

PROSPERITY WITH WATER

AUTHORS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 WATER: A CATALYST FOR PROSPERITY

Over the years in various roles, there are many basic truths in regard to human well being and the prosperity or lack of prosperity in nations, regions and communities. A number of things seem consistently to be key factors from one region to another. Throughout all of this, one element is always present – WATER. The two P's of mankind i.e. Prosperity and Poverty are totally governed by water. Prosperity is the state of flourishing, thriving, good fortune and / or successful social status. It often encompasses wealth but also includes others factors which are independent of wealth to varying degrees, such as happiness and health. Poverty is the state of human beings who are poor. We cannot deny and we cannot ignore that no other resource is as precious and no other natural asset is as fundamental as “Water” as it relieves suffering, improve living conditions, sustain public health and provide economic opportunity for those in need.

Precious water resources sustain life and are fundamental in processes towards peace and human progress. Conversely, poor stewardship leads to human suffering and conflict. Also, the social and economic stakes related to water are painfully clear. The lack of access to water causes human misery and lost opportunities. It is a dire and unacceptable reality. The beauty of the vital task to solve the world's water and sanitation problems is that it is entirely doable. Individual as well as joint action to deal with water scarcity is necessary. Water justice is intimately linked to peace, development and human rights. Ignorance and unfounded pessimism are real problems. People from all walks of life need to react and to choose the path that will lead to mutual gain, peace, security and prosperity.

2.0 SUSTAINABILITY : WITH WATER

The human beings on earth require water from cradle to grave. The water is a vital resource and foremost in self sustenance of humans. Sustainability is the capacity to endure. For humans, sustainability is the long-term maintenance of responsibility, which has environmental, economic and social dimensions, and encompasses the concept of stewardship, the responsible management of resource use.

Human sustainability interfaces with economics .Ways of living more sustainably can take many forms from controlling living conditions by developing means to make optimal use of important resources like water, to reappraising work practices or developing new technologies that reduce the consumption of resources. So three pillars of sustainability are :Economy, Society and Environment and all three are interlinked and clearly indicate that careful management of environment and its resources is required at every stage and at all levels to improve the economy and to bring about prosperous society and vice versa. The best example of this interlinkage and interdependence of three pillars of sustainability is apparent from scenario of water resources.

3.0 WATER AND POVERTY

Poverty is the state of human beings who are poor. That is, they have little or no material means of surviving—little or no food, shelter, clothes, healthcare, education, and other physical means of living and improving one's life. Poverty reduction measures are those that raise, or are intended to raise, the material level of living. Poverty occurs in both developing countries and developed countries. While poverty is much more widespread in developing countries, both types of countries undertake poverty reduction measures. Poverty alleviation also involves improving the living conditions of people who

are already poor. Water is a vital input into many types of human activities that affect poverty reduction.

3.1 A GLASS OF WATER – A DREAM FOR 800 MILLION

A glass of water is a luxury, a dream for more than 800 million people in the world. Poverty is exacerbated by poor water management. An estimated 1.5 billion people worldwide are currently without sustainable access to safe drinking water, and 1.87 billion without basic sanitation. Intensifying competition for water resources in many regions is increasing problems of water scarcity and “stress”, threatening supply for both household use and productive activities. Issues of water supply & sanitation and water resource management are inter-related; if water-related poverty is to be effectively reduced, objectives relating to both must find their place as topmost priority. The key issues such as how to target and deliver new water facilities to the “unserved”, how to protect poor communities from vulnerability to shocks (such as drought or flood), how to overcome information and capacity constraints relating to measurement and monitoring of rates of depletion (and pollution) of ground and surface waters, and how to make best use of available resources (financial, natural and other) are to be addressed to combine economic growth and social protection.

3.2 WATER – LIFE FOR AGRICULTURE

Agriculture which is also called farming or husbandry is the cultivation of animals, plants, fungi, and other life forms for food, fiber, and other products used to sustain life. Without agriculture the human life does not survive as it produces basic raw food, vegetarian or non-vegetarian, for mankind. The basic input for agriculture is water and without adequate quantity of this input no civilization can sustain for long. Agriculture has played a key role in the development of human civilization. Until the Industrial Revolution, the vast majority of the human population labored in agriculture.

