

## Private Water Public Grime: Domestic Water Supply and Poverty Alleviation in Tanzania.

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### Abstract

*Water supply and sanitation is increasingly becoming a proxy for poverty. Water supply as a key component of poverty alleviation have been identified in the Millennium development goals and debated in many international for a. actions on the grassroots however, are still wanting. In the developing world where majority of the poor households expend a lot of time and money in search for water, the link between water and poverty is clear. In Tanzania in particular, several initiatives have been done since independence to address the issue of poverty. Despite these efforts, deliberate concerted efforts to intervene through domestic water supply to the poor households have not been implemented. As a result, access to water among various households, especially poor ones has been dawdling. Poor households expend a considerable portion of their monthly income on buying water, while those who sell water collect up to thrice as much as what they pay for water fess. Of late, the sanguine way forward has been to private the water supply services with the understanding that this will improve both the service delivery and accessibility. Experiences from elsewhere, however, have shown the converse. This paper sound the alarm to the ongoing trend of water supply mechanisms and advocates that, unless deliberate efforts are done to take water aboard the poverty alleviation initiatives at the grassroots, the Millennium Development Goals may not be timely reached.*

### Introduction

Of late, poverty alleviation has been a development catchphrase. The UN Millennium General Assembly has resolved to reduce the world poverty to a half by 2015 as one of the Millennium Development Goals. The linkage between water and poverty however, became clearer at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. To-date, many nation states have as a result adopted poverty alleviation programs as one of the targets through various donor support and domestic efforts.

Convectional poverty alleviation efforts in Tanzania, like elsewhere in the developing world, have focused on increasing economic growth. This tapered understanding however, neglect the distribution of assets and income, generation of employment opportunities (GWP, 2003) and social services and equitable access to clean and safe water. While access to and use of water are fundamental to human survival, health and productivity, majority of people, especially those with the least leverage do not access this vital resource, causing them to spend the little they have directly or indirectly through water.

Poverty, in broader context is visualized as inability of people's livelihood to meet their basic needs and those of their households due to lack of natural resource base, income, access to basic services such as education, health, water supply and sanitation; vulnerability and voicelessness (Semboja, 1994; Mtatikikolo and Mbele, 1997; URT, 1998; Mascarenhas, 2000; Sokile, 2002 and World Bank, 2002). The poor are normally vulnerable and isolated. In many cases they are neglected, abandoned and/or less disadvantaged whenever there is any competition over access to resources, services, livelihood opportunities and investment; and of course, water (Bagachwa, 1994; Sokile, 2002; GWP 2003). This paper focuses on the position of the poor in relation to access to domestic water and raises some basic issues to consider when allocating this vital resource.

### Generic Links Between Poverty and Water

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century was labeled the "century of water" right at its beginning owing to increasing collective concerns over

global water security and poverty alleviation. Although the precise interconnection between water and poverty is hard to capture worldwide (GWP, 2003), in the developing world the current patterns of land and water use and of household and community service provision are evident that the poor stand at a disadvantage and are thus further impoverished by lack of adequate safe and clean water. WSSCC (2000) as illuminated by GWP (2003) underscore some hard statistics that draw attention of the planners and stakeholders in poverty alleviation venture:

*"The numbers of those living on less than \$1 a day (1.2 billion world-wide) coincide approximately with the numbers of those without access to a safe water supply (1.1 billion). The numbers of those living on less than \$2 a day (2.8 billion) coincide approximately with the numbers of those without to access safe sanitation (2.4 billion)...."*

Although literature has not affirmed whether the symmetry is causal or coincidental, in the developing world where majority of deprived live, the link is clear. The destitute would continue spending the little they have to buy vended water in the mega-cities and towns where such relations exist, as they cannot substitute water with anything else. When they cannot buy any, they are obliged to walk to the ultimate distance where they can fetch some, especially in the villages and countryside. In turn, the poor would normally settle for unclean and unsafe water to minimize the walking distance, resulting into severe water borne and water-related diseases. In Dar es Salaam for example, the past three years have seen incessant cholera outbreaks, normally associated with lack of basic sanitation among the poor households.

### Background to Poverty Reduction and Water Supply in Tanzania

Tanzania is considered one of the poorest countries in the world. The UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) ranks Tanzania 156 out of 174 countries (UNDP, 2000). By 1988, about 60 percent of Tanzanians were considered poor i.e. they were living below the \$ 1.00 per day poverty line (World Bank, 1990). Some 10 per cent of the population was living

under abject poverty, meaning that they were struggling with the acquisition of the basic needs of life: food, shelter and clothing (Bagachwa, 1994). Since then, poverty levels have increased within the poor households, despite the overall statistical expressions that attest growth in the per capita income. For example, in 2000 almost a half of Tanzania was considered poor with more than a third living in abject poverty (URT, 2000).

In the near past, Tanzania has initiated several efforts to curb up poverty. The Vision – 2025, National Poverty Eradication Strategies (NPES,) Tanzania Assistance Strategy (TAS), and the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) are the major ones. The Vision – 2025 is advocating for social economic betterment mainly through high quality livelihood. High quality life encompasses a call for efforts to attain food security, better health care, education and water and overall shared benefits (URT 2000). The Tanzania Assistance Strategy is seeking to eradicate poverty through various supports from the donors. TAS is a joint concerted effort between the government of Tanzania and donors toward corporate poverty reduction. The National Poverty Eradication Strategy, like Vision – 2025, focuses on water, health, education and nutrition. The water strategy aims at increasing community access to water to 90% average within 400 meters and to discourage unnecessary tree cutting (URT, 1998; URT, 2001). Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) is another government strategy that discusses areas of concentration and mechanism toward poverty reduction. Under this effort there is Poverty Reduction Strategy Budget (PRSB), which directly channel finances to health, education, water and rural roads (URT, 2000)

Access to clean and safe water is still petite in Tanzania. Overall, only 39 per cent of the country's 34.5 million use piped water. Some 16 per cent use protected wells or springs while the remaining 43 per cent use various unprotected sources of drinking water (National Bureau of Statistics, 2002).

