

WHY WATER?

**Presentation to the TI South Asian Regional Meeting in Colombo
By Jens Berggren, Manager, Water Integrity Network Secretariat**

1. First there was water ...

Corruption in the water sector is not something new. In fact, it might be one of the oldest forms of corruption. All civilisations have evolved around water, the Indus, the Nile, Euphrates and Tigris, Tiber, the tank systems in Sri Lanka, etc. Water is an element that humans have organised and (mostly) cooperated around. As water was one of the first resources whose use was regulated, it is likely that it was the first resource that was misused for personal gain i.e. corruption. The reason why water has been an organising force on our societies lays both in its importance for all human activities and in its spatial and geographical distribution, e.g. South Asia is quite well endowed on average, but the monsoon climate calls for organisation.

2. The value of water

The water sector is divided up into sub-sectors with differing characteristics:

- Water and Sanitation

Unclean water and poor sanitation have claimed more lives over the past century than any other cause (Human Development Report 2006). In South Asia, almost 2000 children die a day due to poor hygiene and 65% of the population don't have access to improved sanitation (Calculations based on a report by the [WSSCC](#)).

Water related diseases: In Bangladesh, unsafe water and poor sanitation are the main transmission routes of 40 of the 50 most prevalent diseases and the treatment of hygiene-related diseases costs 5 billion taka (US \$80 million) a year ([Ahmed 2005](#)). These diseases are among others Arsenicosis (up to 62% of Bangladeshis are at risk of drinking contaminated water), Dengue and Dengue Haemorrhagic Fever (50-100 million cases), Diarrhoea/ Malnutrition, Cholera/ Hepatitis/ Japanese, Encephalitis/ Malaria/ Ringworm/ Scabies (300 million cases), Trachoma (Six million are blind, and more than 150 million need treatment)/ Typhoid (17 million cases) (Source: [WHO](#)). One of the effects is that 443 million school days are lost each year due to water-related diseases (HDR 2006). A study in Bangladesh indicated that a separate toilet could increase the number of girls in school by as much as 15% ([UNESCO](#)). Moreover, 150 million women's working days are used to fetch water in India (Sanghamitra Chakraborty, Times News Network June 8, 2003) and 73 million working days lost in India due to water related diseases ([WaterAid](#)). Diarrhoea claims some 450,000 lives every year in India - more than in any other country - and 118,000 in Pakistan (HDR 2006). A study in Karachi, for example, found that people living in areas without adequate sanitation or hygiene education spend six times more on medical treatments than do people who have such services ([UNESCO](#)).

- Ecosystem services

Most ecosystem services are related to water. Clean water, decomposition of waste, control of climate and diseases, nutrient recycling and pollination, food and fuel production. The value of Asian wetlands is conservatively estimated at \$1.8 billion a year! For example, the Economic Value of the Muthurajawela Wetland, Sri Lanka is 7,532,297 U\$D ([ASSETS PANDA](#))

- Hydropower

The global hydroelectric power capacity is 715,000 MW or 19% of world electricity. It is the leading form of renewable energy, accounting for over 63% of the total in 2005 ([SOURCE](#)). India has the sixth highest hydro electrical production in the world. IEA's 2006 Global Energy Outlook put worldwide hydropower financing requirements in excess of US\$ 90 billion per year

- Irrigation

Irrigation stands for 70% of the global freshwater usage. Irrigated agriculture produces 40 % of world food. Water withdrawals by irrigated agriculture have increased by over 60 per cent since 1960.

Conclusion: The human, ecological and economical value of water is immeasurable and almost incomprehensible!

3. Corruption is draining the water sector!

The long history of corruption in the water sector has not been offset by effective efforts to reduce it. It is recognised that there is not a water crisis in the world, but a crisis of governance in the water sector. Where corruption in the sector has been studied the findings are dramatic. According to a study of 21 water utility companies in Africa, nearly two-thirds of their operating costs were due to corruption ([Estache/ Kouassi 2002](#)). Petty corruption in India's water sector showed that: 41 % of the customer respondents had made more than one small payment in the past 6 months to falsify meter reading to lower bills. 30 % of the customer respondents had made more than one small payment in the past 6 months to expedite repair work. 12 % of the customer respondents had made payment to expedite new water and sanitation connections. According to public official respondents, side payments occur on a frequent basis. ([Davis 2004](#)).

