

WASH and LIVELIHOODS



The concept of livelihood refers to the use of capacities and resources by poor men and women in rural areas and on the periphery of towns and cities to undertake activities in order to survive in adverse circumstances.

Livelihoods are therefore people's means of survival, and are fundamentally affected by the situation in which people find themselves, especially their physical, economic, social, environmental and psychological conditions.

The activities are meant especially to generate an income which contributes to:

- improving life conditions and enhancing human dignity;
- improving family members' health, – especially of those most affected: children, women and the elderly and improve their immediate environment.

The sustainable WASH linked to livelihood approach are not new. What is new is the effort to focus, in a systematic way, on people as the centre of concerns and in particular on people's assets and capabilities to undertake innovative water and sanitation activities to improve their lives.

While other approaches have focused on the poor as beneficiaries and later as consumers, here the effort is also to highlight the role poor people perform as producers and workers, generating an income and employment, and as citizens, who take decisions about their immediate and societal needs.



WASH ASPECTS TO LIVELIHOODS

Safe **SANITATION**
and sanitation related
practices

Better **HEALTH**
and physical fitness
to work



Further upgrading
of immediate
ENVIRONMENT

Economic
PRODUCTIVITY
enhanced

The water and sanitation livelihoods linkage is very much to be welcomed now because of the tremendous need for water and sanitation interventions, and the recognition that governments and utilities alone will not be able to provide for the needs of the poor.

Self-initiative from the poor as informed consumers, producers, workers and citizens, rather than as beneficiaries, is important, particularly in the context of decentralisation. Their allies, namely local Governments, local and regional NGOs and CBOs are also needed, mostly for mobilisation, advocacy and facilitation.

This ultimately leads to a twofold benefit: while water and sanitation helps to enhance poor people's livelihoods, enhanced livelihoods help to improve water and sanitation.

The linking of water and sanitation to livelihoods, with a perspective of the poor as consumers, producers, workers and citizens, ensures a holistic approach to issues of water and human excreta. **This means that water and sanitation will be seen in a broader context of enabling local governments, community enablement, markets enablement, social and economic development and citizenship building.**