

# NGO MAJOR GROUP DISCUSSION PAPER ON WATER, SANITATION AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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## **1. Introduction**

Issues relating to water, sanitation and human settlements are indeed complex and invariably interconnected. An overall understanding of how it all functions together is something few can claim to know. An integrated approach is what is essential and the lack thereof is perhaps the biggest barrier to effective implementation.

A crisis of global magnitude is looming on account of inadequate access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation. The compelling statistics are well-known, and urgently demand action.

A fundamentally new approach to water, sanitation and human settlements will be needed if the aim is to satisfy the water needs of 8-10 billion people while protecting the eco-systems that sustain our economies and terrestrial life. Evolving strategies to ensure sustainable livelihoods and communities is at the heart of a resolution to this crisis

## **2. NGO Perspectives on the status of implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) in relation to Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements: Issues that require attention, including identified obstacles and barriers.**

There are many issues that arise within the issue areas of water, sanitation and human settlements. To identify the root-causes for failures of implementation, we give a perspective of its complexity. But first, the barrier of little public participation:

### **2.1 Public Participation**

At the root of many failures is the lack of public participation, including participation of organized forms of the public such as NGOs. Some would argue it is the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of Sustainable Development. Participation is not happening due to governance failures, but also due to lack of awareness. People still do not understand the concept of sustainability and do not know how they can contribute to its achievement. Perhaps the lack of focused attention in the education systems is a factor here. This leads to gaps and divergences in governments and NGO efforts to raise awareness among citizen groups.

Governments need to support and reinforce the efforts of the NGO community in this respect. This would lead to greater participation of the public to promote sustainable development at local levels especially. In the United Kingdom, issues of sustainability are now being included in the school curriculums via for example, the Sustainable Design Awards for 16-18 year olds and the Sustainable Technology Education Project for 11-16 year olds. Such programmes should be encouraged, replicated and amply funded to raise awareness.

At the intergovernmental level, avenues for public participation in managing transboundary watercourses will be essential to ensuring better governance and less conflict among nations. An example of this is the 1995 Protocol on Shared Watercourse Systems (SADC Protocol) in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region signed by thirteen countries which promotes public awareness, public participation, and environmental impact assessment as management tools for transboundary watercourses. Within the region, the 1999 Shared Rivers Initiative seeks to achieve equitable distribution of water resources in the Icomati River Basin, and in other international river basins eventually. The initiative has established a basin wide research agenda and a network of scientists to it. It hopes to foster research that generates legitimate data in a transparent and politically acceptable way and to develop a methodology that can be applied to other, more complex basins in the region.

More examples are possible, all illustrating the enormous added value of public participation in decision-making.

## **2.2 Water**

This section describes in more detail issues arising in the area of Water and Sanitation.

### Water is a fundamental Human Right

The fact that water is not treated as a basic human right remains a major impediment to equitable access, distribution and use of water. Water is a fundamental life-support, which cannot be treated as a commercial commodity with supply and demand manipulated to increase its value and with alternatives that can be substituted. Water is a public trust issue and which must not be privatized. New developments in international human rights law provide a viable framework to measure and improve government performance. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has elaborated specific rights, roles and responsibilities at different levels and it provides an enforceable framework for recognizing water as a human right. For instance, the Committee has determined that governments are now accountable to taking specific, measurable steps towards fulfilling the right to water. It has also specified in detail the rights of communities, obligations of governments and even identified when a “violation” would be found to occur.

The right to water is included in many other laws such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on Discrimination against Women, the San Salvador Protocol, the Addis Ababa Charter, the Senegal Convention, the Maputo Convention and others. However, these and other human rights obligations are not being taken seriously enough by national governments.

### State sovereignty

Governments must assert their primary responsibility for providing and regulating water and sanitation services. The obligation to protect the right to water includes the obligation to prevent third parties, including corporations, from interfering with the enjoyment of that right. States must therefore retain sovereignty over water as a resource and adopt effective legislation and strong regulatory frameworks to ensure third parties do not deny rights of equal access or pollute or inequitably extract water resources

### Incoherence in Governance

Good governance implies the existence of a firm public authority responsible for fair distribution and equal treatment of users. It must ensure that the provision of services remains within the ambit of the public authority closest to the user. Public participation in decision-making and participation to review, monitor and evaluate quality of services provided will ensure transparency. Flexible modes of management must be explored. However, at this stage incoherence prevails at both policy formulation and at institutional levels and, that hampers the implementation process.

#### (i) Policy incoherence

There remains an absence of policy coherence within and among various government departments. There is little or no coordination among various agencies and actors. The lack of transparency in decision making and participatory processes adds to the lack of ownership of actions and decisions at local community level.

### Lack of Integrated water resource management policies

The absence of an adequate emphasis on integrated water resource management policies and plans presents a major barrier in dealing with issues associated with Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements. Rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests and all other freshwater ecosystems are not just sources of supply, they are habitats for a wide variety of plant and animal species. These ecosystems also perform valuable services for human societies such as moderating floods and droughts, purifying water and sustaining fisheries. Hence nothing but a holistic ecosystem-based approach will suffice in addressing these issues.

