



## AgWater Solutions + Partners = Impact

### Helping 65 million people move out of poverty through better investments in agricultural water management

Small-scale farmers make up the bulk of those living in extreme poverty in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, and they account for roughly half of the developing world's undernourished—around 500 million people and rising according to the latest figures of the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization. A bleak picture, but not a hopeless one. Investments in agricultural water management have the potential to help many of these small-scale farmers who are currently struggling, in part because they lack adequate water access, storage, management, and know-how.

In the next five years, the AgWater Solutions project aims to improve the livelihoods and food security of 1 million poor farmers in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. And the impacts won't stop there. Ultimately, more than 65 million poor women and men stand to benefit. To reach this many people, policymakers, donors, and development practitioners will have to put the project's tools and recommendations to good use, which is why AgWater Solutions places so much emphasis on partnerships, stakeholder participation, and outreach.

As a result of AgWater Solutions:

- **Policy makers** will better understand how to create an enabling environment that will encourage the uptake of promising Agricultural Water Management (AWM) innovations;
- **Donors and other investors** will know where and how to invest to achieve the maximum impact;
- **Development practitioners** in NGOs and government agencies will know how to design and implement more successful pro-poor, gender equitable AWM programs; and

- **Farmers, both male and female**, will understand the benefits of adopting improved water management technologies and practices and how to select ones appropriate to their needs.

#### *Impacts from agricultural water management investments*

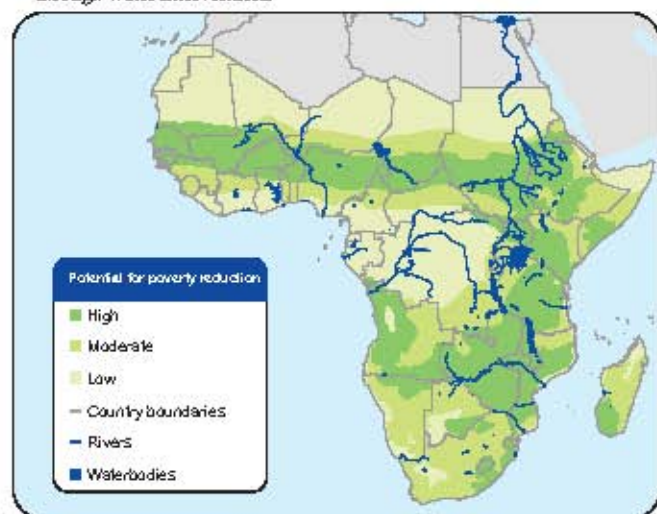
Research has shown that well-designed agricultural water management investments benefit poor men and women through:

- **Improved food security and nutrition**, particularly if women's assets are enhanced.
- **Higher agricultural productivity**—in many areas productivity can be doubled.
- **Increased on-farm income**—for example, a recent study in Tigray, Ethiopia showed farmers were able to double their income.
- **Improved access to water for domestic purposes**, which can improve family health and free up women's time for productive activities.

## Helping AWM live up to its potential

Numerous large-scale studies, many carried out by AgWater Solutions partners, have demonstrated the potential of investments in better agricultural water management to improve lives and livelihoods (see Box on page 1).<sup>1</sup> But thus far this potential has not been fully realized. By looking at the constraints and opportunities that determine why some investments succeed and others fail, AgWater Solutions is coming up with better models for designing, targeting and implementing agricultural water management solutions as well as concrete recommendations for where and how to invest.

Figure 1. Potential for poverty reduction in sub-Saharan Africa through water interventions



Source: *Water and the Rural Poor: Interventions for improving livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa*. Jean-Marie Faurès and Guido Santini eds. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2008.

The AgWater Solutions scoping study estimates that there are some 500 million potential beneficiaries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Using child malnutrition as a proxy for rural poverty and food insecurity (generally a more reliable indicator than income), 135 million of these potential beneficiaries are considered poor. Because of political and other factors, only around half this number is likely to be able to adopt AWM innovations. Thus, AgWater Solutions estimates that it can reasonably expect to benefit 65 million poor women and men in the course of the next 20 years, and around 1 million in the next five.

