



International  
Labour  
Office

# Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods

**DECENT WORK IN THE RURAL ECONOMY  
POLICY GUIDANCE NOTES**



Water plays an important role in ensuring equitable, sustainable and productive rural economies. In addition to being an essential element for agricultural production, nutrition and human health, water enables job opportunities in numerous key sectors across the rural economy. This Policy Guidance Note outlines the main aspects linking water with rural development and employment, and highlights the approach of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to some key policy issues related to the topic. These include investments for water infrastructure; water governance; water and working conditions; and the links between water-related skills, innovation and decent job creation.





## 1. Rationale and justification

**Water is an essential component to ensure equitable, sustainable and productive rural economies.** It is required for guaranteeing food security, health and personal hygiene, as well as for agricultural production and energy supply, among others. Sustainable water management, sufficient water infrastructure and access to a safe, reliable and affordable supply of water and adequate sanitation services are key to improving rural livelihoods, expanding local economies, creating decent jobs in rural areas and across economic sectors, and maintaining a healthy and productive workforce. A failure to address issues related to water runs the risk of having negative repercussions on rural economies, livelihoods and decent work.

**Water is recognized as a human right that “entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses”.**<sup>1</sup> The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the role of water in eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable green growth as essential. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on clean water and sanitation aims to put the right to water in practice and to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.<sup>2</sup> Many other SDGs are closely linked to water-related issues,<sup>3</sup> and water can be considered as a fundamental driver of green growth.<sup>4</sup> The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas recognizes that their access to natural and productive resources such as water is an increasing challenge, and underscores the importance of the right to access to water and sanitation.<sup>5</sup>

**Water is an essential component of national and local economies, and is needed to create and maintain jobs across all sectors of the economy. Water can enable both direct and indirect job opportunities for people living in rural areas.** Globally, three out of four jobs depend on water, and half of the global workforce is employed in eight

highly water-dependent sectors: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, energy, manufacturing, recycling, construction and transport.<sup>6</sup> Many of the jobs in these sectors are in rural areas and rely on the effective management and sustainability of a healthy environment. These jobs are under increased pressure due to climate change and environmental degradation, leading to lower productivity and income instability, particularly in the case of the most vulnerable households and workers.<sup>7</sup> In addition, direct jobs in the water sector include water resources management; building and managing water infrastructure; and the provision of water services, such as water supply, sewerage and waste management.<sup>8</sup> For example in the United States, water, wastewater, and stormwater utilities will support 289,000 permanent jobs (indirect and induced effect) annually over the decade 2015-25.<sup>9</sup> In Latin America and the Caribbean it is estimated that every US\$ 1 billion invested in expanding water and sanitation networks generate around 100,000 jobs – more than investments in most other sectors.<sup>10</sup> Investment in water not only promotes employment generation but also income support and asset creation; it also restores the natural resource base.<sup>11</sup>

**Rural livelihoods are often dependent on adequate water supply, and increasing water scarcity and competition for water resources are threatening these livelihoods.** It is therefore of vital importance to ensure access to sufficient, clean and easily accessible water sources. Globally over 2 billion people live in countries suffering from high levels of water stress, with 22 countries being in a situation of serious water stress. An estimated 4 billion people suffer from severe water stress for at least one month a year.<sup>12</sup> Demand for water will continue to increase, and it has been estimated that by 2030 nearly half of the population will live in areas of high water stress, which will result in the displacement of populations. While water scarcity is likely to limit opportunities for economic growth and the creation of decent jobs in rural areas, the increased demand for water in areas with reduced water availability or high competition for

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: *Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, E/C.12/2002/11 (New York, 2002), available at: <https://undocs.org/E/C.12/2002/11>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform: *Sustainable Development Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all*, available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6>

<sup>3</sup> These include, inter alia, SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production, and SDG 15 on life on land.