### Cross-cutting issues, water, sanitation and human settlements

Poverty and access to water have been repeatedly shown to be directly related. Unsustainable consumption and production patterns affect poverty which in turn leads to resource degradation. The “domestication” of international commitments or securing “country ownership” of international policy prescriptions as a way to ensure functioning and sustainable local markets is one way forward in addressing linkages between international commitments and national policy goal and national budgets.

The focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) has been accompanied by a new narrowing of the policy focus on a small number of blueprint models for water management and water delivery, such as privatisation as a panacea for weak service delivery by national and local governments and a renewed attention for large scale infrastructure.

Whereas these approaches have not proven their effectiveness in contributing to poverty alleviation, sustainable development or the MDGs, the singular focus on these water management and delivery options is crowding out alternatives that merit equal attention from governments, donors and multilateral institutions. It is important to incorporate these approaches in Water Management Plans scheduled to be prepared by 2005 according to the JPOI.

Indeed, NGOs and other local actors, such as community organisations and local governments have a key role in identifying and developing options to improve water management and service delivery. Too often, these initiatives are not encouraged let alone supported with resources. They are severely hampered by central policy decisions that fail to recognise their potential and limit their scope.

#### (ii) Institutional Incoherence

Coherence is found to be an implementation stumbling block not just at the level of policy formulation but also at the institutional and inter-institutional level as well.

At the community level, governance can be improved by building increased capacity for decision-making within the community to raise funds and mobilize internal human and financial resources. Communities know their needs, and their potential, and are well placed to outsource funds for community-scaled water developments.

At the international financial level, IMF rules and conditionalities to control the public debt of developing countries must be. Budgetary constraints always impose greater burdens on the poorest of the poor. Specific directives should therefore be in place for protecting the public budgets for water and sanitation supply to the poorest communities. Any payments for water by users should not enter into government budgets as tax revenue. They must only be seen as payments for services.

Given renewed attention of multilateral financing organisations and bilateral donors for large scale infrastructure projects to help attain the MDGs, it is of major importance that recommendations of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) are followed on a national level, such as is happening in Nepal, Pakistan and South Africa. From the perspective of establishing effective participatory processes and identifying sustainable options for water management and provision, key recommendations and guidelines of the WCD are:

- To assure that decision making processes related to large scale infrastructure projects allow for prior informed consent of all stakeholders, including local actors;
- That alternative management options are considered in the decision making process.

#### *Water Privatization takes priority*

Although the introduction of market mechanisms and an increased role of the private sector may theoretically lead to socially equitable and environmentally sustainable development, the introduction of economic instruments in the creation of water markets requires complex regulatory frameworks and institutions.

However, the tendency is to consider economic instruments and market mechanisms as an adequate way to respond to existing weaknesses of the public. As such, the increasing attention towards private sector involvement and the creation of markets for those goods and services that have been part of the public domain is a logical follow-up of the Structural Adjustment Programmes and current Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) that call for a diminished role for the public sector.

In countries with a weak institutional and legal framework, such an approach brings with it tremendous risks, and can possibly generate new inequities and further stress on the environment. Therefore, the potential of water markets and private sector involvement should always be considered in nation-specific institutional, socio-economic and legal contexts. Such policy analyses should always set out to assure access to clean drinking water as a basic human right, as well as to protect the ecological, economic and social (livelihood) functions of water-related ecosystems.

Endemic water shortages created by drought, inequitable geographic and social distribution of supply, population growth, wastage by agriculture and industry, lack of pollution control standards coupled with poor or nonexistent waste water treatment, cannot be addressed under most privatization schemes. It is government, and its ability to govern resources, that needs strengthening and hand-in-hand with civil society and local communities.

Addressing these problems often requires democratic and governance reforms, as was recognized in the The Hague Declaration on Water Security. The reality is that the present global market for water supply technology and services is large, undiversified and inequitable. This 400 billion dollar industry is controlled by just a few large multinationals. They are also subsidized, receiving export credits from their governments and sharing in the benefits of development loans to the countries in which they agree to do business.

## **2.2 Human Settlements**

Sustainable human settlements mean settlements where everyone's needs are met with ways of managing resource use and waste generation that do not pass on costs to other locations or to the future. Crucial is that people have the fundamental human right to housing.

Despite the work undertaken in the UNCED process and in the HABITAT process, many problems persist and inequalities are growing. There is an urgent need for new approaches and for disseminating and scaling up existing examples of successful approaches.

