

RWSN Forum 2006

How can local entrepreneurship be harnessed and encouraged to improve rural water supplies and help achieve the millennium development goals? Local entrepreneurship includes private borehole drilling, initiatives by local artisans to improve water sources at household and community level, local mechanics and private spare-parts' suppliers as well as household investments, to name but a few.

The 5th Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) Forum 2006, taking place in Ghana (27–30 November 2006), will be exploring this question. The forum will focus on the three RWSN flagship areas of cost-effective boreholes, sustainable handpumps and self supply. The forum will specifically provide a platform for sharing experiences and ideas about ways of scaling up local entrepreneurship in rural water supply to meet the MDGs. There are numerous examples of how local entrepreneurship has successfully enabled rural water supplies to be improved and maintained, and there is considerable untapped potential in this area.

Building on the research undertaken through RWSN, as well as experiences from other organisations and communities, the 2006 forum aims to:

- provide stakeholders with an improved, in depth understanding of the concepts, opportunities and challenges of scaling up local entrepreneurship to help meet the MDGs.
- provide a platform for extensive dialogue regarding self supply, cost-

effective boreholes and the sustainability of rural water supplies.

- enable stakeholders with experience of local solutions for scaling up to present their experiences and ideas for discussion.
- provide considered feedback to the RWSN core team regarding future focus for the network.

RWSN will request selected participants to prepare background and position papers as the basis for deliberations. Case study presentations will comprise about 50 per cent of the forum, with the remainder of the time devoted to dialogue. The forum also offers a great opportunity for informal sharing of knowledge.

About 150 international participants from Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe and 30-40 participants from Ghana are expected.

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Impact of the rope and washer pump in Kenya

This study, carried out in 2004, investigated the health and income impacts of the rope and washer pump in the rural community of Matharu, Kenya. Twenty-six rope and washer pump owners were asked a series of questions regarding their household health and income, both before and since having the pump. The study found that owners perceived the decrease in diseases as a benefit of having a rope pump.

The pump provided good quality water with less than 10 faecal coliform counts per 100ml in 92% of water samples (see Figure 1), sourced from protected shallow wells. The pump design was suitable for domestic water supply as it is low cost, and the owners maintained it themselves at a low cost. The rope pump saved users a considerable amount of time (see Figure 2) that was used for productive activities such as farming, selling produce and small-scale irrigation.

The rope and washer pump has made an important contribution to the water and sanitation project in Matharu and to improving the quality of life of the people.

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Handwashing campaign launched

On World Water Day, 22 March 2006, WaterAid India launched a handwashing campaign in ten Indian states. The organization, which has been working to address water and sanitation issues in these states, reported that diarrhoea, which generally arises from a lack of hygienic practices, is the single biggest cause of infant and child mortality. Worldwide, surveys have shown that hand-washing alone reduces the instance of diarrhoea by as much as 43 per cent. Diarrhoea is the single biggest cause of infant and child mortality in India.

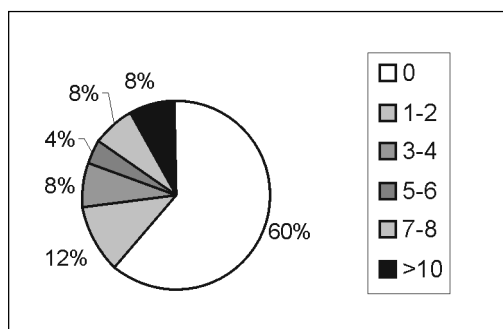


Figure 1. Number of faecal coliforms in 100ml of water from 26 wells

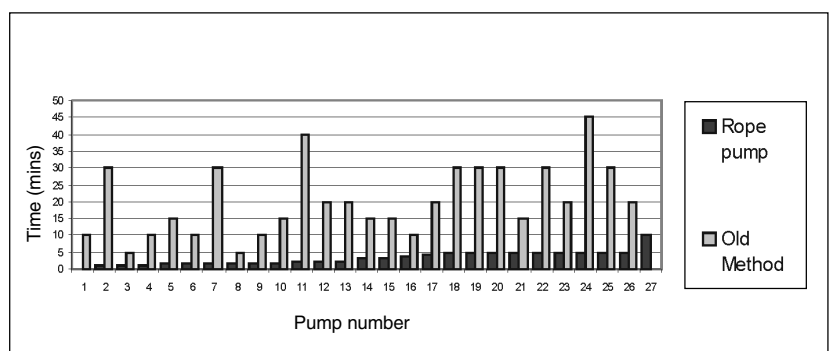


Figure 2. Time taken to collect 20 litres water before and after rope pump installation

The event was preceded by letter-writing and poster-drawing campaigns organized to raise awareness of hygiene practices among school children and young people. UNICEF distributed prizes for the best letters and posters after a lively cultural programme by young people from the districts where the campaign has been ongoing.

