

## Integrating Gender and Environment Aspects in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Rural Populations

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<b>Partner</b>	Protos, a Belgian INGO with expertise in WaSH provision

That every person has sufficient water of good quality is not only a basic need, but a human right! Toward this objective Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7 on Environmental Sustainability aims to reduce by half the number of people who have no access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. The Government of Rwanda has prioritised providing safe drinking water and decent sanitation for its population and intends to bypass the MDG target of 80 percent by the year 2015 and achieve 100 percent coverage for all people in Rwanda by 2020.

Women and children are the main carriers of water. Without specific attention to gender issues and initiatives, projects can and do reinforce inequalities between women and men and even increase gender disparities. On the other hand, involving both men and women in water management initiatives can increase project effectiveness and efficiency. Participation by both women and men in the planning and decision making of water initiatives in their community improves project performance and the likelihood of sustainability.

Furthermore, human interventions of all kinds with the natural resource of water impact the local and extended natural environment. Increasing the environmental awareness and knowledge of communities as they obtain new facilities is important for the long-term success of the systems and the health of the water supply, the community and the environment.

With a view to increasing access to Basic Services in Water and Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) for rural people, SNV Rwanda assisted government districts to draw up an inventory of all stakeholders in the field for a clear overview of the available and required services. In addition to working with district authorities, SNV has had a fruitful collaboration with two partners, nationally COFORWA and internationally PROTOS, both of which have been very active in the WaSH sector.

### Collaboration Begins

In 2006, Les Compagnons Fontainiers du Rwanda (COFORWA) approached SNV and expressed an interest in collaborating. COFORWA's mission is to help rural populations access water under good conditions and to improve sanitation through the construction of latrines, new water supply systems and other improvements. COFORWA, a member of Conseil de Concertation des Organisations d'Appui aux Initiatives de Base (CCOaIB), is the most highly recognised local capacity builder in this field, with over 30 years of experience in training local people to construct and maintain water infrastructure. In fact, it has been responsible for the construction of half of the water infrastructure in rural areas in Rwanda. The overall purpose of SNV's collaboration with them is to enhance the gender-responsive planning of COFORWA and the management skills of its employees, so that they can more effectively play their part in implementing gender-sensitive water programmes.



*Participants at the Gender and Environment mainstreaming workshop*

A Belgian NGO has supported COFORWA financially and technically. PROTOS targets underprivileged people to provide them with access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation and hygiene facilities. Examples of this are the installation of clean toilets in the immediate surroundings of disadvantaged people and assisting farmers to make optimal use of water for agriculture. SNV Rwanda and PROTOS collaborated to develop a *Training Manual for Water Professionals on Mainstreaming Gender into WaSH programs*, and to trial it with COFORWA.

### **Phase One**

The first collaboration between COFORWA and SNV Rwanda was to incorporate gender mainstreaming and environmental aspects into COFORWA's *Strategic Plan 2006–2008*. To do this SNV facilitated a workshop on 21–23 November 2006. Specifically, the workshop sensitized COFORWA members and personnel to identify issues of gender equality and environment and enabled them to incorporate these in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the strategic plan of their organisation. This exercise was not easy because the participants of the workshop, COFORWA personnel and partners, were not aware of gender and environment concepts and the importance of mainstreaming them and had not used gender and environment analysis tools. Thus strengths and weaknesses of COFORWA in mainstreaming these aspects at the institutional level and in interventions were identified. During the training equal participation for women and men in the planning and implementation of water projects was emphasized often. In 2006 SNV dedicated 41 days to this project. We expect that by the end of 2009, the total days dedicated will be 120.

### **Phase Two**

SNV and PROTOS collaborated to develop the *Training Manual for Water Professionals on Mainstreaming Gender into WaSH programs* with COFORWA as a pilot project using a participatory approach. The three training modules were first developed in English with the support of an external consultant. They covered WaSH in the context of Rwanda, theoretical concepts of gender, and implementation of WaSH projects. The manual was trialled with a group of water and

gender experts in Kigali and modified, taking their comments into account. Then it was translated into French by Belgian volunteers, which caused a delay in the process of conducting pilot training with water practitioners, and unfortunately disturbed other planned activities. The bilingual training module is intended for future use with other SNV and PROTOS partners in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### Phase three

SNV Rwanda facilitated two training workshops on “Mainstreaming gender into water programs” held on 23-26 September and 17-19 October 2007. The training workshop was carried out on two separate occasions in order to prevent any interruption in the daily tasks of COFORWA personnel. The team of facilitators was comprised of Dr Shirley Randell and Beatrice Mukasine, gender and governance advisers from SNV and Hester Kapur and Harald van der Hoek, coordinators of PROTOS/Great Lakes Region. The 12 participants trained included three women and nine men, of whom ten were COFORWA personnel, one was a representative of the local government (sector level) and one a staff member of SNV.



*Participants role-playing water use in households*

The training covered the following concerns: the legal status of women in Rwanda, global trends and concepts in water, trends in water usage in Rwanda, the Rwandan government’s commitments to improving water delivery, gender equality, the importance of gender analysis and an introduction to social vulnerability and water. It culminated in how to implement a project.