International society should refrain from generalised approaches to issues confronting human settlements. Policy and support (including financial) should focus on local action already undertaken and how communities and neighbourhoods can help themselves. Within this basic framework there are many different issues that must be considered:

### *Justice*

Within cities there exist major inequalities between neighbourhoods, something that city-wide indicators too often obscure and ignore. Poor neighbourhoods usually have the worst facilities, the poorest environments, and inadequate economic development. This inequality contributes greatly to exclusion and the rise of security problems within cities. Urban regeneration schemes are extremely important to meet the needs of those suffering from environmental and social injustice, but these schemes rarely consider mapping neighbourhood level environmental pressures, nor are they always participatory. Low-income settlements are themselves often heterogeneous, with certain groups finding themselves excluded within them. Other groups such as the elderly, the disabled, or people of different ethnicities may also be excluded from local decision-making processes and power structures.

### *Poverty*

Most governments set their income-based poverty lines too low for urban populations, because they make little or no allowance for non-food needs. This means that they under-estimate who is poor (and the depth of their poverty) in those places where non-food needs are particularly expensive i.e. in most cities where many or most poor groups face high costs for housing, water (purchased from vendors because they have no official supply), keeping children at school, health care, transport (to and from work and accessing services) and fuel. In many nations, the same income-based poverty line is set for all rural and urban dwellers, even though many costs are higher in urban areas or in particular districts. The increasing use of the US\$1 a day poverty line also greatly under-estimates the scale of urban poverty because most urban households cannot meet their basic needs with an income of a dollar a day; the more monetized the economy and expensive the city, the more the dollar a day poverty line understates the scale of urban poverty.

There are also many aspects of (urban and rural) poverty that are not directly related to income levels (for instance civil and political rights and other democratic rights; the rule of law) or only partially related to income levels (poor quality housing and inadequate provision for water, sanitation, drainage and health care which are often caused as much by ineffective governance as by poor households' incapacity to pay).

### *The Built Environment, including housing*

Human Settlements consist of buildings, infrastructure and open spaces. Where buildings are built, how they are built, with what materials, and for what purpose, and who owns them are all elements that need to be considered in developing a sustainable settlement. In many countries in the developing world, the regulations governing building standards were established in the colonial era, and were often copied from those of the colonial power. Most do not allow for the use of affordable, appropriate building materials which are often more sustainable. In Kenya, for example, reform of these regulations has made a significant contribution to allowing poor women and men to build and occupy legal dwellings.

Many cities are experimenting with ecological building, new social housing projects that prevent the security and poor living conditions that have marked low-income neighbourhoods across the world, decentralising business districts, shopping districts, and building transport hubs in such a manner that they invite use of public transport systems. In the case of the existing built environment, many richer nations have programmes to increase the energy efficiency of buildings and increase the 'liveability' of neighbourhoods. They must be continued and scaled up.

Internationally, governments have agreed a target to significantly improve the living conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers before 2020 (UN Millennium Development Goals). Yet this is an unambitious goal given that there are 800-900 million people living in 'slums' and that by 2020, if action is not taken, 120 million new slum dwellers will have joined the ranks, thus outpacing the target. More improvements are needed in the form of land-distribution and land-ownership as well as new building programmes and more attention to extending and improving basic infrastructure for water, sanitation and drainage. Many initiatives to improve slum-dweller's living conditions are undertaken by organisations of slum-dweller themselves. Many national governments are responding to those needs, yet more could be done, especially in the field of micro-finance.

The privatisation of housing, especially in rich countries, decreases the opportunities of the poor to access that housing. Massive privatisation in some of the Newly Independent States has put over 90% of the housing stock in private hands. This takes place alongside the growth in gated communities, and increasing spatial and social segregation.

Community Based Organisations have a key role in delivering change. Despite little support they have repeatedly shown what can be done (see examples below). But too often they (and local NGOs) are excluded from the planning, construction and financial control of new housing and infrastructure.

### *Transport*

The human love-affair with individualised and motorised transport (primarily cars and scooters) continues to contribute to the deteriorating ecological conditions in cities, and the consequent economic loss caused by traffic congestion. This is worsened by a steady decrease in public support for public transportation systems. Without policy coherence on the national level related to decreasing the use of cars, this trend is likely to continue. Priority should be given to good quality public transport, non-motorised forms of transport (including walking and bicycling that give, through more people on the streets, security benefits as well as health-benefits) and good communication systems.

### *Economic Development*

In this era of globalisation, local communities are increasingly confronted with uncertainties regarding relocation of production facilities, or the closing down of subsidiaries of foreign owned corporations. Many communities find their local industries more and more dependent, if not wholly owned, by distant multi-national corporations. This increases economic insecurity, and decreases the reinvestment of profits in local communities. Management of large corporate entities is no longer in any way attached to the local community. The threat of relocation hampers the ability of communities to co-operate effectively and on equal footing with local corporate entities to improve environmental conditions around industrial sites. The lack of corporate accountability is a major barrier to inclusive local community development.

Local production and consumption, involving Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in a participatory manner, can contribute a great deal to improving the local economy as well as the local environment, including through significant reductions in transportation costs. Governments nationally and locally are limited in what they can do to stimulate local production-consumption schemes by national or international trading and investment rules.

