

Afrika:
Water for African Cities:
A Partnership between United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA)

Background

UN-HABITAT, the United Nations Agency mandated to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements, has since 1999 been assisting cities in African countries, through the Water for African Cities (WAC) Programme, to improve the management of water and sanitation.

The goal of the WAC is to contribute to the achievement of the water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The highest priorities of the Programme are to reduce the urban water crisis through efficient and effective water demand management, build capacity to reduce the environmental impact of urbanization on freshwater resources and boost awareness and information exchange on water management and conservation.

The Gender and Water Alliance was established in June 2000 to promote gender mainstreaming as a fundamental part of integrated water resources management. The Alliance works with policy makers and staff in water sector organizations and community groups, developing their skills in gender analysis, their understanding of and commitment to gender equality, and the partnership linkages between them from “bottom” to “top.” This requires capacity building – sharing information, training in gender mainstreaming and advocacy, dissemination of gender analytical tools and methodologies, and networking – as well as targeted initiatives to promote gender mainstreaming in specific contexts.

A. Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Initiative

Fully aware of the burden placed on women and children in fetching water, and the adverse consequences of inadequate supplies in the participating countries, UN-HABITAT, in partnership with the GWA started a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Initiative (GMSI) in January 2005.

The objective of the GMSI is to facilitate the gender mainstreaming of water and sanitation utilities through the development of gender sensitive norms and standards to enable the poorest urban families to benefit from improved access to safe water and dignified sanitation facilities. The GMSI is comprised of eight underlying principles:

- A participatory research approach, based on the understanding that participation is the key to learning, awareness raising, and garnering political commitment.
- Local expertise and resources, based on the understanding that local experts have a much deeper understanding of local realities and the context surrounding programme initiatives than external experts, and that they will remain in the geographic location. Thus, they represent a valuable human resource.
- Location specific context, knowledge, and situations as the basis of analysis to inform and influence national policy and sector wide reforms, in order to ensure they are pro-poor and gender-sensitive.

- Strengthening of existing networks to support local capacity building through knowledge expansion and forging partnerships that foster multi-sectoral approaches.
- Innovative, creative, and useful learning and communication material to support awareness raising and capacity building efforts.
- Capacity building integrated into the strategy to ensure sustainable long term results.
- Exchange of information, methodological approaches, and situational analysis integrated in the design and implementation of a sustainable Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and city-level Action Plans.
- Follow-up support to the implementation of concrete actions. The strategy will not only produce plans which can be presented as evidence of gender mainstreaming, but will also foster concrete action at local levels to ensure the achievement of the objectives of gender mainstreaming.

B. Achievements from the partnership UN-HABITAT with GWA

In 2005, UN-HABITAT commissioned the GWA to conduct a Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA) in 17 cities in 14 countries, namely: Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Accra, Ghana; Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, and Harar, Ethiopia; Bamako, Mali; Dakar, Senegal; Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania; Douala and Yaoundé, Cameroon; Jos, Nigeria; Kampala, Uganda; Kigali, Rwanda; Lusaka, Zambia; Nairobi, Kenya; and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

The objective of the RGA was to use a pro-poor and gender lens to identify, gather and analyze baseline data relevant to the six priority themes of the second phase of Water for African Cities, as indicated in the section below. These priorities were identified by participants from the 17 African cities.

1. Pro-Poor Water Governance and Follow-up Investments

Recommendations focus on how local utilities can deliver water and sanitation services with affordable charges for the poor, especially women.

2. Sanitation for the Poor

Financial mechanisms are needed to ensure that sanitation services are accessible to all in the community, particularly the poor, and specifically poor women and men. Recommendations are aimed at national and regional governments. Specific attention is paid to the creation of opportunities for income generation activities for both women and men in areas such as construction of latrines and recycling and re-use of solid waste, the products of which are used as revolving funds for innovative lending, savings and training, particularly for female headed households.

3. Urban Catchments Management

Residents in peri-urban areas must have access to affordable, convenient, and safe water sources. Recommendations relate to implementation of minimum improvements to the traditional water sources with adequate and regular health education messages to improve effective and hygienic use of water.

Agencies and institutions are urged to incorporate gender equity considerations throughout the programme design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Gender analysis skills

training can be used to assist urban planners to mainstream gender in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and help to incorporate poor women and men's needs in urban planning programmes.

4. Water Demand Management

Water demand management is needed to conserve water and improve efficiency, and strategies and plans need to reflect a gender-sensitive and pro-poor perspectives. Gender concerns should be integrated into the institutional and legal framework of the WDM strategies.

5. Water Education in Schools and Communities

A deliberate effort will have to be made to change traditional views of gender roles in textbook writing and the role of curriculum and teachers in gender equality and equity. Recommendations for training and educational material encourage recognition of the needs of both genders.

6. Advocacy, Awareness-raising, and Information Exchange

Recommendations aimed at local governments focus on developing gender-based information, education, and communication materials and tools. The participation and representation of women and men from informal settlements and slums are encouraged in public meetings.

Information exchange and dissemination can use different forms of media such as drama, games and demonstrations in the promotion of water and sanitation and enhancement of gender mainstreaming.

Conclusion

The action plans developed by each city are currently at different stages of implementation, but the outcomes of the process of ownership and learning by doing is remarkable. While the training needs gap will feed into the sub-programme on Training and Capacity Building, UN-HABITAT and the GWA are in the meantime preparing terms of reference for a high level policy meeting of stakeholders from the 17 African cities to reflect on the progress made on the implementation of the various action plans at city level with a view to identify gaps and design a strategy for gender-sensitive policy.

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