



Africa Water

A newsletter of UN-Water/Africa in support of the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW)

The voices of African women come alive...

The water we waste, the potential we lose

By: Mercy Wambui in Mexico City



Mildred Mkandla, Development Activist

An arduous daily “15 kilometer trek with 20 litres of water on her back” is the reality of the rural African woman, who uses this water to bathe and cook for an average family of 6 - even more,” said Ms. Mildred Mkandla, a development practitioner and activist who is intimately familiar with the struggles of the women she encounters in the course of her work with rural women in Africa.

She spoke passionately on the realities of access to safe drinking water for the majority of African women at the Water for Growth and Development in Africa session convened by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), whose purpose was to exchange information on local actions in the African water sector aimed at ensuring growth and development in water and energy, water and industry, risk management and valuing water.

“To complement the demand for water at the domestic level, girl-children living in rural areas are forced to lose precious school days – an average of up to 60 days, fetching water to meet the demands of the family,” said Ms. Mkandla. She said as a result of this, girls cannot compete at the same level with boys and achieve their aspirations, a fact that places them at a great disadvantage later in life.

“With so much awareness, in forums such as these, I hope that we can take the awareness seriously and commit to changes that impact on the lives of rural

women. These actions, such as the Africa Water Vision 2025, must be pro-poor and pro-rural, she said.

“But when I think of how my sisters suffer for 20 litres of water, it pains me to see how much water is wasted in long luxurious baths.”

Speaking directly to Prof. Ola Busari of the Development Bank of Southern Africa, who had earlier given examples of how the Bank is financing a wide range of small-large scale infrastructure projects, Mkandla said financing institutions needed to remove barriers to improving water resource management for women, who, due

For Africa, implementation of Water Vision 2025 is crucial, says Josue Dione



Dr. Josue Dione

“The achievement of the Africa water vision odyssey is a challenge that African countries must tackle expeditiously,” said Josue Dione, the Director of the Sustainable Development Division (SDD) of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in a remark to delegates at the regional

session on Water for Growth and Development during the ongoing Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City.

“‘Water is life’ is a well-worn cliché,” he said, in his keynote statement, adding, “But for this Forum, this cannot be the case anywhere more than in Africa, a region where hundreds of millions have no access to safe drinking water, where tens of millions are stricken by hunger caused by drought every year, and where eco-

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Water vision must be implemented, says Dione

conomic growth and competitiveness are hampered by the lowest levels of access to electricity”.

In a continent where only 2-3% of the surface and ground water resources available are used to meet the different needs, where barely 6% of the total cultivated land is under irrigation, and where only some 5% of the hydropower potential is developed, Dione urged participants to expedite bold actions around four key areas: support for infrastructure projects, development of energy through hydropower, provision of safe drinking water and increasing food security through irrigation in the Sahelian and Southern regions.

He acknowledged that some significant initiatives have been launched recently and some progress has been made, but urged for expeditious implementation of the African Water Vision 2025 and its Framework for Action.

“Initiatives such as the African Water Facility, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative and Water for African Cities bode well for Africa’s water future”, he said, but lamented that the slow pace of implementation had failed to keep pace with increasing needs of the continent.

“In Africa more needs to be done in investing in local actions and increasing the potential for the utilization of hydropower resources, which currently stands at an average of only 5%,” he said, pointing to the Congo River Basin that alone could meet the hydropower demand of the whole continent”.

He called for urgent implementation of the main recommendations made at the recent African Ministerial Conference on Hydropower and Sustainable Development to ministers in Johannesburg.

A voice for women speaks out

to cultural limitations “have no land to present as collateral when seeking financial assistance from banks”.

An Ethiopian case study on the potential for the Awash river basin to create employment opportunities for some 80,000 inhabitants through sugar production was also presented during the session. “We have the potential to target 2.5% of the global sugar market share if the basin is developed according to plan,” Mr. Teferra Beyene from the Ethiopian Ministry of Water Resources. “However, we need the skills and resources to manage the likely negative impacts of sedimentation and the resettlement of thousands of people in the process,” he said.

DateKeeper

TODAY, MARCH 18

In Casa del Diezmo 4

11:15 to 13:15. Transboundary-Water Resources Management in Africa

Lead Convener: ANBO

The session is aimed at sharing ongoing experiences on shared water management and its role in achieving regional integration and socio-economic growth.

Africa Water is an information service of UN-Water/Africa and African Development Bank in support of the African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW).

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Experts begin discussion on Nile basin

A panel discussion on the role of river basin authorities in poverty alleviation and economic development will open today at the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico City. They will use the Nile Basin Initiative as a case study.

Convened by the African Networks for Basin Organizations, in collaboration with ECA, NBI, NEPAD Secretariat, GWP, CEDARE, SSO, and UN-WATER/AFRICA, the discussion will be chaired by Hon Sonjica, South

Africa’s Minister of Water and co-chaired by the High Commissioner of the Senegal River Development Organization, Mohamed Salem Merzoug.

The Nile is one of the world’s great rivers. For millennia, this unique waterway has nourished varied livelihoods and a rich diversity of cultures. Although it is the world’s longest river, its specific discharge is relatively small. The Nile River is shared by ten countries namely: Burundi, DR of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.