

Water crises prompt governments to seek help from end-users

Scarce water supplies demand a new approach, say UN experts

New Book Announcement

“Enhancing Participation and Governance in Water Resources Management: Conventional Approaches and Information Technology”

Edited by senior UN officials Libor Jansky and Juha I. Uitto

ISBN 9280811207

Website: <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/2005/enhancingparticipation.html>

Tokyo, 16 January 2006 –

More than a billion people lack sufficient clean water to meet their basic needs; 27 nations don't have enough water and another 16 are 'water stressed'. The UN predicts that rising demand for water will threaten human and ecological health over the next generation. As public health, development, economies and nature suffer, governments are becoming more aware of the need to ensure access to clean water.

A book published in February by United Nations University Press argues that governments are realising that getting the public more involved will improve the management of water resources by improving decision-making and problem-solving.

“Governments recognise that to avoid further crises and successfully manage their scarce and valuable water resources it is beneficial to get end-users directly involved” says Dr. Libor Jansky, a Senior Academic at United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan. Dr. Jansky co-edited the book with Dr. Juha Uitto, a Senior Adviser at the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Evaluation Office in New York, USA.

The editors state that the crucial knowledge for the successful management of water is already there: within government departments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and among water users themselves.

But Dr. Jansky says the focus of water management policies needs to change. “Water management normally focuses on rivers, lakes and water tables, but it is important to also explore other issues such as cross-border water flows, inter-basin transfers, and even ‘virtual’ water transfers through the export of water-intensive crops and manufactured goods,” he says. “Human welfare and environmental sustainability demand that we adopt a broader perspective and new techniques.”

The authors examine the best approaches and techniques for public involvement. They identify conventional and emerging methods and practices for successfully engaging users and other stakeholders. They also discuss the many benefits, including raising the profiles of otherwise marginalised water users and improving their access to clean water resources on a sustainable basis.

Among the innovations are information technology tools for giving water users a voice in the decision-making process. “IT tools are helping the UN, governments and NGOs to improve our understanding of water supplies, how they are used and how different decisions can affect the livelihoods of immediate users and others ‘downstream’,” says Dr. Jansky.

Book website: <http://www.unu.edu/unupress/2005/enhancingparticipation.html>

For further comment please contact:

Dr. Libor Jansky, Senior Academic Programme Officer, Environment and Sustainable Development Programme, United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan.
Tel. +81-54671251 (direct). Email: Jansky@hq.unu.edu

Mr. Terry Collins, Press Liaison, Tel. +1-416-538-8712, Tel. +1-416-878-8712 (mobile)
Email: terrycollins@rogers.com

About UN University

The United Nations University is an organ of the United Nations established by the General Assembly in 1972 to be an international community of scholars engaged in research, advanced training, and the dissemination of knowledge related to the pressing global problems of human survival, development, and welfare. Its activities focus mainly on the areas of peace and governance, environment and sustainable development, and science and technology in relation to human welfare. The University operates through a worldwide network of research and postgraduate training centres, with its planning and coordinating headquarters in Tokyo.
Website: www.unu.edu

About UNU Press

United Nations University Press is the publishing arm of the United Nations University. UNU Press publishes scholarly and policy-oriented books and periodicals on the issues facing the United Nations and its people and member states, with particular emphasis upon international, regional and trans-boundary policies. Website: www.unu.edu/unupress