

**FAN - World Bank Scoping Study about developing dialogue between
the World Bank and civil society organisations about urban water
and sanitation services**

**COMMENTARY ABOUT THE SCOPING STUDY EXPERIENCE AND ITS
LESSONS**

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January 2008

1. Introduction

Between February and October 2007, Freshwater Action Network (FAN) conducted a scoping study, with the support of Public World consultants, in accordance with Terms of Reference (attached as Appendix 1) in which the study's objectives were stated to be:

"Identify feasible activities for WB-CSO dialogue on urban water supply and sanitation:

1. A feasible activity is a combination of mechanism (workshops, project team support, joint research, etc), geographical level (global, regional, country, local) and thematic focus (reform, M&E, customer participation etc).
2. Each activity should include a short description, identification of partners and WB contacts, workplan, budget, and timeline.

"The scoping study should aim, as a minimum, to consist of sharing information and knowledge, building mutual understanding, confidence and trust, and providing an opportunity for CSOs to provide input to WB policies and operations. This could lead to a more common understanding of the complexities in the sector. It would not try to forge a consensus, but would allow for recognition of the areas of difference, while still seeking out ways to learn from one another."

It is evident from that excerpt from the Terms of Reference that the scoping study was conceived not only as a potential gateway to dialogue, but as a dialogue activity in itself. In evaluating it, therefore, that point needs to be taken into account. At the same time, however, it was intended that the study would also lead to other dialogue activities. Therefore, it must also be evaluated in

terms of its results in that respect. In addition, the exercise was also supposed to lead to more information and knowledge sharing and increased mutual understanding.

In sum, therefore, there are three sets of criteria for evaluating the study:

- as a dialogue activity in itself;
- as a way of generating "feasible" dialogue activities; and
- as a process of learning and mutual understanding.

Those three criteria set the framework for the rest of this commentary, which proceeds by considering each in turn, and considering where appropriate any problematic issues arising from the relationship between them, before concluding with some overall lessons of the experience. It is based on an earlier draft, circulated in November and December to the members of the FAN Advisory Group and Secretariat and World Bank staff who had been actively involved in the study, which drew on the reflections of:

- Danielle Morley and Ceridwen Johnson at the FAN Secretariat;
- Meike van Ginneken and Eric Dickson of the World Bank's Water Anchor; and
- Brendan Martin and Sue Cavill of Public World, the study's consultants.

The above named, plus John Garrison of the World Bank Civil Society Team, discussed the draft in December, and written comments were received from Meike van Ginneken and from Danielle Hirsch and R. Murali of the FAN Advisory Group.

This revised commentary takes into account the points arising from that feedback, but, like the earlier draft, only Martin and Cavill are responsible for the final content.

2. The Scoping Study as a dialogue activity

The study began with research consisting of a review of literature about the experience of dialogue between the Bank and CSOs, particularly in the water and sanitation sector, and interviews with several people in the Bank and CSOs who had been personally involved in those exercises. A workshop was then held at World Bank Water Week, which was attended by 16 representatives from the World Bank and related bodies, 12 from FAN Advisory Group, and nine other CSO representatives. Drawing upon the preliminary research report, the workshop enabled brief but rich discussion of a number of themes, including:

- Transparency in dialogue processes
- Trust building
- Representation and inclusion
- The Bank's project cycle and dialogue timing
- Benefits and risks of dialogue
- Diagnosis of the problems of delivering urban water and sanitation services to the urban poor
- Developing guidelines for CSO involvement in dialogue
- Learning from best practice about 'Community –Public Sector Partnerships'

- The relationship between urban water supply and sanitation and Integrated Water Resource Management
- Financing urban water supply and sanitation

Among other things, the workshop produced a decision to attempt to develop a set of dialogue activities through a bottom-up approach of inviting CSOs (not only but including FAN members) and World Bank staff to propose dialogue activities. A database comprising 310 organisations was developed as the principal means of outreach to invite proposals.