Raising farm incomes is described as the core of the antipoverty effort as three quarters of the poor today are farmers. Improving water management is an effective way to help reduce poverty among farmers. With better water management, they can improve productivity and potentially move beyond subsistence-level farming. During the Green Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, for example, irrigation was a key factor in unlocking Asia's agricultural potential and reducing poverty. Between 1961 and 2002, the irrigated area almost doubled, as governments sought to achieve food security, improve public welfare and generate economic growth. With the increase in irrigation facilities, people with land could reliably grow rice or vegetables instead of working as labourers or relying on rainfall to water their crops. Those without land could benefit by working within new inland fisheries.

The world agricultural output in 2011 was 5.9% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) where as it was 18.1% of its GDP in India. Access to irrigation encourages families with opportunities to diversify their livelihood activities and potentially increase their income.

3.4 WATER AND HEALTH

Good health is a key to poverty reduction, directly affecting the quality of life of poor people and an essential pre-requisite for sustainable increase in income. Sustainable improvements to health conditions are a key to poverty reduction, and in turn improvements in water management are a key to improving health conditions. Water and health are intricately linked. A workable public health perspective of all water issues requires a clear definition of the nature and magnitude of the links between water and health. There are basically two types of links between water management and the incidence of ill health: water as the conveyance medium of pathogens and water providing the habitat for vectors and intermediate hosts of pathogens. To these can be added the significance of water availability in rural areas in determining food security and nutritional status (itself a key determinant of health) and, in some parts of the world, the growing significance of water-related disasters such as floods, storms and major pollution incidents result in injuries, deaths and the incidence of many diseases.

3.5 FLOODS AND DROUGHTS – PROSPERITY TO POVERTY

Floods, droughts and major storms kill tens of thousands, cause billions of dollars of damage and affect the lives of many millions each year. Such water related disasters undermine development and destroy livelihoods often throwing people into poverty. It is increasingly recognised that natural disaster management should be an integral part of water resources management systems. This involves all stages in the disaster management cycle: prevention and adaptation measures, early warning and disaster preparedness systems, disaster relief during the event and post-disaster recovery. The approach will require a combination of structural measures such as river levees and coastal embankments and non-structural measures like early warning systems, emergency relief measures and post-disaster actions to help affected people rebuild their livelihoods. The same is true for all sudden-onset disasters, such as major storms and mudslides.

4.0 TOLL OF LACK OF WATER OR POTABLE QUALITY WATER

The scarcity of water is primary medium for human devastation. Still, in many villages women can be seen fetching water from far off places and in such areas, we see no buildings, no schools, no markets but we can witness grey skins and can listen chantings of a single word, Water, Water, Water! In some areas, there is total lack of direct access to water. When people are not getting adequate water to fulfil their basic needs, they cannot contribute in development of nation as most their energies and time is spent in fetching water for their domestic needs. The world is moving towards the goal of one laptop per child whereas in many areas even one bucket of water per day per child is not available.

Malnutrition is a crucial contributing factor to the impact of health, which in turn is related to scarcity of water. Inadequate sanitation and unclean water are still major threats, causing the deaths of an estimated 1.8 million people worldwide each year, of which 1.6 million are children. This high disease burden is associated with a high incidence of poverty.

5.0 WATER AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights relate two most important resources - Water and Human beings. The relationship between human rights and human development and environmental justice and global poverty suggest an inescapable element of what may at first glance seem to be simply matters of personal consumer. Water and human rights have a direct link. This link is established in canon of International dimensions. Right to Life and Right to Water suffice the explanation of importance of Water for human life. Right to Water clearly states every human being should have access to sufficient quantity of water to meet his basic needs, that too, at affordable price.

Even Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, makes it clear that everyone has right to a standard of living adequate for health and well being of himself and his family, so there can be no doubt that water is essential.

6. INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (IWRM) : A WAY TO PROSPERITY

IWRM means “Improve the efficient use of water resources and promote their allocation among competing uses in a way that gives priority to the satisfaction of basic human needs and balances the requirement of preserving or restoring ecosystems and their functions, in particular in fragile environments, with human domestic, industrial and agriculture needs, including safeguarding drinking water quality.”

Water management is a good investment: not only can it contribute to poverty reduction, but it can do so in ways that are affordable and, in many cases, generate wealth. Water management needs to be linked to wider poverty reduction processes at national and local levels: this is the key approach to integrated water resources management, and part of a wider process of poverty reduction and sustainable development. Water management is a key factor in the global battle to remove the scourge of extreme poverty and to build secure and prosperous lives for hundreds of millions of people in the developing world.

We can understand the poverty as a complex and variable phenomenon that is as much a reflection of insecurity and vulnerability as it is poor access to material goods. This includes an understanding that the poor have limited choices over how they meet their needs and are often forced into pathways that they know are unsustainable but over which they have little or no choice.

