

acceptance by the public of recycled toilet paper. To their surprise, the response was huge and two phones in their office didn't stop ringing for two days. People enquired about the price and sanitary conditions of recycled paper, while journalists were interested in the Consumers Acting for People and the Environment and the strategies for promoting the issue. Thousands of rolls were sold and big orders were placed with the manufacturer; in addition, four interviews were given in a week.

The action may not immediately do a lot to conserve water resources, but at least an awareness of the connection between water resources and people's daily life has been created.

In addition, on 21 March, Consumers Acting for People and the Environment organized a protest in the Legislative council, calling for an amendment to the election law to give voters the right to choose to receive election information by e-mail. If the law is changed, at least 300 tons of paper can be saved every two years. *Chan Wai Man, Project – Coordinator, Consumers Acting for People and the Environment*  
<http://www.consumerpower.org.hk>

## Rights to water

If the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation is to be reduced by half in the next decade, current sentiments have to be converted into concerted action. At present the pace of change is not nearly sufficient to meet the challenge. In this context, how is discourse on human and other 'rights' to water (e.g. contractual and property rights) being converted into principles and rules that give voice to poor people and strengthen their claims for improved access to water resources and water services?

A workshop entitled 'Rights to Water: strengthening the claims of poor people to improved access' took place on 22 March at ODI London, with speakers: Lyla Mehta (IDS) and Bruce Lankford (University of East Anglia). The report is at [http://www.odi.org.uk/speeches/rights2005/meeting\\_22Mar/meeting\\_report.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/speeches/rights2005/meeting_22Mar/meeting_report.html)

# waterpoints

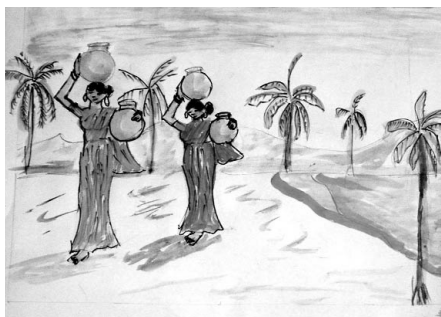
## Community-based water safety plans in MP, India

Worldwide, the principal starting point for the setting of water-quality standards is the World Health Organization (WHO) *Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality*. As discussed in the April edition of *Waterlines* (Vol. 23 No. 4), the recently launched Third edition of the *GDWQ* outlines a fundamental change in approach to water-quality management. The approach — Water-Safety Plans, or WSPs — recommends a move away from reliance on 'end product testing/laboratory-based control' towards a quality-assurance based process of risk assessment and risk management.

The challenge facing water and sanitation professionals, working both for government, communities and partner agencies in developing countries, is how to adapt the WSP approach to suit local physical, cultural, social, economic and health conditions.

UNICEF WES in Madhya Pradesh is pioneering 'community-based' micro-watershed approaches to water-safety plans. The approach aims at developing community-based methods to adapt the WSP methodology for management of both water quality and quantity. The project focuses on establishing health-based reference levels of risk associated with selected chemicals or microbes with development of community-risk management strategies.

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Entry for the 'Women and water' competition, World Water Day 2005, Pondicherry

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## Arsenic survey in Bangladesh

Since the 1970s, drinking water in Bangladesh has increasingly been sourced from tube wells rather than surface water sources, since the former are safer from pathogens. Their reputation for safety suffered a blow in 1973 when arsenic was discovered; now it is known that almost one-third of tubewells supply water over the permissible level of 50 µg/l. A recent report<sup>1</sup> drawing on data collected from 15 subdistricts in the worst-affected regions examines the distribution of affected wells, the level of contamination of wells, the distribution of arsenicosis-affected patients, and the levels of awareness of the population to the risk.

There was found to be enormous variation in arsenic levels from place to place. In some communities, 100 per cent of the tubewells were above the recommended limit; while in some, none were. Part of the analysis focused on whether the depth of well is related to contamination. Most of the wells exceeding the 50 µg/l arsenic level were in the 50–150ft depth range, and there was generally a better chance of finding arsenic-safe water below 500ft or else in shallow wells (though these latter were more likely to suffer from microbial contamination). However, because of the wide geographical variation, no one-size-fits-all recommendation could be made — decisions on alternative water sources must be based on local data.

## Reference

- 1 Rosenboom, Jan Willem (2004) *Not Just Red or Green – an analysis of arsenic data from 15 upazilas in Bangladesh*, APSU, Bangladesh, available on <http://www.apsu-bd.org/>.