Comoros load shifting

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Indigenous peoples are the custodians of many of the world"s most fragile and important ecosystems. They also possess invaluable knowledge about sustainability and resilience, so they have a vital role in protecting our environment.

In 2015, the global community launched the 2030 Agenda, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that should be reached by 2030. Some progress has been made, but for most of the goals, the world is not on track to meet the deadline. Water can help us do better.

A growing number of people, societies and companies are discovering the power of resilient landscapes. It is still possible to shift to more sustainable practices that recharge water, restore soil health, sequester carbon, and strengthen biodiversity - but we need to make the transformation now.

Many of the most pressing challenges in the world are about water: too little, too much or too inferior. Such challenges can only be effectively addressed through adequate governance of available water resources.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has pushed millions of people back into poverty and exposed unacceptable gaps between the rich and the poor. One in three people are still not able to wash their hands with soap and water at home.

More than two billion people in the world lack safely managed drinking water and twice as many lack safely managed sanitation, making WASH one of the most urgent development challenges.

A visit to the Grande Comore island strikes one as to how it has been shaped by the natural environment. Dark volcanic rock limits infiltration and the few remaining sandy beaches are harvested for building materials. On Grande Comore, the largest of the islands, the Karthala shield volcano often leaves visitors in awe of nature.

SIWI visited the Comoros to assist the Directorate of Water and Sanitation in developing a climate resilient action plan. SIWI"s work supports governance, and assessment of how decisions are made and enforced at different levels, how actors coordinate, and who decides and how much money is available. We posed the question: What needs to be done differently on islands where households have severe water shortages, and infrastructure needs in the face of climate change?

We reviewed existing material on the impact of hazards on water and sanitation, water resources and island populations. The aim was to consolidate this information to identify major risks and assess hazards. For example, where flooding occurs, at what intensity and frequency, and how that will behave with climate change.

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Further, who is affected by flooding? In Comoros, flooding in the denser urban coastal communities is more severe than inland. But the watersheds are still affected by landslides, significant erosion and degradation of water sources.

A final review was made on household incomes, their support networks, enforcement of standards for infrastructure and how this affects women and girls differently.? Combining these aspects, we came to the country with a review of key risks, which was developed with a small technical group of members from different ministries.

In Grande Comore, wells built in the coastal volcanic aquifer are threatened by high salinity, and households that purchase water are highly vulnerable to changes in the price and availability of water during droughts.

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