

A Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Water for Asian Cities (WAC) Programme

Tigni in Nepal Improves Water & Sanitation Services by Rehabilitating Infrastructure

Problem of water and poor sanitation has been escalating ever in Nepal especially in urban areas, where population is rising rapidly with very less improvements in the infrastructures. The story of Tigni, one of the poorest settlements with 809 populations in 146 households in Kathmandu valley, was not different. Water pollution and scarcity was chronic in Tigni. The muddy and slippery road with poor condition of existing drainage was very inconvenient for pedestrians, especially during rainy season. Absence of surface drainage and littering debris and wastes was polluting the surrounding environment and incorporating probability of disease outbreaks. People, mainly women, were exposing themselves in the smoky environment using traditional smoky stoves. Many households were deprived from toilet facility and open defecation was quite common. More than 88 percent of the community dwellers were living under poverty line.

Today, it's different. Tigni has changed its face. Problem of water and poor sanitation that used to be a part has been left behind in the past. The settlement is improving gradually in its infrastructure as well as practicing to upgrade economic capacity through micro-credit saving schemes.

Under Water for Asian Cities (WAC) Programme of UN-HABITAT, Centre for Integrated Urban Development (CIUD) carried out a detailed study of the area under poverty mapping and water & environmental sanitation improvement plan preparation in 2005. Based on the findings of the study, CIUD in collaboration with Madhyapur Thimi Municipality and partnership with local community implemented the water and sanitation activities with the technical and financial support of UN-HABITAT and financial support of Water Aid Nepal (WAN).

Under this project, water quality and quantity was improved by rehabilitating the existing well and by fitting two hand pumps to it. This has saved well water from pollution and has made it easier to draw water benefiting 169 people directly. Students and teachers of the local school are safe from the consumption of municipal water with high content of chlorine, after addition of aeration (de-chlorination) system before the collection tank at the school.

The roads and neighborhood is dry and convenient for the pedestrians because 600 metres permanent storm water drainage with small and large manholes has been constructed and soak pit promoted. People seems very

felicitous having plenty of clean space for social interactions, sun bathing and play ground for children as the roads and pathways are paved with brick on 986 square meters area and constructed 300 metres side drains. The project installed 35 improved cooking stoves and inhabitants, especially local women, were also trained on making it. It is gradually improving the in-house environment. The trained women are promoting these stoves.

Targeting to meet 100 percent toilet coverage, 35 toilets were constructed. Although, three houses have no toilet yet because of unavailability of space, open defecation is no more in practice today.

The project has also supported to initiate three women's micro-credit saving groups to build economic capability for overall development in the poor settlement. These groups were provided two skill trainings. At present, some members are producing liquid soap and few others are building improved stoves to generate money.

The project has also added fuel on developing gender balance by providing opportunities and promoting women to participate in various awareness programmes and capacity building trainings.



Kumari Selja, Hon'ble Minister of State (IC) for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Govt. of India was unanimously elected as President of the UN-HABITAT Governing Council for a two year term. The 21st Session of the Governing Council of the UN-HABITAT was held at Nairobi from 16-20 April 2007. The theme was on "Sustainable Urbanization: Local Action for Urban Poverty Reduction with Emphasis on Finance and Planning". This is the highest recognition, till date, India has received at UN-HABITAT.

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India Plans Strategic Initiatives for Inclusive Development during Eleventh Plan for Providing Basic Services

Providing Essential Public Services to those large parts of the poor population who are still excluded from these is a key element of the strategy for the 11th Five year Plan of the Government of India. The Approach Paper to the 11th Five year Plan states that there continue to be large gaps in the most basic services such as clean drinking water and access to basic sanitation facilities. The poor do not have even minimum access. The National Development Council recognizes that the provision of basic services such as clean drinking water and basic sanitation are essential part of the development strategy for inclusive and sustained long-term growth.

Integrated development of slums for providing basic services and other civic amenities

The quality of life for the bulk of urban people in India, particularly for the poor, means living with many avoidable hardships. They do not even have access to clean drinking water. Urban renewal is imperative for both efficiency and equity, since cities provide substantial economies of agglomeration and are the growth engines of the economy.

