

Chapter 9

Conclusion

Was the WCD a watershed in global governance? The WCD marked a departure from previous global commissions and multi-stakeholder processes in significant ways. Because of its origins in the international organising of dam-affected people and their supporters, the Commission included representatives of project-affected communities and indigenous peoples for the first time. Commissioners came from all points on the political spectrum of the dams debate, rather than from a broad middle. For the most part, they were active practitioners in international networks, rather than the eminent persons of past commissions. Not least, the Commission made an explicit commitment to incorporate good governance principles in its work, such as independence, inclusiveness, and transparency, as a way of creating an effective platform for dialogue. These features added up to a Commission structure and process that were path-breaking by historical standards.

A commission with these elements of structure and good process—full representation of relevant stakeholder groups, independence from external influence, transparency, and inclusiveness in the work programme—was meant to create opportunities for broad stakeholder participation and thus, a rich base of common knowledge. Good process was also intended to build constituencies for implementing the WCD's recommendations.

Did the Commission succeed in implementing the good process to which it aspired? If so, how important was good process to the commitment of interest groups to promote and implement the WCD's recommendations?

This assessment shows that despite some flaws, the WCD process was essentially robust, allowing for a

wide range of perspectives to be represented and incorporated in the Commission's work. The Commission succeeded in persuading diverse stakeholders to contribute to its knowledge base, so that a broader than normal group of actors was heard. The Commission transcended, rather than reproduced, fractures among interest groups in the dams debate by producing a consensus report.

The consensus among diverse Commissioners and the emphasis on broad consultation and a transparent process gave moral authority to the final report and amplified the Commission's advisory voice. Indeed, interest groups around the world awaited the final report with expectation and reacted publicly to it, providing another tangible measure of how the process engaged stakeholders. Because of these accomplishments, the WCD's process set a new standard for multi-stakeholder processes.

However, the range of positive and negative reactions to the final report suggests that the consensus among Commissioners did not translate immediately to agreement among the broader stakeholder constituencies. Whether it does so will depend upon stakeholder willingness to continue dialogue on the Commission's findings and recommendations. Indeed, the WCD's model for change relies upon champions in financial institutions, industry, government, and civil society working to implement the recommendations.

The effectiveness of the WCD's strategy for change may be gauged only years after the report's release, when changes in water and energy planning and dam building can be measured. The WCD produced an aspirational document with challenges for implementation whose promise for change lies in the medium- to long-term. The degree of

stakeholder engagement that we have documented during the WCD's process and in the immediate aftermath suggests that the process is worth emulating—and improving upon.

Given that the WCD's process was robust, this chapter reviews the major elements of successful process that could be replicated in future commissions. Where the process was flawed and undermined stakeholder confidence, we suggest corrections that could be designed into future efforts. The chapter concludes by considering the legacy of the WCD for future processes.

Establishing a Credible Process

Representation

As a result of the contentious selection process, the Commissioners chosen for the WCD were prominent individuals in NGO, social movement, and business networks, as well as in government agencies. In many cases, Commissioners were selected because they were perceived as being affiliated with distinct constituencies. Such a composition set it apart from past commissions that were composed of eminent persons. This new model proved successful in engaging large international stakeholder constituencies in the Commission's work.

The WCD's initiators had no obvious benchmark to use when departing from an eminent persons' model to compose a diverse multi-stakeholder commission. Rather, the selection of Commissioners was the result of political negotiation. The WCD's own process later generated a useful framework for identifying stakeholders based on rights and voluntary and involuntary risks. This framework will be relevant to the formation of future multi-stakeholder processes.

Involving stakeholders in the selection of Commissioners increased their confidence in the Commission and their willingness to participate in the subsequent process. It would have been impractical for all concerned stakeholders to learn about and participate in Commissioner selection. Instead, the WCD's formation involved an ad hoc group of participants from the 1997 Gland meeting—the World Bank-sponsored gathering that called for an international review of large dams. The involvement of this group helped gauge the political acceptability of the Commission and promote awareness of the

WCD in participants' networks. This experience demonstrates the usefulness of broadening the selection process in future commissions.