<sup>4</sup> OECD: *Meeting the water reform challenge*, OECD Studies on Water (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2012), available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/environment-development/meeting-the-water-reform-challenge-9789264170001-en.htm>

<sup>5</sup> United Nations: *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas*, General Assembly, 73rd Session, Agenda Item 74b (New York, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP): *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2016: Water and Jobs* (Paris, UNESCO, 2016).

<sup>7</sup> ILO: *World Employment Social Outlook 2018: Greening with jobs* (Geneva, 2018).

<sup>8</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Water Research Foundation (WRF): *National Economic & Labor Impacts of the Water Utility Sector: Executive Report* (Denver, WRF, 2015), available at: [www.bafuture.org/sites/default/files/key-topics/attachments/impacts-of-water-utility-sector.pdf](http://www.bafuture.org/sites/default/files/key-topics/attachments/impacts-of-water-utility-sector.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> International Finance Corporation (IFC): *IFC Jobs Study: Assessing private sector contributions to job creation and poverty reduction* (Washington, DC, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> WWAP: *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2014: Water and energy* (Paris, UNESCO, 2014), available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000225741>

<sup>12</sup> WWAP: *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2019: Leaving no one behind* (Paris, UNESCO, 2019)

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water calls for an increased diversification of water sources, such as low yielding wells and springs, rainwater or storm water harvesting, urban runoff, and wastewater recycling. This not only has the potential, through technological development, to create jobs in the operation and maintenance of treatment plants to reclaim water, but it enables new forms of small-scale intensive uses of water such as the cultivation of highly profitable crops in small plots.<sup>13</sup>

**Many water-dependent jobs in rural areas are found in the agro-food sector.** This sector relies heavily on water, with irrigation for food production using about 70 per cent of available water,<sup>14</sup> with a figure rising to over 90 per cent in many Least Developed Countries.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, livestock and food processing also require a considerable amount of water. Many farmers in the agro-food sector suffer from food insecurity and lack access to water resources. As much as 80 per cent of global cropland is rainfed, which is only half as productive as irrigated land – and yet 60 per cent of the world's food is produced on rainfed land.<sup>16</sup> When the water supply is unreliable, this has a negative impact on the quality and quantity of employment in the agro-food sector as it directly decreases farmers' incomes.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the growing unreliability of rainfall patterns and the increasing frequency of floods and droughts, impacted by climate change, further exacerbate the challenge of reliance on rainwater for agricultural production and contribute to lower yields.

The impact of flooding, for instance, is particularly felt by poor farmers as well as indigenous and tribal peoples, who are in a weak position to access natural resources in a context of increased competition – which itself may accelerate rural-urban migration.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, migrants, refugees and internally displaced people in rural areas can face additional barriers in accessing the necessary water supply and sanitation services.<sup>19</sup> As a way to mitigate the impact of these challenges, approaches such as the promotion of payments for ecosystem services (PES) support rural communities to manage water resources with a view to offsetting the opportunity costs of environmental services and reducing poverty.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of its use of chemical fertilizers, agriculture contributes to **water pollution**. In rural areas, other sectors such as mining and industry further exacerbate this situation, and the subsequent use of polluted water has a direct impact on people's health, economies, and food insecurity: water, soil and air pollution together led to 9 million deaths in 2015.<sup>21</sup> In addition, low-quality drinking water, sanitation and hygiene contribute to an increase of work-related communicable diseases often spread by water, which are a major cause of occupational fatalities. They accounted for about 28 per cent of all occupational fatalities in Africa in 2015, for example.<sup>22</sup>

**Water supply and sanitation** are often more challenging in rural areas, due to their environmental fragility and relatively poor economic conditions.<sup>23</sup> Rural areas are home to most of those who lack access to unimproved sources of drinking water and safe sanitation: for example in Sub-Saharan Africa, 10 per cent of the population consume untreated surface water, while 20 per cent of the rural population lack safe sanitation.<sup>24</sup> In rural areas, public water provision and sanitation services, as well as water infrastructures such as water collection points, pit latrines and septic tanks, are often inadequately maintained and in poor shape. In addition to this lack of services, natural water sources such as wells, pumps, and rivers are often contaminated and provide an unreliable supply. As water technologies are often designed for urban contexts, they may not take into account the specificities of rural areas in terms of energy efficiency, the use of natural treatment systems, and cultural appropriateness.<sup>25</sup>

