

## **A minimum agenda for gender mainstreaming in water management**

Addressing and mainstreaming gender in water is easier when water management and policy are treated as open, non-linear and on-going processes of social dialogue and debate. A flexible, bottom-up and participatory approach is more conducive to recognizing women as water actors, and to identifying gender concerns, than more hierarchic and prescriptive top-down policy models.

Full gender mainstreaming efforts are likely to be more successful when part of:

- ✓ an approach that recognizes the dynamic interlinkages between physical water resource systems, farming systems and the larger social, economic and institutional context within which they are managed.
- ✓ a wider and explicit recognition of the large variety of actors whose individual or collective decisions influence water use patterns and, ultimately, water management needs and options.
- ✓ an approach to understanding water management that recognizes the centrality of the question of the balance of power, because when the balance of power within society is weighed against those most affected by water problems, effective strategies to management are unlikely to evolve.
- ✓ an approach in which questions about the divisions of the costs and benefits of water investments, about priorities for water allocation; about how these priorities come about and about the legitimacy of water authorities are central.
- ✓ an approach that recognizes that water management is intrinsically political and therefore contested, because it deals with the allocation of (public) resources.

Gender mainstreaming requires the recognition of different types of water actors that are, in an ideal world, in dynamic and creative engagement with each other. In particular, the project clearly shows that bridging the gaps between (1) field level staff (and their experiences) with higher level water professionals and policymakers; and (2) gender experts and other water specialists is a key priority to enhance the success of gender mainstreaming efforts.

### **❶ All actors involved in water development and management**

*First of all there is a need for all to:*

- Demonstrate how a gendered approach to water management in agriculture by increased contributes to increased efficiency, visible impact and sustainability.
- Document pathways taken to overcome difficulties and constraints.
- Raise awareness and share experiences and lessons learned.

### **❷ Practitioners in the fields**

*Water and agriculture practitioners should:*

- Always carry out a comprehensive social analysis, including:
  - stakeholder analysis: who is involved or impacted, who does what
  - agency analysis: ways and strategies to formally & informally access resources
  - water use analysis: who are the users (not just in agriculture, but also domestic and other use); how much do they get and how; what water do they use (surface, ground, saline, wastewater); what are spheres of influence.

- Collect and make use of gender & diversity disaggregated data in design, implementation and monitoring of water and agriculture projects.
- Involve all local stakeholder groups - men and women of different age groups and classes through a facilitated dialogue process from the start.
- Involve social/gender experts in projects and programmes from the design stage.
- Share expertise and knowledge among practitioners and give feedback to academics and policy makers on gender issues and mainstreaming efforts.
- Lobby at higher political levels to stimulate the right environment for social changes enabling equity.

*To be able to do this they need:*

- Practical tools for comprehensive social analyses
- Access to information on rights and responsibility for women and men regarding natural resources.
- Essential social sciences training, including facilitation skills and appropriate methodologies and terminology to use (tailored to local contexts).
- Documented evidence of gender mainstreaming's impact on efficiency.
- Financial, institutional and legal support from policy makers to mainstream gender.

#### ③ Policy makers (and funding agencies)

*Policy makers should:*

- Avoid gender neutrality in policies, laws and budgets by making the impact and benefits for, and rights and responsibilities of men, women & other socio-economic groups explicit.
- Base their policies on comprehensive social analyses, including sex disaggregated data and gender impact analysis through a dialogue process, with the ability to take corrective actions.
- Reflect social diversity in policies, laws, financing agreements and institutional arrangements for the development and management of water for agriculture.
- Build upon existing studies and cases and use the expertise at the local level.
- Facilitate equity and gender mainstreaming efforts with financial support.
- Stimulate institutionalized learning and sharing between practitioners, academics and policy makers on gender issues and mainstreaming efforts.
- Ensure the right to information on rights for women and men regarding natural resources as well as the right *to be* informed.
- Integrate gender mainstreaming in the formal and non-formal education streams.
- Develop mechanisms to reward positive gender practices with regard to water management for institutions and individual practitioners and build these into performance appraisals.

*To be able to do this they need:*

- Clear arguments for and cases of gender mainstreaming in water management in agriculture
- Expertise/case studies tailored for policy and decision makers
- Training of staff on key elements of social sciences to allow for gendered policies (skills in collecting sex-disaggregated information, analyzing data sets, and monitoring).

#### ④ Researchers and trainers in water and agriculture

*Researchers and trainers should:*

- Always include gender specific and disaggregated data in all disciplines, analyses and document findings.
- Enhance the gender content of disciplines, by:

- updating conventional social sciences with state-of-the-art gender studies;
- updating existing curricula to include social issues especially in technical training courses.
- Make sure that research is participatory involving all stakeholders, including women, from the onset and recognizing that local men and women are also experts with relevant knowledge.
- Respect women's difficulties in participating in meetings by taking into account the time and place most suitable to them.
- Ensure that researcher's knowledge does not remain in isolation, but is shared with local people and policy makers (tailored for their needs).
- Work in multidisciplinary teams, including social scientists and gender experts and share knowledge and expertise among researchers of different disciplines and with practitioners.

*To be able to do this they need:*

- Guidance on a minimum set of specific & gender-disaggregated data for different scientific fields.
- To assess lessons learned from existing "gender projects" in their discipline to identify gaps.

## 6 Gender experts

*Gender experts should at least:*

- Focus on revising methodologies and tools for different audiences, and as per context and community needs.
- Always attempt to view the water management situation from the perspective of the water technician for better communication, avoiding the use of gender jargon.
- Contribute to improved integration of gender in disciplines in the formal and informal sectors by:
  - updating conventional social sciences with latest gender studies approaches;
  - updating existing curricula to include more social and gender issues especially in technical training courses.
- Raise awareness and create sensitization on what difference a good gender approach can make in water management and agricultural growth, as well as the inherent dangers of *not* mainstreaming gender in policies and decisions on water management and agriculture.
- Communicate information, cases, experiences, and research, using gender study centers.
- Provide tailored training/capacity building according to specific needs of projects, institutions;
- Suggest pathways to involve stakeholders on the ground and at different levels from the design to the implementation and evaluation phase of projects.
- Lobby at all levels to get the appropriate environment for social transformation.

*To be able to do this they need:*

- To get regular feedback from non-specialists on tools, approaches and methodologies.
- Revisit existing tools to make them accessible to non-specialists by tailoring and contextualizing them to specific local needs, users and uses (changing the language and guidelines with multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams).

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