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Policy briefing

A waterproofed post-2015 development framework

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Progressio wants to see a strong and ambitious post-2015 framework that is built on the priorities of those living at the sharp end of poverty and defines a roadmap for future development, which eradicates poverty, recognises environmental limits and protects the planet for future generations.

Water is a common good and the foundation for all social and economic development. Access to water is integral to all aspects of life.

Communities that Progressio's local partners work with throughout the world have identified inadequate and unreliable access to water for drinking, growing food and maintaining a livelihood as their greatest daily challenge.

Progressio is calling for a post-2015 framework that is truly waterproof.

In order to achieve this the framework must have the following:

- A single water goal, which looks at water holistically and ensures access to water for lives and livelihoods, with the poorest and marginalised, especially women, as a first priority. This means addressing everyone's needs to access safe water for drinking and sanitation, growing food and maintaining a livelihood.
- An integrated approach to water, which addresses water as an integral component of other goals: health, food and nutrition, gender equality and energy.
- A commitment promoting the sustainable and participatory management of water resources. This is essential if reliable and equitable access to safe water is to be realised.
- An integrated approach to water and climate change. Water resources are vulnerable to climate change. Any goal focused on access to water and sanitation must be climate smart and build the adaptive capacity and resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Water for food security and livelihoods: The case for integration

Access to water for small-scale farming and livelihoods, which is critical to lifting people out of poverty, has historically lacked the attention that it deserves and been a missing dimension of the water and development narrative. Small-scale farmers, who feed a third of the world's population, depend on sustainable access to water, without which crops will not grow and there cannot be food and nutrition security. Progressio believes that the post-2015 framework must promote access to water for smallholder agriculture.

The report produced by the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in May 2013 takes the positive step of including a target under the illustrative food security goal (5c.) to "Increase agricultural productivity with a focus on sustainably increasing smallholder yields and access to irrigation."[1]

Progressio welcomes this proposal, and wants to see the target strengthened. Sustainably increasing smallholder access to small-scale irrigation schemes is fundamental to increasing agricultural productivity; however, a target that includes the promotion of other techniques that are less water- and energy-intensive, such as rainwater harvesting and water conservation, is critical to the resilience of agriculture-based livelihoods, especially in the context of climate change.[2]

View from the ground in Haiti

"Water is life – without water we cannot grow food"

"Agriculture is our source of income" say Mimose and Elismar (above, with two of their children) from Lamine, Haiti. The river neighbouring their land has dried up so they must use rainwater for agriculture. "We are not able to collect a lot of rainwater because we don't have the means to store it. It normally rains in May, June and November but we have noticed that the rains don't come when we expect them to anymore and it doesn't rain for as long as it used to. This means we don't have as much water and cannot grow enough food to feed our family or to sell for an income. We believe we could grow more food for our family if we were able to collect and store the rain that does fall and if we could find a way of getting water from the river to irrigate our land. We are concerned that things will only get worse without leadership and intervention."

Water governance: Participatory management is a key part of the solution

Sustainable and equitable water resource management is a prerequisite for poverty eradication and sustainable development. It has been widely acknowledged that good governance at local and national levels will help to address the structural causes of water insecurity.[3] Participatory management of water and other related natural resources must be an objective within the post-2015 framework.

Progressio believes that the inclusion in water management of all users within a watershed is critical to ensure that equality and non-discrimination in water allocation and management are realised. The poorest and marginalised are often the first to lose out when there is competition over scarce water resources, but poor people are rarely given a voice in local decision-making around the extraction and use of natural resources.

The post-2015 development agenda must explicitly promote and ensure the engagement of poor and marginalised water users in decision-making. Local communities must be empowered to plan and manage water and related natural resources through community-based, inclusive and participatory water management.

Water and women

Access to water is essential to the empowerment of women and girls. Women and girls spend hours every day collecting water for agricultural and domestic needs. An estimated 200 million hours are spent each day globally collecting water.[4] Women in Africa and Asia often carry on their head water amounting to 20 kg.[5] Investment in rural water infrastructure and providing training in agro-ecological farming methods would reduce the time required to collect and store water and have a significant impact on women's productivity. It would also, in turn, yield economic benefits, as well as improved girls' attendance at school. The FAO predicts that closing the gender gap in agricultural yields, through investing to bolster the access, knowledge and resources of women farmers, will reduce the number of hungry people worldwide by up to 150 million.[6]

Furthermore, the role of women as water managers, as food producers and as drivers of livelihoods makes their participation in decision-making vitally important.

View from the ground in Zimbabwe

Women water managers as agents of change

Mrs Khumalo (above, with Progressio development worker Cliff Maunze) is an agent of change in her community. She is the chairwoman of the Siyaphambili community garden in Simbombo Ward, Lupane, Zimbabwe. Progressio partner organisation Environment Africa is working with communities in Lupane to equip them with the knowledge and minimum inputs to sustainably grow their own food.

According to Mrs Khumalo, "Women no longer have to walk long distances to collect water for their crops. With knowledge about what crops to grow and how to sustainably manage the small amount of water resources that we have, women are providing their families and communities with nutritious food and ensuring that local child-headed households have enough to eat. When there is a surplus we sell it and collectively decide how to invest the money." Women in Simbombo have dug their garden, rehabilitated the borehole, and are making decisions about the most appropriate crops to plant, how to adapt crops and techniques to the changing climate, and how to increase their yields through producing and using liquid fertiliser.