**Access to water – and its use – impact women and men in different ways.** Women bear the brunt of most unpaid domestic and care work, which is the main barrier preventing them from getting into, remaining and progressing in the labour force.<sup>26</sup> Their workload tends to increase in times of water and food shortages.<sup>27</sup> Fetching water for consumption is one such female-dominated task, which often involves carrying heavy water supplies for long distances – women in Africa are estimated to spend an annual total of 40 billion hours carrying water to their communities. The women and

<sup>13</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> ILO: *Sustainable development, decent work and green jobs*, Report V, International Labour Conference, 102nd Session (Geneva, 2013), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_207370.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_207370.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> WWAP: 2019, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> ibid.

<sup>17</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> OECD: *Mitigating droughts and floods in agriculture* (Paris, 2016), available at: <https://www.oecd.org/publications/mitigating-droughts-and-floods-in-agriculture-9789264246744-en.htm>; FAO; IFAD; IOM; WFP: *The linkages between migration, agriculture, food security and rural development* (Rome, 2018), available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/CA0922EN/CA0922EN.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> WWAP: 2019, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> ILO: 2013, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> ILO (WESO: 2018, op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> P. Hämmäläinen et al.: *Global estimates of occupational accidents and work-related illnesses 2017* (Singapore, Workplace Safety and Health Institute, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> UNESCO: *Rural water development*, available at: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/water-security/hydrology/water-human-settlements/rural-development>

<sup>24</sup> WWAP: 2019, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> UNESCO: *Rural water development*, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> ILO: *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work* (Geneva, 2018), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_633135/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_633135/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>27</sup> UNDP: *Gender, climate change and community-based adaptation* (New York, 2010), available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2010/7/gender-climate-change-and-community-based-adaptation>

children responsible for fetching water are prone to suffer from pain, fatigue and perinatal health problems, and are exposed to violence and climate-related hazards such as heat.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, women who fetch water and fuelwood have less time to devote to paid employment.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> J.- A. Geere et al: "Is water carriage associated with the water carrier's health? A systematic review of quantitative and qualitative evidence, in *BMJ Glob Health* 3(3) (2018).

<sup>29</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

Similarly, a lack of basic sanitation facilities poses particular challenges to women and girls. These include health-related hazards, due to their inability to use facilities when required during the night, and physical safety hazards, including sexual violence, to which they are exposed when having to use open sanitation facilities.

## 2. Scope and definitions

While direct jobs in the water sector, or water jobs, account for a minor share of total employment, they support a large number of other jobs. Water can thus be considered **more as a job enabler than a job creator**.

Workers in sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and mining require water to allow them to successfully pursue their livelihoods – and these jobs are called water-dependent jobs. It has been estimated that 78 per cent of all jobs are heavily or moderately water-dependent.<sup>30</sup> As stated in the *UN World Water Development Report 2016*, **addressing the water-jobs nexus, notably through coordinated policies and investments, is a prerequisite to sustainable development** in both developed and developing countries.

The link between **skills, innovation and decent job creation** in the rural economy is key to fostering economic diversification and the technological upgrading of water and other infrastructures. Innovation contributes to sustainable water management, economic growth and decent work.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, it can promote access to a safe, reliable and affordable supply of water and adequate sanitation services, which are vital in improving rural livelihoods – thus creating a virtuous cycle.

