



Responding to poverty

promoting productive
uses of water at the
household level

Statement from a symposium held in Johannesburg, South Africa, 21-23 January 2003



From 21-23 January 2003 the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and the South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) convened a meeting of minds to share experience and ideas about how small-scale productive uses of water at the household level can help to fight poverty. The symposium brought together a multi-disciplinary group of practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers from 14 countries across Africa, Asia, South and North America, and Europe. This short document records the most important findings, beliefs, and recommendations of the participants that were captured in a statement at the symposium.



Response

promoting productivity

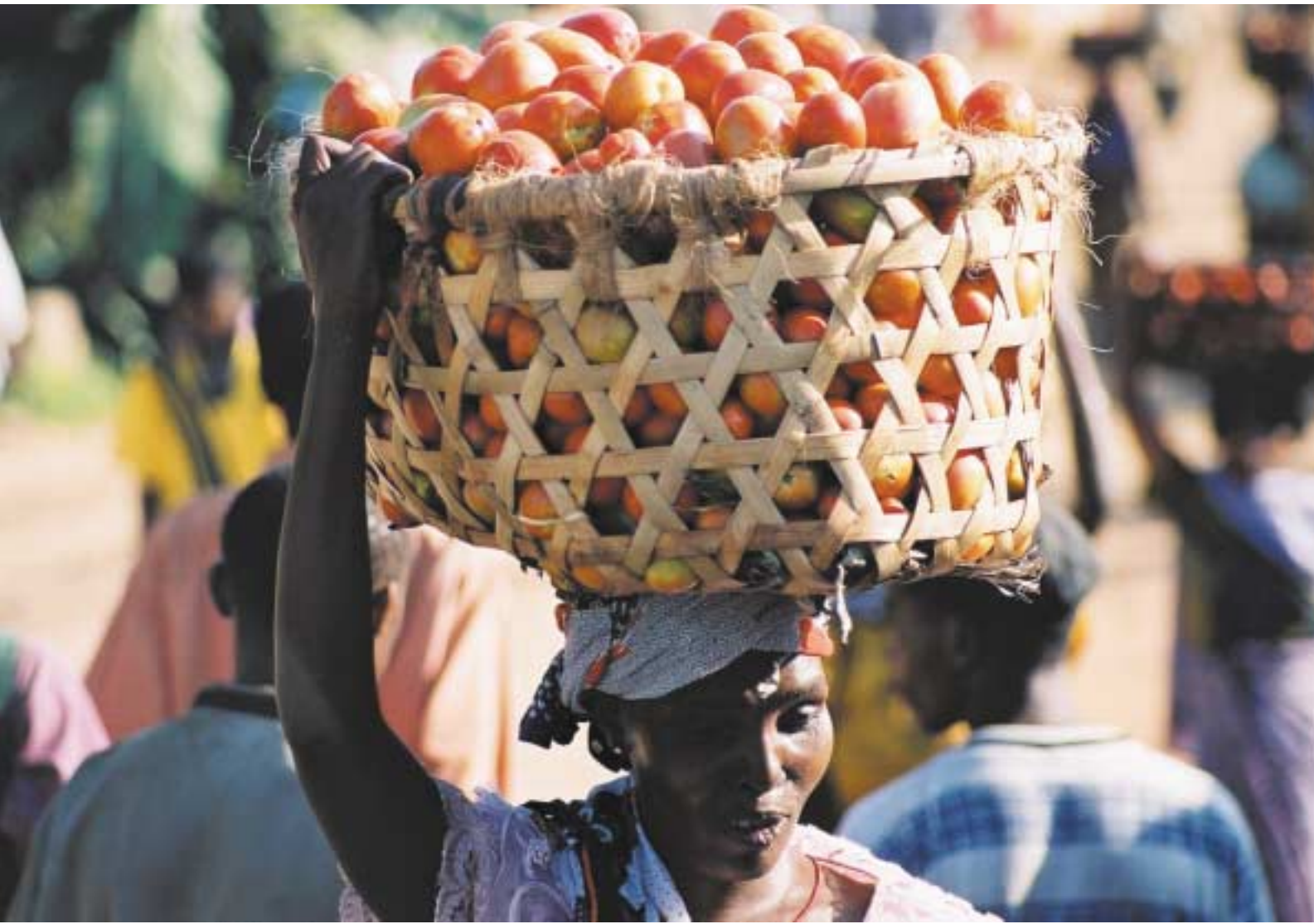


Statement on Poverty and Productive Uses of Water at the Household Level

- 1 Productive use of water at the household level by poor people reduces poverty**
 - 1.1** Sustainable livelihoods can be built on access to water that goes beyond current approaches to meeting both domestic needs (drinking, cooking, and washing) and irrigation needs. The water needs of the poor always extend beyond the domestic.
 - 1.2** Productive uses of water at the household level include a range of small-scale activities that enable people to grow food, earn income and save expenditure: fruit and vegetable production, keeping livestock, brick making and building, and a wide range of informal micro-enterprises.
 - 1.3** Without access to sufficient and reliable water for productive uses in and around the household, people are excluded from a range of options that would allow them to diversify and secure their sources of food and income. At the most basic level, poverty is a lack of opportunity.

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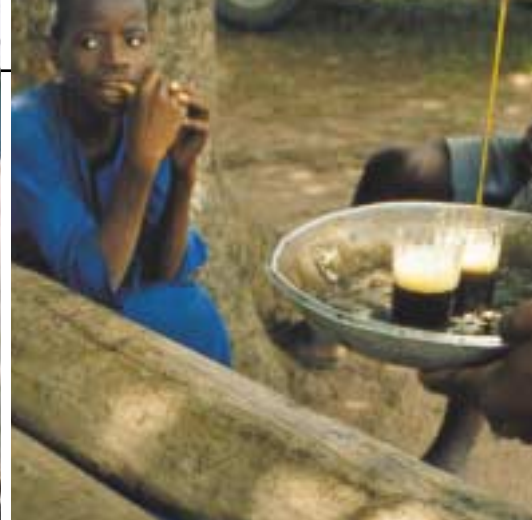


Access to productive water supplies provides opportunities.

- 1.4 We believe that productive uses of water in and around the household are the most socially and economically effective uses of water after 'traditional' domestic uses, and that providing water for these uses offers one of the most effective ways to use water to tackle poverty in its multiple-dimensions.
- 1.5 The provision of water services, that include water for productive uses, needs to be planned to ensure that benefits are inclusive or pro-poor. In planning, implementation and research it is important to hear and act upon the voices of the

