

# Getting development right: the relevance for the water sector

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*AWIRU's mandate is to contribute to the generation of water management solutions that are politically, socially, economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable in Africa*

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# Overview

- Water, food and poverty
- Human development and measurement challenges
- Expanded sets of indicators
- Having less poverty - relevance for the water sector (the case of Mjejane)
- Conclusion - failing forward



# Water, food and poverty



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# Poverty characteristics

- Obvious linkages between water poverty and being poor
- Causes of poverty shape its characteristics
- Poorest are rural, black, women and/or children
- Poverty is characterized as ill-being – not having enough to eat, wearing tattered clothes, not having clean drinking water, not having water for productive use and so forth
- Being poor is expensive as pay more than rich for same goods (vendors, spazas, fishermen)
- Often sacrifice the future for the present insecurity (taking children out of school - to fetch water, to grow food or because people are ill from poor quality water)



# Having less poverty?

- We can say that moving out of poverty requires economic + social change and improved goods and services
- Requires clean drinking water, sanitation and so forth
- Developing - implies positive transformation
- And it results in a more advanced state
- Changes in demographics – decline in mortality rate and then decline in birth rate, better health ....



# Water and development?

- This is mainly about material well being
- Measured in terms of economic welfare or standard of living that is determined by commodities - (supplying pipes, toilets)
- If all utilities (water) increase then there is less poverty (welfarist or utilitarian approach)
- If commodity deprivation then less well off



# Drawing a line on poverty

With debate raging over how to define the poor, an upcoming Nedlac meeting is expected to clarify the issue, writes **Patrick Burnett**



The lowland community of Wesbank outside Malmesbury faces on grants made to the white members of the family. (Photograph)

**Y**ou will hear everyone saying 'food, can we have food?' It's about no food and no money to buy food. There is no work."

In her message Bontle Klauser, a 63-year-old pensioner, heard on a daily basis when she works as a volunteer at a Family Welfare and Development Community Kitchen in Malmesburg, an impoverished area of Cape Town.

A wife and mother of five, she covers the window of the outdoor kitchen where she works, her eyes in a small opening at the bottom through which Klauser serves a plate of soup for R1 and a cup of soup for 50c.

"There is such a lot of people away. Sometimes I can serve only soup because there is no food," she said, lifting the lid on a large pot which has been scraped dry.

Klauser sees poverty in terms of people not being able to afford food, but also as a result of the lack of employment opportunities and access to education. She cites the example of her daughter, who went to study but can't because there is no money to pay for her tuition.

Measuring poverty — and calculating how many people are poor — is the subject of robust debate over the development of a long-delayed poverty index for South Africa. A June meeting of a Nedlac task team charged with making recommendations on the issue is seen as a critical juncture in the process.

Although a signatory to the 1990 Copenhagen Declaration, which

pledged an obligation on signatory countries to develop a poverty measure, to date South Africa has yet to develop such a measure.

But Finance Minister Trevor Manuel announced in his February 2000 budget speech that Statistics South Africa was working on an official poverty line index, referring to a 2000 discussion document on the index.

The treasury document used this preliminary estimate for the poverty line, based on prices in 2000, at R422 per person per month for food and non-food items — the equivalent of about R480 in 2006 prices. Based on household expenditure reported in the 2000 Income and Expenditure Survey (IES), the poverty rate was thus estimated at 53% in 2000.

The development of an index is seen as useful in measuring the extent of poverty and as a tool in measuring progress in overcoming it. Not having one has led to divergent views on the extent of poverty, with estimates on the number of people below the poverty line varying between 6.1% and 70.4%, depending on the measure used.

The proposal in the treasury document to measure for a single poverty line based on minimum food and non-food essentials, with an additional upper and lower threshold.

But the index is controversial because it involves decisions about what poverty is and how to measure it, with these decisions favouring who would qualify for poverty alleviation programmes.

Text of the most common approaches used are either a rela-

tive approach — which would rank people according to their order in per capita income, with the bottom percentage defined by government as poor — and an absolute approach — which would set a poverty line at a basket of goods and the ability to afford this basket.

Critics argue, however, that purely monetary assessments are inadequate and fail to take account of the nuances experienced by people living in poverty.

"The *blitz* about a poverty line is that many people are quite wary of such a measure because, inasmuch as it defines poverty, it excludes people that are just above the line and is a very blunt measure," said Isabel Fryc, director of the Studies on Poverty and Inequality Institute, a not-for-profit trust working on poverty issues.

She questions whether the food component allowed for in the treasury document would be sufficient for someone with HIV/AIDS, for example, and called the current comment "particularly problematic" because it was based on what poor people spend on already limited items.

Fryc expressed the concern that any poverty line should not be a "minimalist figure", but needs to have a higher "aspirational" level.

"The thing about the poverty line is that it excludes people that are just above the line and is a very blunt measure"

that allows people to live in dignity. This would be in keeping with notions like the Copenhagen Declaration of 1995, which refers to poverty as "a condition characterised by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, housing, shelter, education and information."