The different levels of organisation and interest across stakeholder groups at this time influenced their participation in the process. When the WCD was formed, the anti-dam movement was relatively well organised, which translated into coherent demands for representation. Before and after the Gland meeting, civil society groups refused to be subsumed in a single stakeholder category. They argued that "civil society" was sufficiently diverse that it merited several stakeholder categories: indigenous peoples, non-indigenous project-affected people, public interest advocacy groups, and environmental groups. In particular, civil society groups pressed for affected peoples' representatives and indigenous peoples' representatives to have their own seats at the table. This demand—which formed the basis for the Commission's political acceptability to the anti-dam movement—marked a departure from previous consultative and multi-stakeholder processes in which civil society slots were typically taken by NGOs close to the corridors of power in Washington, Nairobi, and Delhi.

By contrast, dam-building companies and utilities did not take an active interest in the WCD process in its early days, largely because they disregarded its significance. As a result, when private companies and utilities recognised the growing reputation of the WCD and became more active in the process later on, some felt under-represented on the Commission. Circumstances exacerbated this discontent—the Commissioner best positioned to represent corporate interests (Mr. Lindahl) slowly lost the confidence of industry groups when his company, Asea Brown Boveri, progressively withdrew from the large hydropower business. This gradual loss of representation made industry groups feel that they were losing ground in the debate and led them to establish a more formal industry network toward the end of the process. The contrasting experience of stakeholder groups suggests that stakeholders bear the considerable burden of defining constituencies and mobilising accordingly, if they are to feel adequately represented.

National governments were represented only modestly at the Gland meeting and in the Commission's formation—an outcome with considerable significance for the subsequent

process. The Indian government would later point out that in its view, it and other major dam-building governments were excluded from the formative process. Despite the presence of a strong Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson from Southern governments, the WCD's ability to attract the political support of governments would become a serious issue in its later process and would inhibit their more enthusiastic engagement with the process and the final report.

The Commissioner selection process proved instrumental to stakeholders' willingness to engage in the WCD process.

The issue of government representation highlights one of the trade-offs that the WCD could not avoid. The muted participation of governments during the Commission's formation helped create the space for NGOs and social movements to participate. These groups believed that to involve governments integrally from the start would have delayed, if not stalled, the formation process.¹ Based on statements made by governments later in the process, their own involvement at the formation stage would likely have created a less broadly consultative process and a less aspirational outcome.² Hence, greater inclusion of governments would likely have led to the loss of civil society voices.³ For example, the response of the Chinese government to the unfolding process certainly suggests that some governments were unwilling to sustain engagement with a broad spectrum of stakeholders. China's discomfort with the process triggered its rejection of the final report, which was significant given that almost half of the global population of large dams is located in China.

The option of having a Commissioner from the World Bank was never explicitly considered given the history of the dams debate and the WCD's genesis in civil society calls for an independent review. In the selection process, it was important to affirm the principle of diverse stakeholder representation, rather than to seek specific representatives from particular institutions or agencies. Indeed, representation of the World Bank on the Commission may have alienated social movements and NGOs. Such a development would have changed the entire character of the process and,

likely, its results. In future processes, if the World Bank is more centrally engaged, even represented on a commission, it may place greater pressure on the institution to acknowledge ownership of the findings and recommendations. The price, however, would be diminished independence of the commission. Such potential trade-offs between representation and adoption of findings, on the one hand, and character of the process and results, on the other, are highly relevant to future processes.

Finally, the WCD experience suggests that adequate representation of stakeholders should extend beyond a commission to all the other organs of a process. As a sounding board, the WCD's advisory Forum was intended to capture diverse perspectives from the dams debate, and did so successfully. Secretariat diversity was important, because Secretariat staff members were the filters between the broad community of stakeholders and the Commissioners, and deployed their networks in developing the work programme. NGOs faulted the Secretariat for having no staff who had worked directly with displaced people. Industry groups criticised it for lacking technical dams expertise. According to the Secretariat, it was difficult to recruit senior staff with diverse sectoral and regional backgrounds because of relocation issues and the temporary nature of the assignment. Criticisms by Forum members suggest that quite aside from the performance of the WCD Secretariat, in a partisan arena each interest group hopes to see someone "like themselves" on a secretariat, and judges the legitimacy of a secretariat accordingly.

