



3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum-  
Water and Poverty Initiative

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# THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

# THEMATIC FRAMEWORK OF THE WATER AND POVERTY INITIATIVE

## Objective

The purpose of this note is to stimulate discussion on a common thematic framework in preparation of the Water and Poverty Initiative for the 3<sup>rd</sup> World Water Forum (WWF).<sup>1</sup> The thematic framework will then guide the selection of case studies and compilation of lessons learned from a multitude of water-related actions taken in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere in the world to improve the water security of the poor. The framework was discussed at the planning meeting for the Initiative at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila on 7-8 February 2002.

## Background

The need for water security was adopted at the 2<sup>nd</sup> WWF in 2000 in The Hague as a major development challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Water security implies that all people, including the poor, have access to water services to meet their basic needs, that they are able to take advantage of the opportunities that water resources provide, that they are protected from water-related hazards, and that they have recourse where conflicts over water arise. The 2<sup>nd</sup> WWF recognized that the water crisis is essentially a crisis of water governance, of ensuring that everyone, including the poor, have adequate access to water services, and that water resources are managed in a sustainable way.

## Water and the Poor

The 3<sup>rd</sup> WWF will focus on water actions around the world that help to achieve the vision of water security in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Water and Poverty will be a central theme at the 3<sup>rd</sup> WWF, because the poor are hardest hit by water-related problems. Globally, 1.1 billion people lack access to safe water supply and 2.4 billion lack adequate sanitation. More than 80 percent of these poor people live in rural areas but the number of urban residents without adequate water services is increasing rapidly. The majority of those without adequate water services live in Asia, while Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of people without water. Many poor people also face other problems with water security: they are vulnerable to disasters, are the victims of conflicts over water resources or face declining stocks of fish or other products essential to their livelihoods. Poor water security also has other consequences for the poor: for example, ill health that undermines the family's livelihoods or investments destroyed by disasters.

In Asia, one in three people does not have access to a safe drinking water source within 200 meters of the home, and one in two people does not have access to adequate sanitation. Of those without access to safe drinking water, more than 700 million live in rural areas and more than 90 million in urban areas. Access to adequate sanitation is denied to 1.7 billion people in rural areas and about 300 million in urban areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The Initiative is led by ADB and involves a partnership of collaborating organizations. This note draws on ADB's water policy entitled "Water for All", a discussion paper on poverty and water security prepared by Professor John Soussan of the Centre for Water Policy and Development at the University of Leeds, and on discussions during the planning meeting in Manila.

Water scarcity impacts on health, and the conditions and quality of life. The poor are particularly vulnerable to water scarcity, pollution, droughts and flooding. While it is clear that the management of water resources and the delivery of water services are central to investments to reduce poverty, there is much to learn about how such investments can be made more effective. Gender is a central issue: women are the main water providers and face the worst problems when water security is low. Gender is therefore recognized as a key dimension of pro-poor water governance actions.

### **Need for Collaboration**

The Water and Poverty Initiative aims to generate lessons learned from ongoing work around the world, raise awareness on the need to improve water security for the poor, and catalyze further action and financing at community, country, and international levels. To achieve this, a partnership is necessary that involves all stakeholders, both within developing countries, and in the international water community. The preparation of the Water and Poverty Initiative for the 3<sup>rd</sup> WWF needs active collaboration among policy and decision-makers, practitioners, funding agencies, the private sector, NGOs, professional organizations, and the media. The initiative aims to develop the basis for this partnership and to generate a common understanding and commitment to work together in preparation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> WWF. As part of this, the Initiative will develop strong links with a range of other themes and dialogues being developed for Kyoto, so that there is both a strong core program and a coherent position on poverty and water security that cuts across all the different sessions at the 3<sup>rd</sup> WWF.

### **Four Aspects of Water Security for the Poor**

Water needs are intricately woven through the daily life of poor communities and, in particular, in the lives of poor women and children. Four aspects are particularly important: (i) the availability of water for production and income generation; (ii) water, sanitation, and hygiene for health; (iii) sustainable environmental management, and (iv) vulnerability to water-related disasters.

- 1. Production.** Economic growth is a main engine for poverty reduction, and water serves as a direct input to economic growth through agriculture, other community-level income-generating activities, and to manufacturing and other larger economic activities that provide employment for poor people and help them overcome their lack of assets such as land.
- 2. Health.** Water, together with sanitation and hygiene, directly affects the health conditions of the poor, and especially of vulnerable groups such as children, women, and the elderly. Women's roles are central, in particular in rural communities, where they are the providers of water in the home.
- 3. Environment.** Many rural poor communities depend on sensitive ecosystems such as forests and lakes for their livelihoods, yet their basic needs are often causing severe degradation of these ecosystems in the absence of viable and sustainable arrangements to manage the ecosystems with their participation.
- 4. Vulnerability.** The poor are particularly vulnerable to water-related hazards, such as floods, droughts, typhoons, landslides, and pollution.

