



**WINROCK**  
INTERNATIONAL



## Multiple-Use Water Services

### **Water is essential for health, food security, and income**

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Access to safe and sustainable water supplies is essential to improving the health and livelihoods of the more than two billion people in developing countries living in absolute poverty (HDR, 2010). People need water for a variety of uses ranging from drinking, hygiene, and sanitation to food production and income generation. Existing approaches to water service delivery usually focus on providing water for a single use — typically for drinking or irrigation. Not surprisingly, people tend to use this water for all their needs. They use water meant for domestic consumption in their gardens, for their livestock, or for other small-scale enterprises. They use irrigation systems for drinking, bathing, or washing clothes. These unplanned uses can create unintended consequences — overuse of domestic systems can lead to conflict and breakage of equipment while domestic use of irrigation systems spreads disease. Providing single-use water services misses a valuable opportunity to improve the lives of poor people at little added cost.

### **Multiple-Use Water Services: Better Health, More Income, Increased Sustainability**

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Multiple-Use Water Services (MUS) is an innovative and holistic approach to sustainable water delivery that seeks to provide water services that reflect the multiple water needs of households. This approach is the platform for planning, financing, and

managing integrated water services that sustainably improve people's health and livelihoods.

In addition to providing water for domestic and priority productive uses, MUS projects often include hygiene, sanitation, agriculture, water resource and environmental management activities to amplify health, livelihoods and environmental benefits and further enhance sustainability. Management structures, including water allocation rules, can also be designed to accommodate multiple uses.

The results of a cost-benefit analysis of single-use versus multiple-use water services suggest that investing a little more in the short term to address people's multiple needs maximizes impact in the long term. Significant advantages of MUS include:

- **Generate more income and benefits**, such as improved health, nutrition, time savings, food security, livelihood diversification, increased resiliency in the face of climate variability, and social empowerment;
- **Increase sustainability** of services. Productive water use generates income that increases the ability of households to cover ongoing operation, maintenance, and replacement costs of multiple-use systems. Because they better meet the water needs of communities, MUS increase returns on community investment and decrease conflict related to water access as well as damage to infrastructure caused by “illegal” or unplanned uses.





## Winrock: MUS global leader

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Winrock has been implementing innovative and effective MUS work since 2002 — work that has been recognized by USAID and the U.S. State Department. In 2010, Winrock’s MUS work won the Interaction/IFAD Innovation award as part of their Best Practice and Innovation Initiative focused on agricultural and rural livelihoods. In 2011, Winrock won the Rockefeller Foundation Innovation Kitchen award for their capacity to nurture innovation in water services. Winrock’s MUS activities include:

**Research and Advisory Services** — Winrock has undertaken major MUS studies, such as a scoping study of the impact potential for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and, for the Rockefeller Foundation, a learning initiative focused on accelerating MUS scale-up.

**Implementation** — More than 215,000 people have or will have access to multiple-use water services through existing or recently completed Winrock projects in India, Nepal, Niger, Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Rwanda.

**Advocacy and Capacity Building** — Winrock has developed a range of education and capacity-building materials on MUS, including a support-building video, a guide that highlights working models for MUS, and a proven training program designed to help development organizations move toward implementing MUS.

**“Winrock International, a global leader in promoting MUS worldwide... has had outstanding results [in Niger] and is providing “proof of concept” to regional governments and WASH sector actors about MUS.”**

– USAID Ghana, West Africa

## A Call to Action

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Access to multiple-use water services has the potential to benefit more than 1 billion people, either through new services or upgrades. Given entrenched project designs, funding streams, and water-use regulations, mainstreaming MUS will take a concerted effort. Let’s move it forward! Working together, we can propel MUS as a mainstream approach, unleashing the potential of multiple-use water services.

### Are you an implementer?

Deepen your impact. Think holistically to determine how water can increase impacts across health, food security, income, and environment.

### Are you a funder?

Get more impact with each dollar spent. Support an integrated approach to water services and see a greater return on your investment and a more enduring impact.

### Are you a policy maker?

Address poverty across sectors. Champion policies that make it easier to implement projects addressing health, livelihoods and environment simultaneously.

*For more information about Winrock and MUS, contact Mary Renwick, Director, Water Innovation Program at [mrenwick@winrock.org](mailto:mrenwick@winrock.org).*

Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the United States and around the world to empower the disadvantaged, increase economic opportunity, and sustain natural resources.



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