poor, women, and children, recognising that otherwise benefits may be captured by elites.

- 2 **People require more than their domestic water needs to be productive**
 - 2.1 It is universally accepted that people should have access to a basic domestic water supply (often ranging between 25-50 litres per capita per day (lpcd)). We believe that poor people should also have access to water for productive uses. Total household water requirements for poor people including water for productive uses are likely to be in the range 50-200 lpcd.



2.2 These quantities can be realised by helping households secure access to water through a range of alternative approaches (such as roofwater and run-off harvesting, family wells, communal water points, piped water systems, municipal and household level wastewater reuse) and by investment in systems that are equitable and reach the maximum number of poor beneficiaries.

2.3 The better off living in cities around the world typically consume around 200 lpcd. We believe that finding ways to provide and manage the use of similar amounts of water in support of poor people's livelihoods is vital.

3 Productive use enhances the sustainability of water supply systems and services

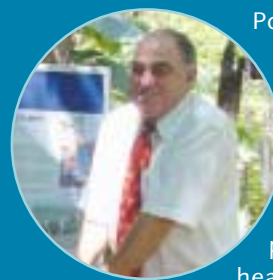
3.1 In most cases the sustainability of domestic water supply systems can be increased by explicitly including productive water uses that provide the means and motivation for people to engage in the management of systems. These uses generate income that can be invested in system improvement and maintenance. Sustainability has been hard to achieve in water and sanitation: we believe that the lack of opportunities for productive water uses is central to this problem.

3.2 When people have demands for productive water that are not met, problems arise and ownership and participation are reduced. For example, 'illegal' connections to domestic piped water systems cause serious problems that could be anticipated and avoided by satisfying the demand for productive water, possibly from different sources. We believe the benefits will normally greatly exceed the incremental financial costs.

3.3 Many irrigation schemes provide multiple benefits. Meeting the needs for other uses of water (including domestic) through an integrated approach enhances the impact as well as performance of irrigation schemes and systems.

