements are men (UNIFEM, 2010).

Pressing and emerging issues related to establishing inclusive governance / stakeholder engagement include⁷: the shift of power across stakeholders; the arrival of new entrants that ought to be considered; the external and internal drivers that have triggered engagement processes; innovative tools that have emerged to manage the interface between multiple players, and types of costs and benefits incurred by engagement at policy and project levels.

Participatory planning processes and multi-stakeholder dialogues are considered essential tools for inclusive governance. Dialogues themselves need not result in consensus, but when well conducted, should help manage conflicts, empower disadvantaged groups, and support social learning⁸. Multi-stakeholder dialogues aim to create and support spaces, in which, meaningful conversations can take place among diverse stakeholder groups. A key notion is that dialogues can inform, and help shape, more formal negotiation and decision-making processes; by bringing in a wider range of perspectives on needs, impacts and options, and having them deliberated openly.⁹

Insights derived from the workshops highlight the importance of specific elements within these dialogues:

- Understanding the interests, incentives and power dynamics among key stakeholders;
- Bringing all relevant interests to the table, making it easier to distinguish short-term from long-term problems;
- Selecting a neutral moderator accepted by all parties;
- Involving external and independent experts in fact-finding processes;
- Demonstrating the mutual benefits and the best practices;
- Adopting participatory planning approaches that incorporate public and stakeholder input in decision-making.

Within the context of these dialogues, efforts should be made to address gender inequity. Women have rights to participate on equal terms as men in peace, security and transboundary negotiation processes.

Furthermore, an important actor frequently overlooked is the business sector,¹⁰ which often has to tackle legislative demands or claims from local communities about fresh water availability. These demands may appear against the backdrop of other forms of pressure, such as political sway, public media portrayals and lobbying by various stakeholder groups. Eventually inclusive governance will create ownership and enable better solutions or solutions complementary to those delivered from the top down.

7 OECD (2015), **Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Water Governance**. OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264231122-en>.

8 Leeuwis, C., and R. Pyburn, editors. (2002) **Wheelbarrows Full of Frogs**. Koninklijke Van Gorcum; Warner, J. F. (2006) **More sustainable participation? Multi-stakeholder platforms for integrated catchment management**. Water Resources Development 22:15-35.

9 Huntjens, P, Lebel, L., Furze, B. (2016) **Effectiveness of multi-stakeholder dialogues on water** - Reflections on experiences in the Rhine, Mekong, and Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river basins. International Journal of Water Governance, 2016.

10 The business sector needs water in various stages of its production process, although this is less visible in the global supply chains. This implies that their competitiveness strongly relate to the availability of and access to good quality water resources. The demand for water will grow with increasing economic development.

Challenges for the Indus Water Treaty

“In response to the recent resurgence of violence in Kashmir, India has made threats to review the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), a water sharing agreement between India and Pakistan that was brokered by the World Bank dating back to 1960.

“The IWT has seen challenging times before. The Indus Commission has had to make over a hundred tours to solve outstanding issues. However, the IWT has stood the test of time and is therefore hailed globally as an example of a successful water treaty. It has survived the 1965 and 1971 wars, the attacks on the Indian parliament in 2001, Mumbai in 2008 and numerous other disputes over infrastructure development and water sharing.”

“Frustrations with the IWT do exist across all levels of government, especially in Jammu and Kashmir. In 2003 the local Legislative Assembly unanimously called for a review, some even for international renegotiation. In 2010 Pakistan brought a case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague over hydropower development and interference with river flow. It was awarded to Pakistan, securing a certain minimum flow to be released by India. Differences have always been resolved peacefully through negotiation and mediation.” From: Veenkant, 2016

4. The ability to deal with uncertainties

Conflict and cooperation over water resources is afflicted with uncertainties: unpredictability of developments; incomplete knowledge; or conflicting views on the seriousness of a problem, its causes and potential solutions. It is crucial to find pragmatic ways to deal with this in water management practice.¹¹ These uncertainties are contributing to multiple interpretations of the same events and (politically aggravated) distrust.¹² Reaching consensus over

uncertainties is therefore an essential step in trust building.

Three successive steps can be taken to address these various uncertainties:

Acknowledging uncertainties:

- A first step to address this type of uncertainty is to make people aware of the differences in interpretation.
- An inclusive dialogue helps to identify uncertainties and increases the legitimacy of any decision made. These dialogues can be operationalised by supporting the exchange of expert knowledge and practitioners across countries.
- Data collection in joint fact finding processes should be organised in a systematic and standardised¹³ manner to facilitate a constructive dialogue.
- Accept the complexity of the issue and accompanying uncertainties of the impacts.

11 Huntjens, P. (2011) **Water Management and Water Governance in a Changing Climate – Experiences and insights on climate change adaptation from Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia**. Eburon Academic Publishers, 2011.

12 Substantive uncertainties fall within two categories: uncertainties that can be reduced through measurements (by e.g. by installing flow meters) and facts that are intrinsically uncertain through their variable behaviour (e.g. climate change impacts). Data collection can help to reduce the first type of uncertainties. Another, more challenging, type of uncertainty is the uncertainty created as people interpret the complex world around them. In this process of sense making (uncertain and certain) facts are filtered and interpreted. From: De Man, R. (2016) **“Transboundary wastewater governance between Israel and Palestine: Options based on uncertainty identification”**, Working Paper 15 (The Hague Institute, 2016).