### *Urban Planning*

The scene in many cities around the world is one of concentrated business districts, industrial zones, residential areas (high and low density) including slums, and urban sprawl. As urbanisation increases, lessons about good practice in urban planning need to be widely disseminated. Good urban planning, involving real citizen participation, can contribute significantly to relieving the social and environmental injustices currently experienced within settlements.

Urban sprawl imposes great strains on the living environment, through increased transport emissions and costs (with attached issues of more people in cars than in streets, leading to increased security problems), and a higher impact on surrounding land. The focus however, on city centre regeneration has caused neglect for the needs of the existing suburbs, making it likely that in the next decades we will be confronted with increasing problems there.

### **3. NGO activities and case studies on the implementation of Water and Sanitation and Human Settlement projects.**

NGO activities focused on sustainable development projects are many and varied. Some are direct actions to improve the living conditions in specific neighborhoods such as actions to improve access to local water supply and sanitation, others tackle the surrounding natural environment or work to secure and improve participation mechanisms, and some undertake policy research and advocacy to create appropriate socio-economic conditions. The case studies below furnish a body of knowledge rooted in the experience of practitioners rather than theorists, illustrating the practical challenges faced and overcome.

A paper of this nature is unlikely to capture the enormous amount of activity undertaken at all these levels by the tens of millions of community based organizations and NGOs worldwide. For instance, in Latin America, from the late 1960s onwards, it was largely local NGOs that developed more participatory models of working with low-income populations in tenements and squatter settlements, while they also helped fight for a return to democracy and for more accountable local government. In Asia and Africa, NGOs working with community organizations have been at the forefront of challenging the large-scale evictions promoted by national, state and local governments, as well as developing more effective models for upgrading squatter settlements.

Two different kinds of partnerships have been tried to increase effectiveness in poverty reduction, sustainable development. The first was through working with the private sector, especially for urban infrastructure (including provision for water and sanitation) and in some cases housing finance. The second was working with the urban poor, including their community organizations and local NGOs. For extending and improving provision for water and sanitation, privatization proved disappointing; it did not succeed in bringing in large new sources of capital for investment from private markets (which had been one of the justifications for promoting it); and private companies were interested primarily in large cities with sizable middle classes rather than the smaller, poorer urban settlements where most of those without adequate provision actually live. In housing finance, some private sector or public-

private partnerships succeeded in expanding the number of modest-income households who could access housing finance but with little or no success at reaching the poorest groups.

In the second kind of partnership, there has been more success. In at least 11 nations, there are now federations formed by the urban poor and homeless that have developed their own poverty reduction programmes, drawing on their own resources and capacities and negotiating with local and national government for support. In most of these nations, there are also support NGOs that work in very close partnership with the federations. In many other nations, comparable organizations are developing.

## **Case Studies on Water and Sanitation**

### *Case Study One: Rainwater Harvesting*

In Africa, the International Rain Water Harvesting Association (IRHA) has been promoting a broadly designed platform to ensure that rainwater harvesting technologies are a fundamental part of sustainable development. Recognizing that the majority of people in Africa suffer from poverty linked to food insecurity and scarcity of drinking water, the IRHA works to mainstream rain water harvesting as a readily available local resource in development agendas for sustained livelihoods and Millennium Development Goal implementation strategies. The IRHA stresses the importance of synergies among various Ministries of Water, Rural Development, Environment, Housing and Economic Development as well as the need for national governments to establish institutional frameworks that encompass rural, urban, peri-urban environments to promote and design five year Plans of Action on Rain Water Harvesting. Strengthening rain water harvesting networks will facilitate the promotion of and cross fertilization of knowledge, build a data base of practices and strengthen regional cooperation in the African continent. The IRHA also endeavors to mainstream rain water harvesting expertise into educational policies and works with educational institutions to widely disseminate such understanding.

In Pakistan, the use of the rainwater harvesting concept in water management and local area development in the drylands for combating desertification and poverty is provided by SCOPE, the Society for Conservation and Protection of the Environment. SCOPE is currently functional in 3 districts- Malir, Dadu and Tharparkar in the Sindh Province. SCOPE has launched a campaign to protect agricultural and pastoral communal lands and rain water harvesting has been promoted through building small check dams and water collection ponds in the villages with the help of local communities. Such activities have resulted in the enhancement of aquifers and the availability of water for drinking and livestock use. SCOPE is now incorporating water purification into community development by introducing biosand filtration technology.

### *Case Study Two: The Integrated Slums Development Programme (ISDP) Pakistan*

Also in Pakistan, the Integrated Slums Development Programme (ISDP) of Anjuman Samaji Behbood (ASB) in Faisalabad has been facilitating the laying of Water and Sanitation systems in low lying areas of the city utilizing the community's own resources in an innovative way of working.

