"Appropriate technology, targets and discourse: contested development in rural Bihar, India"

21 November 2013

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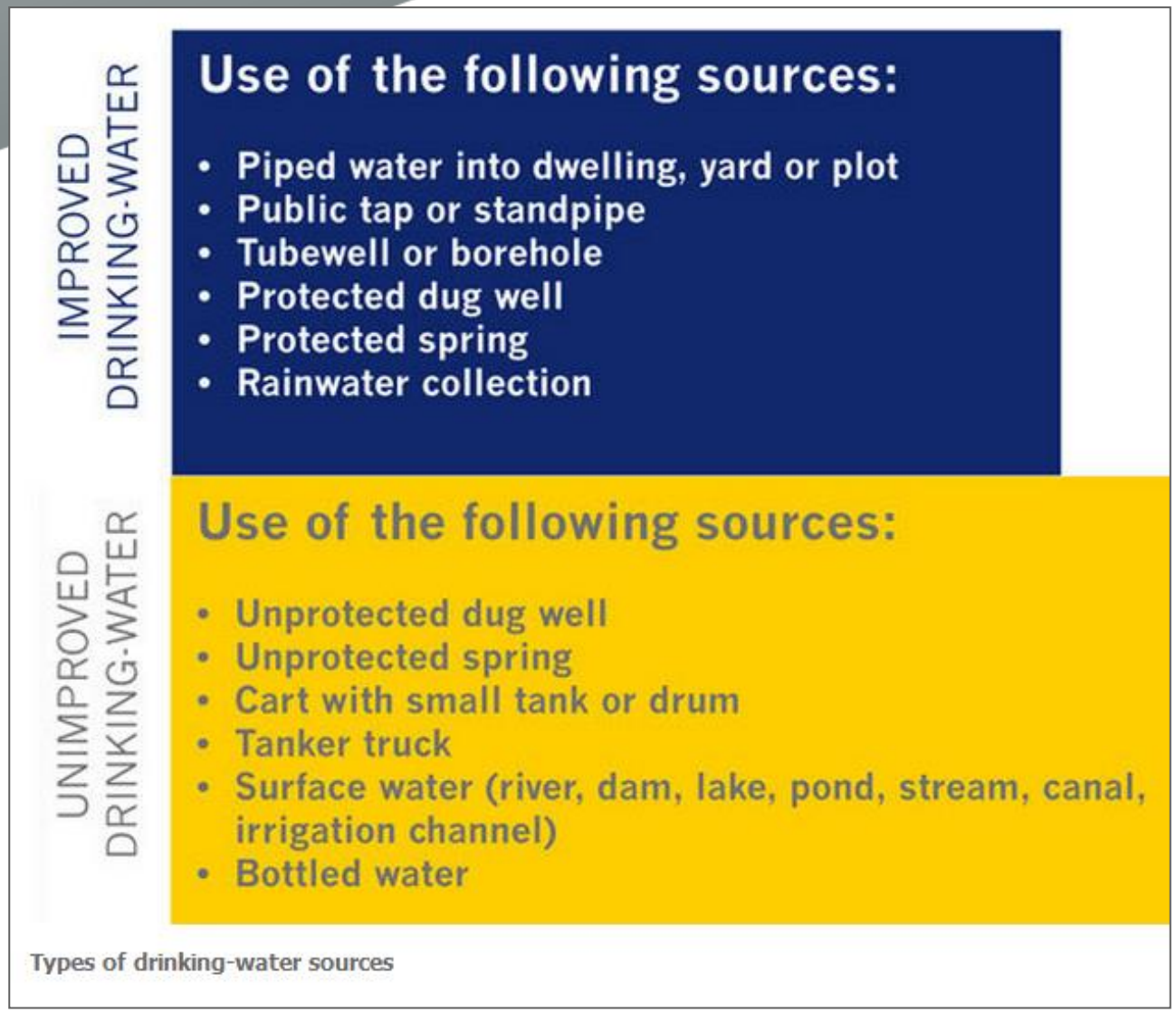
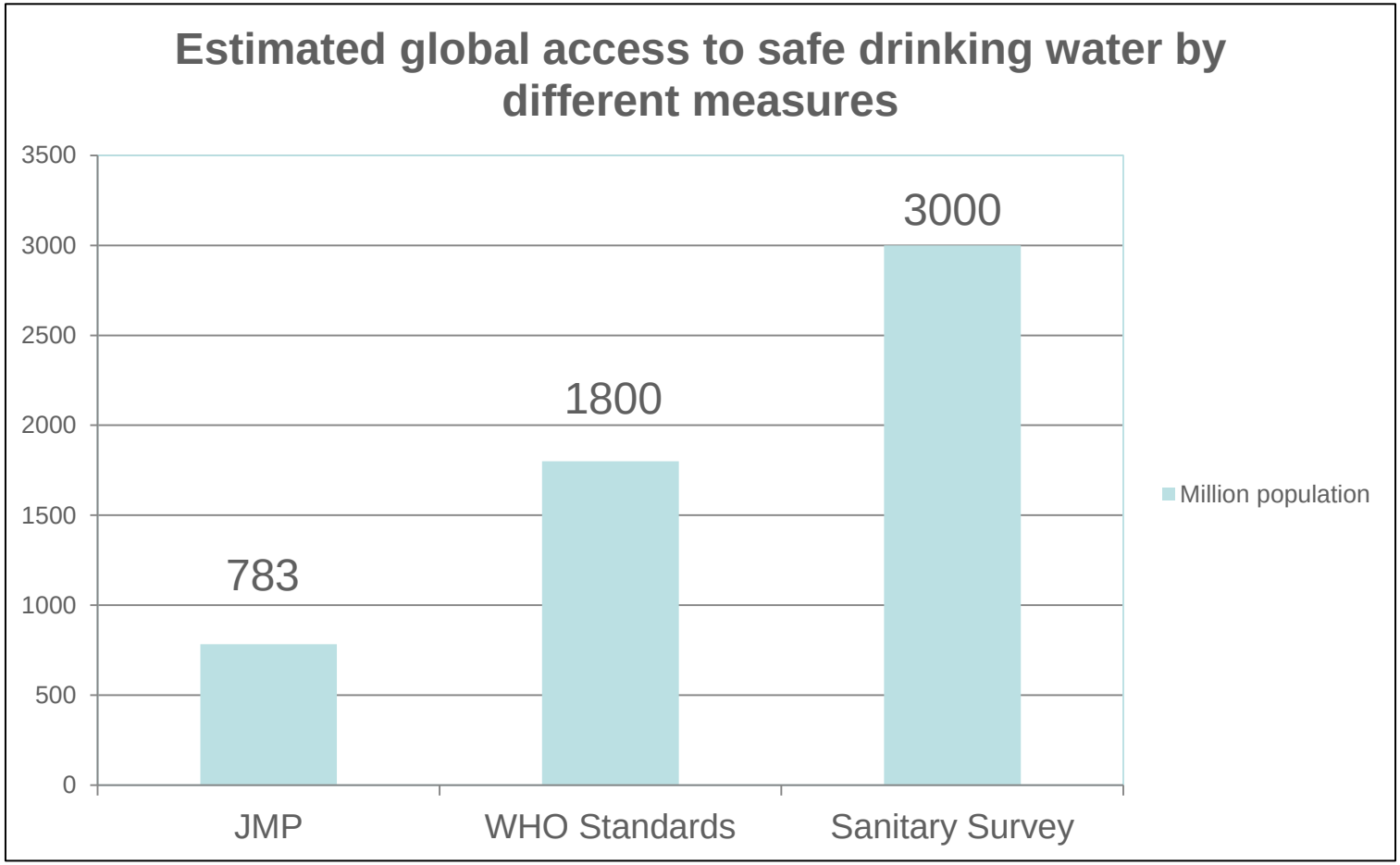
JMP water indicator