The database also provided the main contacts for consultation about two draft documents produced in the weeks following the workshop: a draft set of process guidelines -- "rules of the game" of dialogue -- and criteria by which the feasibility of dialogue activity proposals would be evaluated. A listserv was subsequently established comprising 295 organisations for further consultation on the process guidelines and feasibility criteria.

The above procedures achieved their objective of enabling inclusion in the project of all CSOs identified as having a particular focus on water and sanitation, although it must be acknowledged that many community-based organisations lack internet access and could not be either identified or reached in this way. The fact that the method stimulated 38 proposals for dialogue activities (see Section 3) can also be seen as a positive expression of the study's success as a dialogue activity. However, there was little feedback about the draft documents, which were, therefore, little revised. While inclusive, therefore, the procedures proved less successful in stimulating dialogue.

Where there was genuine dialogue through the process was in the six sessions of telephone conferencing through which the consultants met with FAN and Bank representatives. These sessions contributed to formulation of the feasibility criteria and the process guidelines, as well as stimulating ideas for some of the dialogue activities that were to be proposed and eventually shortlisted for further development. They also contributed to deepening mutual understanding between the Bank and FAN, which had not worked together before. Both acknowledge that the working relationship has been relatively successful, while noting also that the role of personal dynamics in developing these kinds of dialogue processes is crucial.

In terms of enabling dialogue between the Bank and FAN and its secretariat and Advisory Group, therefore, the scoping study had some success. It also included a substantial number and wide range of other CSOs in its outreach, but had less success in securing more active involvement of more than a few of them.

3. The Scoping Study as a way of generating feasible dialogue activities

The call for dialogue activity proposals resulted in 38 proposals, two of which came from the World Bank Water Anchor and none from any other World Bank source, such as task team leaders (TTLs) actually managing urban water and sanitation projects. The other 36 came from CSOs, and some of those were less proposals for dialogue activities than proposals for development projects including dialogue. (For discussion of that, see section 4.)

On the basis of the feasibility criteria (which included not only criteria for evaluating particular proposals but also criteria to enable diversity among the overall package), 11 activities were selected from the 38 as being the most feasible. This was done through a teleconference involving the consultants and World Bank and FAN secretariat representatives. As the ToR had originally envisaged plans for up to 10 feasible activities as one of the products of the study, the result of 11 is at least satisfactory. Moreover, there was a reasonable level of diversity among the 11, in terms of theme, dialogue mode, geographical level and location, and nature of CSO (from international non-governmental organisations to local community-based organisations).

However, there is a clear and significant difference between deeming an activity to be feasible in terms of its compliance with a set of criteria generated through the scoping study itself, and its proving to be so by actually taking place. It is too soon to tell how many, if any, of the 11 will actually go ahead, but it is already clear that not all of them will do so. The evidence for this arises from the fact that none is going ahead smoothly at present, and some appear to have stalled even before direct contact has been made between the CSO and World Bank personnel concerned. Indeed, although the consultants recommended (following agreement on this with the Bank and FAN representatives) that trilateral telephone conversations were held between those parties and the consultants, in no case have the other parties enabled this to occur.

Although it is too soon and there is insufficient evidence to be sure, it appears that the stumbling block in most if not every case is insufficient commitment and/or capacity on one side or the other. Clearly, no activity is in fact feasible without such commitment and capacity on both sides, as the process guidelines state.

The precise problem seems to vary. Some projects are in hiatus awaiting the CSO proposer taking the next step, having generated the idea and had a positive response from the Bank side. In other cases, although the CSO side had indicated that there was a local World Bank counterpart, it has turned out that there is little enthusiasm or even knowledge about it on the part of the named Bank official. In at least one case, despite early progress in dialogue between the parties in the direction of taking the activity forward, it has run out of steam fairly quickly with one side or the other experiencing the other as insufficiently keen or flexible. In some of these cases, the CSO concerned has continued to request intervention from the consultants, which perhaps reflects the power imbalances in the relationships at local level, a problem that is not going away.

