

waterpoints

Hydro-strident

'Bath? Twice a month! Washing clothes? Who knows!' There was deep hurt behind the sarcastic laughter of the angry woman. Her audience understood. There were about 300 women — from nine districts of Gujarat — who congregated in Ahmedabad recently to attend a meeting organized by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). The meeting called for women, who constitute almost two thirds of water-users, to be made central in the decision-making process in this sector.

'We keep hearing about wonderful new water schemes funded by local *panchayats* and by foreigners, but when we go to collect water, there is none!' Ihartaben from Dumali village said. Dumali receives water barely once a month from the much-touted Koth Ghangad water pipeline. The women have to walk miles every day to Devdholera or Kesaradito to fetch water.

Expert eye?

Meanwhile, the self-proclaimed government experts, with little knowledge

of traditional systems, discourage other alternatives. 'When we build a well or harvest rainwater using traditional methods, the experts say that the water is risky for our health,' said Rudiben of Banaskantha district.

in the integrated projects is just a sop.

'We want to formulate our own projects and have access to funds and expertise made available at the local level,' said Shrifabibi, who had led the women of her village, Gokhantar, in constructing agrifilm-lined ponds. The women will make mistakes, she agrees. But these mistakes would not snowball into regional crises, as the government's projects often do.

In some villages near Siddhpur, the

IPTRID database on Internet

The water and civil engineering research and consultancy HR Wallingford now has its own pages on the worldwide web. The new server gives wider access to all the information on irrigation and drainage contained in the IPTRID Network databases.

IPTRID (International Programme for Technology Research in Irrigation and Drainage) is an international initiative launched in 1991 that aims to improve the use of technology in the irrigation and drainage sector, particularly in developing countries. Its database contains a unique library of international 'grey' literature which can be searched, and from which hard-copies of documents can be requested. IPTRID Network users can also make bibliographic searches, obtain relevant articles from *GRID* magazine, and connect with services provided by other international members of the Network.

The IPTRID database may be accessed directly on: <http://iptrid.hrwallingford.co.uk/>; and HR Wallingford's web pages can be found at: <http://www.hrwallingford.co.uk/>.

The fact is that there is more money to be made through building new (albeit non-functional) schemes, than in the maintenance of existing sources. The women feel that their participation

high fluoride content of the water has ruined the villagers' health. The Gujarat government has proposed a scheme covering 550 villages. 'Who knows when the scheme will take off?'



Hektur Netocny/Panos Pictures

Despite the boasts of governments, women in rural areas still walk miles to get water.

At least 10 years, maybe more.'

Even handpumps don't work. The Bodeli *taluka* is home to the population displaced because of the Sukhi dam project. The much awaited handpumps were installed but do not function. 'We have a choice: get drowned under Sukhi dam water, or die of thirst at the new settlement,' the delegate from Bodeli said wryly. The problem is, the data required to activate the water simply does not exist.

The women feel that the government's efforts at creating hydrological, hydrogeological, socio-economic, water quality and environmental databases should be focused on the village. Anjanaben, the project co-ordinator said, 'The support for developing water markets comes from those who have easy access to uninterrupted supplies of refrigerated water. There is not a single woman from the water-starved villages who has called for them.' The water markets, however, are dominated by the big farmers ...

Women from a Thekaria village said they have to go to neighbouring Biber, where wastewater is collected in an excavation site. The women carry back this water after the solid waste settles down. And there have been reports of 'water wars' in the international media. In Gujarat's villages, water battles are a reality. Kheda, traditionally a water-surplus area, has villages where the *panchayat* borewells supply water for just two hours a day. 'Those two hours are marked by riot-like scenes, and social tensions run high,' said Ushaben of Kheda.

Though recognition as water-users is coming about reluctantly, the severe crisis has hit women farmers already. SEWA now plans to consolidate its almost decade-long work with women water-users in Gujarat, and use the outcome of the convention to push for decision-making powers at local levels, both in Gujarat and outside.

This is an edited version of an article by Mihir Batt which appeared in CSE-Down to Earth Features.

Potable water within six hours

When an emergency situation occurs because of a civil war or a natural disaster, clean water is always urgently needed to prevent epidemics of cholera and dysentery spreading among refugees and the displaced or resident population. Water is often available *in situ*, but needs to be purified before it can be consumed.

