



Stockholm Resilience Centre
Sustainability Science for Biosphere Stewardship



PRESS RELEASE

EXPERT WORKSHOP ON ANSWERING THE CALL FOR AN AFRICAN WATER REVOLUTION

The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGC/A), Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC) hosted the Expert Workshop on Answering the Call for an African Water Revolution at the Kigali Serena Hotel on 27th-28th June 2018. During the workshop, participants from governments, multilateral, bilateral and academic institutions, philanthropic foundations and the private sector identified what it takes to scale up green water investments across Africa and design a process in advance of a High-Level Roundtable in January 2019.

The aim of the workshop is to develop a vision for the “Call for an African Water Revolution” and set objectives for the High- Level Roundtable. Discussions will focus on scaling Green Water technologies, options for financing the African Green Water Revolution and how best to garner the support of African leaders and the donor community for this important initiative. The workshop is the first in a series of related events throughout 2018. The opening ceremony of the workshop was officiated by Mr. Torgny Holmgren, Executive Director, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI); Dr. Belay Begashaw, Director General, Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGC/A) and the keynote address delivered by Mr. Jean Claude Kayisinga, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources.

Green’ water is defined as water derived from rainfall which is available in the soil for plant growth through evapotranspiration. Africa faces rising water challenges due to higher demand caused by rapid population growth, urbanization, increasing food demands, depletion of natural water resources and climate change. Close to 70% of people living in Sub-Saharan Africa are engaged in rain-fed subsistence farming and facing increasingly variable rainfall patterns. One third of people across the continent are currently facing food insecurity, and there is an urgent need to solve the hunger crisis. There is a unique opportunity to achieve water resilience based on the efficient use of green water across Sub-Saharan Africa with potential impacts on farmers and whole economies. Green water is infiltrated rainfall water which is stored in the upper layers of the soil and available to plant roots. Proven and cost effective solutions can maximize the capture, storage and utilization of green water which enhance food production and reduce vulnerability to climate variability and climate change. A practical, low cost and sustainable approach for the “invisible majority” across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Torgny Holmgren, Executive Director, SIWI began the address noting that Professor Malin Falkenmark, globally renowned water expert and Senior Scientific Advisor at SIWI raised the issue of green water during the 2016 Malin Falkenmark Symposium. Mr. Holmgren stated that “we need to create an African Water Revolution. SIWI has been working for over 25 years to strengthen the systems and processes that govern access to and protection of fresh water, with the overarching aim to contribute to poverty eradication.” Mr. Holmgren noted that green water is very important for production and the expert workshop will provide an opportunity for us to “come up with a common address to provide clean water access and for development and agriculture for the Africa continent.”

Dr. Belay Begashaw, Director General, SDGC/A indicated that it is essential to bring inclusive economic growth which has to be environmentally sustainable, "There will be a need to focus on

available water use technologies by performing irrigation to ensure more agricultural productivity. That means getting infrastructure that is certainly expensive, but that allows for better harvests" he noted. The Director General highlighted "the call today is to understand the importance of doing things differently which involves doing things different in the financial order – we need to think of a different financial order trajectory in order to scale existing technology on green water as 50% of SDGs will not be met in the current order of financial situation because planetary boundaries will not be met.". These experts at the workshop will provide ideas that direct the search for funding for water management technologies. "This is how we will achieve food security and end hunger in the world. This requires addressing the challenges of climate change, floods and drought. It will also be necessary to recycle wastewater and reuse it" continued Dr. Begashaw.

Addressing the participants, Mr. Jean Claude Kayisinga, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources thanked SDGC/A, SIWI and SRC for organizing such important workshop and bringing together senior experts from all over the world to discuss how to achieve water resilience based on the efficient use of green water. "The Mission of Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources is to initiate, develop and manage suitable programs of transformation and modernization of agriculture and livestock to ensure food security and to contribute to the national economy. This mission cannot be achieved, unless more than 70 % Rwandan farmers engaged in rain-fed subsistence farming switch to green water use already known as proven solution to fight the hunger" stated Mr. Kayisinga.

Highlighting an example of one site named Rwamagana-34 located in Rwamagana District, Eastern Province, the Permanent Secretary notes that "the success of these initiatives needs to be accompanied by capacity building on how to organize farmers into cooperatives, how to maintain the infrastructure in place, best agronomic practices to names the few. Due to this engagement of minimizing rainwater loss, Rwanda is already responding to "Zero Hunger SDG goal" expected to be achieved in 12 years." Getting green water investment is absolutely essential for the development of our economies, our societies and for the planet, "Let us continue to work together, and pool our efforts, in order to put green water security at the heart of sustainable development goals, thus our dream will come true" stated Mr. Kayisinga.

The workshop convened 80 participants ranging from 16 countries; who had the opportunity to visit the Rwamagana-34 site where a landscaped dam allows farmers to irrigate marshes and hills on Thursday, 28th June 2018. "It is through these strategies that we will put an end to hunger and that food security for all will be assured" the Permanent Secretary noted. The workshop session highlighted the current crisis facing Africa's silent majority and discussed the potential of green water, its role in rain-fed agriculture and how to maximize its capture, storage and utilization. In addition, the sessions discussed the best practice and the challenge of scaling green water solutions; which financial approaches would be most appropriate to scale up green water solutions and what it will take to scale up green water investments across Africa including the case for public financing and integrating green and blue water investments.

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