In evaluating those experiences, of course one avenue must be to consider the efficacy of the process by which the project ideas were generated. For example, did the process lose something in its quest for inclusiveness? An alternative to an open trawl for proposals would have been to use a more targeted approach based on the issues that came up in the questionnaires and which were discussed in the workshop. The themes could then have been followed up by targeting those CSOs with a good track record of working on these issues and asking them for proposals. (However, there was nothing to stop such CSOs proposing such an activity if they had wanted to do so, and so we cannot be sure that an alternative approach would have been more productive.)

Perhaps it is more significant that, although all 11 met the feasibility criteria on paper, their quality varied greatly. Yet even the most promising on paper are struggling in practice. For example, a well thought through and budgeted (albeit unfunded) dialogue activity proposed by an INGO, which

would involve itself and the Bank's Water Anchor, under conditions in which the two organisations know each other well, has ground to a halt before even reaching agreement about its content. The problem appears to be that developing the project has failed to find sufficient priority in the workload of the person responsible for turning the initial proposal into a fuller plan. That is not a criticism but a statement of evident fact, and it is surely more pertinent to ask why that is than to suggest that it should be otherwise.

As for why the proposed activities are failing to generate sufficient enthusiasm on the World Bank side, one factor seems likely to be related to the fact that none of the proposals were targeted directly to a particular WB policy or project. While the Bank's Sector Manager and Water Anchor staff feel that dialogue with CSOs is desirable in general, the step from there into action involves competition for staff time and resources on the World Bank side, as it does for CSOs. Here, the scoping study appears to have revealed an unexpected mismatch between the concerns of CSOs and Bank officials at country level. The dialogue activities proposed by CSOs at country level did not tend to focus on policy issues, such as consumer accountability, tariff structures, the role of small scale providers, and corruption. Yet for Bank task teams normally operating in several countries in parallel, those are the subjects in which they tend to hope CSOs might have some comparative knowledge advantages.

Even those TTLs who are initially enthusiastic and make time to engage with a CSO in developing an activity can be easily discouraged if they experience the early engagements as frustrating or time-wasting. If there is little trust on the other side -- expressed, for example, in seeking assurances as to how the process will end before it has even started, or taking a suspicious view about why a Bank official is suggesting change to a CSO proposal -- it doesn't take long to reach an impasse. Once the initial tentative goodwill has been undermined, it is not easily restored, and if there are lessons for the Bank in such experiences, there are lessons too for the civil society side.

Another factor militating against the development of momentum is surely that there was no budget for any activity agreed in advance. Proposers of activities were not bidding for a share of a pre-arranged pot, although some, despite the consultants stating the truth about that repeatedly, appeared to assume they were doing so. Therefore, even where both parties in a proposed activity have expressed enthusiasm about it, both also faced the prospect of investing time and energy in developing it without sufficient confidence (much less guarantee) that anything would come of it.

Even without an available budget, proposals might have had more success in winning the attention of Bank staff had they been structured more along the line of bids, for example with more detailed information on the CSO organisation, staff CVs and so forth. This would perhaps have bolstered their weight in the TTL's mind, but would also have required yet more investment on the CSO side to begin with.

Could more have been done to generate proposals from the Bank's TTLs themselves? The answer is probably yes. For example, selected TTLs could have been asked to identify projects suitable for dialogue activities and then these could have been matched to the activities of CSOs. This might have led to accusations of a top-down approach, but would it have worked otherwise? It would depend in part on the extent to which such TTLs were willing to engage with the CSOs concerned in developing the project idea, and again that returns us to the issue of sustaining commitment through successive thresholds of delay, misunderstanding and limited mutual understanding of

organisational cultures, constraints and incentives. More might have been learned that way, on both sides, but it would not necessarily have led to the development and implementation of more dialogue activities.