3.4 Productive use of wastewater provides opportunities for many urban and peri-urban farmers, but simultaneously places them, the consumers of their products, and the

Case Studies



Poor men and women have much to teach us, if we can only find the time and the humility to listen ... poor people are saying that they need water not only for drinking, cooking and washing, but also for productive purposes. We must

hear the desire of poor households

to lift themselves up out of poverty, and the role that water can play in this process.

Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa

Ambuya Mukwereza was a former employee of a Zimbabwe Forestry Commission nursery where she learnt how to grow saplings of fruit trees like orange, guava and plums. Now an elderly lady, she has only been able to make the best of this knowledge after she was helped to dig a well at her homestead and install a rope pump by the NGO PumpAid. She runs a thriving business selling saplings to other families who have family wells and want to grow fruit trees.



Case Studies

"The water committee in Belén, Guatemala, faces multiple simultaneous problems ... The population grows as people migrate into the area due to the violence in the country. New taps are connected without taking into account the capacity of the source. In addition, more and more water from the system is being used for productive purposes such as watering cattle and coffee production."

Schouten and Moriarty, 2003

In Tarata (Cochabamba, Bolivia) disputes came fatally to a head in December 2002, over the rights to use water for household level productive uses from a multiple-purpose water supply dam (Laka Laka). The dam was planned to provide water for farmers growing vegetables and to meet the basic needs of domestic users, but not for productive water uses at the household level. When the urban population demanded the right to also use water for growing vegetables around homesteads, there were violent conflicts with farmers determined to protect their irrigation water rights.

Rocio Bustamante, Centro-Agua

"I do not know what I would have done if I had not joined the community garden group. My plots in the garden are growing all that myself, my husband and my three grandchildren are eating. We have had no maize meal from the Grain Marketing Board since April and it is now August.

My [rainfed] crops completely failed this year and what we grow in the garden is keeping us alive."

Mrs Selina Vanhukwavo, a 70 year old grandmother from Bikita, Zimbabwe on the benefits of a garden developed using surplus water from the village borehole.



environment at risk. In accordance with the Hyderabad Declaration on Wastewater Use in Agriculture (2002), we believe that appropriate policies, strategies and interventions can mitigate the human health and environmental risks while contributing to poverty reduction. The safer use of wastewater in agriculture should be encouraged and supported, and addressed within an integrated policy framework.

4 People need local solutions and multiple sources for multiple uses

4.1 Peoples' water needs are typically met through multiple sources - from rainwater to wastewater to piped systems. Rarely do people rely on single sources. And single sources tend to be used for multiple purposes. A holistic approach that builds on this reality is required in planning and service delivery to meet peoples' needs for household water supplies.

4.2 Wherever possible and taking into consideration downstream users, household water needs should be provided from locally available water resources, drawing on local knowledge, and at the lowest possible cost to provide a reasonable level of service.

5 An integrated approach is essential to achieve significant impacts on poverty

5.1 Demand for water for multiple purposes at the household level has, until recently, been insufficiently recognised in the planning and allocation of water resources in river basins. We recommend a process in which planners, and in particular local-level and catchment planners, acknowledge and take into account these needs as a priority consideration. This will need to be based upon appropriate assessments of the resource base, possible trade-offs, and environmental sustainability, and within an appropriate framework for demand management.

5.2 People who use water productively at the household level are numerous, but a diffuse and poorly represented group. Special attention is required to ensure that the voices of household level users, especially women, are heard at the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) table. We believe that the use and management of multiple sources at the community level lies at the heart of IWRM, and that water should be managed from bucket to basin.

5.3 Improving access to water will not, on its own, eradicate poverty. People need better access to markets and credit, and to overcome many other constraints to make best use of more water. Collaborative partnerships with education, health and enterprise-based programmes can overcome some of these multiple constraints. This calls for better coordination, communication, and cooperation between different government departments, civil society, NGOs and the private sector.

Further information

More details on the symposium and the work of partners collaborating in initiatives to respond to this statement can be found at:

www.irc.nl/prodwat

This includes:

- Proceedings of the symposium
- The symposium statement in English and Spanish
- Details of a thematic group convened by IRC to build partnerships for effective implementation, to undertake research and to promote policy change. We would like to hear from any individuals and organisations interested in joining this initiative.

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Publication

Beyond domestic: case studies on poverty and productive uses of water at the household level: a book containing selected case-studies from the Johannesburg symposium will be published by IRC, NRI and IWMI in mid-2003.