Reflecting on the absolute and relative approaches, Fryc advised that the index, which would ask people what they think is the minimum amount required to live decently

Fryc argued that officials could determine by the issue to focus on their environmental consultation, that it would be broader than that and involve public forums so people are heard to obtain views on what constitutes poverty.

These findings could be distilled down to a "base group of items and goods".

Black Sash Anti-poverty Program manager Karen Peters says the process, with two-thirds of basic essential food items, are "not so far to go on in terms of guaranteeing of poverty".

Peters sees it as "essential" in society, especially the marginalised are included in the discussion.

Meanwhile, the department of social development focuses the notion of more than one poverty line reinforced that the treasury, while arguing that the index, was concerning its efforts on the development of a minimum poverty line based on a minimum of essential food and non-food items.

While not opposing an ab-



# Basic Needs (1970s)

- Something wrong with narrow economic concepts of development
- Poor countries recorded impressive growth rates 1950s but did not manage to make much progress in improving their standard of living
- To ensuring that there are sufficient, appropriately distributed goods and services to sustain all human lives at a minimally decent level
- Everyone needs basic goods and strives to lead the decent live (food, shelter, clothing, access to essential services – safe drinking water, sanitation, health, education and transport)
- In the 60's the call for greater political freedom and the democratisation of repressive regimes
- Dominated much donor development policy
- Started looking at rights – non welfarist approach



# Human Development and expanding measures



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# Human Development

- Assumption that “all good things go together” no longer seemed valid
- In the early 1980s a new conceptual framework for evaluating human development emerged
- About popular participation and making of decisions that affect lives and livelihoods – people themselves should determine their needs
- Development of people - rather than development of things
- The value lies in the living and not in the commodities
- What is valued intrinsically is people’s capabilities to function
- Poverty is interpreted as the lack of this capability
- Amartya Sen the leader here – development seen as the expansion of capabilities
- In the 1990s research at the UN drew on this and compiled the Human Development Index (HDI)



# Wealth is not the good we are seeking

- Well being is about **being well** – which is about
  - Personal liberty to achieve
  - Being able to live long
  - Being well nourished
  - Being literate
- Aristotle's Ethics was devoted to identifying the conditions needed to achieve '**the best life**' - 'wealth is not the good we are seeking'
- What is required is an approach that considers what people can do and be
- Poverty involves then not being able to do certain things or 'basic capability failure'



# Huge gaps in poverty research

- In 1874 anthropologists and travellers in Africa identified huge gaps in census and other data
- In 1943 were still saying 'our knowledge of primitive population structures is most inadequate'
- In the case of Africa official statistics are of little help
- In 2008 still inadequate



# Expanded indicators

- 1.1 billion people in development countries have inadequate access to water
- 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation
- *“twin deficits are rooted in institutions and political choices, not in water’s availability”*
- Poor people living in slums pay 5 – 10 times more per litre of water than those in richer suburbs
- MDGs – ‘test of humanity’ – test of human development
- Even more important to tackle crisis of the poor in sanitation where the stigma is more discriminating



*“Enhancing capacity of poor people to claim and defend water rights through legal empowerment and accountable institutions”*



# Poverty and policy

- Poverty measurements - not to get a single stat at one time or place
- How have policies impacted on the everyday lives of ordinary citizens?
- How has implementation - infrastructure, commodities - improved well being - being well?
- Who has really benefited and who has not?
- In what ways have they benefited?
- How do we measure the impacts?



# Missing data

- Over the 50 years: shift through economic growth and commodities to include social and political aspects of development (Dublin principles in 1992, MDG goals - World Summit 2002)
- The HDI did not capture all dimensions of human development
- Despite focus on human expanded aspects (HDI basics) – physical security, agency, employment, empowerment and social inclusion/exclusion (trust, shame, humiliation, discrimination) not yet included



Water and food security can be directly responsible for expanded aspects of human development



# Expanded aspects: agency – taking part in life

- An agent is “*someone who acts and brings about change*” (Sen 1999)
- The opposite of a person with agency is someone who is coerced, oppressed or passive (Ibrahim & Alkire 2007)



Agency is of intrinsic and instrumental importance to impoverished communities



# Empowerment

- Empowerment is an expansion of agency
- Sometimes measured by identifying processes that cause empowerment – expansion of resources (assets - more and cleaner water, education etc)
- Built on principles of social justice and equity



Includes just allocation of scarce resource  
Social cohesion - trust

# Empowerment: h/h level indicators

- Decision making:
  - Finances, resource allocation, spending, expenditures
  - Social and domestic matters
  - Child related matters (well being, schooling, health)
- Access to and control over resources:
  - Access to, control of cash, h/h income, assets, unearned income
- Freedom from violence
- Management/knowledge
- Public spaces (political participation - stakeholder involvement)

# How to live that best life ...

- Adam Smith in the 18th century spoke about the labourer who requires a linen shirt to appear in public without shame
- The resources required to achieve these ends will vary with social and cultural conventions



Things like avoiding shame, self respect and taking part in the life of the community are central parts of life



