# Summary of the Spanish language conference (in English)

**INTRODUCTION**

The Second Conference on Gender and Water conducted in Spanish brought together 297 participants from Central America, the Caribbean, South America and Spain. 98 messages circulated during the conference. Case presentations did not follow a specific format and the information submitted in that respect had varying levels of depth. The discussion on methodologies and indicators did not concentrate, strictly, on the cases being presented.

**1. CASES**

The experiences described corresponded to those in which the participants themselves have been involved or to cases they are aware of directly.

1.1 DESCRIPTION

Drinking Water, Sanitation and Community Organization Program in Rural Areas of the New Guinea Municipality, PASOC, Nicaragua. Coordinated by SNV; funded by the Government of the Netherlands. Between 1989 and 1997 this program served 47 rural communities. This program has worked on masculinity with institutional teams, basically, formed by men. At the community level, it has also worked on health and violence issues from a gender perspective. It has contributed to increasing the number of women participating in Water Committees up to 45%, and the number of women coordinators of those committees up to 50%. Educators were trained and teaching materials were revised to incorporate a gender perspective in school Health Education Programs. It also created Inter-institutional Municipal Gender Committees. In addition, this program implemented two National Seminars on Gender.

AGUA Project, Access, Management and Rational Use of Water, El Salvador.
Coordinated by CARE-El Salvador in association with 3 NGOs. Funded by USAID. It is being carried out in 3 regions of El Salvador, covering 18 municipalities. This project started in 1999 and its work has focused on Watersheds and Gender. It has promoted leadership in women, encouraging them to participate in the Board of Directors of various Water Systems and training them as Community roducers/Promoters and managers of small-sized companies. Ana Victoria Mejía has played an important role in this project; her work has had an impact on 24 neighbourhoods, while other Promoters only reached an average of 15. Women have acquired agricultural technological knowledge and are performing tasks that, in the past, have been considered suitable for men only.

Protection Project and Efficient and Sustainable Management of the Panama Canal Watershed. USAID Program. The project itself does not have a gender focus, however, it requires that the NGOs involved include women on their Board of Directors and encourage active participation of women in community meetings. An advanced survey of the population of the Panama Canal Watershed area showed that women are the ones most concerned with water quality.

FASBASE Project, Ecuador. Coordinated by the Ministry of Health and the World Bank Andes Water and Sanitation Program. It developed, for the first time in Ecuador, a water demand management approach. The planning stage did not include a gender perspective; however, during its implementation process the program involved only professional women working in the different social areas. Taking into account that in Andean communities men consult with their wives and families, the decision-making process did not take place at the meetings where the different technical options were presented. Prior to reaching an agreement, the participants were given time to discuss the different options with their wives and families.

Water and Sanitation Program, Bolivia. This program moved from a program focused on the construction of infrastructure, to a program centred on the institutionalization of community development as a social strategy for the sector. It incorporated a gender approach in the methodology and research instruments. The work done on this issue has not included the use of the term gender at the community level; however through the utilization of different instruments, gender activities have been planned.

La Sirena Drinking Water Project, Peripheral Settlement - Cali, Colombia. Cinara provided support to the Community Action Committee formed by men only, to design and construct a water treatment plant. Due to their work schedule, the men neglected the management of the project. Faced with this problem, a

housewife took over the project leadership, reactivating it and obtaining much recognition from various institutions and the community. When a new Committee was elected she was appointed President. This situation provoked a negative reaction from male leaders, who promoted their wives' involvement in the project in order to counterweigh her leadership. This experience, in addition to the training programs taking place, transformed the women into leaders who fight to improve the quality of life in their communities.

Waters of Nouadhibou Project, Mauritania. Coordinated by Spanish women involved in the Women Medical Doctors/Dentists Association with the support of the NGOs for Cooperation in the Sahel region. This project offers training programs to women, on water quality and management and on adequate utilization of water in agriculture, providing support for trickle and sprinkler irrigation systems. Also, automatic drinking water fountains have been installed for children in schools. These facilities have helped to educate children as well as teachers and parents about how important water is for their health. This project is creating a program for role models called "Aguadoras" (female students from senior classes), who are responsible for the quality control of the water and O&M.

