

# MAINSTREAMING GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT POLICIES: CHILE AND BRAZIL CASES STUDY

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**RESUMEN:** Water's unsustainable management faces a current crisis affecting to the poorest and the vital ecosystems. This mismanagement has caused and agravated situations of enormous inequity and inequality, because it has been based on rigid approaches that has not considered all the factors nor to all the actors involved in it. Since Dublin's Conference in 1992 the world has accepted and understood that integrated management of waters is a process that assures the environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability. Also, the third Dublin's principle set that women play a fundamental role in the management and sustainable use of water, which systematically has been ignored even by many of those who subscribed this Declaration. Here are analyzed the public policies in two countries of the Latin American Region, regarding the gender mainstreaming in the process of Integrated Water Resources Management in a wide extent, not merely the one that places women at homes bringing water on the buckets from rivers or springs.

This paper reports the experiences of Chile and Brazil to deal with gender perspective in the IWRM .Both are South Latin American Countries, Chile from the Spanish speaking area and Brazil the only Portuguese speaking country in the Region. However some common points could be raised together with diversity of solutions to deal with the core subject.

## 1.- INTRODUCTION

Since the Conference of the United Nations about Environment in 1972, in Stockholm, too much has been spoken & much has been set out to surpass the crisis of water resources as well, interesting is to mention the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular those that are related to women, the protection of the environment and the increase of the water supply and sanitation for those populations that lack them. Also there is the Implementation Plan of Johannesburg, approved by the United Nations in the year 2002, consisting on the elaboration of the National Water Plans for year 2005. Consequently, the fulfillment of the MDGs represents an extraordinary opportunity to introduce and to seat the process of the Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and to demonstrate that engendering this it's the via to obtain the sustainability of the use of the water and the preservation of the environment.

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The results and follow-up of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade were discussed in *New Delhi* (1990). Although this discussion has been criticized in recent years for not going far enough on gender issues, there was a clear call for an increase in women's decision-making and management of water resources.

The Statement (1992), endorsed by over 100 countries, recognized that women play a central role in providing, managing and safeguarding water resources. It calls for the pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment to be reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources. Principle 20 of the *Declaration* (1992) stated, "Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development". *Agenda 21* (1992) contains an entire chapter on women and sustainable development (Chapter 24). The importance of gender was reaffirmed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002.

All governments made commitments to the women and gender equality goals in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and recognized gender mainstreaming - "the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or program, in any area and at all levels" (ECOSOC 1997) - as the principal means to achieve these objectives. UNDP endorses this approach, and includes the advancement of women as a core thematic area within its Sustainable Human Development (SHD) framework. The *Beijing Platform for Action* (1995) highlighted environmental issues as one critical area of concern ("gender inequalities in the management and safeguarding of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment"). Three strategic objectives were agreed to: (1) involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; (2) integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and program for sustainable development; and (3) strengthen or establish mechanisms to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

At the Millennium Summit in 2000 world leaders agreed on the *Millennium Development Goals* (MDGs). A specific gender target sets out to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Water Forum in The Hague, in 2002, recognition of the importance of applying a gender approach received great acceptance. But at the international levels and at the national levels, the gender approach is little recognized or understood.

At International levels, there is a kind of a invisibility about the gender focus in IWRM, systematically this subject has been ignored even for important and representative institutions of the water sector.

At the national implementation levels, this little recognition or understanding is due to a number of factors: inaccessibility of information on existing policies and practice, limited experience of mainstreaming gender in relation to water for irrigation and nature, insufficient gender analytical disaggregated data, lack of tailored tools and methodologies for training and capacity building, inadequate documentation of good practices, insufficient targeted advocacy at national, regional and international levels and limited capacity in time, resources, responsibilities and positioning of those responsible for mainstreaming gender; have combined to inhibit the significant development and implementation of a gender approach.

Another very important conclusion is the one related to the inclusion of the Gender approach and mainstreaming from the very beginning in the development of ideas, political actions, strategies and projects of IWRM. That is the only way to ensure the success of this inclusion. Unfortunately, experience shows that this has not happened and inclusion has become in many cases delayed because it has been only a formal fulfillment of donor's requirements but it has not been a stage or a phase of the action of which the executors have become aware that these matters must be considered from the beginning of the project or the action.

