

"Agas" by Danilo Victoriano

# HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO LOCAL PLANNING OF WATER SERVICES

**Access to safe drinking water is necessary for survival, well-being, dignified living and intellectual and spiritual development, and as such is considered a human right.**

The realization of the right to potable water reinforces and paves the way for the realization of other human rights including among others, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and security, the right to continuous improvements of living conditions, the right to work and to just and favorable conditions of work, the rights to privacy and to family life, the right to education and to access to information, the freedom from discrimination (gender, age and ethnicity), and the freedoms of religion, opinion, speech, and expression.



"The Innocent" by Jason Cardente

Cognizant of access to water as a human right, under the MDG-F 1919: *Enhancing Access to and Provision of Water Services with the Active Participation of the Poor*, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), with assistance from UN partner agencies, has adopted the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) in the formulation of Municipal Water Supply, Sewerage and Sanitation Sector Plans (MW4SPs) in 36 pilot local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines. The MW4SPs will serve as a tool for LGUs in identifying priority/target areas and potential interventions.

HRBA is guided by the principle that development policies and programs should aim for the greater realization of human rights. Thus, the focus of the rights-based approach to planning and development for water supply and sanitation is on the poor, because the poor are usually the ones denied of their basic rights to life and dignity due to the lack of access to safe and clean water, and have less resources (social, political, economic) to realize these rights.

While HRBA centers development on the poor as the primary beneficiaries, HRBA also recognizes the poor as the main actors of the development process. HRBA believes in the capacity and ability of people to change their own circumstances and act on their own choices, given the necessary environment and assistance. HRBA rejects the perception of providing access to water as charity, and instead promotes it as a realization of an entitlement.

HRBA, therefore, works toward developing capacities of rights holders, particularly the poor, to claim their rights as well as duty bearers to fulfill their obligation in a manner that is participatory, transparent, accountable, just and in accordance with the rule of law.

## Normative Core Elements of Water and Sanitation Services:

1. Availability
2. Physical Accessibility
3. Economic Accessibility
4. Information Accessibility
5. Quality
6. Acceptability of facilities and services

## Human Rights principles as Applied to Water and Sanitation:

1. Universality and Indivisibility
2. Participation and inclusion
3. Equality and non-discrimination
4. Accountability and rule of law

The following principles constitute the over-all planning and development framework of MW4SPs:

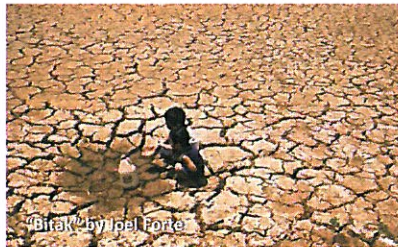
- Strengthening government and non-government institutions
- Existing laws and policies, particularly in the resource exploitation, allocation, prioritization, protection and conservation must be adhered to
- Decentralized operations within the context of the policy of devolution and community-based approaches must be implemented
- Private sector participation with the end view of promoting market-based incentives to rationalize water utilization must be initiated and encouraged
- Coordinated basic data collection system for efficient and effective flow of relevant and validated information including integration of WATSAN data must be institutionalized



"Bottoms Up" by Ernie Peñaredondo



- Gender concerns must be integrated in project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and management activities
- Participation of Indigenous People (IPs) and disadvantaged groups in water governance should be promoted
- Ensure equitable and non-discriminatory access to appropriate potable water and improved sanitation services
- Local initiatives and measures on climate change adaptation and WATSAN agenda should be integrated
- Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach in planning has to be promoted looking into water source development both quality and quantity, management of wastewater and watershed protection and management
- Access to potable water supply and improved sanitation services is the right of every people therefore, it should be considered in the planning process



- Lessons learned from the previous Provincial Water Supply, Sewerage and Sanitation Sector Plan (PW4SPs) will have to be considered in relation to advocacy, social preparation, marketing and other issues and concerns caused by internal and external factors
- Environmental justice should be mainstreamed in the use of water resources and planning in the Comprehensive Development Plan to waterless municipalities.

Some of the benefits of HRBA in the formulation of MW4SPs include:

- ✓ Sharpens focus of water supply and sanitation development as HRBA targets the poorest and most vulnerable
- ✓ Promotes social inclusion as it strengthens and empowers the target groups to act together to fulfill their needs
- ✓ Decreases, if not eliminates, discrimination and inequity in water services provision
- ✓ Integrates into development initiatives a concern for the quality of democracy and governance at all levels
- ✓ Enhances accountability and transparency in the delivery of services
- ✓ Ensures more responsive and sustainable interventions
- ✓ Promotes justice under the rule of law
- ✓ Enhances ownership and fosters partnerships

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#### **About the MDG Achievement Fund**

*The United Nations (UN) MDG Achievement Fund was created in December 2006 with a generous donation from the government of Spain in fulfillment of its aid commitments in relation to MDG 8 (developing global partnership for development). With almost \$700 million invested in 128 programmes in 49 countries around the world, the MDG Achievement Fund is currently the largest global fund dedicated to achieving the MDGs. The MDG Fund represents a unique initiative of the United Nations that brings together more than 22 UN agencies and programmes, building on the strength of each to deliver effective multisectoral interventions that improve the lives of poor and marginalized citizens.*