Whatever its causes, the perception that few World Bank staff outside the Water Anchor have engaged with the process is real and justified. Relations between CSOs and Bank counterparts were mediated in the main by the consultants. One suggestion made in reflecting on the experience was that perhaps Bank personnel, such as from the Development Communications unit, or the Civil Society Team in Washington, or civil society liaison specialists at country level, would have been better at sustaining links with the CSO counterparts than the Water and Sanitation Task Team Leaders. Yet for at least several of the CSOs that showed most initial enthusiasm for the exercise, the aim was precisely to reach past the Bank's outreach professionals to the staff who actually do projects. That was perceived by some FAN Advisory Group members as one of the promising aspects of this exercise in comparison to its predecessors. (Yet, in most cases, the FAN AG members themselves have not followed up by suggesting a dialogue activity involving themselves and a TTL.)

In sum, the scoping study was successful in generating the number of dialogue activity proposals originally envisaged, but none of them are proceeding expeditiously. While a range of factors have been suggested as to why that is the case, none of them on its own is particularly convincing, although each seems to have played a part. For a more fundamental explanation, it might be necessary to consider the context of the undertaking, and the status provided by that context, which are explored in section 4.

4. The Scoping Study as a process of learning and mutual understanding

4.1 Introduction

Undoubtedly, the scoping study process provided opportunities for building mutual understanding between the Bank and the CSOs that engaged with it. The benefits of enabling the FAN advisory group (AG) to spend a couple of days in Washington meeting World Bank staff face to face was clearly beneficial both to them and to the Bank. The FAN AG appreciated in particular the preparatory session Meike gave on how the World Bank works, which enabled the participants to understand the Bank's project cycle, policies, structures and procedures. (Their enthusiasm for that presentation reveals the extent to which many CSOs lack basic knowledge and understanding of the Bank, and that is a significant issue in itself.) For their part, Bank staff were able to learn more about the concerns and attitudes of CSO representatives, and many Bank and CSO participants commented that the encounter challenged some of their preconceptions in ways that were a welcome surprise. That learning was enriched for some in subsequent engagements during the study, although for others it appears that hiccups in the process of developing dialogue activities might have led to a return to previous less trustful attitudes.

Beyond that, the learning benefits may depend on how the experience is understood at this stage. There is disappointment that the dialogue activities are not proceeding as quickly or smoothly as intended, and that some seem unlikely to get off the ground at all. While that disappointment is

understandable, does it suggest that the main lessons to be learnt concern how this exercise could have been done better, or that there are more fundamental lessons to be drawn?

This was, after all, a scoping study rather than primarily a project to generate dialogue activities. Undoubtedly, as always, there are lessons to be learnt about how the project was designed and implemented, and we return to that subject later, but it is at least worth considering that the main lesson is that dialogue grows only if its seeds are planted in fertile soil. If so, the main conclusion must be to develop better understanding about what such fertilisation involves.

4.2 Country level dialogue about projects, and its context

Let us develop that argument by looking at some of the specifics, starting with the perception -- indeed, surely, the fact -- that an obstacle to dialogue between Bank officials and CSOs at country level is the reluctance of Bank staff to give it priority. Here, the issue is that Bank staff either lack the capacity or the incentives or both. Their primary responsibilities are to develop and implement projects, for which partnership with governmental agencies is essential but engagement with CSOs only an option, at best, and not even that if the Bank's governmental counterpart is opposed to it.

To overcome Bank staff reluctance, it has been suggested that if they had to put dialogue with CSOs into their project design and schedules, and were accountable to their superiors for doing so, they would do so. Just as the Washington workshop engineered encounters that enabled World Bank staff and CSO representatives to overcome preconceptions about each other, so an obligation to meet CSOs might enable TTLs to build their networks and understanding about how to engage with civil society. However, it is also possible that such an obligation could lead, as other performance indicators sometimes do, to a check box approach, rather than stimulating the ongoing engagement and give-and-take that truly sustainable dialogue requires.