Poor targeting, inequitable distribution of benefits and burdens, and poor operation and maintenance structures have hindered development projects aimed at addressing issues of sustainable development in water resources management. Community participation and management approaches have failed to address these issues largely because communities are often seen as a collection of people with a common purpose. The reality is that a community is not a collection of equal people living in a particular geographic region. It is usually made up of individuals and groups who command different levels of power, wealth, influence and ability to express their needs, concerns and rights. Communities contain competing interest groups. Where resources are scarce, there is competition for supplies and those at the lowest end of the power spectrum, often the poor, will go without. Power issues place women in a disadvantaged position. Applying a gender analysis helps development agencies better target their resources and the needs of different gender groups.

People centered approaches do not always ensure that gender perspectives are taken into account. Thus a deliberate strategy of gender mainstreaming can be useful to ensure that these issues are part of analysis, project planning and evaluation.

## 2. - THE CHILEAN CASE

In Chile there are five legal instruments to mainstream gender in policies, strategies, programs, plans, actions and projects among the governmental agencies and public services:

- Equality of Opportunities Plan 2001/2010
- Gender Perspective the Investment National System of Public Funds
- Council of Ministers for Equality of Opportunities
- Management Improvement Program for Governmental Agencies
- Ministerial Commitments for Gender Equity

The **Equality of Opportunities Plan between Women and Men 2000-2010** gathers the aspirations and demands of different sectors from women and seeks to consolidate during this decade the gender policies within the public institutionalism, and to promote the participation of women and the citizen control around these policies as well.

The first Plan, 1994-1999, contributed to elevate the conscience level about gender inequalities and put this matter in the governmental agenda and the public opinion. It gathered the demands that many social and political organizations of women came raising from the decade of the 80s. The only existence of a Plan stimulated the sprouting of new initiatives in the equality of opportunities that they have enriched and enlarged its extent. The second Plan, 2000-2010, was elaborated in a scene in which greater conscience of the importance of the Equality of Opportunities between men and women exists among those

who design policies to the interior of the State. Nevertheless, nothing has been done until now to mainstream gender in the IWRM public policies.

About the **Gender Perspective the Investment National System of Public Funds** it must be said that to apply to any kind of public funds to develop programs, projects, actions, etc, the governmental institutions must accomplish all the requisites established in the SEBI, System of Basic Studies for Investment. In it, each agency or public service has a number of themes that must be consider in the proposal of investment, such as information requisites and social prices for projects evaluation. In this last point, specific instructions are established to introduce the Gender Perspective in this National System. Nevertheless, there are extremely few initiatives that fulfill this requirement in the Water Resources Area.

In August of 2000, the President of the Republic created the **Council of Ministers for Equality of Opportunities**, by means of a presidential instructive recognized the advances reached for the equality of opportunities of women, but also assumes that still important obstacles exist to obtain their total insertion in the development of the country. The document mentions textually: "The Government recognizes the important economic, political and social dimensions that contribution of women have for the development of the country. It is necessary that each Ministry, Service and State owned company; incorporate the Plan for Equality between women and men in its policies. In order to supervise and to give fulfillment to the Plan of Equality of Opportunities, this Council is created"

This official and permanent instance is integrated by nine of the 16 members of the Cabinet. In the Council fundamental matters have been analyzed, among them the commitment of the Budget Ministry to incorporate gender equity like one of the variables of the **Management Improvement Program for Governmental Agencies**. Until now, this Council has worked on issues and concerns related to health, family violence and housing, among other social aspects, but nothing has been done in regard with water resources.

The **Management Improvement Program for Governmental Agencies** is related to the budgetary formulation. Almost all the national and regional public institutions have the obligation to analyze those awaited tasks and results engaged with this Program, from the perspective of gender equity, identifying barriers and proposing solutions. It directly is related to the income of the governmental officials. Around the 3 percent of their salaries depend on the fulfillment of these commitments. On 28 August 2001, the Ministries of Internal Affairs, Human Settlement and the General Secretariat of the President sent an instructive to all 180 Public Services in the country to introduce a gender equity approach entitled .Gender Focus. A special document, brought out in 2002, defines the means of verification. This covers, among other things, the investigation of gender conditions, the desegregation of user/client related information, the elaboration of plans (including work plans) to enhance gender equity in the organization and work of the public service agencies and the establishment of a monitoring system on policy implementation. SERNAM, the National Service for Women has been charged with verification of implementation and with technical support.