In order to cope with massive problems that have emerged as a result of rapid urban growth the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was launched by the govern-

ment on 3rd December, 2005 for a seven-year period beginning 2005-06. JNNURM is meant to provide improved urban services. It envisages urban renewal projects in a mission mode approach.

The objectives of the JNNURM are to: (a) give focused attention to integrated development of infrastructure services in 63 selected cities; (b) establish linkage between asset creation and asset management through reforms needed for long term sustainability; (c) ensure adequate funds to meet the deficiencies in urban infrastructural services; (d) achieve planned development of cities; (e) scale up civic amenities and provision of utilities; (f) put special focus on urban renewal of old city areas; (g) provide basic services to the urban poor including security of tenure at affordable prices, improved housing, water supply, and sanitation, and (h) ensuring delivery of other existing universal services of the government for education, health and social security.

The selected cities are one million plus cities, state capitals and places of historical, religious, or tourist importance. The Sub-mission on Urban Infrastructure and Governance, administered by the Ministry of Urban Development, is charged with infrastructure projects relating to water supply and sanitation, sewerage, solid waste management, road network,

urban transport and redevelopment of old city areas. The Sub-mission on Basic Services to the Urban Poor, administered by the Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation has been entrusted with integrated development of slums through projects for providing shelter, basic services, and other related civic amenities. The 11th Plan will be making substantial provision of funds under the JNNURM so that the momentum of urban reform linked to infrastructure creation really takes off.

Citizen Participation for Solid Waste Management

The increasing generation of solid waste is a growing problem in all cities in India. The Planning Commission of India recognizes that uncollected garbage not only causes diseases but it is also visually ugly. Dumping garbage into landfills is not an attractive option in the land scarce cities and should be minimized. Most industrial countries now require their citizens to segregate wastes at home into recyclable products. While recycling is done by rag pickers in India, their lives can be made less unpleasant if citizens sort out organic and inorganic waste and dispose of organic waste in local compost or vermiculture pits. Cities must be encouraged to evolve systems with citizen participation for segregation of waste at point of origin, maximizing recycling & safe disposal of the rest.

	India	Sri Lanka	China	Vietnam
Infant Mortality (Per 1000 live births)	60 (2003)	13 (2003)	30 (2003)	19 (2003)
One year olds fully immunized with measles (%)	58 (2002-04)	99 (2003)	84 (2003)	93 (2003)
Population with Sustainable Access to Improved Sanitation (%)	30 (2002)	91 (2002)	44 (2002)	41 (2002)
Under-five mortality (Per 1000 live births)	87 (2003)	15 (2003)	37 (2003)	23 (2003)
Births attended by skilled birth attendants (%)	47.6 (2002-04)	97 (1995-2003)	97 (1995-2003)	85 (1995-2003)
Maternal Mortality (per 100,000 deliveries)	407 (adjusted 2000)	92 (adjusted 2000)	56 (adjusted 2000)	130 (adjusted 2000)

Source: Approach Paper to the 11th Five Year Plan, Planning Commission, Govt. of India

Clean Water for All—The Strategic Plan Framework

Water-borne infections hamper absorption of food even when intake is sufficient. Clean drinking water is, therefore, vital to reduce the incidence of disease and to check malnutrition. The 10th Five Year Plan (2002-2007) target of providing potable drinking water to all villages in India has not been achieved. Under Bharat Nirman (a new programme for rural reconstruction), it is now planned to cover the 55,067 uncovered habitations in 4 years (2005-09). Rural Water Supply is, however, beset with the problem of sustainability, maintenance, and water quality. Thus though more than 95% coverage was achieved prior to Bharat Nirman, 0.28 million out of the 1.422 million habitations in the country, have slipped back from fully covered to partially covered status. Another 0.217 million habitations have problems with the quality of water; about 60,000 habitations face serious problems of salinity or arsenic and fluoride contamination. These habitations will also be taken up under Bharat Nirman. The 11th Plan will emphasize full and timely realization of the Bharat Nirman targets.