The form that the relationship between water and poverty takes is as diverse as poverty itself. There are no prescriptions, but there are areas where action is needed in most places where the poor face problems with water security. In all places, the starting point is to build from the capabilities and assets that poor communities possess. Poor communities have clear views on both the challenges they face and the solutions they aspire to: indeed, listening to the poor is a central theme of the Initiative.

*Six Key Result Areas for Action*

Six key result areas are presented below as a thematic framework for action to improve water security for the poor: (i) pro-poor water governance; (ii) improved access to quality water services; (iii) pro-poor economic growth and livelihood improvement; (iv) community capacity building and empowerment; (v) disaster prevention and mitigation; and (vi) management of the environment.

- 1. Pro-Poor Water Governance.** Strengthen pro-poor water governance through water policies, laws, action agendas, and better information management. Introduce pro-poor safeguards in integrated water resources management work such as in river basin planning and management, water rights and entitlements, and allocation. Improve stakeholder consultation and participation across all water sector activities, in particular the participation of women. Mainstream gender and development issues in all water sector activities, and empower women to improve water management. Increase public awareness about and political support for the water security needs of the poor.
- 2. Improved Access to Quality Water Services.** Increase the access of the poor to water services: drinking water supply (with hygiene and sanitation), irrigation and drainage and in other areas. Put people at the center of viable and affordable services to be delivered by public, private, and community providers that are accountable to their users, including the poor. Mobilize funds from the community of water users, and from national and international sources. Increase public awareness on the need for autonomous and accountable water service providers and cost sharing with users.
- 3. Pro-poor Economic Growth and Livelihood Improvement.** Increase investments in agriculture, rural development, and other water using sectors that generate direct income for poor communities. Strengthen the asset base of the poor and help develop sustainable livelihood diversification opportunities. Introduce targeted interventions that ensure economic benefits for the poor, as part of, or to complement investments aimed at broad-based economic growth. Include investments in micro-finance as needed.
- 4. Community Capacity Building and Empowerment.** Invest in capacity building in poor communities to help them improve the management of their water resources, negotiate better access to water services, and promote empowerment to improve their livelihoods through income generating activities. Promote awareness of the need for communities to manage their water resources in a sustainable way, using examples of poor communities who have been successful in empowerment. Ensure gender equity in water management.

5. **Disaster Prevention and Mitigation.** Improve the resilience of the poor to water-related disasters, through better forecasting, relief and recovery systems, including both structural and nonstructural investments in prevention and mitigation interventions. This concerns rapid onset disasters such as floods and slow-onset disasters like droughts and water pollution. Promote the need for disaster prevention measures for the poor to be included in all water projects.
6. **Management of the Environment.** Introduce sustainable natural resource management arrangements with the participation of the poor, particularly in the upper watersheds and in wetlands and other common property resources. Maintain the biodiversity on which many of the rural poor rely for their livelihood, and reduce the unsustainable exploitation caused by poor communities in their efforts to meet short-term needs. Promote awareness of the need for sustainable natural resources management among the public and in poor communities.

These six key result areas can be used to select, prepare, and present case studies and other analyses for the Water and Poverty Initiative. The presentation of actions can be shown under different categories, including the (i) *type of action*, including policy/legal, institutional arrangements, financing arrangements, infrastructure development, awareness building; (ii) *level of action*, including local, river basin, national, international; and (iii) *area of action*, including cities and rural areas in various geographical settings ranging from upland and mountainous areas to flood plains, coastal zones, and islands. The analysis of case studies will of course also help to understand the many interrelationships between the key result areas of water security for the poor.

### **The Bottom Line – A Call to Action**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> WWF will **focus on action**. The Water and Poverty Initiative will present actions taken around the world to improve water security for the poor, raise awareness about water-poverty links and advocate the need for further actions and financing. The six key result areas presented above are proposed as the thematic framework to organize the work under the Initiative. Collaboration is needed among all partners in the Initiative, as the issues cut across traditional sectors, and the challenges go beyond the individual mandates of each organization.

*Individually we can be champions for this Initiative, and together we can make a difference and generate development impact to benefit the poor around the world. Let's build a strong partnership for Kyoto and beyond.*

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