In Hassanpura, NGO research showed that the residents paid heavily for the purchase of water and solid waste collection. In 1995, cash spending of Hassanpura equaled USD\$100 on a daily basis when average household income per household was \$2. Residents also were spending inordinate amounts on medicines, house repairs and procurement of basic services. Through self help and the work of ARB residents after 3 years have financed and constructed their own primary and secondary sanitation and water works as well as maintaining infrastructure in collaboration with the municipality. As a result of ASB's efforts, 5302 households now enjoy water and sanitation services. 109,499 feet of

pipes have now been laid and 17.3 million rupees or USD 0.299 million has been earned by residents of low income areas. In the absence of this work, residents would have paid 850 million rupees or \$14.66 million in ten years towards medicines, water supply and solid waste collection.

ASB's fundamental work has been in aligning stakeholder responsibilities and relationships. The NGO progressed beyond participation to orchestrating and mediating previously estranged stakeholders to collaborate while staying within their specific mandates. The community undertook to construct their own tertiary and secondary sanitation works and linked them to primary municipal works. In its own relations with local communities, ASB clearly established that it is teacher not contractor. ASB informs the community about their own cumulative conditions.

*Case Study Three: Hornad River Basin Coalition, Slovak Republic*

In the historical region of Upper Abov, located in Slovakia and Hungary, civic association SOSNA, started the Hornad River Coalition in 2002 between 14 villages in Slovakia and 19 villages in Hungary. The Slovakian part is host to a number of large pollution sources such as steel plants and waste incineration plants. But in other regions the river basin is characterized by well preserved oxbows and wetlands, hilly areas covered by forests and important cultural and historical sites. First a "River Coalition" which is a cross-sectoral agreement prepared with the cooperation of interested groups, along the selected watershed including local self governments, the River Management Company, the Environmental Protection Agency, local industry, farmers, schools, NGOs and small businesses was set up. Secondly a "River Contract" was written, signed by all participants expressing their willingness to realize concrete activities leading to the improvement of ecological, social and economic conditions in the watershed. Participants also accept responsibility such as decreasing pollution by certain limits, adopting clean technologies and carrying out practical watershed-friendly activities etc. The River Contract has now been signed by 25 organizations from all sectors.

## Case Studies on Human Settlements

*Case study one: Slum-dwellers federations.*

*India:* The Indian NGO, SPARC and its alliance with women's co-operatives (*Mahila Milan*) formed by 'slum' and pavement dwellers and the National Slum Dwellers Federation are working in many different locations in India to improve housing and living conditions and basic service provision and to support savings groups that are reaching hundreds of thousands of low-income dwellers. This Alliance has shown how work in many different areas can contribute to poverty reduction such as community-based and community-managed savings and credit groups, house construction, the development of community-designed, built and managed toilet blocks and community-managed resettlement programmes – but to do so, they have to be based on what low-income groups and their organizations can do for themselves. These federations have some 700,000 households as members and they are active in 52 urban areas. They have managed resettlement programmes involving over 20,000 households and a community-managed public toilet programme serving hundreds of thousands of low-income dwellers.

*South Africa:* The South African Homeless People's Federation and its support NGO People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter have helped secure land for housing for tens of thousands of its members and also helped them design and build new homes with provision for water, sanitation and other infrastructure. The federation has around 100,000 households as members, formed into over 1,500 autonomous savings and credit groups that help poor households build their own asset base and have access to credit to cope with shocks. But perhaps as importantly, this federation has demonstrated to national, state and local governments the capacities of urban poor households to design, build and manage their own homes and neighborhoods much more cheaply and effectively than the contractor-built 'low income housing estates' that the government also funded. The South African federation has also helped many other urban poor federations set up and expand in other African nations.

*Kenya:* The Kenyan NGO Pamoja Trust and the urban poor federation in Kenya (*Muungano wa Wanvijiji*) is working in many informal settlements where a high proportion of Kenya's urban population live - in Nairobi and several other urban centers. Building a consensus within informal settlements and from this a representative community structure is particularly important in Kenya because of the conflicting priorities within settlements between landlords (the 'structure owners') and their tenants and the ethnic divisions that politicians have long manipulated. The urban poor organizations are based on community-based savings schemes. 'Slum' enumerations undertaken by the federation and house modeling (where communities develop their preferred design for housing) help to build consensus among the inhabitants on upgrading and tenure and develop community capacity to manage these. This also helps to build a critical mass of communities to engage municipal authorities or national government while building the capacities of its leadership.

Many other urban federations are also showing success: programmes underway in Cambodia responded to the effectiveness of the Solidarity and Urban Poor Federation there, while thousands of urban poor households have negotiated land sites on which to build in Zimbabwe (despite the political difficulties there, the Zimbabwean federation has 45,000 members).