'Providing clean drinking water for all by 2009 and ensuring that there are no slip-backs by the end of the 11th Plan is among the monitorable Socio-Economic Targets of the 11th Plan'

The 11th Plan will also address issues of sustainability by moving away wherever possible from ground water to surface water resources. Where alternate sources do not exist or are not cost effective, ground water recharge measures will be insisted upon in the vicinity of the project.

11th Plan to encourage community owned & managed projects

The Eleventh Plan proposes to move away from state implemented and managed projects to encourage community owned and managed projects, like the Swajaldhara Programme. In the 10th Plan, Swajaldhara had a limited provision of 20% of the allocation of the Ac-

celerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARVSP). It will need to be up scaled so that more and more schemes are community managed, reducing the maintenance burden and responsibility of the state.

Focused IEC campaign for increase in sanitation coverage

Lack of sanitation is directly linked to a number of waterborne diseases. It is now generally acknowledged that unless 100% coverage of the community is achieved and proper solid waste management carried out, health indicators will not show significant improvement. Besides, toilets are essential for the dignity and safety of girls and women.

Rural sanitation coverage was only 1% in the 1980s. With the launch of the Central Rural Strategic Initiatives for Inclusive Development Sanitation Programme in 1986, the coverage improved to 4% in 1988 and then to 22% in 2001. The programme was modified as Total Sanitation Campaign in 1999 changing the earlier supply driven, high subsidy and departmentally executed programme to a low subsidy, demand driven one, with emphasis on hygiene education. Five hundred and forty districts are covered under this programme and the population coverage is expected to increase to about 35% by the end of the 10th Plan.

The subsidy regime in the current programme is only for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. For full coverage to be achieved, however, Above Poverty Line families will have to be motivated to switch over from open defecation to use of toilets. The Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaign will, therefore, receive increased attention in the 11th Plan. A solid waste management component is being included in the programme. These measures coupled with a focused IEC campaign should significantly increase sanitation coverage in the 11th Plan.

Steps are also being taken to link rural sanitation with the rural health mission. The Nirmal Gram Puraskar, a reward

scheme for 100% open defecation free communities has been a motivating factor and is picking up momentum as can be seen from the number of communities competing for the Puraskar.

With sufficient allocation of funds in the 11th Plan, the MDG goal for sanitation can be met by 2010, and full coverage achieved between 2012 and 2015.

The strategy of inclusive growth proposed in the approach paper can command broad based support only if growth is seen to demonstrably bridge divides and avoid exclusion or marginalization of large segments of the population in India. These divides manifest themselves in various forms: between the haves and the have-nots; between rural and urban areas; between the employed and the under/unemployed; between different states, districts and communities; and finally between genders. Such marked inequalities are a matter of concern and, in some cases even shame. The 11th Plan has to ensure that the growth process helps to bridge these divides.

Community-based Water and Sanitation Project in Peri-Urban Area of Siddhipur, Kathmandu

Siddhipur Water & Sanitation Users Committee has constructed a new water supply system in Siddhipur, which consists of a new intake water treatment system, a distribution network and a pro-poor tariff system. More than 150 households have connected private taps to their homes and the users' committee is getting many requests for connections everyday. To improve the sanitation situation of the area, 100 ECO-SAN toilets, one toilet with communal septic tank, 14 other toilets with septic tanks, 186 improved pit are being set up. Similarly, 1km of drainage have been laid and 1100 square meter of pavement have been brick paved. In addition, traditional water sources like wells & ponds have also been rehabilitated under this project. ENPHO has also organized various capacity building programmes in support of this project under WAC Programme in Nepal.

UN-HABITAT organizes Second Regional Media Workshop in Singapore

One of the key elements of the WAC Programme implementation is the mobilization of Political Will and exchange of information. Mobilizing political commitment calls for engaging policy level functionaries in the programme in a continuous manner. Presently information exchange is being facilitated through Internet (www.unhabitat.org/water & www.unwac.org), Newsletters (Water for Cities Newsletter and WAC Regional Newsletter), study visits etc.

