



## Interventions for improving livelihoods<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the FAO news page announcing Faurès and Santini 2008 and from the abstract of the report. FAO Land and Water Division, [www.fao.org/nr/water/news/ruralpoor.html](http://www.fao.org/nr/water/news/ruralpoor.html) and [www.fao.org/docrep/010/i0132e/i0132e00.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/i0132e/i0132e00.htm).

In a recent joint report, Faurès and Santini (2008) address the linkage between water and rural poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The authors affirm that there are opportunities for local water interventions, but their success depends on new intervention models that enhance diversity of livelihoods. There is no 'one size fits all' approach.

SSA can be divided in 13 major 'livelihood zones'. Each offers diverse livelihood opportunities, agroecological conditions and perspectives for pro-poor water investments. The distribution of poor rural people across these zones shows a high prevalence of poverty in the highlands of Ethiopia, the Lake Victoria basin, parts of Nigeria, and semi-arid and sub-humid areas (figure 1).

The interventions required rarely involve large-scale irrigation schemes. The focus is on small-scale, on-farm improvements that are easy to operate and maintain locally, target mainly smallholders and improve water management in rainfed agriculture.

However, investments in water infrastructure alone are not enough to raise agricultural productivity. They should be planned and implemented in the much broader framework of agricultural and rural development, in ways that yield optimal returns for poverty reduction (figure 2). Production, knowledge, finance and infrastructure must be conceived holistically as mutually supporting, and the policy and institutional environment must ensure equitable access to water resources and markets.

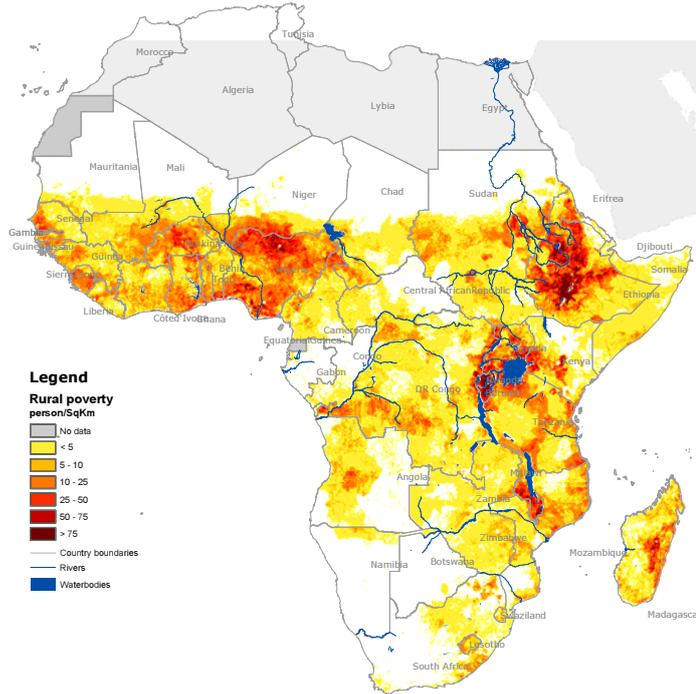
Climate change represents an additional challenge to rural people in SSA – and a further reason for investment in water control. Smallholder farmers, pastoralists and artisanal fishers are among the most vulnerable to this threat. While projections of changes in annual rainfall vary across Africa, these groups will experience the negative effects of increased temperature and extreme events. For them, enhanced control of water will become critical in building resilience to increased climate variability.



Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty

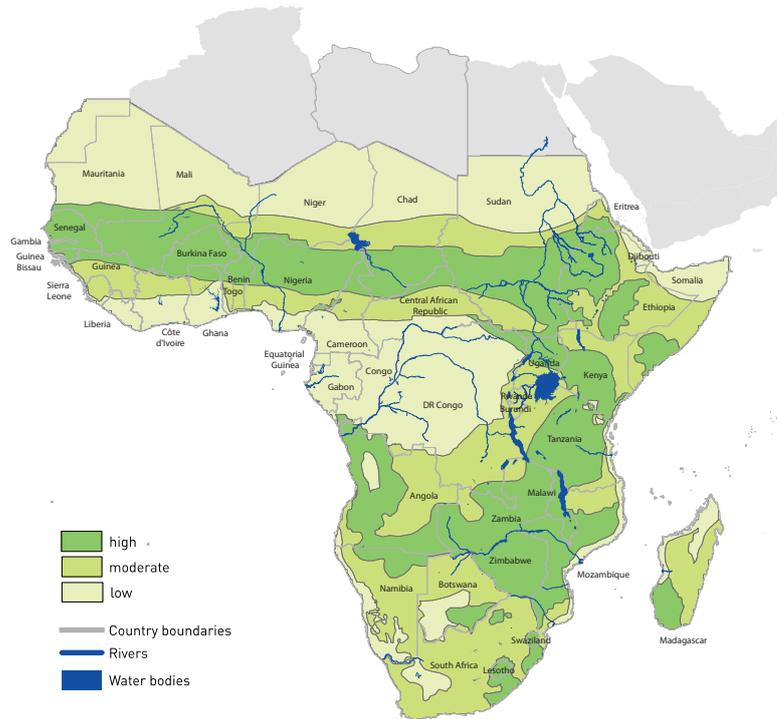
**Figure 1**  
**Distribution of rural poverty in sub-Saharan Africa**

Source: FAO



**Figure 2**  
**Potential for poverty reduction through water interventions**

Source: FAO



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**References**

Faurès, J.-M., and G. Santini, eds. 2008. *Water and the rural poor: Interventions for improving livelihoods in sub-Saharan Africa*. FAO Land and Water Division. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and IFAD, [www.fao.org/docrep/010/i0132e/i0132e00.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/010/i0132e/i0132e00.htm).