CLARA Environmental Education Project, Active Cleaning of the Water Resource Coalition, El Salvador and Panama. Developed by the Foundation for Municipal Support, FUNDAMUNI-El Salvador and by the Metropolitan Park, Panama. This project focuses on the sustainable management of watersheds, mainly working with youth. This program does not have a gender approach, but the group is very interested in working on strategies to involve young women.

Social-environmental Diagnosis with a Gender Perspective of the Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, Baja California State, Mexico. Mexican Institute for Water Technology. This study has proved that an invisibility of women participation in productive activities exists. In this region, water rights are sold to agricultural exporting companies by peasants from the "ejidos" without their wives' consent, generating a migration process.

Participatory Evaluation of Water Projects in the Andean Region. Carried out by Cinara of Colombia. Promoted by the World Bank Sanitation and Water Program and by IRC of the Netherlands. This project was implemented at the end of 1998 in 16 communities, in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. It evaluated projects developed with community participation, but without a gender focus. It established that the discussions conducted by the Water Committees were dominated by men with higher incomes who, usually, exercise community leadership. Women were not involved in activities related to O&M in treatment system projects. In addition, women did not hold important positions in those committees. Seven committees were formed by men only. Water systems have been used to satisfy the reproductive and productive needs of men and women (home vegetable gardens and animal rearing).

Gender Analysis. Aqueduct and Sewage Management Office, Cali Public Services Agency, EMCALI, Colombia. Staff: 1226 (988 men, 238 women). Only 3 women hold middle management positions. The majority of them hold administrative positions (accountants, secretaries, receptionists, data entry). Women get recognition only when they speak another language, have obtained graduate degrees abroad and are very efficient. Men, on the other hand, are promoted with the support of their political godfathers, although there are exceptions. The plant operation activities only involve the work of 7 women, whose orders are resisted by men. Internal planning does not take into consideration the practical or strategic needs of women. Gender discrimination regarding salaries and funding for research does not exist.

Conclusions of the International Meeting "Gender Perspectives and the Role of Women in the Management of Hydraulic Resources of the Altiplano" March 2002, Lima. Promoted by the Virtual Centre for Hydraulic Resources of the Altiplano. It was considered that the inclusion of a gender perspective in the formulation of water and sanitation projects is weak; it lacks consistency and, usually, utilizes information not classified by sex. Irrigation projects emphasize the role of women in agricultural production; however, they do not emphasize their role in the management of the operation. The access of women to irrigation water is determined by their marital status (wife), not by their rights as citizens; their rights are almost non existent in irrigation organizations. Usually, the project diagnosis and the participatory planning process do not include a follow up of the activities by gender, or the use of gender sensitive indicators in the evaluation.

Other experiences:

Comparative analysis of water projects developed in three rural communities of Nicaragua. In two of them, Lajas (Darío) y Lajas (Matagalpa) the decisions regarding the project were always made by men, therefore, the wells were built in the least adequate places and the Committees were formed basically by them. On the

other hand, in Sabana Verde, before the project started, gender workshops for women took place. As a result, women were able to express their needs and have their opinions heard, and, therefore, the well was located equidistant to all dwellings. In order to improve the conditions to do the laundry, women asked for two community laundry sites that included a water tank and a resting area. In Sabana Verde, the Water Committee is mixed and the President is a woman. The project has been working for a year and is a model project in the region. It is necessary to improve the involvement of men in the transportation of water and in household chores.

School Sanitation, Colombia. The importance of considering a gender perspective and age differences in the design of sanitary facilities was emphasized; boys and girls have different needs and expectations. Even though the technical regulations of Colombia contemplate gender differences, schools that do not have different locations for boys' and girls' washrooms have been detected, including situations where the washrooms for boys are located in the girls' area, preventing them from using the facilities.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGIES AND INDICATORS

The SARAR (Self-confidence, Associative strengths, Resourcefulness, Action Planning and Responsibility) methodology is used by CARE-El Salvador because it enables people to develop self-esteem and confidence in their own capabilities. In Bolivia it is used in rural areas, and in Ecuador it was used by the FASBASE project because some of the techniques do not require women to present their opinions in public, i.e. voting matrixes.