Improving governance in the water and sanitation sector calls for a willingness to change on the part of the policymakers, the sector managers as also the individual consumers. Such willingness to change comes from information, awareness and a change in attitude which education can bring about. The capacity to change through efficiency improvements (including distributive efficiency) is also equally important for which human resource development and institutional reforms and strengthening are essential.

UN-HABITAT organized the first Regional Media workshop which was held in New Delhi in December 2006. The aim of the first workshop was to introduce media professionals in the region to the UN-HABITAT's WAC & MEK-WATSAN programmes being implemented in select countries in the region.

The Water, Sanitation and Infrastructure Branch of UN-HABITAT, Nairobi has now planned its second Regional Media Workshop on "Urban Water and Sanitation Issues in Asia and the Pacific" from 12-14 July 2007 in Water Hub, Singapore.

Singapore impresses the world with its achievement of only five per cent unaccounted-for water. The modern airport in Singapore gets 80 per cent of its water through rainwater harvesting. Since 2003 more than 250,000 households in about 70 constituencies are saving up to five per cent in their monthly water bill as a result of an use water wisely programme. This has helped to reduce the

per capita domestic water consumption from 162 litres per day in 2004 to 160 litres per day in 2005. More than 800 buildings and premises in the non-domestic sector have also acquired the water-efficient building status. The people, public and private sectors have started using the Waterhub launched in 2004 for technology development, learning and networking.

The main objective of this workshop is to bring together the media professionals and also create awareness among the Journalists regarding the current situation of water and sanitation in various countries of Asia particularly those participating in the WAC and MEK-WATSAN Programmes of UN-HABITAT. The workshop starts on Thursday, 12 July 2007 with registration and field visit to Public Utilities Board (PUB) in Singapore. The workshop is being organized in parallel with the Asia-Pacific Water Forum (APWF)'s 2nd Governing Council Meeting in Singapore.

Chairman, MP Legislative Assembly visits WAC Projects in Jabalpur, MP

Mr. Ishwar Das Rohani, Hon'ble Chairman, Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly reviewed the progress of activities under the Water for Asian Cities Programme in Jabalpur. Mr. Rohani visited the WATSAN class room developed in the Model Higher Secondary School to promote Human Value based Water Sanitation and Hygiene Education. He appreciated the initiative and asked the Gwalior Municipal Corporation officials during the visit to establish a Rooftop Rain Water Harvesting structure in the school premises to create awareness regarding rooftop rain water harvesting.

During the visit to the slum settlements of Ambedkar Mohalla at Ranzi, Mr. Rohani had interaction with the members of the women SHGs who have been trained to take over the responsibility of operation and maintenance of community toilets. Mr. Rohani was apprised that Ambedkar Mohalla is one of the 5 slums of Ja-

balpur where the empowerment of the women SHGs for the community asset management has been initiated as a part of the implementation of Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and action plan. Mr. Rohani also visited the Rooftop Rain water harvesting system, School sanitary block and demonstration toilets constructed in Katiya Ghat slum under the Slums Environment Sanitation Initiative (SESI). He also had interaction with the SHG members maintaining the composting unit for the management of solid waste. He expressed his satisfaction and assured his support for up-scaling the initiative. Mr. Rohani was also apprised of the Community Managed Water Purification Scheme being implemented in collaboration with



Mr. Rohani, Hon'ble Chairman, Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly during his visit to review the SESI activities in Katiyaghat

District Urban Development Agency to provide safe drinking water to about 600 households of the Bheron Nagar, Bajnanath area around Sangram Sagar lake at a very nominal charge. He expressed his satisfaction over the status of implementation of WAC programme in Jabalpur.

UN-HABITAT and Coca-Cola India Partnership to Improve Access to Water and Sanitation for Marginalized Communities in India and Nepal

Since the UN reform engaged by Kofi Annan, the United Nations seeks new alliances with the business community that can help it fulfill its mission, by supporting the UN's work, directly or indirectly. In the process of unprecedented urbanization changes, UN-HABITAT acknowledges that sustainable urbanization cannot be ensured without help from the private sector. UN-HABITAT, therefore, looks for partnerships with entities that display corporate responsibility in the community or which make a positive contribution to the urban environment, particularly in slums. During the 21st Session of the Governing Council, the Business Partnership for Sustainable Urbanization (BPSU) was launched. Its objective is to offer a new platform for the private sector to exchange business practices and models in sectors such as construction, housing finance, water and sanitation, energy, transport, disaster management and reconstruction.