#### **The Water-poor in Tanzania**

Global Water Partnership (2003) defines water-poor, among other parameters as those obliged to expend a high e.g. (>5%) percentage of household income on water, and normally pay above the market price. In urban Tanzania, especially in Dar es Salaam, majority of households are water poor and expend up 50 % of their income on vended water, normally paying well above market rates. In Dar es Salaam, average 20lts gallon of water costs \$0.15 from an average vendor, meaning that if a 4-member household buys some 5 gallons per day, spending up to \$ 0.75, they would have expended some \$22.5, exactly equal to a half of the ordinary monthly wage of a Tanzanian employee. Conversely, the households that have access to portable water would sell water at \$ 0.02 a gallon, selling up to 100 gallons per day and earning up to \$ 2.00. Notwithstanding the household's water consumption, the sales accrued from water would fetch \$ 61.0 per month, amounting to 469% per cent of the monthly water fees.

The poor households further expend the little remaining income for medication against diseases resulting from unsafe vended water since they do not have control over the quality and safety of water they buy. While the middle households sell water and earn a considerable income, rich households do not sell water although they have more than the household needs, including flushing, gardening and swimming. Unless poverty alleviation efforts deliberately focus on equitable water distribution among households, water will continue to act as a socio divide, a resource through which some get rich by selling while other get poor by buying.

The rural water-poor, on the other hand walk long distances to fetch portable water, most of which is not clean and safe. Rural households must travel long distances to the water source, varying much on average from 1Km to 6Km depending on the regions, although there are cases where a distance is well above 15Km. On average, only 49 percent of households have water source within a kilometer in the rural Tanzania compared to 84 and 73 per cent in Dar es Salaam and other urban areas respectively (NBS, 2002). Women and girls are more affected, as they spend many hours a day collecting water. This not only put their security, productivity and nutritional status at risk but also saps them potential time for recreation, rest and social life. Girls are further marginalized as their school time is replaced by fetching for household water and thus denying them time to cope with their male counterparts.

#### **Private Water: Of Privatization and Leasing of Domestic Water Supply Services**

The International Conference on Water and Environment in Dublin in 1992 recognized water as an economic good. Since then, many international conferences and summits have adopted this viewpoint. As a result, there has been a decline of international support to supply driven policies (GWP, 2003), impelling many developing countries to review their water policies to accommodate privatization of water supply. Straight away after Dublin, the World Bank pointed out the wastage and lack of efficiency of various water supply schemes as a result of failure to recover costs from consumers (1992).

Tanzania has put herself in the context of various reforms in the public sector. Sectoral policies, strategies, and acts have been reviewed to accommodate the global pattern of public-private partnership (PPP). Water sector in particular has been on the major changes. The new National Water Policy (2002) has just been launched, preceded by the Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Agency (EWURA) Act in 2001. The Policy, among other things, provides for the private sector to manage water supply in Tanzania, with major emphasis being on the cities urban centers.

The Dar es Salaam Water and Sewerage Authority (DAWASA) was born in 1997 by dissolving the National Urban Water Authority (NUWA) and merging the Dar es Salaam Sewerage and Sanitation Department (DSSD). DAWASA was operated by the government as a public enterprise through the ministry responsible for water. On February 19, 2003, DAWASA was officially privatized by signing a ten-year Lease Contract with a private operator, City Water Services Ltd. While City Water Services Ltd will operate the existing infrastructure, which is already obsolete, the government, through the Dar es Salaam Water Supply and Sanitation Project (DWSSP) will implement a large water supply and improvement Programme by updating infrastructure. Immediately after taking over in August 1, 2003 the 'private DAWASA' promised low-cost connections and stand posts to low-income households and a consequent benefit from 'lifeline' water consumption for the first five cubic meters per month at a lower tariff. The concern, however, is that, will the private market oriented operator supply a low-tariff water to low-income households, a matter that the public enterprise failed to accomplish, and still make profit? Or will the income-poor households be further marginalized as it has proved elsewhere, especially recently in Johannesburg and Nairobi?



s are forced to increasingly spend their incomes on water up when they cannot spend anything more. As a result, some households have resorted on the alternative sources of domestic water including rivers, springs etc. In Dar es Salaam, for example, in 1991 no household was reported to be using river water during the in various studies. In 2001, some 0.1% of the population is reported to be using water directly from rivers, despite the possible contaminations therein.

Conversely, water uses from unprotected sources has doubled in Dar es Salaam just in a decade, from 1.8% to 3.6%, doubling the risks of risk for waterborne diseases including cholera. The use of water from unprotected sources is of cognizant interest gives the nature of waste management. Dar es Salaam. The city is dominated by pit latrines (82% of the population), higher than elsewhere in other urban areas in Tanzania. Since the access to and supply of water is unreliable in most parts of the city, many people choose to use pit latrines, compared to the flush toilet is only 10.6 %.

### Conclusion

The domestic water supply has been a sink for the little resource that the poor households have. The general poverty alleviation efforts however, have not mainstreamed water supply as a key area of intervention in the struggles to alleviate poverty. Unless some serious deliberate efforts are taken to provide the poor households with basic water, such households would continue to treadle in the path of poverty. As water supply peaks an interest in the global development forum, the same should be taken on board in the local action forums and planning.

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