

3.5. Gender, Domestic Water Supply and Hygiene

Introduction

All people, men, women and children need water daily for drinking, for bathing, for the preparation of their food, for sanitation (see 3.4), and to ascertain clean cloths and a clean living space. To take care of the availability of sufficient water for all in the household, worldwide women have the major responsibility. Traditionally they manage domestic water sources and together with daughters fetch water, sometimes from far away. They also take care of most of the domestic work which makes them the ones who use more water in and around the house. However, men, and especially the male leaders, often control the water sources and make the major decisions related to location and type of facilities available. The differentiated gender relations are often reinforced by official efforts to improve domestic water supply. This is despite widespread evidence that water management function better when both women and men are actively involved in planning, construction, operation and maintenance. Only when women are directly involved in a meaningful way will solutions be found that are appropriate and sustainable. Involving women's skills and interests in domestic water management also has the potential of addressing gender imbalances in society, leading to more equity.

Conventional approaches in the water supply sector are generally not gender-sensitive and have undervalued women's needs and contributions to the sector. Women's knowledge about water sources and the multiple uses of water are not given significant recognition. When women have access to water, they will have more time for child care and economic activities that will improve their families' quality of life and their own health and wellbeing.

Hygiene is important for a sustainable and safe water supply; half of the contamination of water happens after fetching it. Water might be stored in dirty pots or water sources can become polluted, because people are watering livestock from the same source. However, while hygiene promotion and education typically focus on women and girls, this does not reach men who are often the ones to take major decisions in the household. All family members need to be aware of hygiene issues to make it work. As men and boys often serve as role models, they should be involved in hygiene promotion and education programmes. To be more gender sensitive, such programmes need to target men and boys through culturally appropriate channels.

Gender and the Drinking Water Supply Sector

The drinking water supply sector is the only water sector that paid some attention to women, because of the visibility of women carrying water over long distances in many countries. The effort to improve water supply has paved the way for a gender-based approach that takes account of changing social structures, and their effects on the way that women and men use and manage water resources. Successes have been achieved in incorporating a gender analysis into local drinking water supply programmes. A number of participatory toolkits have been developed for this purpose.

However, a lot still remains to be done:

- Gender has not been mainstreamed in the engineering and technical design of water supply systems nor in the management of the sector at all levels;
- Staff of line departments are seldom sensitised towards the needs of women and prefer to deal with their male counterparts in the villages and slums;
- A disproportionate part of investments goes to large, multi-village schemes that offer less opportunity for participation, in particular by women (GWA 2003).

- Women and men's different skills and knowledge regarding the local water situation need to be tapped for more efficient water management and increased sustainability;
- Outcomes of gender analysis have seldom been incorporated into project designs and operation and maintenance practices;
- An integrated approach to water management is important for women at the local level who often face fierce competition from the men who prefer to use limited supplies of water first for agriculture and for their animals; and
- Hygiene is still usually considered to be women's domain though men have an important role to play as decision-makers;
- Interests and needs of marginalised groups such as poor women and men, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, refugees in conflict situations need to be given attention.

Considering the development and provision of infrastructure, Improving access to drinking water and sanitation can make an enormous difference to the economic well being of households, as women gain time and energy to engage in economic and personal activities.

Economic Benefits Of Domestic Water Supply

From a research project on gender and economic benefits of domestic water supply carried out by the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre and the Foundation of Public Interest (FPI), it was demonstrated that improved water supply combined with micro-enterprise development and capacity building programmes for women has much potential to reduce poverty in semi-arid areas. The calculations were made in terms of the costs of reduced water collection time and the potential benefits of this reduced time.

Within households and communities, men, women and children have different tasks related to water and hygiene. Unequal power relations shape the daily practices. Within households different categories of women have different responsibilities. Because of ignorance about hygiene in some cultures, daughters-in-law, who do most of the cooking, are forbidden to wash their hands or use the toilet, because it is seen as a luxury they do not deserve.

Policy Overview

National water policies, if in existence, include perhaps the mention of women's important role and at best the division of responsibilities between women and men, but they do not have a comprehensive and consistent gender focus. Gender still does not penetrate deeply into policies and legislation (GWA, 2003).