### Target groups

**Women in rural areas** are often responsible for water fetching, which may lead to health and security risks, and they are primarily involved in household chores. Their access to water for ensuring food security and hygiene is therefore essential. A lack of basic services such as water and sanitation increases the burden on women and further reduces their

participation in the labour market.<sup>32</sup> Innovative solutions to water fetching, as well as improved water sources and other infrastructure, can alleviate this burden and increase their time available for education and paid employment opportunities, and help them to participate in community life on an equal footing.<sup>33</sup>

**Smallholder farmers** often live in poverty and have to cope with food insecurity and malnutrition. They have a low resilience to shocks and are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They often have limited access to natural resources such as water, and face competition from other water users. The lack of water for irrigation has repercussions on productivity, and their situation is further challenged by the increased unreliability of rainfall. Many smallholders who have access to small-scale irrigation may be unwilling to register their water use officially as they may be liable for higher fees.

**Indigenous and tribal peoples** are over-represented among the poor; they are also among the most water-deprived populations worldwide, and lag behind others in accessing many basic services – including water supply and sanitation services.<sup>34</sup> Under the ILO Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), their right to be consulted regarding measures that will affect their lands is guaranteed.

**Sanitation workers** involved in pit emptying and sewerage works, including manual scavenging practices, have to endure insanitary and hazardous working conditions that often lead to relatively common "sewer deaths".<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> ILO: *Work for a brighter future*, Global Commission on the Future of Work (Geneva, 2019), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms\\_662410.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_662410.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> G. Koolwal and D. van de Walle: "Access to water, women's work, and child outcomes", in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (January 2013), pp. 369- 405.

<sup>34</sup> WWAP: 2019, op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

### 3. The ILO's approach

Involving the ILO's social partners in any water-related policy development process, thereby establishing an effective social dialogue, is key to ensuring better services and access to water in rural areas.

The ILO's approach to water and jobs in rural areas aligns with the measures outlined in the *UN World Water Development Report 2016*.<sup>36</sup> The lack of capacity and challenges facing the water sectors requires solutions to fill these gaps. Solutions include:

- creating an enabling policy environment for collaborative frameworks between the education sector, water sector, ministries of labour, and employers and workers' organizations;
- clarifying incentives to attract and retain staff;
- strengthening technical and vocational training; and
- giving attention to human resources capacity development in rural areas.

#### Policy issues

##### Promoting investments for water infrastructure and related services

Water investments have a positive correlation with job creation and poverty reduction, and their return of investment can be high. In addition to the employment multiplier effects, investments in water infrastructure and the operation of water-related services may lead to production systems that are more labour-intensive. If water has a strong impact as an input in a specific economic activity, it will be even more keenly felt with respect to the decent work agenda because it plays a number of crucial functions in each person's working life. Investments in infrastructure and the operation of water-related services can promote sustained production growth and provide employment; investments should be planned for relevant sectors such as agriculture and energy in order to maximize positive economic and employment results.<sup>37</sup> This involves building and operating infrastructure for irrigation and water supply, and rural water management including water distribution and treatment in rural areas. Investments in this infrastructure and in social protection have an impact

on access to water, job creation and environment, and this will boost incomes, increase agricultural productivity and improve resilience to climate change.<sup>38</sup> Investments in irrigation development, for example, can contribute to increasing labour productivity and decreasing food prices.<sup>39</sup> They can also lead to more labour-intensive productions systems and employment opportunities in the green economy and increase the productivity per unit of water.<sup>40</sup> As highlighted in the report by the Global Commission on the Future of Work, investments in other public services can ease the burden of women's unpaid work, such as water fetching.<sup>41</sup>

##### Improving water governance

Water scarcity and a lack of access to water are often socially constructed rather than natural issues. While sufficient water may be available, people do not always have access to it. They may also not have a say in how water resources are used – and by whom. Governments should therefore be called upon to formulate and implement effectively policies and legislation in which the roles and responsibilities of the various water stakeholders are defined and stakeholder participation – particularly that of employers' and workers' organizations – is spelled out and secured. Bringing about fair and equitable water governance systems implies meaningful participation and consultations, as well as further sensitization and education on the rights and responsibilities of water users, including those groups vulnerable to discrimination. These systems should be inclusive in nature, taking into consideration the voices of women, indigenous and tribal peoples, and smallholder farmers, as well as other groups. In some countries, inclusive water users' associations have proved to be useful in ensuring that the voices of different user groups are heard and taken into consideration.