*Case Study Two: Networking, ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability*

ANPED brings together 100 NGOs from North America, Western and Central Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. 30 of ANPED's members are networks themselves, significantly increasing the number of NGOs and CBOs currently linked to ANPED's work. For the past 6 years, ANPED has undertaken many activities within its Local Action for Sustainability Programme. The primary activity has been to link locally active NGOs and CBOs within the network, to exchange skills, knowledge and experiences in order to excel at the local level in action for sustainable development, public participation and community involvement. Where possible, new subjects are introduced with the help of external experts. As such, a strong network has evolved of locally active groups which ensures that within the ANPED region the expertise is present to support local communities in becoming sustainable.

*Case Study Three: GAP International*

Agenda 21 established that sustainable development can only be realized if a strong local movement is initiated. One such vehicle that emerged towards this end is the EcoTeam Programme, developed by Global Action Plan for the Earth (GAP). Developed by a team of international social scientists and consultants, it aims to offer citizens not only a guideline for the adoption of a sustainable lifestyle but also a support structure for its day to day implementation. In an EcoTeam, 6-8 participants, mostly neighbors, set out their options to use less energy, fuel, water and materials in their households, aided by a coach, a workbook and a feed back system. In all 18 (Northern including CEE countries) where varieties of this programme have run, teams have found that they could easily bring down their use of energy and materials by 5-30%, with as collateral benefits lower energy bills and good neighborly relations. An estimated 50,000 people participated, spread over 18 countries. Subsequently EcoTeam members have participated in other local sustainability initiatives, such as Local Agenda 21 working groups, car-sharing schemes, twin city exchanges, LETS systems and campaigns for sustainable regional retail products and outlets.

However, successful and innovative, the GAP organisation worldwide has had a tough struggle for survival. Governments, utilities and other donors tend to be wary to support multi issue, people – oriented approaches of this type. Secondly, although volunteers could rather easily be recruited for this positive empowering work, in most countries the period in which the public was ready to commit to this rather structured, predominantly green type of programme was rather short (1992-1997) However, new varieties continue to be developed and used, including programmes for schools and communities.

*Case Study Four: Habitat International Coalition*

The Habitat International Coalition (HIC) is dedicated to action for the recognition, defense and full implementation of the right of everyone to a secure place in which to live in peace and dignity, in all countries. It acts as an international pressure group in defense of the rights of the homeless and poor and the inadequately housed. It promotes the creation of awareness among the public in general about human settlement problems as well as the exchange of information on these problems and their solutions among its members. It functions as a platform for the formulation of NGO policies and strategies in the field of human settlements. It acts as their spokesperson in contacts with international organizations.

HIC aims to attain these objectives by means of

- (i) the mounting of campaigns, either in cooperation or otherwise with other NGOs and CBOs and social movements;
- (ii) the undertaking of seminars and conferences;
- (iii) the publication of statements, reports, newsletters and other study and information materials;
- (iv) the undertaking of research and other projects;
- (v) the support of networks and information exchanges among its members and other NGOs social movements and organizations;
- (vi) any other legal means.

*Case Study five: The Sustainable Community Movement in Appalachia, USA*

The grass roots movements in the poor rural areas of the Appalachian Mountains, USA are working against a history of domestic exploitation, colonialism and landlessness. Groups in the Movement are working against:

- mountaintop removal and the massive automation in the Appalachian coalfields;
- Deforestation from chip mills and air pollution impacts related to coal fired power generation and vehicle emissions;
- Hyper development of the higher elevations for tourism;
- Surface and ground water over-consumption and contamination from mining , petrochemical, agriculture and weak development regulations;
- Corporate power using community rights;
- The continued de-industrialization and rising unemployment of southern Appalachia.

National policies are diverting vast resources away from communities in Appalachia. Environmental and social conditions continue to deteriorate. The Appalachian Coalition for Just and Sustainable communities was formed in 2002 to stimulate networking and use popular education and research to empower grass roots change. The Coalition envisions an “Appalachian Agenda 21” and members are integrating global perspectives to inform their efforts toward that end.

Distressed communities are looking for development alternatives, not for aesthetic reasons but out of necessity. This thread binds the people of Appalachia with many others worldwide. The plight of Appalachia shows that even in “developed” nations, policies are developed and implemented that are not supportive of sustainable community development.

*Case Study Six : The experiences with Local Agenda 21*

Since 1992 around 7000 Local Agenda 21s have developed around the world. While these have been mostly led and managed by local governments, evaluation programmes show that the most successful ones are those where the local communities have played an active part in developing and running the programmes. LA21 has also shown that it is possible to engage with communities around the theme of sustainable development and for communities and elected bodies to work together on practical projects to improve local quality of life while also helping meet global targets. New networks such as the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign have shown that the success is often less about the issues being tackled but more about effective governance and cooperation between sectors and disciplines.

For example: In Flanders (Belgium), the government provides extra financing if local authorities commit to developing Local Agenda 21s. The government also supports a regional network of NGOs to act as support- and focal point for civil society activities.