### Assessments and Outcome Indicators

SNV Rwanda and COFORWAs’ assessments gave COFORWA an Output Score of 18 and 17 respectively. The client has shown great commitment and improved its understanding of SNV’s capacity building approach. The activity contracts signed were implemented despite minor problems meeting deadlines. Gender and Water training has strengthened the practice of partnership and collaboration between COFORWA & its partners, including local governments and International NGOs.

The increased knowledge COFORWA personnel and partners have about gender mainstreaming in WaSH development leads the Outcome Indicators. The score of 80 percent spans framework tools for incorporating a gender perspective in water programs that were introduced and distributed, and the understanding of gender sensitive indicators to measure the achievement of water programme objectives. In addition, participants recognized that access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses is a human right and that it should be distributed equitably to all men, women and children, garnering a 90 percent score.

A direct outcome of the November 2006 workshop was training for COFORWA technical staff on *Environment Impact Assessment*. Pain pour le Monde supported this financially and technically. As a result of the training, COFORWA understands that all projects undertaken should be put through the EIA process they learned. This outcome indicator received a score of 90 percent. Another indicator, for a project which is yet to be funded, received a score of 70 percent: rainwater harvesting in villages and schools. A study tour for rainwater harvesting in Nyaruguru district, South Province has been organized

### **Effectiveness and impact**

As the activities are still in process, we cannot make a final assessment of the impact of the workshops. However our predictions of the outcomes of these activities are very encouraging. With this training, we expect that COFORWA and PROTOS will ensure that women participate in community decision-making about WaSH matters. They will determine reasonable targets for women's participation, which will be issued to organisations that are responsible for establishing WaSH users' committees. They will seek gender balance at all times in all aspects of community training and education programmes, including the operation and maintenance of equipment. They will undertake an assessment of the constraints that hinder women's participation in training activities so that the times and venues of future training sessions will be chosen to facilitate women's participation. They will provide adequate sensitisation to district planners for gender-responsive programmes to be executed effectively using gender-disaggregated data and information. Women as well as men will be involved at all levels of management and operation of their local water supply. An additional benefit for women is learning technical and managerial skills.

In the area of environmental concerns, we have recommended that COFORWA has an Environmental Management Plan and that its projects should be environmentally responsive. The implementation of the rainwater harvesting project should contribute to improved soil management, consequently reducing erosion.

### **Critical success moments**

In the partnership between these three organizations PROTOS brought the finances and expertise in water, SNV brought its gender and water expertise and COFORWA participated as a local



COFORWA Coordinator thanking SNV gender and water trainers

organisation in need of increasing capacity and improving governance. The Minister for Water immediately endorsed the draft manual and agreed to sign a forward to it. The Minister for Gender has expressed approval. The clear direction and guidance on gender issues and dedicated support from the Coordinator of COFORWA in mobilizing his entire staff to participate in the training, including programme staff, managers and himself, made this program a success. During the workshop to improve COFORWA's strategic plan, the basic gender training introduced 20 participants to concepts related to gender

and the environment. They included COFORWA members, staff, leaders, partners and representatives of water users' committees.

### **Lessons learned**

“We have learnt that one hand cannot tie a bundle.” Both women and men need to be central in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. Capacity development programs for WaSH utilities should include the transfer of skills to enact a gender-equitable, pro-poor analysis as the basis for gender-sensitive strategic planning and governance. Gender-disaggregated data must be collected in order to facilitate the design of appropriate mainstreaming strategies. Any new construction or rehabilitation of infrastructure for WaSH services must be carried out in consultation with users, who include women. Moreover, gender mainstreaming can assist in bringing about the institutional and organizational changes necessary to ensure gender equality as an ongoing commitment of clients. This work contributed to governance by strengthening Local Capacity Builders and provides a model for further joint collaboration of SNV-LCBs in WaSH.

As a local capacity builder in WaSH, COFORWA is in a position to apply environmental mainstreaming in all its projects. It can also advocate for the Organic Law on the protection and conservation of the environment in Rwanda.

### **Recommendations and follow-up**

Upon its finalization, copies of the training module will be available in the SNV Rwanda library for all readers concerned with and interested in gender and water issues. It will be distributed to SNV branches in other countries and outside SNV. For instance, it will circulate through the SNV intranet, ESA gender network, Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) and the Rwanda Pool of gender experts. We recommend that the training module, designed and developed in English and French, be translated into Kinyarwanda for use at the local level. This may require outside funding. We suggest that SNV and PROTOS continue their support in the follow up and implementation of the training recommendations.

By strengthening their gender analysis and responsive planning skills, COFORWA is now able to monitor and evaluate the integration of an equitable gender perspective into all projects and programs. In addition to mainstreaming gender in the WaSH sector this work facilitated the development of sector specific gender tools that may be used by other organizations working in water supply and sanitation. COFORWA is in need of continuous support to truly become a “gender sensitive organisation.” The gender training we provided is just one part of this long process. SNV can give special attention to supporting COFORWA in initiating other community development projects that integrate gender sensitive indicators.