Women were well represented on the Commission itself, comprising five of the twelve original members. However, both the Secretariat and Forum had disproportionately small numbers of women or, perhaps more pertinent to issues of representation, they included few women or men who were sensitive to the gender-differentiated impacts of water and energy development, along with best practice in gender and development work. The discrepancy in numbers and the poor representation of gender advocates led women to feel marginalised in discussion forums. The WCD's final report might have had a stronger gender perspective running through it had there been more women and gender advocates in its Secretariat and Forum.⁴ By not including more such voices, the WCD failed to meet its own standard

for inclusiveness and neglected an important constituency.

In summary, representation of the full range of stakeholders, across government, business, and civil society as well as regions and disciplines, can considerably enhance the legitimacy of a multi-stakeholder process. In the case of the WCD, this potential was somewhat diminished by the lack of full industry confidence, largely because of industry's failure to mobilise early in the process and by the wariness of some governments. Yet, the alternative of relying exclusively on a middle ground, however eminent the representatives, would not have carried the same credibility with the range of people involved, and particularly not with civil society, whose calls for an independent review of dams led to the formation of the WCD. Hence, despite the trade-offs that make it impossible to satisfy all sides and despite the challenges of balancing various forms of representation, the potential legitimacy gains make the representative multi-stakeholder model worth emulating.

Independence

The WCD was born out of calls by civil society for an independent review of the global experience with large dams, with a particular focus on the role of international aid and credit agencies. Hence its independence—not only from funding agencies, but also from influence by various stakeholder groups—was a critical element of its legitimacy. At the same time, the success of the WCD relied on vigorous engagement by all stakeholders, so as to promote buy-in to the process and the final outcome. The simultaneous pursuit of independence and engagement certainly posed a challenge. Rather than seeking neutrality, the Commission sought balance in its engagement with stakeholders.

The Commission was independent from the convening institutions—the World Bank and IUCN—insofar as it was not answerable to them, these institutions were not represented on the Commission itself, and they did not control its operations or decision-making process. The WCD made a clear choice for independence over ownership by convening institutions, a choice that was critical to the Commission's legitimacy. The only debate in this regard concerned Secretariat staff's links with the convening institutions. In the WCD process, some industry stakeholders were concerned that the Secretary-General and three of ten senior

advisers had strong prior ties with IUCN and that ecological issues would be given undue weight as compared to social or economic concerns. Although it is possible that the WCD's creators underestimated the role of staff members' backgrounds in building confidence, this example suggests that independence might be considered in the selection of secretariat members for future commissions.

The WCD's independence from convening institutions was critical to its legitimacy.

Maintaining independence by diversifying funding sources was a major accomplishment of the WCD that enhanced its broader legitimacy. The Commission explicitly sought financial support from government and multilateral agencies, the private sector, and civil society groups. This fundraising effort was time-consuming and overshadowed much of the work programme. However, the pay-off was worth the effort, for diverse funding sources demonstrated that the WCD was not beholden to any one set of interests. Indeed, it is a notable measure of success that Forum members and the general media did not criticise the WCD's funding strategy.

Also in the interests of independence, the WCD adopted a policy of only seeking money that came with no strings attached. This was more difficult to accomplish. In order to raise sufficient funds, the WCD did compromise this principle. For instance, the Commission accepted major donations (principally from bilateral and multilateral agencies) that were tied to specific events or studies. However, there is no evidence that these conditions forced the WCD to do what it otherwise would not have done, nor did they undermine the confidence of Forum members or other concerned stakeholders in the integrity of the process. Future processes will, similarly, have to handle such relationships cautiously to avoid donor influence.

Transparency

Transparency was central to the WCD's legitimacy for several reasons. Non-transparent decision-making processes in multilateral institutions and in large-scale development generally have been major causes of friction in the history of large

dams. To mobilise broad input for its work programme, and therefore build credibility as a platform for dialogue, the WCD had to respond to stakeholder demands for transparency. Transparency was especially important because there were no formal accountability mechanisms between Commissioners and various constituencies. Hence, disclosing information about objectives, methods, and progress helped keep Commissioners honest to broader tides of opinion. Perhaps most important, the WCD had limited ability to facilitate broad consensus among contending interest groups during its lifetime. To leverage the WCD's influence in the dams debate, the commitment to transparency was necessary to disseminate new ways of thinking among these constituencies.⁵