# Why do we need 'shame' data

- Absolute poverty has both material and social dimensions
- The lack of humiliation, for example, is the **core** component of a decent society
- And that absolute deprivation, while including hunger and lack of clean drinking water - also includes “being ashamed to appear in public”
- The stigma of poverty is a recurring theme among the poor: The Voices of the Poor study conducted in 60 countries found that people often try to conceal their poverty to avoid humiliation and shame
- Goldin (2005,2008) shown the link between shame and lack of water





# Incomplete measures

Dimensions	H	E	I	S	E	E	S	M
Individual 1	NP	P	NP	P	P	P	NP	NP
Individual 2	NP	NP	P	NP	P	NP	P	P
Individual 3	P	P	P	NP	NP	NP	P	P
Individual 4	P	P	P	P	P	P	NP	NP

MISSING DATA

*Empowerment:* decision-making, access to control over resources

*Employment:* underemployment, unsafe, low pay work, not fair

*Safety:* victim of violence or lethal violence, physical abuse + includes mental and psychological abuse

*Ability to go without shame:* being stigmatised, humiliated, isolated, discriminated, indignity

*Meaning and satisfaction:* alienation, anomie, dissatisfaction



## Social Capital (Trust)

If there were a problem that affected the entire village/neighbourhood, for instance (lack of water, lack of sanitation, leaking pipe, bad taste ...) who do you think would work together to deal with the situation?

	Yes	No
Each person/household would deal with the problem individually	1	2
Neighbours among themselves	1	2
Local government/municipal political leaders	1	2
All community leaders acting together	1	2
The entire village/neighbourhood	1	2
Anything else that I have not mentioned and you would like to specify:	1	2



# Having less poverty - relevance for the water sector



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## Adapting to water stress



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# Agency, empowerment - dignity

- Innovation and creativity
- Nurture continuous learning
- Innovation and creativity - agency enabling learning spaces
- Ability and willingness to learn and problem solve
- Self-esteem, empowerment
- Internal locus of control – cannot always control the external
- Also referred to as ‘self agency’ – “ I have control over my own life”

## Responsive and responsible farming



Water  
solutions

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Quick to recover - irrespensible



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# Ability of human and eco-systems to produce adequate responses

- Vulnerability – defined as degree to which human & environmental systems are likely to experience harm due to a perturbation or stress (Kasperson *et al.* 2003, Turner *et al.* 2003)
- Aspects of systems that constrain or enable ability to respond (Luers *et al.* 2003)
- Resilience – emphasis is on the ability of system to respond
- Not yet adequate (expanded) measurement indicators



# Having less poverty?

- The growth of individual motivation and the expansion of enterprise
- It implies a reduction in absolute poverty, unemployment and income inequality
- Expansion of people's entitlements or command over goods and services
- The growth of political freedom and democratisation
- It is the expansion of human capabilities
- Enlarging people's freedom of choice



# Impacts require measurement indicators?

- Measurement challenges
- Importance of addressing these as influences on policy
- Lobbying politicians through better understanding of poverty - and development
- Has impacts for the water sector ....



# Water and development

- Fundamental relevant principles
  - Inclusivity
  - Decisions taken at lowest level
  - Demand not supply driven (requires knowledge - choices)
  - Equity in resource allocation
  - Maintenance and operations
  - Means to end not end in itself



# Water and development contd.

- Power structures and political agendas that drive water allocation - because it is these structures that determine how much, who and where water will be directed
- If you are living in an area free of cholera that would be better than living in an area with cholera and it is an external factor
- Capacity to manage water not just 'nice to have' but fundamental for sustainable development



# Measurement value to the sector

- Critical to have responsive citizens
- Engaging meaningfully
- More resilient
- Measure impact of policies
- Name desired outcomes and
- Propose indicators as critical measurement tools



# Conclusion - failing forward



# Positive freedom of choice

- Classic economists agree not just about wealth but improved living standards
- The expansion of human capabilities or positive freedom of choice
- The task of the researcher is to determine what these capabilities are in specific societies
- To communicate clearly with policy makers
- And to measure who attains them and who fails to attain them

# Tangible and intangible goods

- Material property is an inaccurate and incomplete guide to personal well-being
- Obviously not an obstacle to human development
- Utility constitutes an incomplete concept of well being and cannot be used as a reliable proxy for human development
- For us in the water sector - we need to see how utility application improves or enhances human development
- Can be a means to an end and not just end in itself



# Mistakes into stepping stones for success



- *“There is no doubt in my mind that there are many ways to be a winner, but there is really only one way to be a loser and that is to fail and not look beyond the failure”*



*Mistakes become failures when we continually respond to them incorrectly ....*  
(Maxwell 2000)

# Conclusion

- Primary concern is the promotion of human development and the elimination of poverty
- Identify the categories
- Identify indicators of performance in each category
- Missing data: sets of indicators are currently being tested for robustness and applicability in cross country studies
- Considered within African Continent context as critical to advancement in the water sector

# Thank you