6.1 INVESTING IN WATER FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Water management needs to be linked to wider poverty reduction processes. Investments in water resources development and management can contribute to promote sustainable development on an area basis -- such as multi-purpose river basin development and aquifer management--and through targeted actions addressing one or more particular goals in a specific location, such as watershed management within degraded areas farmed by poor families.

The investments in water are a good bet: not just for social, health and environmental reasons but also to directly generate economic growth.

6.2 INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS AND POVERTY REDUCTION

Doing infrastructure right means that substantial new investments in water control infrastructure are needed, including major water control structures to increase storage capacity and regulate water flows, but these need to be part of a package of structural and non-structural measures that includes social, environmental and health safeguards. Water management can be a catalyst for growth through infrastructure investments by creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs in supplying technologies, constructing facilities and providing services.

6.3 FINDING THE FINANCE: A WAY TO POVERTY REDUCTION

Innovations in financing the water sector are essential if the potential of water in poverty reduction is to be realised. This includes both increased financial flows from the international community and, more importantly, actions to enhance levels of internal capital generation in developing countries, including from the private sector and the poor themselves. Finance in any deal may result in profit, may result in loss but in Water resources upliftment, its only profit and profit, Increased resource flows to water management have positive impacts on poverty and are beneficial in social, environmental and economic terms.

6.4 GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR PROSPERITY

Good governance is an issue that, in different forms, is now seen as fundamental to any poverty reduction strategy. It has many dimensions: creating a fair legal, policy and regulatory framework in which the rights of people to access resources are secured; improving the effectiveness, accountability and transparency of government agencies; ensuring the participation of the poor in decision making; enhancing the role of civil society; ensuring basic security and political freedoms.

Water governance is more than national level water legislation, regulations and institutions, though these are important components. It also refers to the processes that exist to promote popular participation in designing water and sanitation systems and where decisions about those systems are made.

6.5 WATER AND HEALTH MEASURES LEADING TO PROSPERITY

Good health is most essential for poverty reduction, directly affecting the quality of life of poor people and an essential pre-requisite for sustainable increases in income. This can be achieved by water management especially in domestic and sanitation sectors.

7. CONCLUSION

Thus links have been analysed and the different ways in which improvements to water management can advance the cause of poverty reduction have been outlined. Indeed, improving access to water is in some cases an essential pre-condition for achieving growth targets. The paper also gives a clear and

optimistic message for the future. It illustrates that improving the contribution of water management to poverty reduction is not just achievable: it is affordable. In many cases, it is a good investment that generates growth and gives rates of return comparable with investments in any other sector. And these benefits are directly targeted to the poor, and especially to women who bear many of the burdens that a lack of investments in water creates. Investing in water, in reforms to the institutions that govern water management and creating more effective partnerships to focus international support to water and environmental sustainability are all essential. It can be said that we are facing a critical challenge in building on and supporting the actions so that the existing role that water management plays in poverty reduction can be enhanced in the future.

Development, peace and human rights are inter related; there is no peace without development, there is no development without peace and there is no lasting peace or sustainable development without respect for human rights. They are truly the pillars of prosperity and a life of dignity that every human being deserves. It is no surprise that water is a fundamental dynamic in each of these pillars. And we need to conserve and manage water resources for reducing extreme poverty.

There are important tasks now before us. They are urgent, and in the case of water, truly concrete in character. We know the causes and we understand what must be done to make sure that people have the clean water and sanitation they need to live healthy productive lives.

To accomplish all this, we may have to move out from our own comfort zones and sometimes act out of character. We can no longer afford to wait politely while the world bides its time getting to these problems. The urgency of the situation requires us to speed things up, raise our voices and, if necessary, become harsher in our calls for action....early action. We also need to change our traditional frame of reference. We now have to move from fact-finding and early warning to fact facing and early action.

It is time for us to introduce an era of responsibility in our work on water and sanitation. The means we need to think of the world's water as a resource that belongs to everyone, a concept that we could call hydrosolidarity. It's now time to unite around the cause of water as an essential requirement of life and human dignity taking us to a world of prosperity.

CERTIFICATE

The author(s) certify that the paper titled "PROSPERITY WITH WATER" and submitted for consideration for Conference on "India Water Week" to be held in New Delhi from 10-14 April, 2012 is in original and has not been published or presented at any other forum.

Signature of Author(s): DEEPIKA SHARMA & KK RAO

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