The WCD did strive to, and substantially achieve, high standards of transparency. A widespread standard for transparency is that the convenors of policy processes communicate their objectives to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner, tell stakeholders how they can participate and how their inputs will be used, and communicate decisions in full.⁶ The WCD publicised opportunities for participation in the work programme broadly. It disseminated terms of reference for the commissioned papers, and the draft and completed thematic reviews and case studies to all interested parties, and posted them on its award-winning website. In addition, stakeholder groups were engaged in the process by serving as reviewers of terms of reference and studies and by occasionally participating in meetings organised around the various studies.

The WCD's efforts to reach out in person to stakeholders and go beyond reliance on the Internet were important to stakeholders with limited Internet access. This included the majority of Southern stakeholders, even in elite institutions. Personal contact—through seminars, workshops, and official consultations—helped engage stakeholders and solicit their input more effectively.

The Commission's track record for transparency was tarnished toward the end of the process, however, when it did not communicate clearly whether the Forum would have an opportunity to review a synthesis of work programme results. The Secretariat was to compile a synthesis midway through the process based upon the myriad background studies that had been commissioned. Such a synthesis would have provided a succinct

summary of the knowledge base that the Commission would use to prepare its findings and recommendations. Because of time pressures, this interim step was abandoned. Following the release of the report, the World Bank and stakeholders from the dams industry suggested that this lost opportunity for review compromised the technical merit of the report.

To build credibility as a platform for dialogue, the WCD had to respond to stakeholder demands for transparency.

Although discussion of *interim* findings compiled by the Secretariat based on the knowledge base may well have been constructive, disclosure of the Commissioners' draft *final* report, as some Forum groups desired, would have been counterproductive. A premature effort to build a broad consensus among stakeholders, via the Forum, might have risked undermining progress toward the Commissioners' consensus. Over two years, the Commissioners had developed a delicate internal dynamic based upon mutual respect and shared learning that did not exist among Forum members or the wider stakeholder community. Circulation of a draft for comment risked igniting politically charged debates among interest groups, which could have undermined Commissioner solidarity. The lesson is that the demand for transparency must be balanced with the often delicate dynamics of consensus among commissioners.

Another set of practical challenges to full transparency pertain to consultation in a global setting where stakeholders' use of information is limited by language and their access to information is limited by Internet availability. The transparency of the WCD's process was diluted for those non-English speaking stakeholders who could not understand the information. The WCD's record in translating information about the work programme from English into other languages was mixed. Although the final report itself was translated in full into Spanish and the summary into numerous languages, working documents were not translated. Because it is not practical to translate multiple drafts of working papers for stakeholder dissemination, a reasonable standard may be to

translate essential framing documents and interim products into major world languages. Although translation and interpretation requires significant amounts of time and money, it should be an integral part of the time lines and budgets of future processes.

Finally, the Commission's efforts to disseminate information about opportunities for participation were not matched by its management capability to acknowledge stakeholder inputs once they were received. This is a problem that future processes can correct. For almost the first two years of the Commission's life, the Commission invited stakeholders to send written submissions on the development effectiveness of large dams. The process yielded a total of 970 submissions from institutions and individuals around the world and helped the Commission achieve an image of openness. Managerial problems somewhat undermined the mechanism's legitimacy. Consultants failed to integrate submissions and only in the late stages did the Secretariat have the resources to do so. Eventually, the submissions were sorted by theme and appended to thematic reviews after the full report was complete. They were included on a CD-ROM of the knowledge base that was mailed to stakeholders after the report's launch. However, the lack of early acknowledgement undermined the confidence of contributors that their submissions would be taken into account.

In summary, the Commission's mixed record on transparency demonstrates that it did not meet stakeholders' high expectations for information disclosure, although much of this could not have been managed without unrealistic increases in the length and cost of the process. However, the Commission also fell short in meeting some basic international norms of transparency, as in acknowledging stakeholder inputs or being completely clear about the role of the Forum in consultation. These experiences provide lessons for operational improvement that can be applied to future multi-stakeholder processes.

Inclusiveness

Given the diverse composition of the Commission itself, the WCD's knowledge-gathering process had to be inclusive of diverse viewpoints. Without an inclusive approach in the work programme, the Commission would not have held together.

