Improving water security in Jaffna Peninsula through integrated water management

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Jaffna Peninsula water context

- **Shallow aquifers** - Only water source for all needs

- **Threats**
  - **Over extraction & pollution**
    - Agriculture/ Residential/ Industrial/ Increasing urbanisation
  - **Sea water intrusion**
  - **Shortages** (during dry season)

- **Health** impacts:
  - Chronic kidney disease (CKD)
Governance challenges and context

- Weak or non-existent policies/regulations
- Fragmented institutional sectors
- Conflicting and over-lapping roles
- Lack of data to inform decision making
- Level of co-ordination is ad-hoc and unclear
- Influenced by post-civil war legacy

Characterises a ‘wicked problem’
Water reform processes are successful when they are context driven, inclusive of direct and indirect users of water, take a whole of water cycle approach to reform and deeply consider multiple societal outcomes.
Supporting Sri Lanka’s IWM capacity

• Delegation in 2016, 14 people: ‘Sustainable groundwater management though integrated water management’.

• **Diversity** of organisations (National & Provincial gov., research and academic, politicians)

• Strong **leadership** within the group

• Result = **recognition** that a co-ordinated policy was lacking and **commitment** to utilise **existing expertise** to commence a policy planning process.
What was the action?

• ‘Change Project’: Developing a Draft Proposal on Regulatory Measures for Groundwater Management in the Jaffna Peninsula

• It looked at Institutional, Technical and Policy aspects

• Draft Policy for Northern Province developed by Jan 2017, proposing:

  • Overarching water authority

  • Communication mechanisms for collaboration and communication between stakeholders
Institutional aspects

- Develop **coordination** for knowledge sharing
- Compile **evidence** on groundwater quality and quantity
- Assign the proper **role and responsibilities** of all related institutions
- Develop **context specific** and sustainable arrangements within the given institutional context
Policy aspects

• Establish **alternative** water sources and **sustainable sources** for multiple uses
• Establish **institutions** and **coordinating mechanism** among water related organizations and departments.
• Establish **provincial government control over groundwater**
Technical aspects

- Develop a groundwater **well inventory**
- Establish automated **monitoring network** in high risk areas
- **Rehabilitation** of lagoons and Salt Water Exclusion Schemes
- Application of **water efficient technologies** in agriculture
Consultation and participation

A multi-stakeholder colloquium with over 70 participants (government, politicians, researchers, various stakeholders and international delegates) was carried out to get feedback on the draft policy.

Raise awareness
Call for papers and share experiences
Facilitated workshops for feedback
Overall outcome

Application of more **integrated approaches** to improve **water security** in the Jaffna Peninsula:

- **Shared** recognition of the issue
- **Participatory** approach to understand and document roles and responsibilities and gaps in knowledge
- Improved **collaboration** pathways within and across organisations
- **Context-specific** draft policy
- Push for better data systems and monitoring for **evidence-based decision making**
Ongoing barriers/challenges

• Transitioning to implementation – policy is undergoing government approval
• Inertia of current institutions and governance frameworks – will require strong leadership
• Very politized water sector - water is a sensitive issue in Jaffna.
• Further research and capacity development needed regarding coordination of institutions in post-conflict situations and the role of IWM theory in this context.
Lessons and conclusions

• Building **capacity in IWM** can help initiate improvements to water security and promote integrated and improved outcomes for communities.

• A critical component was **strong leadership** from key staff combined with having the contextual knowledge and capacity to drive the process.

• Reflections on the **impact** of short capacity building programs (if the right pieces are in place, great things can happen)
Please get in touch! 😊

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References


