

I. Issues and Challenges: Water and Sanitation¹

a) Ecosystems and Integrated Water Resources Management

The balance between preserving nature including both land and water, and using it for the sustenance of human beings is not easy to achieve:

- How much water should be used for agriculture, industry, urban settlements, as compared with maintaining minimum flows and seasonal volumes in water bodies?
- How can these flows and volumes of water be maintained and protected from further loss?
- How can the ecosystems supported by seas, rivers, lakes, underground water and other water bodies, be maintained and protected from further degradation?
- How can this be done in a way that allows the growing population of the world to continue to feed and water itself?
- How can this be done in an equitable manner?
- How can women receive both equitable benefits and entitlements from the products of water and land, and how can they best participate in preserving and maintaining water systems?

Challenges

- Governments are urged to involve interest groups in all levels of decision and policy making, and to establish and strengthen mechanisms at national, regional and international levels to facilitate the required participation of all stakeholders and particularly poor women.
- Move from a competition-based approach where ministers and more powerful stakeholder groups lobby for water rights to a more integrated approach to water resources allocation. The competitive approach tends to focus on issues of legal water rights, often associated with land rights. With most land rights residing with men, water rights are accordingly awarded to men. A more strategic approach though participatory IWRM recognises these associations and develops water resource policy to address this imbalance.

b) Agriculture

While it is slowly being recognized that policies to promote inclusion, participation and equity are needed, the inequities in this sector cover an extensive range of issues. These include:

- Land tenure, in which men and women have different expectations regarding inheritance of land and the social reality of their claim to communal property.
- Access to water in which women have low expectation and influence.
- Participation in which men and women have different expectations and experience, juggle different responsibilities, and respond to different time schedules, social networks and meeting places.
- Resource control that accepts and reinforces stereotypical roles and social norms, directing technical and financial control to male farmers.
- Capacity and skill development influenced by established social roles and reinforced by gender-insensitive educational and economic policies and established civil society structures.
- Marketing and commercial linkages that follow well-established, male-dominated paths.

Challenges

- Promote and support efforts and initiatives to secure equitable access to land tenure and clarify resource rights and responsibilities, through land and tenure reform processes that respect the role of law and enable women producers to become decision makers and owners in the sector.

¹ This Annex is derived from a Background Document to the Gender Panel entitled “Tapping into Sustainability: issues and trends in gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation”. The document deals with each of the issues/actions/recommendations in detail and is accompanied by several case studies from many contributing organizations. Download the document from: www.genderandwateralliance.org

- Promote and support women's right to inherit land.
- Ensure that women farmers have access to land, water, credit, technical inputs and training, and marketing, with a focus to developing sustainable agriculture.

c) Drinking Water

Projects and programs that neglect indigenous management, and treat women as beneficiaries and users, and not as water and waste managers and decision-makers, hamper their results and diminish women's position. Many women are active and leaders in the struggle for safe, affordable and accessible drinking water. International alliances between women, environmentalists, human rights activists and professionals in the water and sanitation sector are yielding quantifiable results for sustainable management of water resources.

Challenges

- Whenever possible, link proposed rate increases with agreed-upon improvements in service based on consultations with women and men users in the different user categories. An integrated and holistic approach should inform rural development in which women influence the design and operation of the service so that it meets their domestic and economic requirements.
- Public agencies and water-service providers should monitor water quantity, quality and reliability of delivery and convenience of service hours for women and account for their services to male and female heads of households.
- Promotion of private sector development of natural resources should take into account women's knowledge and subsistence activities for economic development.

d) Sanitation and Hygiene

In fact, few development issues demonstrate the gender divide in human society more graphically than sanitation. As the traditional water bearers and custodians of family health, women shoulder a huge burden in coping with the lack of basic sanitation services. The lack of sanitation facilities has significantly different impacts on women than men. For example, in rural areas due to deforestation and the expansion of cultivation, women have to get up even earlier in the morning than they already do to attend to their needs. Similar societal pressures for privacy do not put the same onus on men. And in both urban and rural areas, innumerable women and girls have been raped and assaulted when attempting to go out to defecate in the dark in insecure places far from their homes.

Challenges

- Governments should ensure that national sanitation policies are gender sensitive, by enabling the participation of women in the policy formulation process. Gender provisions should address both practical and strategic needs.
- While promoting an integrated approach, separate policies should be designed addressing gender-sensitive hygiene promotion and sanitation improvements. This will ensure that sanitation is given the attention it deserves. Separate sanitation strategies should be prepared for rural and urban informal settlements and should include clear gender commitments.
- Subsidies, if necessary, should be economically and socially sound and take into account the power relations within families. For example, sometimes cash subsidies for latrines given to men are not used for installing latrines, which are a female and not a male priority.

e) Water - A Public Good or a Commodity for Profit

The privatization of water services in many cities and regions in the world has been instigated at the insistence of international financial institutions and tied to loan conditions, structural adjustment programmes, poverty reduction strategies and international development assistance. In many

instances, privatization has led to astronomical hikes in water bills, the cutting off of water supplies, an increase in health problems, an increase in corruption, and further hardships for poor women and their families.

Challenges

The option to privatize should be discussed publicly with all relevant stakeholders. Information and relevant documents should be available to all and especially poor women and their organizations. All discussions should take place in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

Companies should be required to publicly disclose details of their operations including information on turnover, profit, number of connections, average price charged, capital expenditure, transactions with parent company and outstanding debts. The information should enable policy makers in the host country and those proposing privatization elsewhere to assess whether and how any efficiency gains have been achieved.

II. Issues and Challenges: Gender Mainstreaming

a) Gender analysis, Gender-disaggregated data and Gender-sensitive indicators

- All governments should immediately ratify the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Countries, which have ratified CEDAW, should ensure its implementation to the fullest.
- All actors in the water and sanitation sector need to ensure that their policies, plans, projects and actions are vigilant of the gender differentiation and social inequalities in the communities they work with. Addressing gender and social inequalities in water and sanitation is part of the larger commitment to social justice and sustainable development.
- While recognizing that local and national gender and poverty-sensitive indicators are more immediately relevant for performance and progress measurement; it would be useful to get global agreement on a number of criteria that must be met as a minimum in the different water sub-sectors if scaling-up of equity between women and men and social justice for the poor are to be achieved.

b) Capacity Development

- There is need for governments, NGOs and donors to develop tools for gender mainstreaming at the institutional level. All institutions involved in the provision of sanitation services in both rural and urban areas should have internal gender policies. The policies should address gender in recruitment, training programmes and the general practice of the institutions. Indicators should also be developed to monitor progress towards achieving gender-related goals.
- Training materials about gender and poverty should be developed and targeted to senior managers and staff in national ministries and water utility boards, to municipal councillors and staff, to engineers, and engineering colleges, to finance departments, as well as personnel in operations and maintenance.
- Resources should to be allocated for the capacity enhancement and development of poor women and girls, and to women's organizations based on their own priorities.