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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Indian water policy initiative receives World Water Day global award:**

#### ***Key insights into groundwater 'directly tackle the challenges' facing India's water future***

**Tokyo, Japan (March 21, 2014):** A research program that pinpointed how perverse subsidies were causing India to export virtual water has won the coveted 'Water for Life' UN-Water Best Practices Award. The IWMI-Tata Water Policy Research Program (ITP), a partnership between the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Colombo, Sri Lanka, and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai, India, scooped the award for its groundbreaking work linking energy use, food production and water availability in Indian agriculture.

"We are greatly honored by this prestigious award," said Tushaar Shah, leader of ITP and a Senior Fellow at IWMI, who accepted the award in Tokyo on behalf of the research team.

"Many, many partners and several hundred student interns have helped us along the way, but our focus has always been to support India's smallholder farmers and preserve our precious natural resources."

Commenting on the award the jury said, "In the past, a lack of communication and research in relation to water management in Indian agriculture has led to a paradoxical situation where farmers in regions with rapidly depleting groundwater get free or a highly subsidized power supply, while farmers in regions with abundant groundwater resources tend to economize on irrigation due to expensive diesel. As a result, water-scarce areas in India end up exporting 'virtual water' to water-abundant areas in the country. Examples such as this can be attributed to the fact that, while there is a lot of potentially useful scientific research being conducted in India, it often does not reach the policymakers. Thus, ITP tried to fill the gap between research and policy action by simultaneously engaging with scientists and policymakers."

The jury decided to select this practice for 'directly tackling the socioeconomic and environmental challenges related to the improvement of the energy-irrigation nexus, by engaging with various stakeholders and for its strong potential for replication'.

ITP, based in Anand, Gujarat, India, received the much sought-after award under the Category 1 for 'Best water management practices'. The research program has influenced some major policy changes in India's water management. In Gujarat, a recommendation to introduce 'intelligent rationing', rather than abolishing or curtailing power subsidies, by metering tube wells is credited with boosting both crop yields and improving the reliability of electrical power supplies. In West Bengal, where groundwater is abundant, ITP insights helped the state government to improve access to small pumps for poor farmers, a move which will hopefully boost sustainable food production.

ITP has highlighted the major energy implications of groundwater recharge. The bulk of India's energy use in groundwater irrigation is explained by the high pumping head. Decentralized groundwater recharge can reduce energy use in irrigation. ITP has also highlighted that, in India, micro-irrigation does more to save energy than water, and electricity companies should actively support groundwater recharge as well as micro-irrigation.

Michel Jarraud, Chair, UN-Water, said, "The 'Water for Life' UN-Water Best Practices Award is an important prize as it recognizes sustainable water resources management practices. Our future is highly dependent on our ability to manage our resources, and educate and raise awareness around them at the same time. The winners this year are excellent examples of two organizations that tackle future challenges in a sustainable way."

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#### **Additional information:**

[www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterforlifeaward.shtml](http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterforlifeaward.shtml)

The **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** is a non-profit, scientific research organization focusing on the sustainable use of water and land resources in developing countries. It is headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, with regional offices across Asia and Africa. IWMI works in partnership with governments, civil society and the private sector to develop scalable agricultural water management solutions that have a real impact on poverty reduction, food security and ecosystem health.

[www.iwmi.org](http://www.iwmi.org)

**CGIAR** is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food secure future. CGIAR research is dedicated to reducing rural poverty, increasing food security, improving human health and nutrition, and ensuring more sustainable management of natural resources. It is carried out by the 15 centers who are members of the CGIAR Consortium in close collaboration with hundreds of partner organizations, including national and regional research institutes, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector. [www.cgiar.org](http://www.cgiar.org)