##### Supporting workplace policies to improve working conditions

Policies and actions to improve working conditions should include improved access to water and sanitation in the workplace, as this is critical to maintaining a healthy, educated and productive workforce.<sup>42</sup> The limited data available show that access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is lower in workplaces than in households, and that there is limited knowledge in middle- and low-income countries on WASH in non-household settings such as workplaces, schools and

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> ILO: The End to Poverty Initiative. The ILO and the 2030 Agenda, Report of the Director-General, Report I (B), International Labour Conference, 105th Session (Geneva, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> ILO: 2013, *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> WWAP: 2019, *op. cit.*

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> ILO: 2019, *op. cit.*

<sup>42</sup> WWAP: 2016, *op. cit.*



hospitals.<sup>43</sup> Providing a water supply and sanitation in these settings has positive effects on the productive capacity of rural communities, and would cover a substantial part of the population for most of their waking hours. A 2012 meta-analysis of studies covering 27 African countries found that “increasing the access rate to drinking water significantly increases the growth rate of agricultural labour productivity” because of the better health of workers and the reduced time they spend on fetching water.<sup>44</sup> Policies and actions at the workplace level should also take into consideration the importance of having adequate facilities for managing menstrual hygiene to support the health, dignity and inclusion of female employees; this may also reduce absenteeism among women. To highlight the importance of this issue, in 2005 the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and Action for Southern Africa initiated the “Dignity! Period” campaign, which has since provided over 7.5 million female sanitary products.<sup>45</sup> By tackling this challenge, member States will be able to provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health and to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls. One way to advance these issues would be to establish workplace occupational safety and health committees with workers’ participation.

Specific consideration should be given to the rights and working conditions of workers who protect freshwater resources. Their rights must be enhanced through laws, regulations and social dialogue, including collective bargaining. For example, the diligent work of wildlife rangers helps protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of rural ecosystems, but they need proper equipment, motivation and protection from human threats and corruption. Unfortunately, these are not always present.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, actions to reduce the number of deaths and people affected by disasters, including water-related disasters, require well-prepared and competent public emergency service workers.<sup>47</sup>

### Enhancing water-related skills with a focus on improving youth employment

The ILO Centenary Declaration underscores the importance of promoting the acquisition of skills and competencies,

and of addressing skills gaps.<sup>48</sup> Emphasis should be placed on ensuring investment in people’s capabilities, including with a view to developing them to participate in democratic societies.<sup>49</sup> Improving the skills of the workforce – including through re-skilling and up-skilling in one sector – can lead to more efficiency in other sectors. With the right sectoral balance, these measures can support the efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, promote health and well-being, improve education prospects, foster innovation, combat climate change and its impacts, and prevent conflicts. Appropriate water management, therefore, will need to incorporate skill needs assessment and anticipation studies based on the evolving technology and innovation.<sup>50</sup> Increasing access to water has a great potential for improving living standards by retrofitting existing infrastructure with new technology that improves sustainability.<sup>51</sup> For example, France has established 11 sectoral committees (“comités de filières”) in sectors considered most promising in terms of green economy jobs creation, two of them being water supply and sanitation.<sup>52</sup>

Many water-related jobs require specific skills and training, and skills mismatch is particularly relevant in rural areas, including being among the main obstacles in greening the economy.<sup>53</sup> For example in the rural sanitation sector, the supply of skilled labour and technicians is limited, with only 20 per cent of the countries globally having enough workforce to meet their demands. This may be attributed to a number of reasons, including a lack of financial resources and political will, and challenges in attracting a workforce with the right qualifications – particularly in rural areas. What is more, training and education are not always available or they fail to meet the sector’s needs, and the jobs in the sector are often considered as being of very low-status.<sup>54</sup>

### Facilitating innovation for the water sector in rural areas

In the changing world of work some jobs will be lost, others will be transformed, and new ones will be created. Water-related sectors have the potential to benefit from the transition to a greener economy, and innovative approaches

<sup>43</sup> R. Cronk et al.: “Monitoring drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene in non-household settings: priorities for policy and practice”, in *International Journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health*, Vol. 218 (2015), p. 695.