From a social equity and diversity perspective, it can be seen that inequality remains a serious problem among various groups (socio-economic, religious, ethnic, caste), and between women and men within these groups. Yet very few policies recognise diversity and gender inequalities in combination, and do not address them in a comprehensive manner.

Water sector reforms in many countries have created many new institutions, some of which may include a gender unit. Nevertheless these do not really seem to have affected the way the institutions work. In Uganda, a Water Sector Gender Strategy was introduced in 2003 that stipulates targets for involving women at all levels of water management. While this is a laudable initiative, so far it is difficult to measure the effects of the strategy on the ground. There is need for more attention to be paid to the roles and positions of men and why they may or may not be supportive of gender equality in the sector.

Other positive examples include affirmative action policies incorporated into regulations of water ministries in for example Lesotho, Uganda and South Africa, specifying percentages of staff who should be women. The 1996 South African Constitution explicitly states that every citizen has the right to basic amounts of drinking water and sanitation, and recognises equality of men and women. In the Dominican Republic, there is a regulation of the National Water Authority, requiring that at least 40 per cent of the water committee must be women.

Key Actors in the Sector

In many countries the state has moved away from water provision and is focusing on poverty reduction policies and creating an enabling environment for other actors to provide water and sanitation. Private-sector enterprises, particularly (but not only) small-scale local service providers, have an important role to play. However, the framework in which they operate should be clearly spelt out. This is particularly so when the private sector takes over water supply systems in urban or peri-urban areas, and the interests of low-income communities require special attention. From the daily practice of GWA members messages reach us that poor women are affected most by the privatisation of water supply.

Involvement of local communities in the planning, implementation, operation and maintenance (O&M) of drinking water supply is essential for the quality and sustainability of the systems. However, within communities men tend to dominate the decision-making, even though women are the main stakeholders. NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) have key roles to play in facilitating the planning, implementation and O&M in a gender-sensitive and equitable manner. For this capacity building support is crucial.

Gender Mainstreaming in the Sector

Gender is a critical factor in ensuring efficiency and sustainability and hence overall success of water projects. Gender mainstreaming is a way to ensure that there is adequate representation of men and women in planning, operation, maintenance and management of programmes and projects.

Some of the challenges to gender mainstreaming in the sector are the following:

- There is need to have an integrated and holistic approach to rural and urban development reform, so as to empower women and enable them to influence the design and location of the services to meet their domestic and economic requirements as well as utilise their specialised expertise.
- There is also a need to involve experienced CBOs and NGOs with communities and local governments in providing water supply and supporting micro-enterprise development in the re-formulation of current policies.
- The promotion of private-sector development of natural resources should take into account women's needs, knowledge and subsistence activities for economic development.
- There is need to build capacity of sector professionals to mainstream gender, including NGOs, CBOs, and managers.
- To enable sound water management, water and sanitation services should be provided at fair and reasonable rates. Payment systems should be flexible to reflect that women and men in different economic groups have different income sources and mobility.

References

Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), 2003. *The Gender and Water Development, Gender Perspectives on Policies*. Delft, Netherlands: Gender and Water Alliance. Available at: <http://www.genderandwater.org/page/287>

Gender and Water Alliance, 2003. Tapping into sustainability: Issues and trends in gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation. A background document for the Gender and Water Session, 3rd World Water Forum, Kyoto, Japan. Available at: <http://www.genderandwater.org/page/156/offset/10>

International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), 1994. Occasional Paper series. *Working with women and men on water and sanitation: An African Field Guide*. Available from: <http://www.irc.nl/page/1858>

Maharaj, Niala, 2003. *The Global Approach to water management: Lessons learnt around the globe*. Findings of an electronic conference series convened by the Gender and Water Alliance, Delft, Netherlands. Examines emerging lessons from 82 case studies on gender mainstreaming in the water sector. Available at: <http://www.genderandwater.org/page/725>

WEDC, 2004. *The Gender Millennium Development Goal: What Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Can Do*. Briefing Note 4, London Water Engineering & Development Centre (WEDC).