And this has been the crucial instrument that has allowed starting gender mainstreaming in IWRM. As a first step, desegregation of information on the data bases is being done, in order to have real information and adequate statistics. Also, a workshop between all the agencies related with gender and water resources, and some NGO's and international organizations is being organized and it will be the first dialogue about this matters made open and honestly to

get a good diagnosis and action plans for the future, very close to the formulation of the National Water Plan for the year 2005, according to the Implementation Plan of Johannesburg.

About the **Ministerial Commitments for Gender Equity**, only the work done by the National Service for Women to congregate all the public agencies related with rural women has been successful due to the Rural Women Round Table created and still actively working. Here recently some aspects related to IWRM has been included and are currently developing.

### **3. - THE BRAZILIAN CASE**

Brazil accounts for 20 percent of the world's reserves of fresh water. The public perspective on gender is concerned with basic human rights themes, such as citizenship, protection against violence and injuries. Poverty alleviation is a major issue, but is not clearly linked to water resources, despite international concern. Some states, such as São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul, provide legal rules and public policies in which a gender perspective is mainstreamed. In the specific field of water resources management, international declarations such as Dublin 1992, Paris 1997, The Hague 2000, Santa Cruz de la Sierra Principles and Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 are fundamental for Brazilian Water Management Policy. They emphasize the important role of women and the principle of equity.

Brazil 's Water Resources Policies is based on the Constitutional principles which are regulated by National Policy Act ( 9433/97 which states that : water is a good on public domain , with economic value and drainage basin oriented the regional planning Policy for water management adopts the participatory approach, it means shared between public entities, users and civil society that are stakeholders of the water management and its decision making process. Procedures for implementation of National Water Resources Policy are provided by National System on Integrated Water Management (in Portuguese SINGREH).

For National Water Resources Policy water resources are under Federal and State domains, and Municipalities are responsible for the public services such as water supply and sanitation, together with land use and human settlements. Brazil is a Federation, for that reason the key issue to achieve a sound Integrated Water Resources Management is to promote the dialogue and cooperation between all stakeholders mentioned previously.

Gender perspective in IWRM it is matter of principle for Brazilian Administration as stated by Brazilian Delegation before Ministerial Conferences and fora such as III World Water Forum, March 2003 Bonn Conference on Water Resources Management, Bonn December, 2001.

One major step for gender mainstreaming in the Water Resources Management was the decision taken Minister of Environment who proposed a seat for the National Secretary of Women's Rights at National Water Council. Recently for celebrating the World Water Day, the Ministry for Environment, by National Secretary on Water Resources and National Agency for Water organized a workshop on Gender Approach on Water Resources Management. Workshop's recommendations will feed the discussion and preparation of National Water Plan. National Conference on Environment, held in 2003, proposed to mainstream gender perspective as cross cutting issue for all environmental activities and water management, too.

From the civil society view point, gender perspective in water management is matter of principles as state in its Position Paper delivered for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002

#### **4.- CONCLUSIONS**

There is no doubt that Brazil has undergone a longer and deeper journey in mainstreaming gender in the process of Integrated Water Resources Management, even more Chile doesn't have its National Water Plan, only a first phase of a National Policy of Water Resources. Even more, Chile has a Water Law that contains a neoliberal economy focus or approach based on the market economy that clearly jeopardizes the gender issues and concerns. Chile has still a big challenge in fulfill this gap between both countries, therefore many actions are being developing currently so far, governmental agencies related to water resources, together with international organizations such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, FAO and some other international organizations like the Gender and Water Alliance have began to work together. Also, it is necessary to make operative all the other four instrument detailed in the explanation about the Chilean case.

Both countries have the advantage of having specific rules or laws to mainstream and focus gender in any activity, specifically water resources in the case of Brazil. Having a frame that strongly sets the importance of gender mainstreaming, in a mandatory way, indeed means a good chance or opportunity to work and develop this gender focus in the IWRM process I order to obtain the economic, cultural, social and environmental sustainability of Water.

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