<sup>44</sup> Y. Kiendrebego: “Access to improved water sources and rural productivity: Analytical framework and cross-country evidence”, in *African Development Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2012), pp. 153–166.

<sup>45</sup> M. Sommer et al.: “Managing menstruation in the workplace: an overlooked issue in low- and middle-income countries”, in *International Journal for Equity in Health*, Vol. 15 (2016), p.86, available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4895811/>

<sup>46</sup> World Wildlife Fund: *Life on the Frontline 2018: A global survey of the working conditions of rangers* (Washington, DC, 2018).

<sup>47</sup> ILO: *Guidelines on decent work in public emergency services*, Sectoral Policies Department (Geneva, 2018).

<sup>48</sup> ILO: *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future Of Work*, International Labour Conference, 108th Session (Geneva, 2019), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/-ed\\_norm/-/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_711674.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/-ed_norm/-/-relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_711674.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> ILO: 2019b, op. cit.

<sup>50</sup> ILO: *Skill needs anticipation: Systems and approaches. Analysis of stakeholder survey on skill needs assessment and anticipation* (Geneva, 2017), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/skills-training-for-poverty-reduction/WCMS\\_616207/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/skills/areas/skills-training-for-poverty-reduction/WCMS_616207/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>51</sup> ILO: *Anticipating skill needs for green jobs: A practical guide* (Geneva, 2015), available at: [https://www.ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS\\_564692/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS_564692/lang-en/index.htm)

<sup>52</sup> ibid.

<sup>53</sup> ILO (WESO): 2018, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

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will be required to create green and decent jobs in these sectors. Some of the new opportunities will arise from reduced water availability and increased water pollution, which can lead to new markets for water-efficient products and an increased demand for pollution control devices and systems.<sup>55</sup>

Innovations can have important quantitative and qualitative implications for the water sector and water-dependent jobs in rural areas. Promoting water-friendly and sustainable production methods, such as groundwater management, community-based irrigation, rainwater management, and access to small-scale technologies to capture, store and distribute water, can have positive impacts both on agricultural productivity and the environment. They can also contribute towards increased and more equitable access to water in rural areas.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> ILO (WESO): 2018, op. cit.

<sup>56</sup> WWAP: 2016, op. cit.

These and other innovations will change the range of tasks that many workers will perform and the conditions under which they will do so. These tasks will also require new skill sets and competencies. Policy mechanisms will need to consider the new related research in order to seize the opportunities for job-creation that water innovation brings, and ensure that these new approaches are generated and disseminated. Member States should consider policies to mitigate job loss or displacement and maximize job creation that may result from the transition to a green economy. A just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies can increase employment opportunities by means of key policy areas such as macroeconomic and growth policies, industrial and sectoral policies, enterprise policies, skills development, occupational safety and health measures, social protection, active labour market policies, the guarantee of workers' rights, and social dialogue.

## 4. The ILO experience to date

The ILO's main contribution to policy development has been its adoption and promotion of international labour standards and Codes of Practice. Many ILO Conventions on occupational safety and health contain provisions relating to access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. The Welfare Facilities Recommendation, 1956 (No. 102), provides guidelines for the establishment of canteens, mess rooms and other food and rest-related facilities. The facilities so provided should include at least an adequate supply of wholesome drinking water. A number of Conventions have adopted this phrase as a minimum requirement of adequate welfare and accommodation facilities, although they differ regarding the quality and location of water supply, underscoring the importance of easy access and reflecting the diversity of economic sectors. These measures should be brought in line with national laws or regulations.