Moreover, there is also a basic structural problem with persuading Bank staff at country level to engage with CSOs, which was addressed in the scoping study's original research, the workshop and the process guidelines. This is that the main parties to any World Bank project at country level are the Bank itself and the governmental authority concerned (normally national, sometimes more local). CSOs often see it as a convenient excuse when the Bank tells them this, and that they should direct their attention instead to persuading their governments to engage with them, but perhaps one important lesson is that CSOs should treat that view with less suspicion and more seriousness. Perhaps at national level they are indeed better off directing their attention to government rather than the Bank, complementing global level efforts to persuade the Bank to eliminate project conditionalities that many CSOs see as undermining national sovereignty over policy design.

The evidence of the scoping study, on the other hand, is that some CSOs feel their best route to influencing their government's approach to urban water and sanitation service development is to engage with the Bank. It appears that they are unable to secure influence or develop dialogue with governments directly, and hope to achieve those goals through securing the Bank's support for them. This could go some way to explaining why so many of the proposals for dialogue activities were actually proposals for development projects with dialogue elements, rather than simply proposals for dialogue activities *per se*.

However, another explanation for that fact could suggest a fundamental flaw in the way in which the scoping study defined "feasibility" and applied it to evaluation of the 38 proposals. In some cases, it was undoubtedly right to take a sceptical view of such proposals when evaluating them, especially since a few CSOs appeared to have seen the process as an opportunity to make a bid for a budget that would, it seemed, cover their entire general operating expenses. There were other cases, however, where the large budgets attached to proposals were intended to finance a development project as well as dialogue about it, and these too were viewed as unfeasible. They were indeed unfeasible within the context of the scoping study's terms of reference, but perhaps the fault lay in those terms of reference and/or the way in which they were acted upon. We took a more negative attitude to proposals that included substantial budgets for elements other than dialogue activities *per se* precisely on the grounds that they did so. In the feasibility criteria we developed, we rejected them as unfeasibly expensive for a dialogue activity and insufficiently focused on dialogue. But perhaps it was the criteria that were wrong, and in fact those were more feasible activities than the ones we defined as such precisely because they did link dialogue directly to project development.

The proposals suggested that there are CSOs that are capable of informing the Bank's project agenda with perspectives of the urban poor in different local and thematic contexts such as slum upgrading and on-site sanitation. They put forward proposals that would focus dialogue on meeting local needs directly, and in a wider context than that of the scoping study's terms of reference, that might have been seen as a strength rather than a weakness with those proposals. Within the terms of reference of the scoping study, this could not be recognised, but in drawing lessons from it, perhaps it should be. If this point is accepted, it follows that those proposals should be revisited and that the Bank and FAN should use their good offices to put the proposers of any of them that seem to have potential in touch with whoever in the Bank might have reason to consider them.

More generally, perhaps, a lesson for the Bank at country level would be to build links with such CSOs and urge engagement on their governmental counterparts too. In fact, some Bank country offices and TTLs are already doing so, and it needs to be borne in mind that, at country level, many Bank water specialists liaise with civil society already, and did not need the scoping study to prompt them to do so. Indeed, TTLs who are doing that will have seen no additional benefit, and some additional cost, in trying to incorporate their civil society dialogue within the scoping study process, which would have appeared to add a layer of bureaucracy without necessarily providing access to additional resources. Given that TTLs working on particular projects are under considerable time pressures to get the job done, and feel pressure too not to overstep their mandate in relation to government, there are plenty of disincentives to taking on the extra work and risk involved.

Genuine dialogue is sustained only if participants see the tangible benefits in terms of fulfilling the tasks for which they are responsible and by which they are judged by themselves and others who matter to them. Moreover, some of the communications difficulties that impeded the scoping study - - such as reliance on phone calls and people reading email -- emphasise that dialogue is either on local agendas and can take place in local languages, or it isn't and can't. Rather than attempting to overcome that problem with an internationally organised drive, perhaps it would be better to invest in capacity building at national and local levels with a view to enabling the drive for dialogue to grow organically at national and local levels.