### What will it take to reach 65 million?

Achieving the desired impact will require new ways of doing things, for example approaches that are better able to reach women and address the constraints that hold poor farmers back. It will also require strategic partnerships and effective outreach and communication strategies.

How will AgWater Solutions ensure impact? Through:

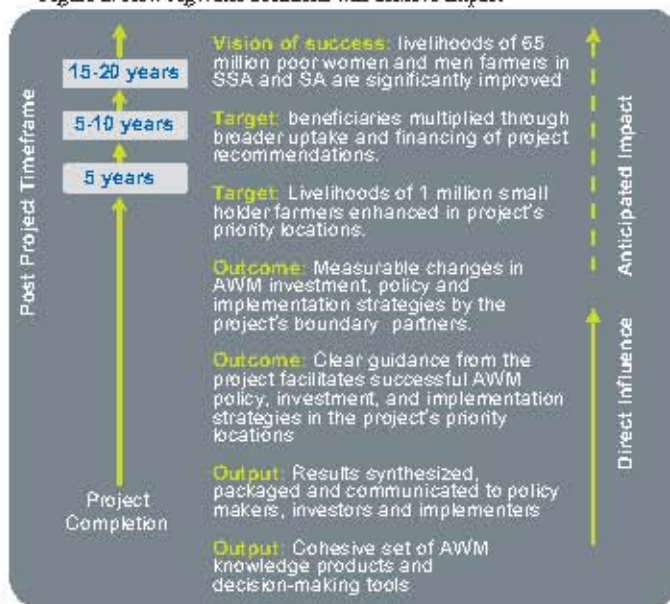
- **Closely collaborating with a range of local and regional partners** who will be able to use AgWater Solution outputs in different ways to achieve impact and linking to other projects and initiatives with similar objectives that can immediately use project findings.
- **Taking a participatory approach to planning, research and monitoring evaluation**, thus making certain that the end users

<sup>1</sup> For example, see "Investment in agricultural water for poverty reduction and economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa" (AfDB 2007); *Water for Food, Water for Life: A Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture* (IWMI and Earthscan 2007); "Water and the Rural Poor: Interventions for improving livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa" (FAO 2008).

of tools and recommendations are involved every step of the way. This on-going involvement ensures that the project delivers on its promises and produces outputs that can be readily put into use.

- **Including staff and partners with expertise in implementation and outreach**, along with a dedicated outreach strategy and budget.
- **Incorporating monitoring and evaluation that won't end with the project**; an ex-post external impact assessment is planned 3-5 years after project completion.

Figure 2. How AgWater Solutions will achieve impact



### Project outputs

One of the key products emerging from the project will be a set of country AWM investment briefs that will offer concrete, science-based recommendations and tools to support the investment decisions and subsequent implementation plans for donors, investors, policymakers and others. The briefs will include:

- **Criteria for selecting high potential areas for investment.**
- **Guidelines to design location-appropriate intervention strategies**, including technology selection, institutional preconditions, approaches to addressing institutional and environmental constraints and targeting women, and key actors needed to implement strategies.
- **Tools to estimate the cost of an investment and related livelihood benefits.**
- **Tools to monitor and evaluate investments** in terms of cost, benefits and outcomes for continual improvement and refinement of AWM interventions.
- **Methods to estimate impacts** (positive and negative) of the intervention.

Outreach and communication take place throughout the life of the project, not just at the end. The project is using not only traditional communication channels, such as progress reports, project workshops, peer reviewed publications, and country policy dialogues, but also newer web-based tools such as a blog, twitter and del.icio.us to engage a broader audience.

**AgWater Solutions is a three year research program funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.** Its objective is to identify investments in agricultural water management with the greatest potential to improve incomes and food security for poor farmers and to develop tools and recommendations for policy makers, donors and other investors; NGOs and government agencies working in water, agriculture, and rural development; and smallholder farmers themselves. The research is being carried out in six countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Zambia, and India. Partners include six international organizations – with expertise in research, implementation, and outreach – as well as many national and regional partners. See <https://awm-solutions.iwmi.org/> for more information.