The WCD's ability to create and maintain political space for diverse engagement rested in large part on its open-ended approach to knowledge gathering. Rather than defining criteria up front for the development effectiveness of large dams, the Commission invited stakeholders to present their own analytic and normative views of whether dam projects had advanced their society's development. The multidisciplinary case studies were in theory set up to elicit such converging and diverging views. This approach assured stakeholders that the process did not prejudge outcomes, and thus encouraged broad participation.

The WCD Forum demonstrated the inclusiveness of the process.

The WCD's regional consultations were important vehicles for the Commission to demonstrate its inclusive approach. These hearings, in South Asia, South America, Africa and the Middle East, and East and Southeast Asia, brought almost the entire Commission and Secretariat to Southern regions to reach out and listen to stakeholders. The Secretariat went to considerable lengths to include social, economic, and environmental topics, along with pro- and anti-dam perspectives on the panels. Payment for presenters' travel ensured that a range of presenters could attend, from community representatives to environmental experts to dam engineers to agency planners. Not only did these events raise awareness of the Commission's work during its process, but they were also a means of legitimising the process' outcome—the Commission could rest its report upon consultations with thousands of people.

Two important lessons from the regional consultations are relevant for future commissions and multi-stakeholder processes. First, even when meetings are carefully designed for balance and inclusiveness, the failed India meeting (*see Chapter 6*) serves as a reminder that the location and timing of public meetings is a political decision that can alienate stakeholders. When such decisions appear heavily biased toward one side or another, the commission risks destroying its ability to act as a convenor for broad stakeholder dialogue. In this case, the proposed meeting site appeared to bear upon a local controversy.

Second, the WCD succeeded in mobilising grassroots input for its hearings, which was notable for a global commission. WCD events often marked the first time that government officials had heard directly the voices of affected people and the alternative viewpoints of NGOs. This mobilisation owed something to the efforts of diverse Commissioners, Secretariat staff, and Forum members. But, in particular, grassroots mobilisation resulted from the efforts of a few highly co-ordinated, dedicated civil society groups who reached out to contacts at the community level with their own resources. Future processes will also rely heavily upon the networks of their staff, commissioners, and advisors to mobilise participation. Where such networks are limited in their reach, as they inevitably will be, it may be practical to assign additional resources to civil society groups and local actors to increase appropriate outreach. Vigorous outreach to local media to mobilise input to consultations would also be a cost-effective strategy in the future.

The WCD's advisory Forum also demonstrated the inclusiveness of the process by including organisations that had engaged in bitter wars of words and even physical clashes in the past over the legitimacy of dam projects. Export credit agencies that were backing controversial dam projects in the South joined the Forum alongside indigenous peoples' groups defending their ancestral lands from large dams. Large engineering firms that supplied dam equipment joined alongside civil society organisations that had arranged protests outside their corporate offices. Some Forum members refused to engage in direct dialogue with others, but many agency officials, community representatives, and NGOs came with—or developed—a listening ear. Although the effects are hard to measure, gathering such actors in the same room for three substantive Forum meetings was clearly an achievement.

While the act of convening such diverse parties was worthwhile and quite unusual, the ongoing engagement of Forum members in the WCD's work programme was sporadic and uneven. Structured opportunities for Forum members to provide guidance on the work programme were few. Commission and Secretariat members say they were informed and empowered by their two formal meetings with Forum members. However, the consultations fell far short of using the Forum as a “sounding board” for the direction of the

WCD's final report as Forum members gained little sense of the Commission's internal deliberations. As a result, Forum members' ownership in the process and forthcoming product was quite tenuous. Between the second Forum meeting and the launch of the report, an intense aura of secrecy surrounded the final report's content, and the report surprised many Forum members upon its release. Many of these members were ill-prepared to receive and respond to the report.

The WCD experience suggests that advisory bodies have considerable value in providing a platform for exchange among conflicting interest groups. Such bodies can assist in furthering a commission's shared learning and advances in its members' thinking. For participants to reap tangible benefits from the experience, they not only need to be organised and motivated to participate themselves, but they also require regular updates about the progress of the work programme and the direction of a commission's thinking. The WCD excelled in providing Forum members with informational updates, but as our discussion about transparency indicated, they fell short of their own high standards in fully engaging the Forum.