On the other hand, the scoping study process might have enabled TTLs (including those already engaging with civil society) to make links with CSOs other than those with which country offices are already in contact. This might have been beneficial, as there is a danger in Bank staff engaging only with CSOs with whom they are already familiar. Yet the scoping study process provided no incentives in that context either. In fact, whatever the motivation, insofar as some Bank staff and CSOs are already engaged with each other, the scoping study terms of reference provided no incentive to develop the relationship in the more centralised way on offer through the scoping study, and some incentives not to do so.

Following two earlier attempts to develop a process of systematic dialogue between the Bank and CSOs around water and sanitation issues, this scoping study was different from its two predecessors in that, while their focus had been on the global policy level, on this occasion it was intended to generate activities at regional and national levels as well. The experience suggests, however, that regional and national level dialogue will emerge from activity and relationships at those levels or not at all, and that dialogue cannot take place in the abstract but needs to be concretely related to policy making and project development at its own level.

4.3 Global level dialogue about policy, and its context

At global level it is indeed better to focus on global policy issues. But why, then, has global policy dialogue also failed to take off to the extent that was hoped? In the previous two attempts, one factor was the involvement of CSOs who were opposed to the endeavour and whose engagement with it had the effect of wearing away at the patience and enthusiasm of those who took a more positive view and were putting a lot of energy and time into making it happen. This scoping study has not suffered from that problem, and here the inclusive nature of the way it was handled has been vital, whatever its shortcomings in other respects. Critical organisations were encouraged to put forward proposals for dialogue activities, on the same terms as everyone else. They were also able to take part in defining those terms, because of the inclusive nature of the processes by which the process guidelines and feasibility criteria were developed. They chose not to do so, but nor did they complain about the process being insufficiently inclusive. Even the language obstacle was to an extent -- albeit a limited and insufficient extent -- removed, through the production of all key materials in Spanish and French as well as in English.

So the atmosphere around this study has certainly been more positive. Yet the development of global policy dialogue, as expressed in some of the dialogue activity proposals, continues to move ahead very slowly and intermittently. The reason for this is surely the same, basically, as with the country level activities: that the parties concerned are not giving it the priority needed to move ahead more rapidly. Again, the issue is not to say that everyone should be more interested, and urge all parties to handle their diaries differently, but rather to ask why they do not.

If we are right that a factor in the case of country level dialogue about projects is that dialogue needs to be linked much more concretely to an actual project, shouldn't we also consider that policy dialogue needs to be linked much more concretely to an actual Bank process that will actually shape Bank policy? In the absence of that context, where is the incentive on either side to give priority to the design and implementation of a dialogue process about a particular policy theme? Furthermore, as was mentioned in section 2, there was little feedback on either the process guidelines or the feasibility criteria from CSOs or the Bank, which must reflect disinterest. If

the recipients of draft process guidelines for dialogue have no plan for engaging in dialogue that will actually affect their policies or practices, why should they spend time commenting on the process through which such dialogue might occur?

As it is, FAN is left uncertain as to whether the Bank is committed to the content of the process guidelines and will adhere to them in any dialogue activity that does proceed. On the Bank side there are equivalent concerns about whether or not CSOs will stick to the agreed "rules of the game" if and when dialogue fails to go smoothly or attracts criticism from other CSOs more sceptical about talking to the Bank.

