

WILL THE GOALS BE ACHIEVED?

Water and sanitation projects need to be implemented by 2010 for impact to register by the 2015 deadline

By Melissa Alipalo

Consultant Writer

When reliable, clean water started flowing from faucets in 335 rural villages in Punjab, Pakistan's largest province, all of life changed—for the better.

Women started spending more than 45% of their day on income-generating activities. Incidences of water-related diseases dropped by 90%. Households increased their income by 24%, and school enrollment soared by 80%.

This is the power of water.

The positive effects of investments,

such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB)-funded Punjab Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project, have also been felt in other countries—in Nepal's remote villages, in the rapidly expanding city of Dalian in the People's Republic of China, and in the recovering city of Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

One in three Asians, however, still does not have access to safe water, and half the population is without adequate sanitation. The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aim to halve these

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numbers by 2015.

Time is of the essence. The outcomes of the Punjab project demonstrate the cross-cutting impact a proper water supply can have on other factors of poverty. To meet the MDGs, the poor's access to safe water and sanitation must be addressed first—before the 2015 target.

A catch to large-scale water supply and sanitation projects, though, is that they can take up to 10 years to prepare and implement. At this rate, the typical water supply and sanitation project needs to be implemented by 2010 for its impact to register by the 2015 deadline for the MDG water-related targets.

This year, ADB will test two innovations—zonal management and small, privately operated piped networks—for their ability to deliver quality water in a fraction of the time of major projects. These have recorded successes in various cities in Asia and around the world.

In Dhaka, Bangladesh, ADB will tackle the megacity's overwhelming lack of water with a zonal approach. Dhaka will be divided into smaller, more manageable zones no larger than 1 million people. The idea is to concentrate substantial resources and effort to improve water services one zone at a time, ultimately providing 24 hours of piped, safe, and metered water.

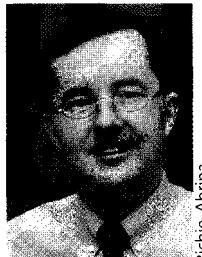
Small, privately operated piped networks will be a second innovation piloted by ADB in India, Philippines, and Viet Nam to fill the gap in urban water services. Small piped networks operate much like a utility company would, but are owned by local entrepreneurs, who have proven to be more sensitive to users' needs and quick-acting to answer new demands. The implementation of small piped networks—from start to finish—can be as short as 3–6 months only.

These innovative approaches have been successful in cities such as Phnom Penh and Bangkok, showing the potential for some of Asia's other cities. Without such innovations and more investment, millions across Asia and the Pacific may be still waiting 5–10 years for the mere possibility of a connection to a safe, reliable, and affordable water service. ■

By Christina Dueñas
Consultant

People all around the world commemorated World Water Day on 22 March 2005. Water symbolizes life, yet the stark realities in the Asia and Pacific region offer little cause for celebration. Only two in three Asians enjoy safe drinking water within 200 meters of their home, and half the region's population lacks adequate sanitation.

Having a clean and reliable 24-hour



Richie Arriëns

**Wouter Lincklaen
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water supply into the home remains a pipe dream for many. Droughts, floods, and water pollution continue to cause untold hardships for Asia's poor. Achieving water security is, therefore, regarded as a necessary condition to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s water policy, approved in 2001, envisages Water for All. With a comprehensive review of the policy's implementation about to get under way, *ADB Review* asked Wouter Lincklaen Arriëns, Lead Water Resources Specialist in ADB's Regional and Sustainable Development Department (RSDD), about the role of institutional and legal reforms in implementing the water policy.

Why do countries need a water policy?

Many of our developing member countries (DMCs) are facing a challenge with so many agencies investing in water projects, yet without a common vision, effective legal framework, and prioritized action agenda for the sector.

Under these circumstances, having a water policy helps create a shared vision for institutional reform and investment, and as a guide for water projects.

Without a water policy and updated legislation, fragmented water investments will continue to cause problems. Our DMCs are now recognizing the need for institutional and legal reform to make water investments more successful.

Making water for all a reality—and not just a dream—means uniting efforts under practical water policies that have impact on the ground

WATER FOR ALL



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How does this apply to ADB?

The same challenges apply within ADB, which has more than 10 operations divisions dealing with water projects. Water cuts across much of ADB's operations, yet it does not receive enough attention.

Water seems to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

People cannot live without water, and most economic sectors cannot deliver sustainable results without water needs being met first. Achieving the MDGs is impossible without improving the water security of the poor. Yet, at the corporate level in ADB, we are still learning how to target water as a priority area in our operations with a comprehensive approach.

Which reforms are targeted by a water policy?