The WCD managed to open up the knowledge-gathering process.

In summary, the WCD accomplished a process that was very inclusive by global standards. The Commission's insistence on welcoming all forms of evidence as a valid contribution to the knowledge base—the grassroots as well as the “official”—ensured that it was more democratic than technocratic. The effort to reach previously unheard voices also displeased some technical experts who were accustomed to being the dominant participants in such processes and this reaction will have ripple effects on future processes. The WCD's major achievement was that it developed sufficient authority as a convenor that it could create and strengthen the political space over two years of consultations to engage most concerned parties in the knowledge gathering process. Such inclusiveness provided a strong basis on which to rest the Commission's final report and sets high expectations for future multi-stakeholder processes.

The Legacy of the WCD

The Promise of a Representative Commission

The WCD reveals both the promise and the pitfalls of an advisory multi-stakeholder process. The promise is that selection of active practitioners can provide legitimacy with the full range of stakeholders engaged in a debate. The pitfalls are that determining representation within amorphous constituencies and expanding consensus among representative commissioners to a broad consensus remain challenges.

The WCD also provides lessons on how to support and promote the legitimacy of advisory commissions. The WCD experience suggests that if a multi-stakeholder process is to truly move beyond the divisive politics of an issue, representatives from the full spectrum of the debate must be at the table. The WCD provides a model where voices that have long protested decisions made about their lives in their absence can represent their views directly and share in developing a framework for future decision-making.

Who is a stakeholder? Who should be at the table? The WCD's report provides a framework for identifying who is a legitimate stakeholder, based upon rights and risks. This framework calls for full identification of the overlapping and intersecting rights of stakeholders in a country or river basin, combined with attention to who is taking voluntary and involuntary risks if the development project proceeds. The rights and risks approach could be used to identify legitimate stakeholders for dialogues in many development arenas—from the global to the national to the local. Based on legitimacy with a wide range of stakeholders, such bodies are well poised to act as “norm entrepreneurs,” who articulate genuinely new formulations that, over time, diffuse and are accepted as new norms of conduct in the international arena.⁷

What Does Good Process Contribute?

In this assessment, we have examined the WCD process against the benchmarks of independence, transparency, and inclusiveness. Although the process did have flaws, we have concluded that it was essentially robust. As the stakeholder reactions above suggest, however, good process cannot by itself transcend divisive politics. Indeed, it would be naïve to suggest that it could. What, then, did

attention to process bring to the WCD, and what does it promise for future processes?

The most significant contribution of good process is to support the legitimacy of a multi-stakeholder process. This is important because in contentious arenas, such as dams, not all differences can be reconciled through new information and cognitive advances. Ultimately, some differences are irreconcilable and will require a framework to decide which interests prevail. A legitimate process is an important defence against criticisms of this approach.

A good process can expand the range and variety of information and perspectives that feed into decision-making. The WCD's efforts at inclusion brought to the fore voices that have often been marginalised in the dams debate. The Commission cast a wide net, capturing the views of the displaced, along with the reports of consultants and the data banks of governments. This process enriched the knowledge base on which the WCD deliberated.

An important promise of a multi-stakeholder process is its ability to create a broader space for dialogue among stakeholders. The WCD proved only partially successful at this task. In their frequent face-to-face meetings, the Commissioners were able to transcend pre-conceived characterisations of other constituencies. The broader group of stakeholders had far fewer opportunities for interaction. Moreover, the regional consultations and, in large part, the Forum meetings were structured to inform the Commission, rather than as a two-way dialogue. Finally, the absence of an interim report that could stimulate a directed discussion among Forum members proved an obstacle to furthering stakeholder dialogue. Despite these design flaws, the WCD, nonetheless, did encourage far more communication across stakeholder groups than had occurred in the past years of the dams debate and additionally stimulated the formation of networks within stakeholder groups.

The Challenge of Implementation

Multi-stakeholder processes typically have little formal decision-making authority, and the WCD was no exception. Instead, multi-stakeholder processes are designed to win consent for implementation through a process of inclusion, with a

particular focus on civil society and the private sector. A process structured around representative stakeholders holds the potential for genuinely new and transformative formulations that can break policy deadlocks—a contribution that is less likely to be achieved through governmental processes alone.