In view of the participatory nature of the process that produced them, it is reasonable to expect both the Bank and CSOs to regard themselves as committed to them, or to suggest revisions. But a more fundamental issue is whether the Bank's commitment to policy dialogue extends to reviewing its actual policy agenda in a participatory way, moving away from the present dominant reliance on the Bank's own staff and consultants. Undoubtedly, the Bank employs many very well qualified and experienced people, but it can sometimes have a tendency to assume that it has all the expertise it requires among its staff and consultants. The real test of its belief that it can learn from CSOs is the extent to which its policy making processes and outcomes reflect that. However, that in turn might involve reform of the Bank's policy and project development processes to allow the time and budgets required to institutionalise dialogue. That seems unlikely to happen in a climate in which the Bank is also under pressure to reduce its own and its clients' transaction costs.

For their part, CSOs must accept that there can be no guarantee in advance that their views will be wholly adopted by the Bank, and it is unrealistic to expect the Bank to agree to that in advance of dialogue. CSOs are entitled to seek reassurances in advance that their views will be taken seriously, and to take a sceptical view of processes that militate against that, but if they demand more than that in advance, dialogue will not happen. If their judgement is that the Bank's approach is so far from their own that dialogue will not change that, or that the results would not justify the investment of effort, that is fair enough: they have no reason in that case to waste their time on dialogue, and some CSOs that expressed initial interest in this exercise appear to have made such judgements.

Certainly, success demands acceptance on both sides that the development of the relationship and trust required for effective dialogue is a long term project. The experience of the relationship between the Bank and global trade unions is instructive in this context. That has been in development for around six years at global level, and has involved not only meetings but a series of secondments from global union federations to the Bank, some of which have gone a lot more smoothly than others. It has taken a long time to consolidate these relationships and to build mutual understanding at global level, and to try to extend that to country level projects might not have helped. By focusing dialogue on policy issues, while building understanding of the concerns, cultures, attitudes and constraints of the other, an increasingly clear picture about where agreement is and is not feasible has emerged over time on both sides. This has brought a willingness to maintain dialogue within those parameters as long as it is mutually beneficial to do so.

It might be significant in this context, however, that the global union federations are established membership organisations with clear and unrivalled representative authority, authenticity and

hierarchies. There are established demarcation lines and institutionalised means of liaison and negotiation between them, as well as low levels of leadership turnover and an office in Washington run by experienced and highly able personnel. Those characteristics are not present among the water and sanitation CSOs in general, and even to the extent that FAN has established representative legitimacy (which it derives from the number and nature of its members) it has little capacity for or experience of strategic advocacy.

It is not clear whether or how these problems could be overcome, to enable the Bank to face a continuous and increasingly knowledgeable and experienced group of interlocutors among water CSOs as it does among global unions. Probably it cannot be done to the same extent as with the unions, but to the extent that these problems can be tackled, considerable investments of time and money seem likely to be involved.

4.4 Lessons for the design and implementation of the scoping study

The logic of the arguments outlined above is that we need to ask fundamental questions about the purpose and context of dialogue if we are to learn the lessons of this scoping study. For all that, there are lessons to be learned too about how to carry out such a project as this more effectively. Some have already been discussed in earlier sections of this commentary, and in this sub-section we will discuss some others.

One problem lay in the fact that the ToR had to be rejigged from the start because there simply was not time to get to the stage envisaged at the end of Phase One in the month or less between the start of the process and the fixed date of the Washington workshop. The ToR made sense in anticipating that up to 10 feasible activities would be identified by the time of the workshop, and further developed there and later. In that scenario, the participants at the workshop would have included the people who would be involved in those activities. As it turned out, however, CSO participation in the workshop mainly involved the FAN AG, and the generation of activities followed it rather than preceded it. It might well be that if the ToR as originally designed had been followed, the CSOs at the workshop would have been those who were interested in pursuing a particular activity, and that some of the misunderstandings that are holding them back now could have been overcome then.

Nevertheless, as already noted, the Washington workshop was successful in some important respects. Indeed, its success suggests that another lesson of the experience is that the study would have benefited from regional and perhaps a few national workshops. These might have generated a stronger set of dialogue activities and enabled the relationships required to sustain them to be forged. However, neither the budget nor the timetable for the scoping study could accommodate such events. It should not be assumed from that, however, that the budget should have been larger. The more fundamental lessons discussed earlier about how to actually develop dialogue at policy and project levels suggest that the fault here lies in design rather than budget.