UN-HABITAT and Coca Cola Partnership

UN-HABITAT and Coca Cola India have signed an agreement to collaborate to improve community access to water and sanitation in India and Nepal. At the signing ceremony which took place at the BPSU event held in April 2007 during the 21st Session of the Governing Council in Nairobi, Dr. Tibaijuka noted that clean water and sanitation can make or break human development. She commended the partnership with Coca Cola India, as an innovative example of how public-private-community partnerships can help meet the challenge of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Deepak Jolly, Vice President for Coca-Cola, India said, "Water is fundamental to all communities and we understand that businesses thrive only amidst vibrant and sustainable societies. Water management remains a priority and we are delighted to enter into this partnership with UN-HABITAT."



Dr. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director, UN-HABITAT and Mr. Deepak Jolly, Vice President, Coca Cola India at the signing ceremony of agreement during BPSU Event held at Nairobi

Projects to be undertaken by Coca Cola together with UN-HABITAT under the Water for Asian Cities Programme in India and Nepal include:

1. Demonstration projects to increase water supply through rainwater harvesting and other techniques to store and conserve water in Madhya Pradesh, India. The project aims at setting up urban and rural Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) systems in 15 locations. This includes the construction of roof top RWH structures in 10 schools, including 3 government run schools and construction/revival of 5 rural RWH structures.
2. Provision of safe drinking water and sanitation for urban poor in West Bengal. The target is to provide potable water to 150 schools.
3. Improved water management & sanitation in selected urban slums & rural areas of Nepal which aims to provide access to potable water through WHO approved household level purification methods as well as awareness on sanitation. The project will work in 5-6 urban areas with a total population of about 3 million people.

4. Awareness raising programmes on water usage, sanitation and conservation including capacity building and mobilization of political will with legislators and political leaders.

Coca Cola and the UN

The Coca-Cola Company and the United Nations system enjoy a long-standing partnership that includes advocacy and implementation of projects in a wide range of areas in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The United Nations Office for International Partnerships has been facilitating the relationship since 1998, and serves as a gateway for developing concrete projects on the ground. This includes providing strategic guidance on the most effective ways of engaging the wide range of UN partners and UN leadership.

Over the years, the Coca-Cola Company has made available its expertise and experience in support of UN causes. This has translated itself into building stronger links with UNDP, UNAIDS, UN Foundation, UN Global Compact, Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, OCHA, WFP, UNHCR and now extended to UN-HABITAT.

