

Session Report

Session Title: Securing Community Development and Sustainable Livelihoods for the Poor
Date: 19th March, 2003
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1. Key Issues

The presentations showed the differential impact that investments in water have on the various social groups. The importance of involvement of women in the design, implementation and operation and maintenance of water systems was brought out clearly. Women's expertise can lead to increased effectiveness of water resource management. Women's involvement may also lead to changes in gender relationships and resulting in improved lives for all.

The session presentations also showed how the various actors in the water sector, community based organizations, NGOs, local and national government institutions and funding agencies have varying roles in water resources development. These roles are complementary. Finally the importance of demand-driven approaches to water was highlighted.

The discussion session started by several questions on whether the Millennium Development Goals can be reached by a demand-driven approach. This may take too much time.

Involving the private sector too often only means the international firms. We need to put more emphasis on including small scale local enterprises.

Questions also focused on how we relate small scale bottom up and large scale top-down approaches. A number of speakers and participants raised questions about the negative impact of the large scale interventions on equity and the livelihoods of the poor. Others argued that in some situations there is no alternative to large scale changes in the water regime.

The potential of the productive use of households falls in an institutional gap as it is not in agriculture nor health. The potential is huge but how to we realize that potential?

There are now many example examples of good approaches but the question is how do you scale up. To do so more funds are needed to make the necessary investments.

Who must build who's capacity? In many people's experience the local people understand more than the outsiders do and they are more capable than them. Outsiders say they must build the capacity of the poor, but the questions is who's capacity must be built! Capacity building is needed to create the situation for the poor to utilize their own potential. The poorest know what to do, but they may not be posing the right questions. They are far more brilliant than outsiders. If there are so many poor that are untouched then they must utilize the potential of their vast numbers.

2. Key Quotes

Jennifer Francis, Water Gender Alliance

Meaningful participation involves holding decision-makers to account and includes the opportunity to gain redress for grievances.

Our task is beyond Kyoto to help create an environment to ensure the right to participate in the development of water resources and services.

Self Employed Women's Association Film

SEWA's study was originally only concerned with water but they found out that we had problems with employment and income. It is the women who know how important clean water is. The men have no idea (Village women).

We have to prove ourselves, nothing comes without struggle. (SEWA Female Director).

It has not been easy but we have achieved a lot (village women).

Women's work used to be of no value, now we get pay and respect.

Michael Roberts, International Development Enterprise: Micro-Irrigation for Income Generation

Drip-irrigation uses 50% less water and leads to 30-50% more yield.

Treadle pumps and drip-irrigation technologies are biased towards the poor because they are self-targeting.

In 15 years, 30 million households can benefit from these simple technologies.

These micro-irrigation approaches deliver income direct to the rural poor.

Micro-irrigation technologies have a positive gender impact.

Intizar Hussain, International Water Management Institute

Irrigation has a strong land-augmenting role, in practice often doubling the cultivatable area. This is particularly important for small and marginal farmers.

Tom Slaymaker, Overseas Development Institute

Communities are often very divided and politicized and we need to find better ways to deal with that.

Maliha Hussain

In creating access to water, the poor they themselves need to take the crucial action. They must take the lead, organize themselves, and then the government must provide a supportive and enabling role. NGOs can play the role of a catalyst. The private sector can then allow people to make use of existing opportunities. Overall the poor must take the lead, that is the message.

Action and the lead has to be taken by the poor.

The role of governments and agencies is to provide support; to provide an enabling environment.

Saleuddin Ahmed (BRAC)

Capacity building is one thing easier said than done, scaling up is another.

We need a moratorium on mega projects.