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Secretariat of the 3rd World Water Forum, 5th FL. 2-2-4 Kojimachi Chiyoda-ku Tokyo 102-0083, Japan
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More than 3,000 Innovative Water Projects Worldwide Actions Speak Louder than Words

Thousands of innovative water projects are being undertaken around the world, many of them small or in locations where they don't get media attention. But it is these actions that hold out the dazzling possibility that the crippling global water crisis can be overcome sooner than expected.

Nearly 3,000 new water projects will be presented to the 3rd World Water Forum on its opening session on Sunday, March 16th, in a document entitled **World Water Actions – Making Water Flow for All**, prepared by the Water Action Unit of the World Water Council.

“This report demonstrates that there is no single solution to the world's water problems, but instead, thousands of solutions, just as there are thousands of water problems,” says François Guerquin, Coordinator of the Water Action Unit of the World Water Council. “When people have the will to address this issue, they will find the ways to solve them.”

The report emphasizes that in many of the projects, people have used their own initiative, not waiting for government assistance or planning. This is because many governments have not yet made water supply and sanitation a priority. Although many new laws on water have been passed in recent years (the report identifies such new laws in at least 42 countries), experience is showing that they are difficult to implement because they require profound political changes in terms of decentralization and empowerment of citizens.

“Water is no longer taken for granted as a plentiful resource, always available,” the report says. “More and more people in more and more countries are experiencing water differently, as individuals in their day to day lives and as communities and nations.” This report shows what they are doing about water.

A sampling from the 3,000 successful new projects include:

Burkina Faso: Farmers and researchers developed a natural wastewater treatment system in ponds of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, alternating standard ponds with ponds holding water lettuce (macrophyte, or *Pistia stratiotes*). The system delivers an effluent that can be safely used as a fertilizer to irrigate market gardens; such a method can be applied throughout West and Central Africa. Currently most effluent for irrigation reuse comes from activated sludge treatment plants and is of poor quality.

South Africa: A privately owned company borrows on financial markets and lends capital to local authorities and water boards. This system allows for improved access to financing because it spreads the risk among all lenders. Currently, the default rate is just 0.006%.

Hungary: The Nagykörü Revitalization Project is a pilot project for natural regeneration of the Tisza River's ecosystem. The scheme aims at alleviating the problems caused by spring floods as well as providing protection against pollution. To this end, it restores the flood plain management system that existed 200 to 300 years ago. Along a 400-meter stretch of the Tisza embankment, oxbows, or naturally formed dry channels, and sandpits have been connected by a network of ditches; sluices connect them with the river. Water flooding from the river in spring can be retained in this system until the summer.

Belize and Guatemala: Two NGOs – Friends for Conservation and Development in Belize, and Naturaleza para la Vida in Guatemala – joined across the border to establish monitoring of water quality by the public, raise public awareness so as to encourage practices for the reduction of erosion and improper garbage disposal, and organize clean-up campaigns.

Japan: To avoid building new infrastructures in regions where water shortages are relatively severe, pilot projects are being launched to connect existing reservoirs so as to allow exchanges between them, according to water needs.

Among other measures, the report seeks to help convince decision-makers that water is central to poverty alleviation and economic development. To that end, the World Water Council announced the launch of a study to quantify the benefits of water and sound management.

The World Water Council has also pledged to pursue gathering information on Water Actions in coordination with any interested organizations, be it from the United Nations system or an NGO.

World Water Actions Recognized -- A contest to identify the best action attracted more than 900 entries. Participants in the Forum will be able to view 150 of the best entries displayed on the site and talk to representatives of the projects. The winning project, to be selected from among those appearing at the Forum, will receive \$50,000 to help continue its efforts.

The **World Water Actions** report says that the described success stories can be replicated globally, or at least inspire people facing similar challenges.

The report recommends that governments should demonstrate that they give priority to water by:

- Establishing concrete investment plans for improved sector management and infrastructure;
- Including water in poverty reduction strategies;
- Implementing decentralization accompanied by financing and training programs, to the benefit of local authorities and communities.

The report also recommends that the international community (donors, UN agencies and NGOs) should give priority to helping those countries that adopt the approach it recommends to governments.

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