One positive example of the implementation of a Local Agenda 21 programme is in the town of Nakuru in Kenya. This 5<sup>th</sup> largest town in Kenya lies at the edge of the Nakuru national Park. The Local Agenda 21 process has allowed for the formation of key partnerships between a range of organizations including WWF and the Kenyan Wildlife Service, local community based groups, businesses, NGOs and donors. A strategic Structure Plan for the town has been agreed which deals with the issue of environmental sustainability as well as meeting the needs of its residents. City to city cooperation, in this case between Nakuru and the Belgian town of Leuven, has been a key part of the process too.

#### **4. Analysis of the role of governments and other major groups in relation to water, sanitation and human settlement**

This section assesses the role played by governments and the remaining 8 major group in implementing policies and projects relating to sustainable water, sanitation and human settlements.

##### Governments

Governments are genuinely committed towards sustainable development and poverty alleviation as reflected in their international pledges and numerous national policy frameworks. However, a viable mechanism for translating these aspirations into actions is still missing and the response to requirements on the ground remains incredibly slow. The very first step is to develop Water Management Plans by 2005, as called for in the JPOI, and commit adequate resources towards the attainment of agreed goals and targets. Policy autonomy is central, and this must not be undermined by global economic liberalisation rules such as GATS or conditionalities imposed by the multilateral financial institutions and donors.

A vastly altered post 9/11 geo-political scenario, the elusive nature of peace, security and stability, increased military spending, counter-terrorism measures that have undermined human rights, the protracted war in Iraq, the quagmire of reconstruction, weakened multilateralism, unaltered and inequitable global trade and financial architectures have all coalesced to make the attainment of internationally agreed development goals including sustainable development, more elusive than ever. This inevitably affects the level of development assistance required to realize these goals.

##### Business and Industry

The consensus among NGOs is that business and industry retain the highest potential for affecting the achievement of the global goals and targets for water, sanitation and human settlements. They are well placed to thwart, even subvert, attempts towards realizing such goals. The challenge is to realize their potential within a framework of publicly accountable rules.

Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) can provide employment, technology, training and financial resources to local communities in all these areas. In some cases, MNEs are known to introduce higher environmental, health and safety standards. They have also become notorious in terms of profit repatriation, focusing on short term profits and relocating the moment they smell declining profits.

They also enhance economic insecurity by distancing themselves from the real needs of local communities and by not being adequately open and transparent in their dealings.

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that form the bulk of local economic activity generally have better and closer ties to local communities. They also have an interest and stake in the local investment climate. They should become a stronger part of local sustainable consumption and production schemes and should be supported to contribute in more concrete ways to reducing the ecological footprint.

The willing acknowledgement of all segments of business and industry, including the accounting, investment and financial sectors, of the need to adhere to strong enforceable government regulations and standards, will help in defining and refining their priorities and constructive roles. Community participation and enforced accountability are tools that can greatly contribute to maximizing their potential.

### Trade Unions

Organized workers can contribute significantly to improving the social conditions of people working for business and industry. In many cases workers have hands on experience with sustainability issues and have practical ideas for innovations and improving existing practices such as those relating to saving water or reducing pollution. As major organizers of people, trade unions can contribute significantly in terms of educating their members on choosing a sustainable path of development that will simultaneously improve the quality of their lives while preserving the environment for present and future generations. The commitment with an implementation framework by the trade unions at the CSD to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns is a valuable example.

### Women

Women are the most vital of all links in the sustainability chain. It has been proven time and again that any activity at the local level that does not involve and empower women is a non-starter and bound to fail. No issue in sustainable development is more relevant to women than water and sanitation. Yet, in many regions of the world, women remain marginalized from decision-making as they relate to these issues.

Gender mainstreaming is only now finding its way into the global vocabulary. Much more needs to be done to ensure it becomes second nature in thought processes and practical arrangements. Only when women are recognized as valuable custodians of the eco-systems will efforts to improve service delivery at all levels bear fruit.

### Youth

It is not simply a cliché that the future belongs to the youth of today. What they inherit from the policies we implement today will determine whether and how well they will live. Youth movements are gradually being geared into action and to take on a more proactive role in local planning for sustainability. They must be made more aware of the power they wield through greater awareness raising programmes and there ought to be greater opportunities for youth to participate in sustainable development processes.

### Farmers

As primary suppliers of food products and raw materials for production no one can deny the central role farmers play in terms of food security, food sovereignty and public health. Water is the life blood of their livelihoods and they have the major stake in ensuring a steady access to water supply. They hold the key to sustainable water use and must jealously guard fresh water supplies. To be able to do

this they require all the support they can muster especially at the local level. Traditional and small farmers have been marginalized in decisions regarding the choice of technologies, seeds, and practices. They are victims of agricultural systems and practices (promoted for decades by agribusiness, multilateral institutions and national governments) that are extractive and chemical intensive, polluting waters and soil, as well as eroding biodiversity. While some farmers have organized themselves and begun to work with other civil society groups, much more needs to be done to ensure that their voices are heard and listened to.