The ILO has also issued policy proposals for workers' dwellings, which are commonly provided by employers in agriculture, mining, and maritime activities. The Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110) includes water supply and sanitary facilities as part of its minimum standards for adequate housing accommodation for plantation workers. The Workers' Housing Recommendation, 1961 (No. 115) proposes that the supply of safe water in the workers' dwelling should be enough to provide for all personal and household uses, and that housing units should provide adequate sewage, garbage disposal

systems, and sanitary and washing facilities. Recommendation No. 115 also protects self-employed and aged, retired or physically handicapped workers. The Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) establishes that "National laws and regulations or the competent authority shall prescribe, after consultation with the representative organizations of employers and workers concerned:

- (a) the provision of adequate welfare facilities at no cost to the worker; and
- (b) the minimum accommodation standards for workers who are required by the nature of the work to live temporarily or permanently in the undertaking."

As a UN-Water member agency, the ILO coordinated the worldwide campaign for the World Water Day in 2016, which was organized on the theme of "Water and Jobs", and World Toilet Day 2016 on "Toilets and Jobs". The campaign explored the links between the SDGs 6 and 8, and it supported the launch of the *World Water Development Report 2016: Water and Jobs*. It also examined ways in which water and jobs are related at the global, regional and sectoral levels. During the World Water Day over 500 activities were held, and several Governments, including those of Pakistan, Ghana and China, launched education campaigns and announced labour-related measures to improve access to water and sanitation.



### Examples of ILO activities related to water

#### Box 1: Employment-Intensive Investment Programme – Indonesia, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Ghana, Sri Lanka and Yemen

This is a multi-agency collaboration that has empowered indigenous rural communities to participate in the provision of water and sanitation services. The critical factors for success have been comprehensive and participatory planning, labour-based implementation and coordination, the involvement of all stakeholders, and education about the importance of water. Technical specialists enhance local knowledge and skills to manage appropriate water pipe systems and reservoirs for water storage and distribution.

- In **Latin America**, specialists in indigenous capacity building have established a network of facilitators to promote entrepreneurship, which generates employment and also supports local development.
- In **Indonesia**, the “Water Supply for Bawomataluo Village” (WSBV) project under the Nias Islands Rural Access and Capacity Building Project (Nias-RACBP), aimed at improving infrastructure investment in water and sanitation in a traditional village on the Nias Island that was affected by the 2004 tsunami and earthquake.
- The Community contracting for water harvesting schemes in **Yemen** built water harvesting cisterns to collect run-off water during the rainy season. The community managed the project and received the funds directly. The project was labour-intensive. The community built these cisterns to improve traditional systems with slow sand filters or, where possible, installed hand pumps. It provided education on how to treat surface water.
- Since 2011, the Local Empowerment through Economic Development and Reconciliation project, in the Northern Province of **Sri Lanka**, has been promoting an inclusive and equitable recovery from the war. It helps reduce fragility by creating decent work opportunities and supporting reconciliation among vulnerable communities. As part of its technical support to countries, the ILO has introduced more water-conserving irrigation methods as a response to the 2017 drought, which left hundreds of thousands of households facing serious food security issues.

#### Box 2: Ghana Social Opportunities Project (GSOP)

The GSOP has developed a toolkit for the use of a local resources-based method for climate change adaptation strategies. It comprises a thematic manual on Integrated watershed management, and a technical manual on soil and water conservation. These relatively labour-intensive soil and water conservation schemes may have high labour absorption during their construction and subsequent maintenance phases. At the same time, they contribute towards improving the infrastructure for increased food production. Specific community participatory watershed development planning exercises have been piloted in six communities.

#### Box 3: Governance of water and sanitation in Angola’s poor neighbourhoods

From 2009 to 2013, the ILO, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF, together with a number of government ministries and municipalities, promoted sustainable access to water and sanitation by: (1) establishing an institutional framework guided by a rights-based approach; (2) setting up a regulatory framework to ensure equity and an enabling environment for private providers; (3) reinforcing the capacity of local administrations to monitor the network, mobilize resources and fund community water projects; and (4) putting in place an accountability system. Approximately 258,000 people – of whom 100,844 were women – benefited from new or rehabilitated water systems, and 68,216 people were trained in “community-led total sanitation”(CLTS).

