

Brief report of Global WASH Forum Learning Event 'Beyond Domestic' Dakar, Senegal, 29 November 2004

Objective

In making water work towards poverty reduction, and improving sustainability of services, small-scale productive uses of water (activities like backyard gardening, raising small livestock and micro-enterprises) play an important, but currently neglected, role. These activities fall into a policy (and practice) gap between the WATSAN and irrigation sectors, and are also often overlooked by the water resources management community, despite the fact that surveys often show that as much as half of domestic water consumption is for productive activities, and that these activities frequently contribute significantly to the livelihoods of poor people.

The thematic group on '*Productive uses of water at the household level (PRODWAT)*' (www.irc.nl/prodwat) organised a learning workshop at the Global WASH Forum in November 2004 on the topic '*Beyond domestic: livelihoods and small-scale productive uses of household water supplies*'. The aim of the two hour workshop was to unpack some of the key issues relating to productive uses of water at the household level.¹

Agenda

The agenda included:

- Multiple Use Services: what they are and why they are important (*Patrick Moriarty, IRC*)
- Nabadogo Dam and multiple uses, Burkina Faso (*Evariste Kouassi, CREPA*)
- Household level productive uses of water around Cochabamba, Bolivia (*John Butterworth, NRI*)
- Discussion based upon the Johannesburg symposium statement and case study presentations

Summary points from discussion

The discussion largely supported the findings of the Johannesburg symposium, but given the limited time, there were many more questions than answers! Further information on some of these issues can be found at www.irc.nl/prodwat

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and advocacy

- Is it feasible to talk about increasing design standards (e.g. volumes of water) given the huge pressures to meet the MDGs (and especially the drinking water goal)?
- Productive uses of water at the household level help support MDGs other than the narrow drinking water goal. There is a danger of losing sight of the overall goal of reducing poverty.
- The MDGs seem good at a sector level, but fail at lower e.g project levels. Here sustainability is a key issue and multiple use approaches seem more relevant.
- Who are the targets for advocacy and promotion of the concept of household level productive uses? We need better advocacy tools.

Planning for PRODWAT

- There is a big difference between planned and unplanned multiple use water services. Unplanned services may be damaging (e.g. to sustainability and tail-enders who get no water) and are unlikely to equitable.
- We should distinguish between household systems and technologies (e.g. a hand dug well with a rope pump) and community systems e.g. a piped water system

¹ The slightly inelegant phrase '.....at the household level' is used to distinguish these productive activities from 'field-scale' irrigation and agriculture.

- Water quality is a key issue (and potentially in conflict with productive uses). The role of community and household-level treatment needs to be considered. Wastewater reuse is also linked to this theme.
- We need better information on the benefits and costs of household level water supplies. What are the social as well as economic benefits of household level productive water uses? And what are donors willing to pay for?
- What is the experience and opportunity to find commercial finance to help support the development of multiple sources (rather than domestic sources) at the household level?
- How do tariffs affect small-scale productive water uses?
- Ability to pay is an erroneous concept. Willingness to pay should incorporate what people are able to pay.
- People should pay for more water, if they use more. And we should emphasise the need for efficient use.
- What are the gender roles in household level productive activities?
- How can we manage conflicts over household level productive uses?
- Each community is different!

IWRM and PRODWAT

- We need a better set of tools for planning water allocation. Where should productive uses of water at the household level be considered? There is a danger that the poor are left out.
- How can institutions be brought together to work with the multiple use services approach? What are the constraints?

Recommendations

Based upon the presentations and discussions, the following recommendations statement was submitted to the forum coordinators:

- Recognising that people use water for a range of activities at the household level including small-scale productive activities like kitchen gardening, keeping livestock and micro-enterprises
- Recognising that these small-scale productive activities play a critical role in peoples' livelihoods, food security and poverty reduction strategies
- Recognising that minimal domestic water supply norms are often insufficient to meet these small-scale productive needs
- Recognising that under-design of systems leads to illegal (unplanned) use and conflicts between users
- Recognising that people typically draw on a range of sources of differing quality to meet their total household requirement

We recommend that:

An integrated approach to water services provision that goes 'beyond domestic' is essential to make access to water effective in the fight against poverty

Multiple use water services should encompass:

- integrated planning, especially at local government and community levels
- cross-sectoral actions especially between domestic water, agriculture and local economic development
- monitoring of performance and impact that is sensitive to peoples' multiple needs

Participants

The following people participated in the workshop:

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Website

For more information on the thematic group that organised this workshop please visit www.irc.nl/prodwat

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