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Yet, as the tentative and defensive reactions of Southern governments to the WCD suggest, a multi-stakeholder approach co-exists uneasily with the existing framework of international law based on the sovereignty of nation-states. As the Indian government's negative reaction to the appointment of an activist as a Commissioner illustrates, governments question the legitimacy of non-elected individuals as representatives of a broad view. Moreover, as governments' calls for no new conditionalities arising from the WCD show, they are wary of non-governmental actors' ability to circumscribe states' role through international agencies and such processes as the WCD.

What then is the pathway to implementation—one that captures the potential for creativity of multi-stakeholder processes, while recognising the legitimate role of governments? The full answer to this question must await the unfolding of reactions to the WCD report over time. However, the initial steps taken by various actors indicate a way forward.

The WCD Forum established a Dams and Development Unit (DDU) to carry forward its work. A range of Forum members—the World Bank, IUCN, an NGO, a river basin authority, a social movement, and a private sector actor—agreed to serve as the steering committee of this unit. The continued participation of this range of stakeholders demonstrates the ongoing relevance of the Commission's report.

Follow-up steps include efforts to reach out to governments. The WCD couched its recommendations within the context of the United Nations covenants and declarations on human rights, development, and environment. By so doing, it firmly located itself as within, rather than external to, the frameworks of intergovernmental deliberations. Thus, it provided a way for governments to engage with its findings in a manner that recognised the legitimacy of intergovernmental deliberations. Moreover, the steering committee's choice of an established intergovernmental body, the United Nations Environment Programme, as the host of the DDU, provides a further bridge to governments.

At the same time, rather than being backed by formal sanction mechanisms, widespread adoption of the WCD's recommendations depends on acceptance of norms of practice, supported by civil society scrutiny of the private sector, national governments, and international agencies. If successful, a critical role for the WCD will have been to crystallise and provide an impetus to norms of practice for infrastructure projects. Over the longer term, the bridge back to formal governmental and intergovernmental processes will likely be built incrementally, by incorporating practice into formal laws, in part through continued pressure by non-governmental actors.

This discussion reinforces the message that although democratisation of decision-making at the global level can bring significant advantages, ultimately advances in principles and practices must be translated to and implemented at the national level and below. However, as the experience of the WCD suggests, efforts at global and national democratisation are mutually reinforcing. In the WCD process, civil society organising at the national level served as the catalyst for creating the Commission and the seedbed for a transnational civil society alliance on dams. Conversely, the WCD process provided an avenue for greater expression at the national level and stimulated further dialogue across sectors at that level. The full potential of the World Commission on Dams—and other multi-stakeholder processes—lies in this promise of democratisation, at both the national and global levels.

Endnotes

1. Interviews with Forum members, September 2000 and November 2000. E-mail correspondence with Forum member, January 2001.
2. In interviews and public settings during the Forum meetings, government representatives expressed reservations about the extent of NGO and social movement participation in the WCD process. Also interview with government representative, April 2000.
3. Patrick McCully, "How to use a Trilateral Network: An Activist's Perspective on the World Commission on Dams." Paper presented at Agrarian Studies Program Colloquium, Yale University, 19 January 2001.
4. For example, the Dublin Principles agreed upon by governmental representatives in 1992 in the run-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development recognised that "[the] pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water" as one of four overarching principles. Principle Three of *The Dublin Statement*, International Conference on Water and the Environment: Development issues for the 21st century, 26-31 January 1992, Dublin, Ireland. The WCD's final report documents some of the effects of dam-related development and displacement on women, but its guidelines and recommendations incorporate only a passing mention of gender issues.
5. This recommendation is contained in the paper of an early advisor to the Commission, Anthony Dorsey, *Institutional Design and Operational Modalities for the Proposed Large Dams Commission*, Stockholm Draft, 6 August 1997 (mimeo).
6. Derived from Corporación Participa, Environmental Management and Law Association, Thailand Environment Institute, and World Resources Institute, "Framework for Assessing Public Access to Environmental Decision-Making," 2001.
7. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink. Autumn 1998. "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change." *International Organisation* 52(4): 887-917.