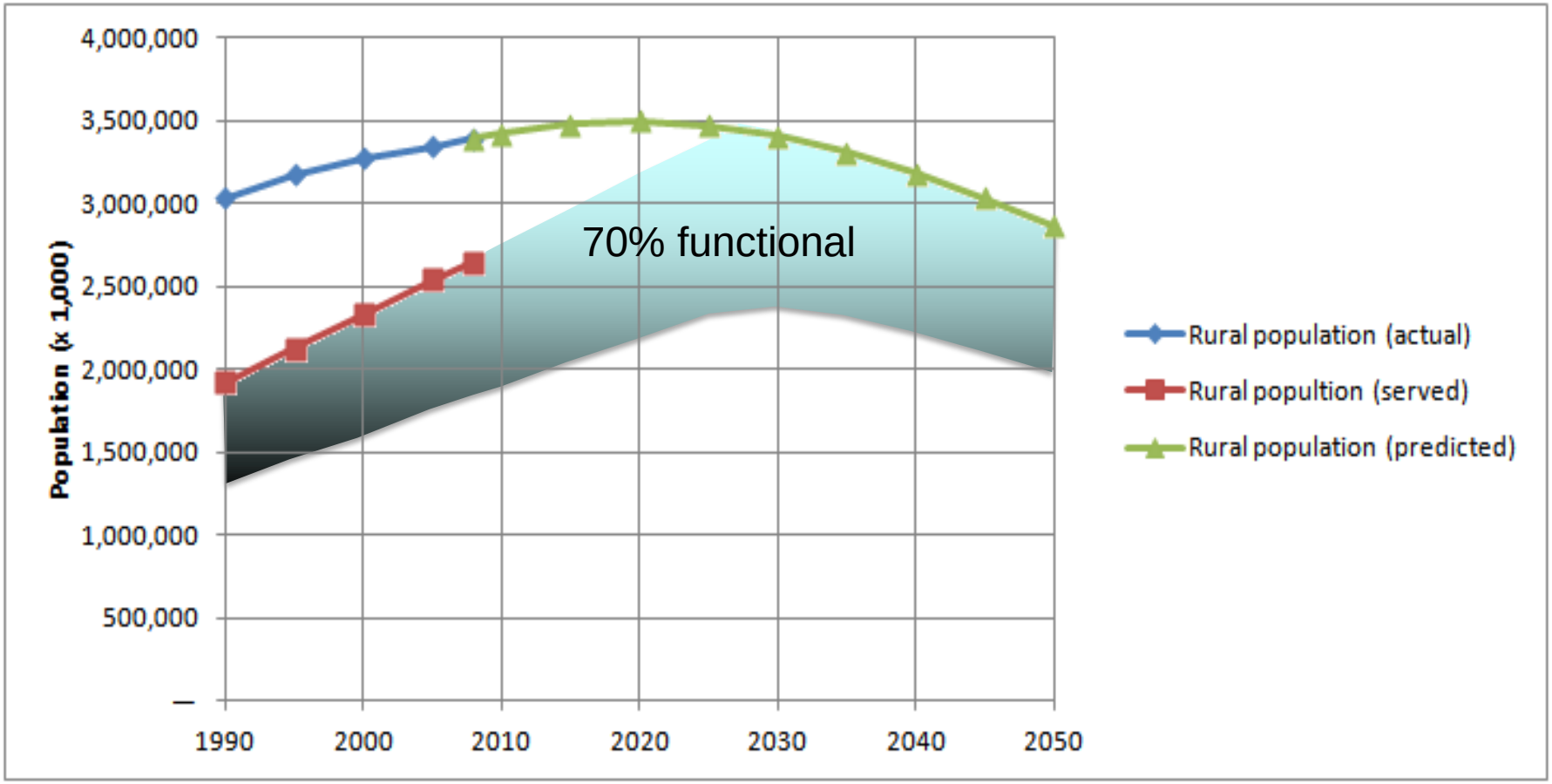
Types of drinking-water sources

The power of indicators (1): The safety gap



Calculated using data from (Onda et al, 2012)

The power of indicators (2): The functionality gap



Source: IRC (2012)

Moving from macro-statistics to micro-politics

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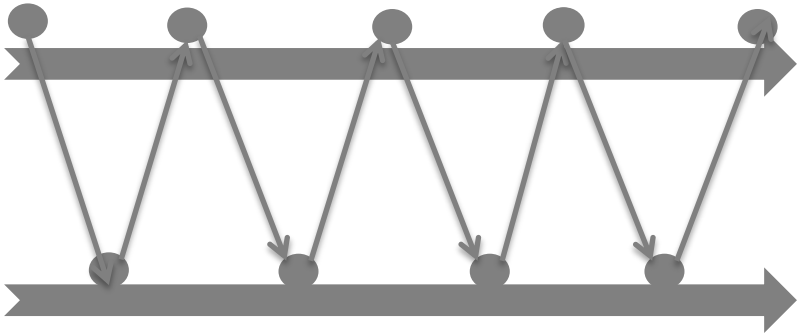
How do technology-based targets shape water-development trajectories in an underserved region of rural India?