### Indigenous Peoples

Despite recent UN efforts to address the concerns for this group, it is clear that a lot more needs to be done if we are to protect the rights of indigenous peoples to their land, resources and knowledge so that they can sustain their livelihoods. Increased recognition by governments and the scientific community of the water rights and knowledge base of indigenous people is needed. This scientific and technological underpinnings of their knowledge base can be built upon for the benefit of the communities (e.g. Early warning systems in prevention of natural disasters - floods in Mozambique, where the communities have their own references, etc.)

### Scientists

Closing the wide gap in the translation and transmission of current scientific knowledge to the wider global community is perhaps the biggest challenge for this group. There is no shortage of studies on urban planning, sustainable housing, sustainable delivery of public services etc. The scientific community in general and universities in particular owe, to themselves and the non-scientific/academic minded peoples of this world have a duty to inform, share and help demystify their respective disciplines and help all stakeholders move from words to deeds towards a sustainable society. They must work more closely with community based organizations and assist in identifying simple ways to make sustainability a reality for all. At the same time, they must also acknowledge gaps in scientific understanding and promote the precautionary principle in resource use and management.

### Local Authorities

Local authorities are the obvious centers for community building, for local planning and sustainable development. This group has, in many parts of the world, been identified as having ultimate responsibility for managing water, sanitation and even housing systems and they deserve more support and clearer roles within national structures. If they are to do their jobs properly, they must also have the rights tools, adequate resources and access to information from all other stakeholders.

While many local authorities have done excellent work in raising awareness and promoting sustainability, many others remain closed to public participation and do not provide information to affected citizens. Given the right circumstances local authorities are well positioned to pull together various sectors of society into joint agenda setting and implementation ensuring policy coherence and a holistic approach to community building at the local level. In short, local authorities need to empower their constituencies while also being empowered themselves in this chain of implementation.

## **5. Main Conclusions**

1. Water, sanitation and human settlement policies impinge upon every area of public concern. As such they must be addressed holistically and comprehensively. And, whatever approach is settled upon, it must face the light of constant public scrutiny if it is to be effective and meaningful to the

bulk of humanity. Making available safe drinking water is not only a technical problem but also a social challenge encompassing issues of ownership, community rights and management concerns, the issue of water wastage, the burden of repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure, corruption, lack of accountability, the choice of options, quantity of resources allocated and so on.

2. Achieving Sustainable Human Settlements requires a cross-cutting (from the perspective of all three pillars of Sustainable Development) approach to **building sustainable communities**, rectifying environmental and social injustices (including gender aspects) and achieving sustainable production and consumption patterns, whilst ensuring economic and social innovation and development. Public participation (the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of Sustainable Development) is crucial in this process. All this must be done while also meeting basic human needs.
3. Many successful examples of sustainable water and sanitation projects, and human-settlement development are developed and managed by Community Based Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations, yet these groups frequently do not participate in national policy schemes or even grander international schemes. Policies are needed to reverse current processes that marginalize crucial groups in society that play a vital role in building sustainable communities and integrated water policies.
4. Globalisation in its current form has increased economic insecurities especially in poorer neighborhoods. The lack of participatory structures and accountability makes communities relatively powerless in ensuring environmental and social sustainability.
5. Human settlements are indeed complex entities. Any strategy for sustainability needs to work with different disciplines and sectors, and just as every practitioner needs to understand those working around her or him, so governments also need to ensure that plans for sustainable development are integrated across the sectors, and will genuinely meet international targets while also meeting the needs of the poorest.
6. A primary concern is the protection and conservation of water catchment areas and restoration of those that have been degraded and destroyed, such as wetlands. Deforestation and degradation of water catchment areas has been going on without adequate checks. The ecosystem approach should be integrated into water resource management policies at all levels.
7. Human rights standards have a key role to play in sustainable water development. The UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Committee provides a framework for action that is anchored to legal accountability, and should be recognized by the CSD as a means to secure the right to water for all. As such, it should be reflected in future water management policies, including all National Water Management Plans expected to be in place by 2005.
8. The vital role of water resources in rural and urban livelihoods should be appreciated as water is an essential resource for reducing vulnerabilities through attaining food security, alleviating poverty and enhancing people's health.
9. There is a need to strengthen the coordination and cooperation for the mobilization of both internal and external resources and the wise use of such resources as well as to make increased effort to allocate more budgets for water resource management, sanitation and human settlements. Financial and other commitments must be honored. The type and nature of conditionalities must be

fundamentally reviewed and not be imposed. The donor community must rely less on standard blueprints for water development and pay more attention to small scale water management and service provision options, which should be replicated and up-scaled.

10. There is an urgent need to introduce innovative approaches in involving the private sector. The adverse impacts of resource privatisation and over-exploitation now call for firm regulations and strong enforcement. This will help conserve and improve upon the current rural and urban environments and to promote corporate social accountability and good practices in private business.