# 5. Practical guidance and resources

## ILO Instruments

*Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110)*

*Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)*

*Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)*

*Safety and Health in Construction Convention, 1988 (No. 167)*

*Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)*

*Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)*

*Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)*

*Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Recommendation, 1964 (No. 120)*

*Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)*

*Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1985 (No. 171)*

*Safety and Health in Construction Recommendation, 1988 (No. 175)*

*Safety and Health in Mines Recommendation, 1995 (No. 183)*

*Safety and Health in Agriculture Recommendation, 2001 (No. 192)*

## Tools

*Recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases (1996)*

*Ambient factors in the workplace (2001)*

*Safety and health in underground coalmines (2006)*

*Safety and health in agriculture (2011)*

*Safety and health in opencast mines (2018)*

*Guidelines on decent work in public emergency services (2018)*

## Publications

*Wastewater and jobs: the Decent Work approach to reducing untreated water, SECTOR Working Paper No. 314 (2017)*

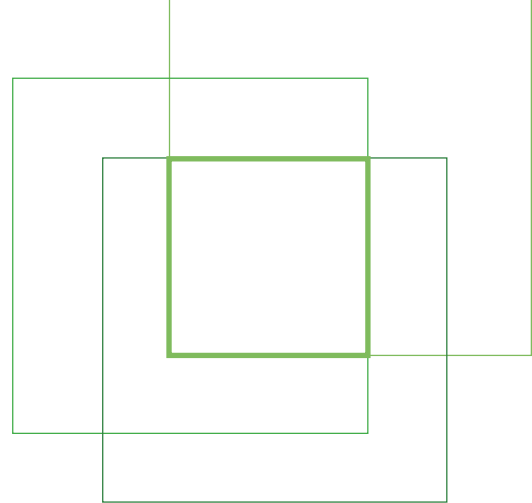
*WASH@Work: a Self-Training Handbook (2016)*







# Overview of Policy Guidance Notes on the Promotion of Decent Work in the Rural Economy



## Supporting inclusive agricultural growth for improved livelihoods and food security

- Decent Work for Food Security and Resilient Rural Livelihoods
- Decent and Productive Work in Agriculture

## Promoting economic diversification and triggering productive transformation for rural employment

- Economic Diversification of the Rural Economy
- Promoting Decent Work for Rural Workers at the Base of the Supply Chain
- The Role of Multinational Enterprises in the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas
- Transitioning to Formality in the Rural Informal Economy
- Sustainable Tourism – A Catalyst for Inclusive Socio-economic Development and Poverty Reduction in Rural Areas

## Promoting access to services, protection and employment-intensive investment

- Providing Access to Quality Services in the Rural Economy to Promote Growth and Social Development
- Extending Social Protection to the Rural Economy
- Developing the Rural Economy through Financial Inclusion: The Role of Access to Finance
- Employment-Intensive Investment in Rural Infrastructure for Economic Development, Social and Environmental Protection and Inclusive Growth

## Ensuring sustainability and harnessing the benefits of natural resources

- A Just Transition towards a Resilient and Sustainable Rural Economy
- Decent Work in Forestry
- Harnessing the Potential of Extractive Industries
- Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods

## Increasing the voice of rural people through organization and the promotion of rights, standards and social dialogue

- Rights at Work in the Rural Economy
- Promoting Social Dialogue in the Rural Economy
- Building Local Development in Rural Areas through Cooperatives and other Social and Solidarity Economy Enterprises and Organizations
- Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy
- Empowering Women in the Rural Economy
- Decent Work for Rural Youth
- Promoting Fair and Effective Labour Migration Policies in Agriculture and Rural Areas

## Improving the knowledge base on decent work in the rural economy

- Enhancing the Knowledge Base to Support the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas

**For more information please visit [www.ilo.org/rural](http://www.ilo.org/rural) or contact [rural@ilo.org](mailto:rural@ilo.org)**