

Statement Report

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| DATE: 17 - March, 2003 | Theme/Region: Gender and Water |
| | Code: GENP |
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1. Key Issues

The cost effectiveness and positive impacts of a gender approach in the water sector have been amply demonstrated. Furthermore, the need for mainstreaming gender in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) has been validated from around the world. While initiatives in gender mainstreaming are in progress at different levels, there are still major challenges ahead to empower women for sustainable development.

Participatory processes are a first step in implementing a gender-sensitive approach. However, there is a need for a closer examination of participation based on race, ethnicity, economic status, age, and religion to ensure inclusiveness.

Gender mainstreaming is about both men and women. Nevertheless, women-specific activities that promote women's participation are critical, due to the historical disadvantage faced by women. Efforts also need to focus on keeping men engaged in gender-sensitive initiatives.

Fragmentation characterizes the water sector. To ensure equity, efficiency and sustainability, a gender perspective is essential for integrated water resources management.

2. Actions

Gender-sensitive participatory processes at the community level with the involvement of women's groups and NGOs, have provided effective interventions for communities who are poor and are not being serviced by governments. These interventions have been supported by institutions at various levels. However, there is recognition of the need for gender-training and awareness raising with all staff within these institutions to better mainstream gender.

While there are only a few gender inclusive policies in water, it is widely recognized that gender-sensitive policies are a more effective way to mediate conflicts in water issues. These

policies are being successfully pursued in some countries.

Global networks of organizations working in partnership to place the water-gender-poverty-sustainable development nexus into practice have built global synergy for the inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting issue in integrated water resources management.

3. Commitments

Government of Brazil

Cooperation with the Gender and Water Alliance, primarily for the “Zero Thirst” Programme that is still being developed. The “Zero Thirst” aims to ensure that each Brazilian will have access to adequate and quality water supply. The Programme aims to integrate governmental action on this subject and to call for participation of civil society.

Government of The Netherlands

The government of The Netherlands has made a commitment to include women’s water actions in their integrated water resources management activities.

Government of Sri Lanka

Establishment of a new unit in the Ministry of Irrigation & Water Management for mainstreaming gender.

UN DESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDESA will incorporate a proposal on the second series of the Gender and Water Development Reports by the Gender and Water Alliance as part of the International Year of Freshwater 2003. UNDESA will incorporate gender into strategies for implementing the Millennium Development Goals in water supply and sanitation, and be part of a new task force on Water and Gender within the Interagency Network on gender issues.

United Nations Development Programme

UNDP will be continuously updating the UNDP Resource Guide on Mainstreaming Gender into Water Management, in collaboration with the Gender and Water Alliance. UNDP will establish (a) specific targets for increased participation of women in CAPNET programmes and emphasis on gender perspective in learning materials and programmes of CAPNET participating institutions;

(b) special focus on support to strengthening of women’s groups within the activities of the community water initiative; and

(c) highlight gender perspective in the strategy and work of the MDG water task force.

Building Partnerships for Development

The BPD plans to work together with the Gender and Water Alliance to develop a gender audit tool to be used specifically for analysing partnership situations. The audit tool will be tested initially in three-four partnership projects before being made available more generally.

Asian Development Bank

This partnership will be a mechanism for regular dialogue and collaboration between the ADB and the Gender and Water Alliance on mainstreaming gender into water resources and management policies, strategies and programmes, including that of disaster and flood management programmes. This partnership will be a collaboration on gender capacity building; developing good practices and facilitating country and regional dialogue.

Women for Water Initiative

The Netherlands Council of Women, the Business and Professional Women International, Women in Europe for a Common Future and NetWater are committed to building an International Women for Water Initiative. This Initiative will bring together existing women's coalitions for greater synergies to mainstream gender in integrated water resources management.

4. Recommendations

Governments must recognize and enshrine water as a human right that entitles everyone to safe, sufficient, affordable and physically accessible water for personal and domestic use.

Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives (GRBIs) should be introduced in the water sector, as these will enable governments, donors, multi-lateral agencies and civil society organizations to be accountable to their commitments to gender equity, poverty eradication, sustainable development and rights-based governance.

An Inter-Ministerial Dialogue on Gender should be established. Such a Dialogue should be incorporated into the existing ministerial networks. This should be supported by regular contact between the public sector and civil society in order to have an on-going exchange on the progress made on the gender agenda in the context of integrated water resources management.

Representation of women in the water sector should not only be based on the needs of equity, integration and sustainability, but simply be justified by the fact that women are half the world's population. Thus, women should be at least 50% of all bodies. This representation consists of two levels. One, at the institutional level; and secondly, at the civil society level

where women voices should be given due respect and consideration.

Local governments, utilities, and public sector unions should make a commitment to poor women by developing projects for the implementation of ecologically sustainable, equitable, and affordable water and sanitation services. Women themselves should define the priorities and be partners in implementation.

A gender analysis and gender-sensitive indicators must be integrated in the implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Locally appropriate, affordable, and sustainable technology taking into account a gender and environmentally sensitive approach is needed to realize the targets established for the WSSD and the MDGs.

Strategies designed to respond and mitigate the impacts of climate change must take into consideration differences based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, and economic status.

Greater follow-up action is needed to sustain the positive impacts of gender mainstreaming for both women and men. Qualitative indicators are required to monitor the process and the impacts.