

Abstract

Kenya was at the brink of an environmental disaster as most of its watersheds were experiencing water stresses, which resulted in deadly conflicts on ownership of the little available resources. In the main cities of Machakos, Nairobi, and Mombasa water supply was unreliable and limited in coverage. The Government was therefore unable to supply water services while managing the resources at the same time. In 1999, the government initiated a reform, which culminated with The Water Act 2002. The new legislation attributed the supply of water services to water-businesses and reserved itself the right to manage the resource in consultation with the public. A Bottom-up approach was suggested for the management of water resources through the creation of “Water Resource Users’ Associations” (WRUAs). The latter needed to work closely with the “Water Resources Management Authority” (WRMA). But how was this new legislation to be implemented? Until 2005, no strategy was available. In pursuant of the Water Act 2002 and water sector reforms, the German International Cooperation (GIZ and DAAD) supported the National Water Resources Management Strategy 2007 (NWRMS) to enable the Water Resource Management Authority (WRMA) implement Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) approaches in Kenya. Universität Siegen (Germany) in partnership with Kenyatta University (Kenya) organized three DAAD Alumni Summer Schools in Meru, from 2006 to 2008, with the logistical and financial supports of the GIZ and DAAD. The latter were to strengthen local stakeholders’ capacity in addressing issues and challenges pertaining to water resources management. This study used both qualitative and quantitative analytical tools to describe and examine the learning process put in place by the German International Cooperation to instill a participatory watershed management practice in Kenya. It assesses key actors and their respective roles, outlines challenges met, and anticipates the actual impact of these Summer Schools on the ground. Results show that DAAD Alumni played a major role in training local stakeholders in designing, organizing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating participatory water resources management plans. Both locals and professionals, mainly constituted by WRUA and WRMA representatives, played a key role during case studies, the interpretation of the law and governmental policies, as well as providing local expertise during fieldwork. The learning process involved a holistic and interdisciplinary approach of problem assessment and resolution. Thus some participants may have been challenged to interact freely and easily with unacquainted ones while others were monopolizing the debate. Nevertheless, the final outcome was positive and greatly contributed to the development of a sustainable and integrated watershed management approach that is being implemented at the local level in most of the watersheds of Kenya. That is why the authors of this paper recommend the concept of the DAAD Alumni Summer School as an innovative tool for facilitating sustainable exchange of knowledge and skills to local stakeholders for their participation in integrated water resources management