The economy of sanitation: It is estimated that US\$6.7 billion is needed to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) in Sub-Saharan Africa ([Mehta et al 2005](#)). If average corruption costs in the sanitation sector are 30 percent, this equals a loss of US\$2 billion a year. The annual cost a person for improved sanitation ranges from US\$5–10 ([Hutton/ Huller 2004](#)). Two billion US\$ a year equals a sustainable supply of sanitation for between 200 million and 400 million people. If the money was used correctly: every US\$ invested to reach the MDG's (including sanitation) in Sub-Saharan Africa is worth around US\$13 ([Hutton/ Huller 2004](#)). This means that if we lose US\$2 billion this region is actually bereaved of the value of some US\$26 billion.

From a theoretical point of view, the water sector fits the prescription of where corruption flourishes best, often a "natural" monopoly, high discretion and low transparency and low attention!

Procurement of non-standardised "goods and services". Much of the water sector is focused on construction, with characteristics that expose it to corruption: competition for

contracts, numerous levels of official approvals and permits, opportunities for delays and overruns, and the often a humanitarian imperative for rapid work.

The water sector is a leaking bucket. Corruption has an effect on all decisions in the water sector; what is being done, how it is being done, by whom it is being done, for whom it is being done, when it is being done, why it is being done. This often raises the question whether the water sector is optimised to provide water services or if it is optimised to provide water actors with private benefits

In essence: Corruption not only drains the water sectors, it shapes them

4. Water, a source of integrity

Water is an emotional topic. Everybody has a relationship to water. Water is not rocket science. Three water related problems: too much, too little and too dirty! By being closer to people, more “hands on” and less “professionalised” than e.g. defence, judiciary, health care, etc., water is a great place to start engaging people in anti-corruption. The theoretical concepts of rights, entitlements, access to information, accountability, transparency, etc. get a very concrete and “down to earth” meaning in the water sector.

Curing corruption in the water sector is both an absolute necessity and a great opportunity to start a real broad based integrity reform of our societies.

“Successful civilizations have usually ensured that their water governance is rigidly enforced. When there is a breakdown of water regulation, conflict and economic failure often follow.” ([Brelet 2004](#)).

“The promotion of improved water governance may serve as an avant-garde for inducing broad-based reform. It has been pointed out that cooperative water development in the Netherlands in the earlier part of the twentieth century was an important part of nation-building for the modern Dutch welfare state” ([United Nations World Report 2006](#)).

5. The Water Integrity Network

The WIN was launched in 2006 by International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Swedish Water House (SWH), Transparency International (TI) and Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP). Dr. Håkan Tropp, SIWI, was elected the first chair of the WIN. WIN is funded by Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and possibly DfID. The secretariat housed by Transparency International Secretariat in Berlin, Germany. The network includes more than 160 members from over 50 countries (from individuals and NGO's to UNICEF and the World Bank).

There are 32 members in South Asia: Bangladesh 6, India 15, Nepal 1, Pakistan 5, Sri Lanka 5,

Activities:

- Advocacy (like The GCR 2008 on water, an advocacy group is being set up);
- Capacity building;
- Implementation of anti-corruption tools and methodologies.;
- Research (diagnosis, assessment) on corruption in water (e.g. a study of licensing of water)
- Dissemination;
- Support to start-up activities on the ground, particularly by NGOs in the South.

6. The WIN South Asia Workshop, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 3-5 November

An inclusive event with actors from the integrity and water sectors (NGO's governments, donors, multilaterals and private sector). Establish contacts to build anti-corruption activities in water.

1. Widely shared existing experiences of the current status of water and sanitation and anti-corruption experiences, problems, opportunities and ongoing activities in West Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and East Asia.
2. New partnerships between water and sanitation and anti-corruption professionals based upon shared experiences and trust developed at the workshops
3. Ideas for joint regional and country level WIN activities, including where necessary, ideas for seeking further funding for activities and commitment from local actors to develop and implement actions

Conclusions:

- 1. Water is one of the most valuable resources on earth**
- 2. Corruption is draining and shaping the water sector**
- 3. We can fix the leaking bucket and by doing that, fix a lot of the holes in our societies**