Available at:

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/Publications/Briefing%20Notes/BN%20Gender.htm>

Wijk-Sijbesma, C. van, 1998. *Gender in water resources management: Roles and realities revisited*, Technical series 33-E, The Hague: International Reference Centre for Water and Sanitation.

Additional Resources

ADB, Gender Checklist for water and sanitation

This publication starts by discussing why gender is important in water supply and sanitation projects and goes on to list key questions and action points in the project cycle, and to explain gender analysis from project design to a policy dialogue.

Available at:

http://www.adb.org/Documents/Manuals/Gender_Checklists/Water/gender_checklist_water.pdf

Ahmed, S. 2002. "Mainstreaming gender equity in water management: institutions, policy and practice in Gujarat, India," in *Natural Resources Management and Gender: A Global Source Book*. Amsterdam: KIT (the Royal Tropical Institute) and Oxford: Oxfam.

Alter, R. C. 2001. *Water for People: Stories about People and Development in the Himalayas*, New Delhi: Orient Longman.

This is the story of a Himalayan community and their struggle for a better quality of life both for themselves and the environment which shelters them. Women in these mountain villages play a critical role in developing and maintaining community (piped) water supply schemes as well as addressing local health and education needs.

Colleen Lowe, Morna, 2000. *Mainstreaming gender in water and sanitation: Literature review for the South African Department of Water and Sanitation, Gender Links.*

This paper is a review of international, regional and national literature on mainstreaming gender in the water and sanitation, forms part of the study on gender mainstreaming. Commissioned by the South African Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF).

The review is divided thematically as follows:

Key gender concepts

Key lessons of gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation

Best practices of gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation

Available at: <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/water/gender/genderinwatersanitation.pdf>

Danida, 1999. *Gender and Water Supply and Sanitation: Guiding Questions Working Paper.*

This document provides 'guiding questions' for the water supply and sanitation sector, including, health and hygiene promotion, and water resource assessment and promotion. It contains questions, actions and examples to include gender dimensions into various topics, including key areas in programme planning and implementation and in monitoring and evaluation.

Available at: UM Information Office, Ministry of Foreign affairs, Asiatisk Plads 2, 1448 Copenhagen. E-mail: info@um.dk

DFID, 2002. *Gender issues in the management of water projects.*

DFID, WSP, India Case, Community Management field notes: *Sustainable community management of a multi-village water supply in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India: Small Private Initiatives (SPI) in the water and sanitation in India.*

This is a series of field notes on small private initiatives in the water and sanitation sector in India. It is designed to document a few successful urban and rural experiences focusing on the poor.

DFID, 1998. *Guidance manual for water supply and sanitation programmes.*

A manual prepared by Water and Environmental Health at London and Loughborough and published by the Water Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, UK.

Available at: Water Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, UK

Makule, Diana, 1997. *Water and Sanitation for all: Partnerships and Innovations: Gender Perspective.* Ministry of Water, Tanzania.

The paper was presented in the 23rd WEDC Conference on gender issues in water and sanitation, the case of Tanzania. It provides an overview on the situation of water and sanitation to enable the reader to comprehend the reality of what Tanzanian women are going through. The paper does not go into detail on the reason that sum up to the actual situation of water and sanitation in Tanzania.

Available from: Water Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, UK.

FINNIDA, 1993. *Looking at gender, water supply and sanitation.* Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA), Helsinki

FINNIDA, 1994. *Looking at gender, water supply and sanitation.* Finnish International Development Agency (FINNIDA), Helsinki

IRC, International Water and Sanitation Centre, *Abstracts on women, water and sanitation.*

Annual annotated listing of new publications and resources (journal, articles, books, research publications and reports) that goes beyond sanitation issues and also gender and water. From 1998 it has become a web-based resource.

Available at: <http://www.irc.nl/page/6130/offset/20>.