UNICEF has developed a fully self-contained Water-Purification Unit that combines the functions found in four separate Oxfam kits — pumping,

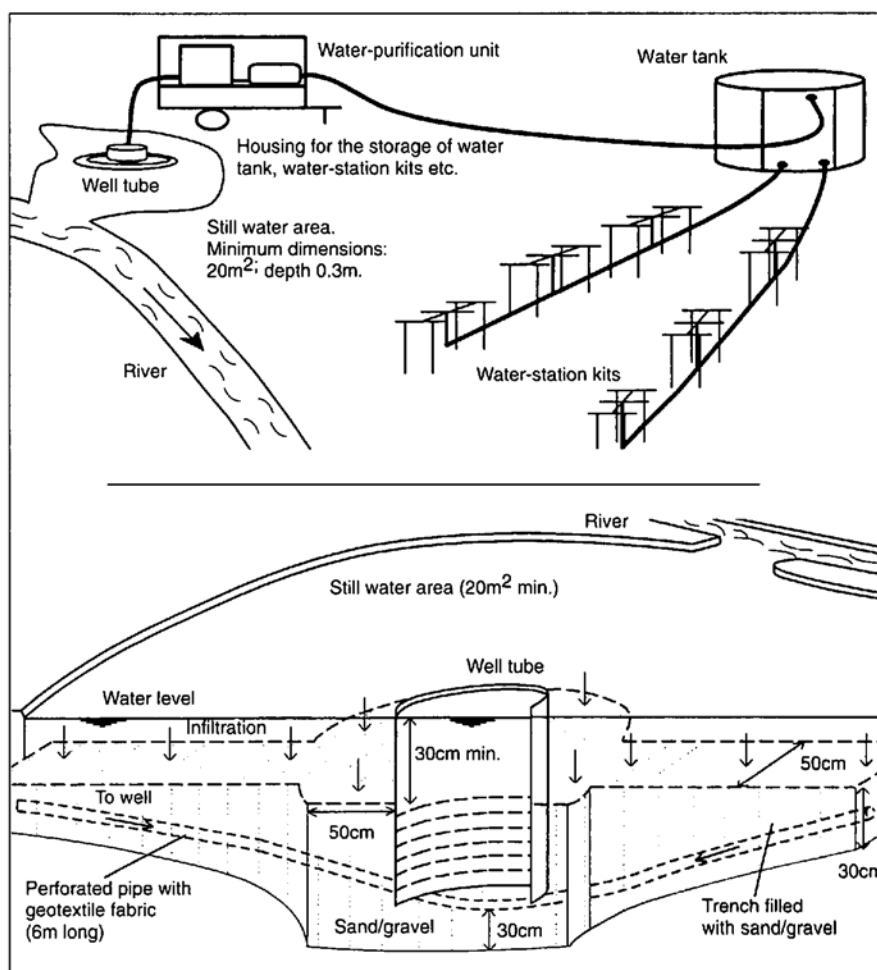


Figure 1 (top) shows the main components of the water-purification unit; Figure 2 shows the still water area which should be dug if the raw water is turbid.

purification, storage, and distribution — in a single trailer assembly that can be drawn by any four-wheel drive vehicle. Pumping 20 cubic metres an hour to a 40m³ flexible storage tank, the kit can hold and distribute via six-tap water stations enough clean drinking-water for up to 15 000 people a day. If needed, storage tanks can be linked in series to allow one pump and purification unit to fill further reservoirs and

utilize further distribution taps.

More details, including technical specifications, are contained in UNICEF'S *Technical Supply Bulletin* No.8, 'Water-Purification-Unit' — also available in French and Spanish

Contact: UNICEF Supply Division, UNICEF Plads, Freeport DK-2100, Copenhagen, Denmark. Fax: +45 35 269421. E-mail: jstorath@unicef.dk.

A sunny solution?

'The exposure of drinking-water in a transparent container to a few hours of sunshine rids the water of enteric bacteria. The process is so simple ... it may be an immediate answer to the numerous incidences of preventable water-borne and water-related diseases prevalent in the South'.

So avers the Brace Research Institute in its enthusiastic introduction to 'Use of solar radiation for water disinfection', a fact-sheet comprising the findings from some preliminary investigations carried out in the mid-80s.

Have you explored the possibilities of decontaminating dirty water by harnessing the sun's rays? Is it an appropriate, small-scale technology that should be disseminated more widely? Because of the lack of residual, does it address the real problems? *Waterlines* and IT's Technical Enquiry Service would like to know what you think, and to hear about your experiences; we would also appreciate suggestions for further reading. Please contact: The Editor, *Waterlines*, IT Publications, 103-105 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH, UK. Fax: +44 171 4362013. E-mail: itpubs@gn.apc.org.

The Technical Enquiry Service is primarily intended for people involved in development in the South. The service offers information and advice on wide range of technical subjects and can be contacted via The Enquiry Co-ordinator, ITDG, Myson House, Railway Terrace, Rugby CV21 3HT, UK. Fax: +44 1788 540 270. E-mail: itdg@gn.apc.org.