

Editorial

IN JULY 1982 the first issue of *Waterlines* appeared, subtitled 'the journal of appropriate water supply and sanitation technologies'. Since then much has changed in our world, and *Waterlines* has attempted to reflect, respond to, and even anticipate those changes. Let me reflect on some of those changes, and also look forward across the next few decades of water and sanitation development, and *Waterlines*' place in that world.

When *Waterlines* first appeared:

- World population was around 4.5 billion (United Nations Economic and Social Affairs, 2010).
- Africa's population was half its present total, at around 500 million.
- It was estimated that about 1.8 billion people lacked a safe water supply and 1.7 billion lacked adequate sanitation (Carter et al., 1993).
- The United Nations Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade ('the decade') had the ambitious goal of bringing safe water and adequate sanitation to all by 1990.
- It was estimated that an expenditure of about US\$30 billion per annum would be needed to achieve this (Brown, 1983).

The corresponding figures for today are well known. Global population will very soon hit 7 billion. More than 1 billion people now live in Africa and 4 billion in Asia. Progress in water supply has been impressive (although there is still a long way to go), while in sanitation the situation has worsened considerably. In recent years however sanitation has rightly risen up the political agenda. Targets have been modified to find a balance between realism and political expediency. But even to meet the less ambitious MDG targets for water and sanitation would require an annual expenditure up to 2015 of US\$72 billion, three quarters of which are needed for maintaining existing services (Hutton and Bartram, 2008). Current spending may be only one-fifth of this.

Thirty years ago HIV/AIDS was just coming into public consciousness. Similarly with climate change. The pace of urbanization in the developing world was already evident, and starting to draw attention away from rural environments where 84 per cent of those who are not served with safe water, and 70 per cent of those without improved sanitation, are still thought to live (WHO/UNICEF, 2010).

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In that first *Waterlines* issue, a number of things are evident. First, we had a strong focus on technology – the subtitle of the journal made that clear, and most of the early articles had a technical focus. However we also recognized the importance of community motivation, participation, gender issues, education and organization in achieving the desired health impacts of improved services. Third, we questioned the sustainability of services: to quote from Martin Beyer's editorial in the first issue, 'even the most impressive figures, such as the numbers of water supply schemes installed, latrines built and populations covered, are one thing. It is another matter to look at the figures and see how many of these systems still function and are used properly by the population after one year, after ten years, and even longer.' No change then in regard to that particular and fundamental challenge!

What do the next three decades hold for our world, for water and sanitation, and consequently for *Waterlines*?

Some trends are very clear – for example the continuing rapid growth of unplanned urban settlements with their immense needs for sanitation and water supply solutions. Some are less clear: what will the urbanization trends mean for rural demographics – numbers, age and gender distributions among those left behind? How will rising global temperatures (in which we can have a high level of confidence) impact on rainfall, floods and droughts, soil water balances and water resources, human health, and a wide range of other indirect climate-related issues for which confidence in projections and predictions is far weaker?

What is clear is that we live in very uncertain times in which major step changes and steep trends will be increasingly evident. These changes and trends will have the most damaging impacts on poorer, more vulnerable households and communities. Enhancing basic services such as water supply and sanitation, and, crucially, paying full attention to the means necessary to keep these services working permanently, will help to strengthen community resilience and ability to cope with change. Our basic task remains the same then.

I have little doubt that *Waterlines* will be needed for the next 30 years. The world will change, but the poor, and the poorest-of-the-poor, will remain with us. They will need ever more imaginative and more radical solutions. Serving the poor will stretch the capacities of even the best-resourced and most competent organizations and individuals. Those serving the poor will need to aspire to ever higher standards of professionalism, and the status and standing of those national governments, research bodies, international organizations and networks, donors, local governments, private companies, non-governmental and other civil society organizations will need to rise in recognition of the high value of their mission.

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Thirtieth anniversary congratulations

'Many congratulations on reaching 30, coincidentally WaterAid celebrates its 30th birthday this year too and it's great to be in such distinguished company! *Waterlines* is a must-read for all water, sanitation and hygiene practitioners and does a wonderful job of bringing the two worlds of research and practice together in an accessible, erudite and illuminating manner. Here's to the next 30 years for us both.'

Barbara Frost, Chief Executive, WaterAid

'A hearty congratulations to *Waterlines* on your 30th anniversary. During the past 30 years you have made a valuable and important contribution to learning in both the water and sanitation sectors and I look forward to more of the same over the next 30 years.'

Eduardo A. Perez, Water and Sanitation Program – WSP, Senior Sanitation Specialist

'Congratulations to *Waterlines* on an outstanding 30 years contributing to the goal of clean water supplies, sanitation and hygiene for all. Best wishes for the next 30 years!'

Sanjay Wijesekera, DFID, London

Jon Lane, CEO WSSCC

Idrissa Doucoure, CEO CREPA

Kerstin Danert, Director of the RWSN Secretariat, Skat Foundation