Methodology



Intra-case comparative approach focusing on appropriate technology storylines

4 Rapid Rural Appraisals (Chambers, 1981; 2008)

Participant observation / group interviews with community members

15 in-depth interviews with sector professionals

Discourse Analysis *(Hajer, 1995; Drzyzek, 2005)*

National Water Policy 2012 / Jal Jan Jodo Abyian Manifesto 2013

West Champaran, Bihar, India

The traditional technology
An open ring well, Tharu Tola

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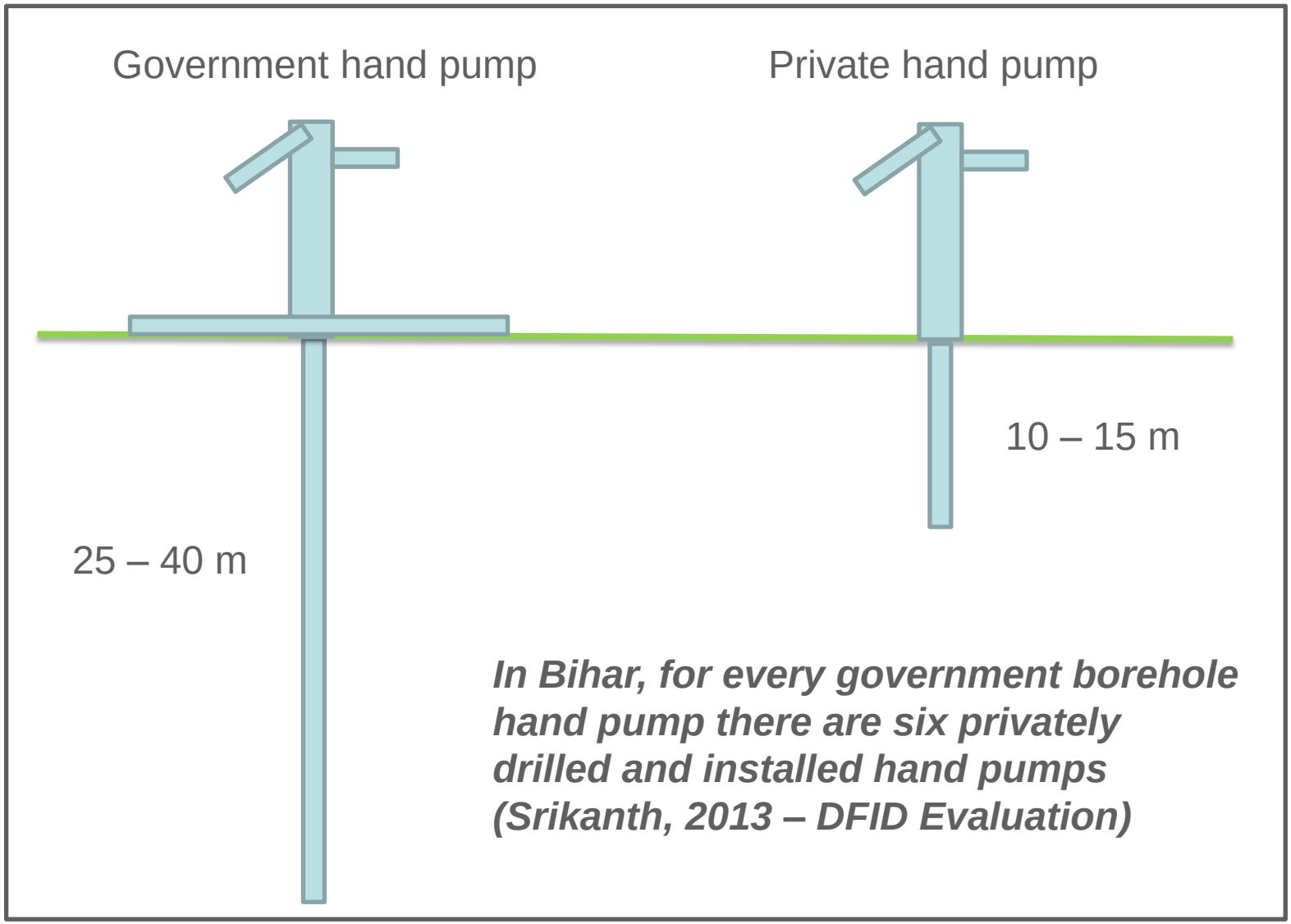
The 'improved' technology
A borehole hand pump,
Poorvi Tola

Gap between normative aspiration of targets and the reality in Bihar



In Bihar, for every government borehole hand pump there are six privately drilled and installed hand pumps (Srikanth, 2013 – DFID Evaluation)

Some theory to conceptualise this situation

Photo from: http://devpolicy.org/confronting-capability-traps20110329/

***Isomorphism** (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)*

Isomorphic mimicry & development
(Pritchett et al., 2010; Andrews et al., 2012)

"The evolution of one species to look like another in order to derive benefits from its appearance (i.e. a non-venomous snake adopting the colours of a venomous snake so to deter predators)"

- Ecology & the complexity turn
- Institutional theory
- Best practice & capability traps
- Hold relevance for conceptualising the uncritical adoption of internationally recognised practices

Capability traps & resistance

Has the government promotion of hand pumps “made people lazy” & “disconnected communities from the environment”?
Grassroots NGO worker

Confronting notions of appropriateness

Reflections

Disjunction between simplistic binary targets and the messy reality of everyday life

The discourse of targets profoundly influence both the material provision of technology *and* associated behaviours in rural districts

Whether the fight against hand pumps is based on solid evidence is doubtful however the existence of this anti-hand pump discourse is resultant from perceived isomorphic mimicry

This drains precious human resources from the sector

Represents a specific incident of a wider emblematic dispute over the nature of rural development in India (Hajer, 1995)

Concluding remarks

- Water targets useful and necessary macro-governance tools
- However, as we aspire to meet the universal human right to *safe* and *sustainable* water, technologically deterministic indicators appear limited
- Can we develop targets that validate positive development but do not become the drivers of it? How do we balance local determination with global accountability?