13 Water Accounting Plus, for example, is a framework which offers a transparent method to provide information on water resources in international shared river basins. In areas with scarce data, data obtained through remote sensing (satellites etc.) can be a great source of independent information.

Understanding the different interests:

- As a next step, strategic and context-specific studies, for example, may provide a better understanding of cross-border interests and power dynamics and allow the identification of the zone of possible effective cooperation (ZOPEC) on transboundary basins or aquifers.¹⁴
- This knowledge and experience should feed into multilateral dialogues, with the objective to find initial agreement on possible avenues for cooperation, followed by creating (further) commitment and ownership for the further institutionalisation of transboundary cooperation processes.

Responding to the uncertainties:

- Take an adaptive management approach to identify the low-regret options and the measures needed to prevent locked-ins. Decisions should be evaluated by the costs of reversing them.
- Adopt an adaptive planning approach that accommodates changes, uncertainties, and complexity into scenarios for decision-making.
- Promote adaptive capacity to deal with unforeseen changes, use flexible monitoring and social learning, emphasize the importance of stakeholder participation, and support open and innovative decision-making processes.
- Identify pathways for future re-negotiation of agreements.

5. Sustainable financing: Transboundary water cooperation is often underfinanced

Many national governments and donors are hesitant to finance processes without clear outcomes and timelines. However, preventing conflicts and avoiding environmental degradation is less expensive than reacting afterwards.

Financial settlement is often sought by involving the private sector in the resolution of public issues. In the last few decennia, new forms of finance schemes and structures, such as public-private partnerships (PPP's), have become available and are now commonly used.¹⁵ PPP's might enable the public sector to spread the cost of the investment over the lifetime, in contrast to traditional financing where the public sector is required to provide capital, while the benefits will come much later and are mostly uncertain. A promising new financial instrument is the Social Impact Bond (SIB)¹⁶, in which investors and government share financial risks with the objective to improve social outcomes, such as water services delivery.

Creating an enabling environment for cooperation over water resources (as, for example, highlighted in SDG 6b¹⁷) will require continued financial support for capacity building and the engagement of stakeholders. The financial gap for the sector to meet the SDG-related needs of developing countries needs to be resolved.

While the business sector is involved in the financing of e.g. public utilities, the potential role for a constructive involvement of the business sector is much larger. Think of the agriculture and food sector. Their involvement in dialogues and negotiations will provide a different perspective to the identification of priority problems and possible solutions and would provide a broader basis for a sustainable funding of possible solutions. Experiences show, however, that the business sector is reluctant to enter in these processes for various reasons. A recommendation would be to

14 Huntjens, P., Yasuda, Y., Swain, A., De Man, R., Magsig, B., Islam, S. (2016) **"The Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework: A Legal and Political Economy Analysis for Advancing Cooperation over Shared Waters."** First edition, The Hague Institute for Global Justice, 2016.

15 Bossert, J. 2006. **Public-private partnerships with local governments in The Netherlands.** Breukelen: ING, 2006.

16 For more information on Social Impacts Bonds: <http://www.socialfinance.org.uk/services/social-impact-bonds/>.

17 Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6>.

clarify and develop incentives for entering into these processes.

6. Sustainable legacy: how to build an enduring capacity among all stakeholders to prevent and resolve conflicts

Capacity building for water diplomacy, governance and management through targeted training, action learning and professional guidance and consultancy are essential for sustainable water cooperation. Building a sustainable legacy should target six key areas¹⁸:

- 1) Relationships among community entities, such as local governments, schools, water user associations and between individuals;
- 2) Community awareness of water and environmental issues;
- 3) Leadership across and within systems;
- 4) The use of evaluation data in decision making;
- 5) Staff competencies and expertise and other program capacities;
- 6) Securing funding streams that could provide for a sustained funding of these strategic areas.

Specific attention should be given to involve and invest in the younger generation for fresh perspectives and innovation.

Conclusions

To resolve water conflicts – or any conflict – negotiation, mediation, and conciliation are needed. To be successful such processes must be rooted in an in-depth contextual understanding. Third-party and multi-track diplomacy is critical to maintaining dialogue under uncertain political conditions, particularly when formal negotiations between conflicting parties have come to a halt. It is important to show that a peaceful diplomatic solution to vital contested issues is still possible.

Water diplomacy can be successful when parties realize that non-collaboration is likely to result in worse outcomes for all involved. Sharing international waters should be approached from a perspective of shared opportunities for regional benefits that can outweigh the optimum national benefits, in the form of energy pools or good trade relations for example. The aim of water diplomacy should therefore be to look for and strengthen mutual benefits in bilateral, regional and international contexts. However, the key challenge to arriving at a peaceful solution is the lack of capacity to deal with complexity and uncertainty related to conflict and cooperation over shared water resources.

18 Adapted from: **Leaving a Legacy: Six Strategies for Sustainability**: www.promoteprevent.org/files/resources/legacy_wheel.pdf.

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About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative aims to help increase awareness, to deepen knowledge, and to develop and promote policies and good practice guidance to help governments, the private sector and international institutions better secure peace and cooperation in times of climate change and global environmental challenges. The Initiative was launched by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and is currently operated by a consortium of leading think tanks headed by the Clingendael Institute.

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Rens de Man currently works as researcher at The Hague Institute for Global Justice and as senior advisor water and climate governance at the Water Partner Foundation. His work focuses on stakeholder analysis, negotiation, integrated natural resource governance, uncertainty analysis and strategic policy advice with regard to sustainable development issues and social conflicts around the use of natural resources.