Pro-poor Bottled Drinking Water for the Community of Lalitpur, Nepal

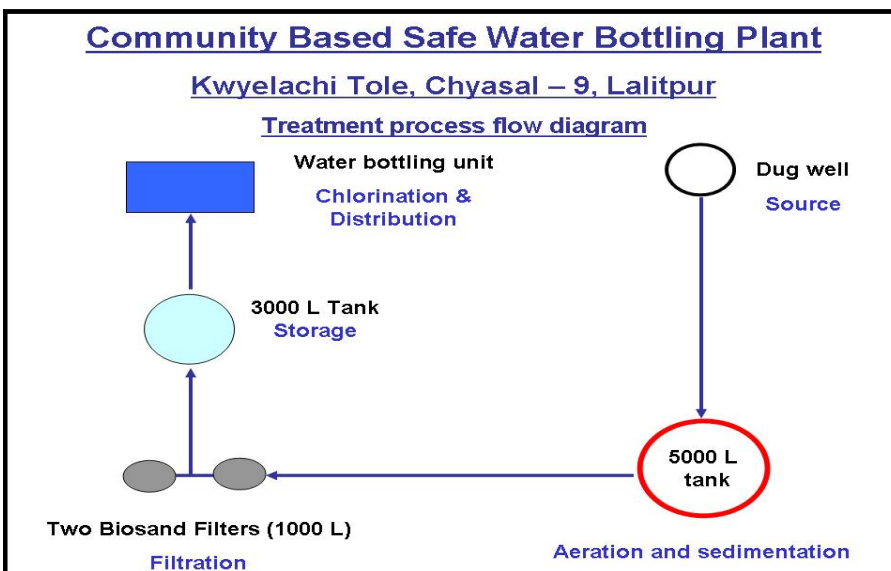
Locals of Chyasal Tole, a poor community in the core of Lalitpur Sub-metropolitan City, had been suffering from scarcity of drinking water. They were either deprived of drinking water or they had to rely on contaminated water from various sources. The plan to provide safe drinking water from a local source brought a drastic change in the lifestyle of the people. They no longer have to queue for hours to get water from the local stone spout. They are now proud to have sufficient water of WHO standards. "Indeed it is wonderful. We never thought that bottled water can be affordable even for us," said 45-year-old Hari Maya Maharjan, a local housewife from a farmer's family. She is now happy that she can serve the family with clean and safe water without bearing any extra cost. Like Maharjan, over 200 families are being benefited by the unique water bottling project.

UN-HABITAT has taken up this initiative in partnership with UEMS, an NGO based in Nepal, in Chyasal, Lalitpur district of Kathmandu Valley. The concept of water bottling system project is based on the 'Sujala' scheme of Byrraju Foundation, an NGO working in Andhra Pradesh, India where numerous water bottling plants have been set up by the Foundation.

The local people have formed a users' committee "Koyelacchi Tole Sudhar Samiti" comprising of one-third women and the committee has taken upon them the

responsibility of establishing, operating and managing the community based water bottling system. UN-HABITAT provided them with technical and financial support and UEMS helped them in implementing the initiative. The local dugwell is the source of water for this system. Water from the dugwell is collected in a settlement tank from where it is pumped to two bio-sand filters. The filtered water is then filled in 20 liters polythene jars after chlorination. These jars are distributed for a minimal charge of NRs. 3 for each jar. The Community-Based Safe Drinking Water Bottling Project has proved that communities can solve their water problems if they are supported with some technical know-how. It was a small-scale and low-cost project. However, the small effort of the local people

instantly brought visible results due to active participation of the local community. The Minister for Physical Planning and Works Hisila Yami appreciated the initiation of the local people when she inaugurated the project on April 20, 2007. With the successful demonstration of the water bottling system in Chyasal, similar system is being setup in a poor community in partnership with Nepal Water Supply Corporation. UN-HABITAT under the Water for Asian Cities Programme in Nepal is providing financial support to the tune of NRs 1.5 million. Similarly, NRs 50,000 are being provided through Parliament Development Fund for construction of the underground reservoir. The in-kind contribution of the local authorities amounted to NRs 378,000.



Siddhipur in Nepal declared Total Sanitation Zone

Local people and all the well wishers of the village cheered up on May 12, 2007, when Joint-Secretary of Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, Krishna Prasad Acharya declared Siddhipur as the village with total sanitation at a programme organized at Siddhipur VDC.

The construction of altogether 750 different types of toilets had displaced 3 open defecation sites in the village. Siddhipur Water and Sanitation Programme has helped the local community construct

301 different types of toilets in the village in one year alone.

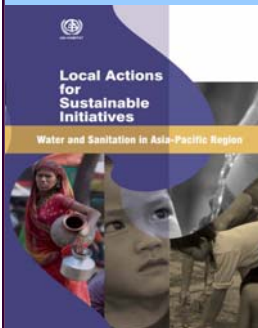
Siddhipur has set itself as an example in the world through their efforts towards the construction of latrines prior to the establishment of water facility, said Dr. Roshan Raj Shrestha, CTA of UN-HABITAT, WAC-Nepal.

Before the programme, a rally had been organized where active public participation was clearly visible. A group of chil-

dren also performed a street drama to visualize the change in the Siddhipur after the campaign. All the local committees contributing in establishment of sanitation in the village were honoured with Letter of Appreciation to encourage them for their continuous effort for the sustainability of the programme.