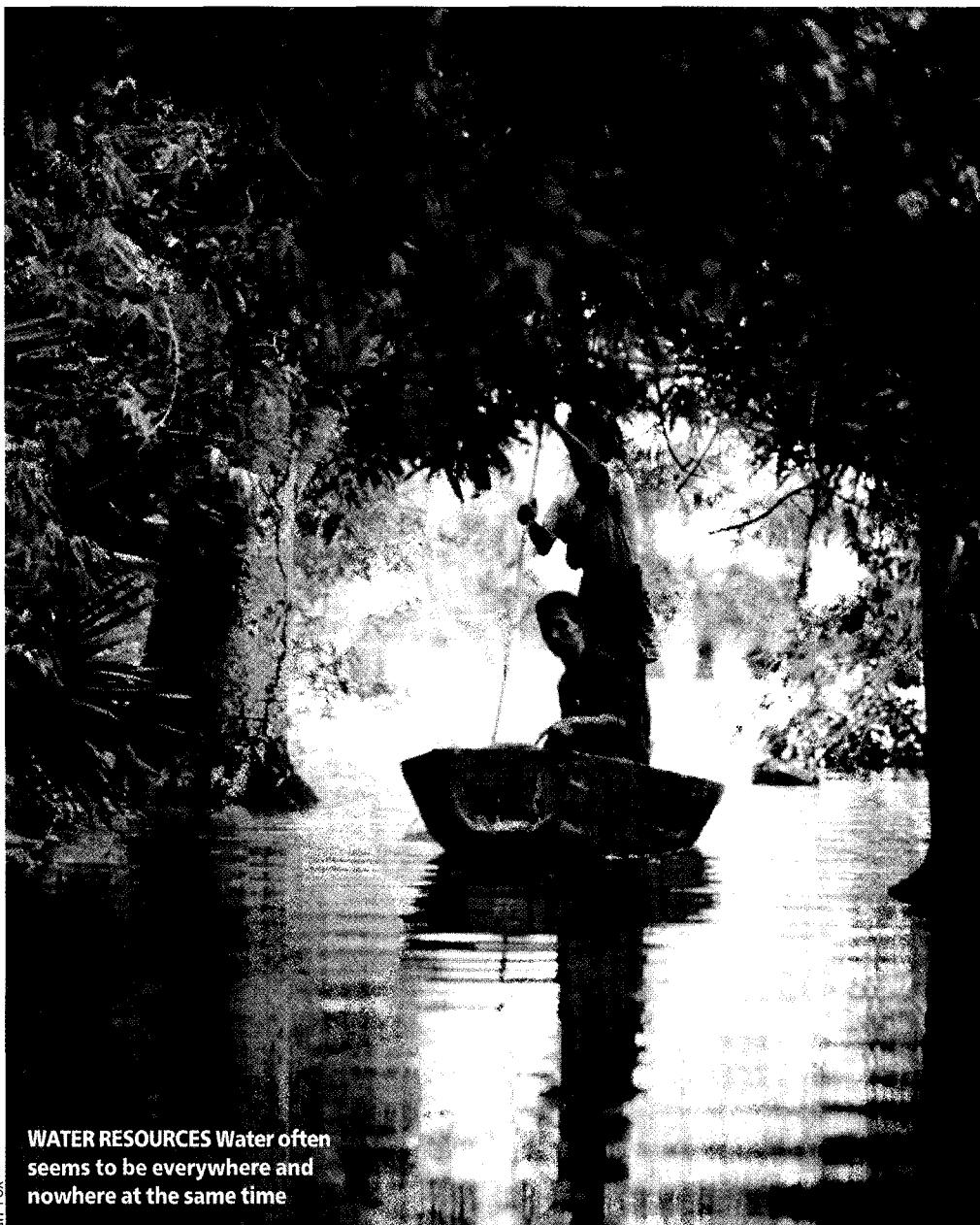
Water management is primarily a governance challenge, and reforming the institutions concerned is, therefore, critical. The distinction between the management of water resources and the delivery of water services lies at the core of effective water policies. Each country has to determine its own reform process to address water management challenges, yet these basic principles of water governance can be applied universally.

Water management is actually more about people and institutions than it is about water. It starts with adopting sound principles of water governance, and it revolves around inspired leadership and effective decision making and implementation. It is not rocket science.

How are reforms different in water resources and water services?

Water is both a resource and a service. Effective water policies, legislation, and institutions are grounded in this principle. As a resource, it needs careful and integrated management in a river basin context. This is where governments should provide strong leadership and sustained investments.

On the other hand, experience shows that water services are best delivered through autonomous and accountable providers, in an enabling environment of regulation, recovery of costs from customers, and public awareness of the need to manage and conserve water. As part of the reform process, private sector participation in water services is desirable, especially in potable



WATER RESOURCES Water often seems to be everywhere and nowhere at the same time

water services in cities. However, ADB does not seek water privatization.

ADB's Water Week 2004 recognized a need for water projects to "simplify the rules and decentralize the money," and to empower civil society organizations to help catalyze water reforms.

What is ADB's greatest challenge in its water operations?

We want our water work to be judged by the results it produces in partnership with our clients, and this involves working together to make the necessary reforms happen. ADB's mandate and our water policy are clear, and our greatest challenge is always to meet our clients' needs, which are to help

them catalyze water investments, in the adoption of reforms, and in capacity development in critical sector institutions in our DMCs and within ADB. Our water policy points us in the right direction. ■

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Wouter Lincklaen Arriëns
ADB's Lead Water Resources Specialist