

Handpumps: an overview

Groundwater is used by millions of people as their main source of drinking water. It is normally free from diseases so does not require treatment. However, it does require lifting to the surface. A bucket in a well is one way of doing this, but hauling water is hard work and an open well can lead to the water becoming contaminated. A simple pump can make this task easier and keep the water clean.

Why are there different types?

Handpumps have been developed over time and in different places. Some can only be used if the water is near the surface, others can pump water from deep underground. Some have been designed to make them very easy to maintain; some are good for occasional use whilst others are stronger and can serve more people.

Where are they used?

Handpumps are found in many rural areas and in some urban locations in low- and middle-income countries. Often a particular model will be used in a country, as this makes it easier to supply spares and train maintenance staff.

How are they used?

A bucket or other water container is placed under the spout and the user then pumps the water. This may involve pulling on a handle, pushing down on a lever, turning a wheel, winding two handles, pushing down with your foot or even standing on two steps and operating the pump with your legs (so that it is really a foot pump!)

