



7th RWSN Forum Media Statement

November 28th, 2016

This year, the 7th Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) Forum takes place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from November 29th to December 2nd 2016. It is the first global gathering to consider the practical challenge of how everyone worldwide can get access to safe, affordable water by 2030.

This is the challenge set through the Sustainable Development Goals (specially Goal 6). While urban areas face many challenges, the weight falls on the shoulders of rural water supply professionals because 80% of the 660 million women, men and children who do not have access to an improved drinking water source today live in rural areas. And even for those who do have an improved water source, service levels are often inadequate.

Over the last 25 years, global rural water access has increased from 62% - 84% - that's over half a billion people. The challenge is to do the same again, in half the time.

We believe that reaching everyone, everywhere with sustainable water services is possible, but we recognise that no individual or organisation can do it alone. This is when the 7th Forum of the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN)² comes in. Held only once every 5 years, it is a unique event, dedicated specifically to water services in rural areas, which present unique challenges. How do we provide sustainable water supply in isolated, hard-to-reach areas? How do we ensure the most vulnerable have access to a good level of service in their community? How do we manage and protect groundwater resources so that it benefits us and future generations?

Innovative technologies and financing mechanisms will be presented, as well as the numerous ways that organisations around the world are trying to improve access to a clean drinking water supply. Nearly 500 professionals from 6 continents, from government, NGOs, research, private sector and donors will be sharing knowledge based on over 150 peer-review submissions.

¹ See rwsn7.net for details. The last RWSN Forum took place in Kampala, Uganda, and brought together over 500 participants. See <https://rwsnforum.wordpress.com> to find out what happened, and who was there.

² RWSN is a global network of more than 8000 professionals and practitioners working to raise standards of knowledge and evidence, technical and professional competence, practice and policy in rural water supply and so fulfill the vision of sustainable rural water services for all. See rural-water-supply.net/ for details.

Highlights include:

Professionalising rural water services

Too many bad boreholes are drilled, money is wasted and people are left with a dry hole in the ground. To counter this, UNICEF and Skat are launching a guidance note on “Professional Water Well Drilling” The guidance note is mainly concerned with rural and small towns’ water supplies but is mindful of the huge challenges faced by supplies in many growing African cities dealing with problems of groundwater quantity and quality.

[Read more...](#)

New technology:

The LifePump , a new, robust handpump for remote areas has been lab and field tested. It can draw water from greater depths than other handpumps and is a robust, corrosion-resistant design.

[Read more...](#)

Getting water to the hard-to-reach

Using the power of Bollywood stars to communicate about water across India.

[Read more...](#)

Sustaining services

“Smart” handpump technology developed by Oxford University is being used to monitor how handpumps are being used and when they break down so that they can be repaired quickly. Their spin-off enterprise, “Fundfix”, Kenya, has dramatically reduced water point downtimes so that villagers get water when they need it.

[Read more...](#)

Preparing for climate change

Facing uncertain future rainfall, it is essential that rural communities reduce their vulnerability to climate shocks. Groundwater research, from the UPGro programme (<http://upgro.org/>) and technology such as sand dams are helping to store water in the wet times to see them through long dry periods.

[Read more...](#)

Resources for journalists:

Website in French and English: <http://rwsn7.net> and <http://rwsn7-fr.net>

Twitter account @ruralwaternet and #rwsn7

Media corner with photos, daily highlights:

<https://rwsn7.net/media-corner/>