After long and continuous efforts, today, Siddhipur has traveled a long journey, away from poor sanitation to the 95 per cent sanitation coverage.

Local Actions on WATSAN for Sustainable Initiatives



UN-HABITAT, in collaboration with Asian Development Bank, Water and Sanitation Programme of World Bank, WaterAid London, Gender and Water Alliance of the Netherlands, Asia

Pacific Water Forum, Japan and others prepared a 'Vision 2020' document on the "Delivery of the MDGs for Water and Sanitation in the Asia-Pacific Region", which articulated the core elements on a region-wide approach to water and sanitation which are appropriate to the aspirations of the Asian countries despite varying conditions and challenges.

In support of this initiative, UN-HABITAT has prepared a Publication on **"Local Actions for Sustainable Initiatives on Water and Sanitation Initiatives in Asia-Pacific Region"**, which aimed at supporting the country Governments of the region in achieving the MDG relating to Water and Sanitation by sharing such solutions which can be easily replicated, scaled up and sustainable besides being cost effective and innovative. It brings forward the proven practices in different parts of the region which are pro-poor, innovative, appropriate, affordable & acceptable by the user communities.

The experiences presented in the Publication provide a road map to the implementing authorities which are flexible, reflects new knowledge & strategies and facilitate a framework to faster WATSAN services in the region. The Publication presents 60 Local Actions & Best Practices being practiced in 26 Nations of the Asia-Pacific region which include Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kiribati, Korea, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, Tajikistan, Timor-Leste, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan & Vietnam.

Community-based Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor in Vietnam

UN-HABITAT is supporting the ADB Loan project (VIE-2272) for Central Region Small and Medium Towns with a significant capacity building component under the Water for Asian Cities Programme in Vietnam. UN-HABITAT has developed two Cooperation Agreements with Municipal Water Utilities in the towns of Cam Ranh and Gia Nghia in 2006. At present, the implementation process has started in both towns of Cam Ranh and Gia Nghia. The rapid assessments of water and sanitation situation are being undertaken where UN-HABITAT has provided the funds and methodology to utilities for all the activities under the agreement.

UN-HABITAT is also developing further three cooperation agreements with the Municipal Water Utilities of Song Cau, Thap Cham and Ca Na towns with a focus on water and sanitation to the tune of US\$350,000. UN-HABITAT is also exploring the possibilities for developing the fast-track projects with the involvement of five Water Utilities in these towns. This will help the water utilities to enhance their ability & autonomy as well as capacity building through implementation and management of project in the sector.

In order to boost the activities in these five towns, UN-HABITAT is organizing a one-day Inception Meeting in Nha Trang City, Central Region of Vietnam during the last week of July 2007. The key objective of the Inception Meeting is to bring together primary and secondary stakeholders to discuss and decide on the approach and strategy to be adopted by UN-HABITAT in the implementation of the fast-track activities within WAC programme in the Central Regional towns under ADB loan project. The Inception Meeting will be basically a platform where a large number of representatives from the Government in the project provinces, Mayors and Commissioners from the 5 project towns and representatives from NGOs/CBOs in Vietnam would have the chance to learn and share their concept, experience and views about the community-based water supply and sanitation for the urban poor projects.

The one day-meeting will be followed by technical sessions on Mapping the poor; Water Conservation and Demand Management (WCDM); Water Saving Technology and Human Values-based Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (HVWSHE).

Seminar on 'Integrated Slum Upgrading' during the World Water Week 2007 in Stockholm

UN-HABITAT and Asian Development Bank (ADB) is jointly organizing a Seminar on "Integrated Slum Upgrading: Meeting the Water and Sanitation Needs of the Poorest of the Poor" on 14 August 2007 from 0900 to 1200 hrs during the World Water Week 2007 in Stockholm. The seminar proposes to focus on big challenges that have to be faced to make water & sanitation a local agenda and share experience as to how sanitation coverage can be ensured through people's participation.