Union Minister for Rural Development Raghuvansh Prasad Singh called for an alliance between the people, NGOs and government to take the link between hygiene practices and health to heart. 'India has traditionally laid great emphasis on cleanliness, on washing hands before eating, bathing before prayers, and so on,' the Minister said, 'but, somewhere along the way we seem to have given up these hygienic and healthy practices.' He later led the gathering, dominated by youth activists, in taking an oath to observe and promote hygiene.

Namibia study critical of water charges

An in-depth study of privatized water services in Namibia¹ says that while prepaid water systems are being marketed as the solution to unpaid water bills and water conservation, they are in fact worsening the situation of the poor. Using the experiences of the informal settlement at Swakopmund as an example of the hardships people suffer as a result of the system, the study questions whether this policy is becoming 'the new apartheid'. 'Prepaid meters are not being installed in the rich suburbs nor in the industrial areas where vast amounts of water is being consumed. The pricing and method of prepaid water supply inhibits consumption by the poor in a drastic way,' the study contends. The report argues that while government and NamWater are looking at 'accounting cost recovery' of providing water, they have fallen short of clearly looking at the 'real costs' of drinking water shortage in terms of lives lost and increasing public health expenditure.

Reference

1. McClune (2004) 'Water privatisation in Namibia: creating a new apartheid?' Windhoek, Namibia, Labour Resource and Research Institute (LaRRI).

U.N. water report focuses on governance

'Mismanagement, corruption, lack of appropriate institutions, bureaucratic inertia, a shortage of new investments in building human capacity as well as physical infrastructure' and environmental changes mean that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for water and sanitation will not be met if current trends persist. This is one of the conclusions of the 2nd edition of the United Nations *World Water Development Report (WWDR2)*, which was officially released on 9 March 2006 in Mexico City on the eve of the Fourth World Water Forum.

The report estimates that political corruption costs the water sector millions of dollars every year, which especially affects the poor. It cites a survey in India on bribes paid by customers to falsify meter readings, and expedite repair work or service connections. Good governance requires 'essential freedoms, like the freedom of speech and the right to organize'. 'If citizens cannot access basic information on water quality and quantity, it seriously curtails their chances of halting environmentally unsound water projects or to hold relevant government agencies accountable.'

Barun Mitra, director of Delhi-based Liberty Institute, told the BBC that the report showed a 'bottom-up' approach was needed. Governments were failing because they were not learning from informal community-based initiatives, he said.

Reference

- UN-Water (2006) *Water, a shared responsibility: the United Nations World Water Development Report 2*, Paris, France, UNESCO. Table of contents [<http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr2/index.shtml>]; Executive summary [<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001444/144409E.pdf>]; Order form [<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001431/143120E.pdf>]

Responsible export of electronic waste?

All discarded products that have an electrical cable or battery are classified as wastes from electronic or electric

equipment (WEEE). Examples include toasters, computers, mobile phones, microwaves and radios. These items produce complicated multi-material wastes with different proportions of metals, plastics and glass. These can be polluting if they are not adequately treated before final disposal. Material recovery from this equipment is relatively complex but can prove worthwhile when they contain precious and rare metals e.g. gold.

WASTE and ACEPESA (WASTE's partner in Costa Rica) have a project WEEE. In the first phase of the project, ACEPESA and WASTE developed a sustainable strategy for WEEE management in Costa Rica based on an inventory of the system in the Netherlands. The second phase of the project focuses on the implementation of a sustainable strategy in Costa Rica, and also entails setting up a discussion about WEEE management in the Netherlands. One subject of discussion is the possibility of Responsible Export of WEEE to Low-Income Countries.

Is export a responsible way to deal with WEEE? By collecting and exchanging information about these discussions with stakeholders in the Netherlands and key countries, WASTE intends to find the middle ground in the debate around the export of WEEE from high-income countries to low-income countries. WASTE hopes to open communication channels with several stakeholders involved in the process, such as the Dutch ICT branch, recycling and repair companies, governmental institutions and the Dutch civil society involved in this topic. In this discussion WASTE pays special attention to the opinions of groups and individuals who are actually processing the (W)EEE materials in low-income countries. By giving all stakeholders the chance to elaborate their views, and by providing a platform for discussion, WASTE intends to establish a more balanced approach to export of WEEE. How can we achieve 'responsible export' that is acceptable for all stakeholders?

For more information and to join the discussion please go to:
<http://www.waste.nl/page/255>