Women make up the majority of the garden's management committee, including the roles of treasurer and secretary, and the water committee which manages and maintains the borehole with the collective savings of the group. In addition to being empowered, women are respected more by their husbands and communities.

Water and climate change

Water is predicted to be the primary medium through which early climate change impacts will be felt. Climate change is a threat-multiplier and will exacerbate other more immediate challenges: growing populations, low institutional capacity to deliver and manage water supply services, environmental degradation and inadequate management of water resources.

The IPCC technical paper (2008) on water and climate change states, "Observational records and climate projections provide abundant evidence that freshwater resources are vulnerable and have the potential to be strongly impacted by climate change, with wide-ranging consequences for human societies and ecosystems."[7] As floods, droughts and other impacts of climate change on water become more frequent or intense, water, food and livelihoods security will weaken.[8] Building resilience against such shocks is key to water security for the most vulnerable.

Government at every level must recognise the critical role that local communities play in water resource management and climate change adaptation. Communities, and particularly women as the household manager, must be able to access information and resources in order to be able to plan for and adapt to changing climate. This requires the promotion and finance of small-scale, efficient water- and risk-management techniques that increase climate resilience, such as better irrigation, rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharge.

Water and sustainable consumption

At present global fresh water consumption far exceeds environmentally sustainable limits. The role of governments and the private sector is key in driving forward increased efficiency and decreasing the consumption of water to within supply limits.

In recognising the important role of water for growth and employment, a balance needs to be found between the interests of competing large- and small-scale water users and the social and ecological impact of economic activities on water resources. Decisions about how water is allocated and managed must be transparent, as well as participatory, with access to redress when disputes arise.

View from the ground in Peru

Multi-stakeholder management of water resources

Lima, Peru faces a severe water crisis. A rapidly growing population, the impacts of climate change, severe contamination of the water supply, highly inefficient water management due in part to inadequate infrastructure and a lack of awareness about water conservation are all contributing to the

problem. Water resources are used by smallholder farmers, communities, mining companies, industry and hydroelectric companies. As well as over-exploiting water resources, these users and the activities they support generate pollution.

Progressio partner organisation Aquafondo is a private sector and NGO partnership set up to improve water management in Lima. A Water Law approved in 2009 promotes an integrated and participatory approach to water management, including the establishment of 'Catchment Councils', which bring together the relevant authorities and industrial, domestic, and agricultural water users.

Sonja Bleeker, a Progressio development worker supporting Aquafondo, reports: "Organising the Catchment Council is not an easy task, considering the number of stakeholders involved: over 70 local governments, more than 80 rural communities, a high number of powerful mining and industrial companies and 9 million domestic water users. Aquafondo has organised workshops, inviting all stakeholder groups to develop a common vision for the watershed. For many farmers this was the first time they were consulted about their needs and opinions in water-related issues in the presence of the government and private companies, with which they often have conflicts over water use and contamination. With capacity-building support, Catchment Councils have the potential to empower a group of rural stakeholders in order to defend their needs, interests and priorities, and fight for their rights."

Water, data and monitoring systems

Equitable access to water and sanitation cannot be achieved without the sustainable, transparent and accountable management of water resources. There is a critical lack of existing data or metrics and monitoring systems for addressing water quantity, quality, use, distribution and reliability, particularly for groundwater resources. Systems for monitoring and aggregating data at national and global levels must be strengthened. Data should be disaggregated by rural/urban area, wealth quintiles, formal-informal settlement status, gender, disability and age.

Conclusion: A waterproofed post-2015 development framework

Equitable and sustainable access to water is vital to poverty eradication. The world's poorest and most vulnerable communities and small-scale farmers face huge challenges to their lives and livelihoods due to inadequate and unreliable access to water. Communities, and notably women, who are the primary water guardians, consistently prioritise water resource management, but their voices have not been heeded in international policy-making. The post-2015 development framework is a critical opportunity to waterproof development for everyone.

Notes

1 United Nations (2013) A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development: The report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, UN, New York, www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/HLP%20P2015%20Report.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

2 United Nations Environment Programme and Stockholm Environment Institute (2009) Rain-water harvesting: A lifeline for human well-being, UNEP, www.unwater.org/downloads/Rainwater_Harvesting_090310b.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

3 WaterAid (2012) Water security framework, WaterAid, London, www.wateraid.org/~/media/Publications/water-security-framework.ashx (accessed 1 October 2013).

4 WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2010) Progress on sanitation and drinking-water: 2010 update, World Health Organisation and UNICEF, Geneva/New York, www.unicef.org/eapro/JMP-2010Final.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

5 United Nations Development Programme (2006) Human Development Report 2006: Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis, UNDP, New York, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR06-complete.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

6 Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (2011) The state of food and agriculture 2010-11: Women in agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development, FAO, Rome, www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

7 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2008) Climate change and water: IPCC Technical Paper VI, IPCC Secretariat, Geneva, www.ipcc.ch/pdf/technical-papers/climate-change-water-en.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

8 Alavian, V, et al (2009) Water and climate change: Understanding the risks and making climate-smart investment decisions, World Bank, Washington DC, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTNTFPSI/Resources/DPWaterClimateChangeweblarge.pdf (accessed 1 October 2013).

Progressio is an international development charity working in 13 countries across the world. This briefing paper is intended to be a contribution to the debate based on the knowledge and experience of Progressio's partner organisations and the communities that they work with.

Progressio has already participated in meetings with the High Level Panel and has made contributions to the World We Want thematic consultation on water. Progressio looks forward to further engaging in this debate.

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