

# books

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## Meeting Development Goals in Small Urban Centres: Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities 2006

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), 2006, paperback £25.00 ISBN 184407305X, hardback £85.00 ISBN 1844073041, 288 pages

'At least one billion people who lack adequate provision for water live in small urban centres... and it is in small urban centres in these [low and middle-income] nations where much of the growth in the world's population over the next 10 to 15 years is likely to be'.

This simple statement lays bare the enormity of the challenge of water and sanitation service provision in small

urban centres, and highlights the significance of small urban centres for the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation between 1990 and 2015.

The report, *Meeting Development Goals in Small Urban Centres*, is comprehensive in scope: chapters 1 to 3 set out the demographic challenge and inadequacies of water supply and sanitation services in small urban centres; chapters 4 to 7 consider what can be done in terms of technologies, information for action, and organizational structures; chapter 7 looks at financing; and chapter 8 introduces issues of integrated water resources management. A basic premise is the need to act on local needs, consider existing resources and capacities, and be accountable to local stakeholders.

To this end, the great strength of the report is its catalogue of case studies that demonstrate pragmatic local solutions. Some general principles emerge, such as keeping installation and maintenance costs down, building on existing facilities, and supporting local partnerships. But in principle the report emphasizes a need for flexibility, with the basic message that innovation and precedent can drive expanding learning networks and even policy changes.

Perhaps the report could have done more to summarize its findings and identify key areas for further research. In particular, guidance in strategic planning and development of information systems is needed to help integrate technological, managerial, business and organizational elements set out in the report, and to develop approaches to implementation, as well as providing work-based tools to support education and training which the report advocates.

The report, *Meeting Development Goals in Small Urban Centres*, provides a comprehensive overview of the current body of literature and is a critical reference for practitioners and policy makers, as well as a timely call to action.

*Nick Pilgrim is the Project Manager of the World Bank's Town Water Supply and Sanitation Initiative (TWSSI)*

## Books received

### Greywater reuse in rural schools – wise water management. A guidance manual

National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nehru Marg, Nagpur 2006, 66pp

This publication is the result of evaluations of greywater reuse systems that were installed in a number of residential schools in Madhya Pradesh, India, with the support of NEERI and Unicef India.

The context of this drive to economize on the use of water is the lowering of the groundwater table in the locality with increasing concentrations of fluoride in the groundwater, as well as an increase in demand for water as a result of increased construction and use of toilets following the Total Sanitation Campaign. Greywater from the kitchen and from showering was used for toilet flushing and for irrigation of kitchen gardens. This manual takes readers through an explanation of the concept of greywater, how greywater can be characterized and quantified. The design of a number of primary, secondary and tertiary treatment procedures are described, and how they should be maintained.

The manual includes how to draw up a water safety plan to identify the potential risks in the system, and control for them. A chapter follows describing the case study of how the greywater system was applied in tribal residential schools in Madhya Pradesh (see Godfrey et al.'s article in this issue). A particular feature of this programme was the way pupils and the parent teacher association were involved in drawing up and monitoring the water safety plan as part of their school sanitation and hygiene education programme.

Also available from the same source is a CD with text and photos showing not only the design of the greywater reuse system but also the rainwater harvesting system that was installed to supplement the water supply, and the design of a water safety plan to identify and avoid all the risks involved.



## Facilitating Community Water Supply: From transferring filtration technology to multi-stakeholder learning

Jan Teun Visscher

2006, IRC international Water and Sanitation Centre, €22.00, 254 pages, ISBN 90 6687 055 9

This book examines the issue of learning processes at the interface between the implementation of water supply technologies and approaches to community management. It considers the issue of improving water quality, which is an often-overlooked aspect in the field of community-management approaches, when an 'improved' water source often does not equate with a safe one in terms of human consumption. The book traces the processes of piloting, learning, dissemination and scaling-up of community-managed water treatment systems, based on slow-sand filtration and multi-stage filtration technologies. The analysis benefits from a long association between the author and the projects in question, which spans a 30-year period,

based largely on systems functioning in Colombia.

Although the book looks at experiences with water-treatment technologies, it is essentially about learning. The author puts forward a number of important arguments about learning processes and how stakeholders from different perspectives can learn more effectively from each other. According to the author, the most important element of learning is process facilitation and the ability to apply knowledge at a pilot scale, learn from direct experience and then implement at scale. The emphasis on learning is reflected in the structure of the book itself, which walks the reader through two main field projects, with pauses for reflection about lessons learned. As part of this process, Visscher does not gloss over failures and shortcomings, on the contrary he highlights them as part of learning and should be commended for his transparency. The book closes with a call for a change in the way community-managed water supply is approached, with an emphasis on learning, captured in a process entitled 'FLAIR'

(facilitation, learning, application, implementation at scale and reflection).

This book raises important and timely issues, not least of which concern water quality and water treatment, which are increasingly important for service delivery in many parts of the world. The book makes the case for the FLAIR approach based on a relatively complex technology, largely developed in the context of a relatively advanced developing country. Therefore it would be interesting to see how this approach could be applied to other contexts and with other priorities, for example, very low-cost water-supply technologies in sub-Saharan Africa. If the FLAIR approach is to be taken up more widely, the question of costs could also be addressed more rigorously. Whilst the book contains some discussion of project costs, these are relatively limited, and it is unclear to what extent these account for all costs involved, and how costs and benefits can be assessed over time.

*Harold Lockwood is a consultant with Aguaconsult Ltd.*



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### Water Lifting Devices: A Handbook (Third Edition) Peter Fraenkel and Jeremy Thake

An updated and expanded new edition (formerly Water Pumping Devices), surveying the water lifting technologies that are available and appropriate for smallholdings.

It examines the costs and general suitability of different technologies, to enable farmers and policy makers to make informed choices.

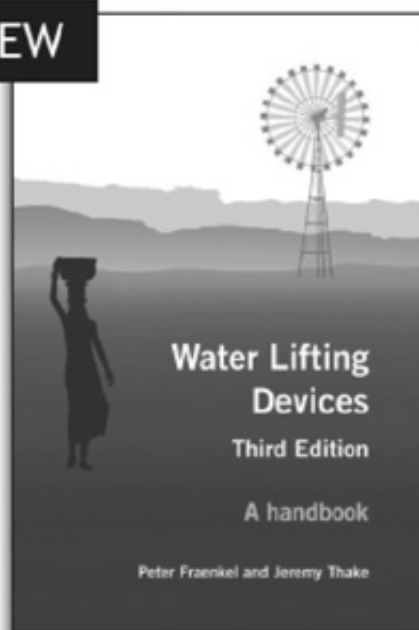
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