Nearly one billion people today live in slums, majority of them women and children. Slums are characterised amongst

others by inadequate water supply, lack of sanitation, poorly built shelter and overcrowding. It is in these slums where the battle is being fought to meet the MDGs in addressing the needs of the poorest of the poor. It is important to build the capacity of local governments to work in equal partnerships with communities and the private sector as part of the process of pro-poor urban water & sanitation governance.

The Seminar will be Chaired by Ms. Inga Björk Klevby, Deputy Executive Director, UN-HABITAT & Co-Chaired Mr. Arjun Thapan, Director General, ADB Manila along with other eminent speakers.

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Sanitation is Dignity**

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Right to Information Act supports Citizen's Participation in Water Supply and Sanitation Projects in India

UN-HABITAT has been working in the four project cities of Madhya Pradesh viz. Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and Jabalpur under the Water for Asian Cities Programme. The Municipal Corporations of these cities have the delegated powers to function as self governing urban local bodies. The services levels for basic urban facilities in these cities are very low, financially unsustainable and do not meet the requirements of urban poor. Innovative solutions of community participation are essential to meet the administrative problems of:

(a) Unauthorised water connections leading to unacceptable level of losses in distribution of water;

(b) Involvement of community in the water supply and sanitation projects; and

(c) Transparency and public accountability in the administrative machinery to remove inefficiency and contain corruption.

Pro-active measures to involve citizens are needed, for improving the management of urban facilities for water supply and sanitation. Recently enacted Right To Information Act 2005 would facilitate citizen's participation, by sharing information.

Right of the Citizens: Since October 2005, Municipal Corporations are Public Authorities under the RTI Act 2005. This enactment has ushered in a new era of transparency and public accountability, to strengthen democratic governance. RTI Act enables any citizen to (i) Inspect works, documents and records, (ii) Take notes, extracts, certified copies of any record, (iii) Take certi-

fied sample of material and (iv) Obtain information kept in electronic devices. There are large number of success stories regarding citizen's resort to RTI Act to demand better services from public authorities regarding water supply and sanitation. Use of RTI Act is likely to increase, which would result in public debate regarding inefficiency in operation of the Municipal Corporations and expose corrupt practices.

Obligations of Municipal Corporations:

Pro-active use of RTI Act to improve the management of water and sanitation services to the citizens is envisaged in Section 4 of the RTI Act, which places several obligations on the Public Authorities. Section 4(1) (a) requires the Public Authorities to maintain the record duly indexed and catalogued to enable any citizen to access information. Section 4(1) (b) requires them to publish all details relating to management of services and up-date the information every year. Section 4(1) (b) requires them to suo moto disclose the information required by public, so that citizens need not resort to RTI Act to obtain information. Section 4(3) requires the public authority to widely disseminate the information in such form and manner which is easily accessible to public.

Current status of implementation of RTI Act:

This enactment has far reaching consequences for ushering in democratic governance by active participation of the citizens. It is in early stage of implementation, as the law which came in force on 12.10.2005 has

not been fully implemented. Citizens and public authorities are at early stages of the learning curve. The potential of enhanced public accountability in improving the management of four selected Municipal Corporations of Madhya Pradesh has to be fully explored. This can set the replicable example for using RTI Act for improving services of Municipal Corporations in other District in India, as well as other countries where Right To Information / Freedom of Information laws have been enacted.

RTI and reforms in urban water supply & sanitation:

Practical examples of use of RTI Act by citizens relating to urban water supply and sanitation shows that this enactment enables the citizens to demand better services from the public authorities at the cutting edge. There are instances of improving sanitation, maintenance of parks, cleaning of roads, etc. in cases where citizens demanded muster roll of employees to monitor whether they are actually performing the assigned duties. Full potentiality of using RTI Act as a measure of administrative reforms is yet to be explored.

UH-HABITAT is also monitoring whether the actions taken by the Municipal Corporations in four selected cities of Madhya Pradesh would ultimately result in sustained revenue streams, which would enable the Municipalities to repay the loans. The thrust is on pro-poor programmes which depends upon community participation. Implementation of Right To Information Act opens up a new regime for informing the citizens.