A further design issue in the study relates to the funding of proposed dialogue activities. As mentioned earlier, there was no funding in place to finance any activity, and this reinforced the other incentive problems discussed in this commentary. With the benefit of hindsight, it does appear that the endeavour would have benefited from earlier discussion between the Bank and FAN about dialogue activity financing.

There are also some organisational lessons, in addition to some already discussed earlier. It was originally envisaged, for example, that a group from the FAN AG would represent FAN in the scoping study and provide feedback to the consultants. However, this team did not assemble, which placed a burden on the FAN secretariat that may have exceeded its capacity, particularly at the time. Insofar as the FAN AG was consulted from time to time, it was highly cumbersome and time consuming to consult all its members. Moreover, there were times when strong leadership was required on the CSO side, and such a group might have been a more effective and appropriate means of providing it than the proxy efforts of the consultants could be. The need for some form of executive body in FAN's leadership is perhaps a more general governance issue FAN should address in considering how to deal more effectively with its own impressive growth, as its existing governance structures may no longer be best suited to its scale.

There was an equivalent problem on the World Bank side, where, with the benefit of hindsight, it might have been advantageous to establish a group of half a dozen or so TTLs to support the Water Anchor personnel in the exercise. The intermittent ad hoc involvement of TTLs served to demonstrate how valuable their more consistent engagement with the study might have been, while the Water Anchor might also have made more extensive use of CSO liaison officers in the Bank. A more active role for a wider Bank representative group might have avoided the tendency -- revealed in the fact that nearly all the dialogue activity proposals came from the civil society side-- for the Bank's relationship with the study to evolve in a reactive rather than proactive way.

5. Concluding points and next steps

Decisions need to be taken by both the World Bank and FAN about how to proceed with those dialogue activities that have been developed to various degrees. Expectations have been raised among the CSOs concerned and on the FAN AG. There is considerable risk to reputations on both sides if action is not taken decisively to do what is necessary either to mobilise the funding, staff capacity and whatever other resources are required to proceed, or to arrive at shared decisions not to proceed with a particular activity and shared understanding as to why not.

This matter requires urgent management focus on both sides, which should include discussion as to the mechanisms through which the next steps will be taken. The key questions to be addressed with urgency are:

- What is the next step to maintain dialogue at global level, particularly between the Bank and FAN, and to sustain it, and what should be the focus of that dialogue?
- In relation to the regional and country level dialogue activities, is there a need for a global co-ordinating mechanism, such as the consultants have performed in the scoping study, or is it sufficient to make clear to the parties concerned with each dialogue activity what each must do next and leave them to it?
- Is there a need for regional co-ordinating mechanisms, and even if they would be desirable, would they have sufficient priority to attract the necessary resources?

- Should such co-ordination (global and maybe regional) be performed by an independent facilitator or a working group of FAN Advisory Group members and World Bank staff?
- While FAN has proved to be the kind of coordinator needed on the CSO side in terms of communicating and mobilising their members in the scoping study, does it enjoy the capacity to take this forward, and if not, how can that problem be solved?
- If outside capacity is required, what can be done to finance it?
- How will funding for the dialogue activities that require it be secured, and what will be the roles of the Bank and FAN, and of cooperation between them, in securing it?
- Are there proposals among those that were not considered "feasible" during the scoping study that should be referred to TTLs for their possible interest in working with their proposers? If so, what additional information about the CSOs concerned -- e.g. background, staff CVs, etc. -- should be obtained, and who will take responsibility for that?
- The idea of a secondment of a CSO representative to the World Bank, for six months or so (along the lines of the secondment programme between the Bank and global unions), has been suggested. Is this agreed, and if so, how can it be taken forward as soon as possible?