

Water, Health and Development

Simavi is a non-governmental organisation which was established in 1925. It aims to improve the health environment of the poorest in developing countries.

Because of increasing requests from its partners abroad for financial support to drinking water supply, sanitation and hygiene projects Simavi established its World Water Fund in 1995, which is similar to WaterAid UK. The Water Fund links sector projects from abroad to financing organisations in The Netherlands.

As one of the activities to celebrate its 75-year anniversary, Simavi organised a symposium titled 'Water, Health and Development', which took place on the opening day of the World Water Forum, on March 17 2000, in The Hague. At the symposium, which was honoured with the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Orange, keynote speakers presented their views about sector development.

Dr Valerie Curtis of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine introduced the results of her PhD research in Burkina Faso about the perceptions and realities at household level concerning dirt, hygiene and health.

Her research indicates that poor people do not relate hygiene and diarrhoea in children, despite the fact that poor sanitation is a proven major contributing factor to diarrhoea. But even poor people attach a positive social value to hygiene because of its perceived links to attractiveness and dignity.

Dr Curtis found that promotion of the use of attractive soap, in particular when used for cleanliness of children, can be very effective in improving hygiene standards at a household level and thus contributes to the reduction of diarrhoea in children.

Piers Cross of the World Bank unravelled

the distinct differences in the goals, mandates and competencies in the sector of government institutions, market players and non-governmental organisations, which rather than leading to competition, should lead to complementarity in sector development. This led Mr Piers Cross to make a strong plea for building partnerships between the governmental, private and civil society. The distinct generic attributes are summarized in the table at the foot of the page.

Roland Schertenleib of the Swiss Federal Institute for Environmental Science and Technology discussed the new requirements on technology in water supply and environmental sanitation because of the inabilities of conventional technologies to meet the needs of the large proportion of humanity having to do without adequate services and because of the increasing environmental and economic pressures on innovation.

The Household-Centred Model was introduced as an option for water supply and environmental sanitation that allows for resource conservation at the lowest and innermost societal and resource circles. Placing the household at the centre demands an adaptation of technologies to meet people's needs, rather than a change of people's behaviour to accommodate technology.

The Household-Centred Concept leads on to a set of principles which include considering waste as a resource, that wastewater should be recycled and added to the water budget on the income side, and that the water cycle should be kept as short as possible.

If you wish to know more about the keynote presentations, you are welcome to request a copy of the complete texts which are available from Simavi by e-mail from <simavi@simavi.org> or by mail from Simavi, Spruitenbosstraat 6, 2012 LK Haarlem, The Netherlands.

Henk van Schaik

Some distinct generic sectoral attributes

Primary interest	Primary goals	Societal order	Assessment frame	Dominant organizational form	Relationship basis	Time horizon
Government	Political	—	Legality	Government	Rules	Electoral cycle
Business	Economic	Wealth creation	Profitability	For profit	Transactions	Business cycle/ annual report
Civil Society	Social	Expression of values	Justice	Non profit	Values	(Re)generational- human and natural environment