The PHAST methodology (Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation) is used in basic sanitation programs and reproductive health projects, to promote attitudinal changes in peripheral urban areas of various cities in Bolivia. The programs usually take 8 to 12 months and include migrant men and women from different backgrounds. This methodology contributes to create awareness on gender inequality, at the family level.

The Methodology for Participatory Assessment, known in English as MPA, has been used in the participatory evaluation of water systems in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. This methodology combines the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques. A mixed team of facilitators, during five days, works with communities and personnel from local institutions to evaluate the relationship between sustainability, system use and access and the use of a gender, poverty and response to water demand perspectives. The research techniques correspond to the SARAR methodology and PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal); however, it also uses Thurstone type measurement scales.

Considering the challenge is to incorporate a gender perspective in a transversal manner in all stages of the project cycle, a female participant presented a checklist to verify its inclusion in all phases prior to the implementation of the project, to which questions were added. Also, the questionnaire created by the Gender Alliance was presented to examine the incorporation of a Gender Perspective at the institutional level.

In general, the importance of using participatory methodologies and techniques, and the use of quick participatory research methods was recognized. It was indicated that methodologies must not be regarded solely as a set of techniques, because this point of view does not allow for the advancement of social processes. The importance of undertaking ethnographic research prior to the implementation of projects was also mentioned, in order to explain how gender relations work in specific contexts.

The need to create comprehensive water resource assessment methodologies (economic, social and ecological) that incorporate gender and poverty perspectives was also discussed, considering that a predominant economistic approach in this type of studies is not inclusive.

With respect to Indicators, the wide use of the number and percentage of women that participate in specific project activities as an indicator of gender advancement, without taking into consideration those indicators that describe the process and capture the qualitative aspects, such as the increase in self-esteem and self-image, was criticized. In addition, there is concern about how women use their free time, considering that it is not enough to measure the number of hours women save by having tap water at home. After the implementation of water management projects, in the Dominican Republic, some women have gone back to school, reaching university levels.

It was mentioned that the NGO "Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana" is working on the development of an empowerment measuring scale. They are also trying to adapt the Rosenberg Scale on self-esteem, in order to measure changes in women who have participated in water management projects.

## 2. GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN LEGISLATION, PUBLIC POLICIES AND SECTORIAL INSTITUTIONS

During the discussion, few participants referred to water sector legislation in their countries. In the Dominican Republic, there is a regulation of the National Water Authority requiring that at least 40% of the Water Committee members must be women. In other countries this issue has not been addressed. In Mexico, the 1992 National Water Act and its 1994 regulations do not make reference to gender equity. In Colombia, gender equity is not mentioned in the legislation relative to the water sector.

In general, in the countries of the region, there are National Policies on Gender, such as the case of Bolivia and the National Program for Equal Opportunities, PROEQUIDAD, established by the Mexican Government in 2001 (with few results due to the fact that less than 0.1% of the national budget is assigned to programs for women). However, water sector policies often use neutral language and have not incorporated a gender perspective.

At the institutional level, CARE-El Salvador informed that in December 1999, the organization approved the implementation of its Gender and Diversity Policies. These policies are now being evaluated in order to analyze the changes that have taken place in the organization. However, regional institutions that promote the incorporation of a gender perspective in water management projects do not necessarily have an institutional policy regarding this matter. Furthermore, even though some of the working teams do have a gender balance, women working in the social areas are easily intimidated by men from the technical areas.

## 3. FINAL REFLEXIONS

- The issues that continue to generate concern among participants are: water scarcity; power imbalance between men and women in the public and domestic domains; staff committed to gender issues are basically women.
- Most of the experiences presented at the conference refer to the work of NGOs supported by international organizations for cooperation and development. Therefore, much work needs to be done in the public and private sectors.
- Methodologies and indicators are vital factors for the incorporation of a gender perspective. The conference has proved that there is ample space to investigate and work in those areas.
- The importance of maintaining a channel of communication for the participants is a recurrent idea that deserves to be addressed by the Water and Gender Alliance.