InterAgency Taskforce on Gender and Water, The UN Commission on Sustainable Development, 13th Session. *A gender perspective on water resources and sanitation: Background Paper 2, 2005.*

Paper covers issues such as equitable access to resources, participation, resources mobilisation, pricing and privatisation, water resources and conflict. It also includes recommendations for actions by governments, communities and civil society as well as donors and international organisations.

Available at: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd13/documents/bgground_2.pdf

Khosla, Prabha, Christine Van Wijk, Joep Verhagen, and Viru Jmes, 2004. *Gender and Water*, Technical Overview Paper, IRC. Available at: <http://ww.irc.nl/page/15499>

Rathgeber, Eva M, n.d. *Women, men, and water resource management in Africa*, IDRC.

This paper examines some of the concerns that have motivated African governments and donors to become involved with water projects. Although there is a general recognition of the needs of “communities” for reliable water systems, it is argued that the different attitudes, perspectives, and the needs of women and men with respect to water access and use have been given little focussed attention by environmental planners and water resource managers in Africa. More specifically, it is suggested that throughout the 1970s and 1980s, although concerted efforts were being made to increasing water accessibility, little effort was made to integrate the economic roles of women into water resource planning.

Available at: http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-31108-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Regmi, S.C and B Fawcett, 1999. “Integrating gender needs into drinking water projects in Nepal,” in C. Sweetman (ed.) *Women, Land and Agriculture*, Oxford: Oxfam.

Regmi, S.C and B. Fawcett, 2001. “Men’s roles, gender relations, and sustainability in water supplies: Some lessons from Nepal”, in C. Sweetman (ed.) *Men’s involvement in gender and development policy and practice: Beyond Rhetoric*. Oxford: Oxfam working papers

Regmi, S.C. and B. Fawcett, 2001. *Gender implications of the move from supply-driven to demand-driven approaches in the drinking water sector: A developing country perspective*.

The paper was presented at the first South Asia Forum on Water, Kathmandu, November 2001. The article argues that lack of gender in the international water policies can marginalise poor rural women in the developing countries from the benefits of improved water services. Water supply improvements implemented under such policies neither empower women, a prerequisite for development, nor do they achieve sustainable practical benefits for women and men.

Singh, N, G. Jacks and P. Bhattacharya, 2005. “Women and community water supply programmes: An analysis from a socio-cultural perspective,” *Natural Resources Forum*, Vol. 29, pp. 213-23.

Singh, N, P. Bhattacharya, G. Jacks and J. E. Gustafsson, 2004. “Women and modern domestic water supply systems: Need for a holistic perspective,” *Water Resources Management*, Vol. 18, pp. 237-248.

UNICEF, 1998. *A Manual on Mainstreaming Gender in Water, Environment and Sanitation (WES) Programming*. Water, Environment and Sanitation Technical Guidelines Series, No 4.

The manual represents gender policies & strategy frameworks based on UNICEF principles, details current issues in WES Programmes illustrates how gender issues relate to the sector using case studies, best practices and lessons learnt.

Available at: wesinfo@unicef.org

UN DESA, DAW, 2005. *Women 2000 and beyond: Women and Water. Gender perspective, Natural resources, Rights, Access, Sanitation, Health, Economics*. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/Feb05.pdf>

WEDC, 2004. *The Environmental Sustainability Millennium Development Goal, What Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Can Do: Briefing Note 6*, Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, U.K. Available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/Publications/Briefing%20Notes/BN%20Environmental%20Sustainability.htm>

WEDC, 2004. *The HIV/AIDS Millennium Development Goal, What water, sanitation and hygiene can do: Briefing note 5*, Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, U.K. Available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/Publications/Briefing%20Notes/BN%20HIV%20AIDS.htm>

WEDC, 2004. *The Child Health Millennium Development Goal, What water, sanitation and hygiene can do: Briefing note 3*, Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC), Loughborough University, U.K. Available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/well/resources/Publications/Briefing%20Notes/BN%20Child%20Health1.htm>

World Bank/Water and Sanitation Program Toolkit for Gender in WatSan Projects

This webpage provides some checklists of important gender issues to consider when developing projects and sectoral programs. It also has indicators and checklists to help address key gender issues throughout a project cycle. Additional resources including briefing notes on Gender and Development, Toolkits, GenderStats, and training material are provided as weblinks and downloadable (pdf) files.

Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/toolkit.pdf>

White paper on Water Policy, South Africa, 1997.

Paper represents the policy of the South African Government. It focuses on important part of the review and reform of the water law in South Africa.

Available at: http://www.policy.org.za/html/govdocs/white_paper.html#contents

World Bank, 1999. *Rural Water Supply and Sanitation in India*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers.

French language resources

pS-Eau, 2003. *L'intégration du genre dans la gestion de quatre infrastructures Hydrauliques du Programme d'Appui Institutionnel au secteur Eau (PAI-Eau) dans la région de Sikasso, au Mali*. Helvetas Mali et le pS-Eau – Session «Gender in court», 3ème Forum mondial de l'eau, Kyoto, mars 2003. Disponible en: <http://www.pseau.org/outils/biblio/>

pS-Eau, 2003. *Projet hydraulique villageoise au Togo*. Helvetas Mali et le pS-Eau – Session «Gender in court», 3ème Forum mondial de l'eau, Kyoto, Mars 2003. Disponible en: http://www.pseau.org/outils/biblio/ouvrages/genre_cas3_eau_togo.doc

pS-Eau, 2003. *Projet Eau et Assainissement en milieu Rural (PADEAR) au Bénin*. Helvetas Mali et le pS-Eau – Session «Gender in court», 3ème Forum mondial de l'eau, Kyoto, Mars 2003,

Le Programme d'Appui au Développement du Secteur de l'Eau et de l'Assainissement en Milieu Rural PADEAR est un programme basé sur un modèle participatif. Dans le cadre de ce programme, l'implication

des femmes à toutes les étapes de décision (depuis l'identification des besoins, la conception du projet jusqu'à la réalisation et à l'organisation de la gestion du projet) est une des stratégies privilégiées

Disponible en: <http://www.pseau.org/outils/biblio/>

Sidibe, M. and S. Dembele, 1990. *Collaboration au niveau du pays dans le secteur de l'eau et de l'assainissement : une étude de cas République du Mali-Bamako DNHE*, CREPA, Ouagadougou.

Spanish language resources

Espejo, Norah and Dr. Betty Soto, sin dato. *Género en el sector agua y saneamiento de la Región Andina: Hallazgos, Recomendaciones y Propuesta Estratégica*, Programa de Agua y Saneamiento Región Andina (PAS-AND), World Bank Office, Lima

Diagnosis of Gender in the Water Supply and Sanitation Area in Bolivia and Perú, to allow institutions and other organisations of the sector to mainstream gender effectively in WSS projects in the Region.

Disponible en:

<http://www.aprchile.cl/pdfs/Genero%20en%20el%20sector%20saneamiento%20andino.pdf>

Guzmán Esaine, Jessica Niño de, y Mercedes Zevallos Castañeda, sin dato, *Construyendo la Equidad: Metodología e Instrumentos para su inclusión en Proyectos de Agua y Saneamiento*. Programa de Agua y Saneamiento, América Latina y el Caribe, World Bank Office, Lima. Disponible en: http://www.aprchile.cl/pdfs/and_genero.pdf

Case studies

The complete case studies are found in the annex of this resource guide

- Egypt: Empowering Women's Participation in Community and Household Decision-making in Water and Sanitation
- Nicaragua: Gender Equality as a Condition for Access to Water and Sanitation
- Nigeria: Using Gender Mainstreaming Processes to Help Protect Drinking Water Resources of the Obudu Plateau Communities in Northern Cross River State
- Pakistan: Initiative of One, Relief for All - Women's Leadership in the Banda Golra Water Supply Scheme
- Uganda: Mainstreaming gender into policy: Examining Uganda's Gender Water Strategy
- Zimbabwe: Gender Mainstreaming in Water Supply and Sanitation in Manzvire Village, Chipinge
- Zimbabwe: The Initiative On Gender Mainstreaming in Water and Sanitation Projects Through the Well Sinking Programme