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## Conference report

### 2.1 Water and gender

**Rapporteur: Christine van Wijk. Participants: 500**

#### Presentations

Where are genders and gender equality in integrated water resources management? This was the recurrent theme of the gender day. Setting the scene, a beautiful stage performance from India showed that in the mother's womb the environment is safe and the twin girl and boy are equal. Thereafter the challenges begin ...

In her Keynote Address the Vice President of Uganda noted the progress made in Beijing with the seven points of the Platform for Action. She criticised the lack of progress in addressing the female character of poverty (women are 50% of the population but 75% of the poor), the equitable access to education and the gender equality in legal issues and cited progress in the latter two in Uganda: by law one-third of local council members are female; enrolment of girls in education has doubled. But: portraying women as victims to be saved by men is getting the issue wrong and will not bring change—enhancing equity between women and men is a matter of better development and human justice.

Her male colleague the Minister from Luxembourg and the representative from UNIFEM in South Asia noted that initially gender issues had lagged behind in the Water Vision. Five organisations in water and gender—IRC, IIAV, IWMI, Both Ends and UNIFEM joined hands. Their aim: *'to achieve equal opportunities for women and men in dialogue and decision-making as an integral dimension of all design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies and programmes for integrated water resources management'*. The strategy: gender in all the remaining vision meetings, a full gender day, gender ambassadors in all other sessions, gender represented in the Minister's Conference and encouraging that the momentum and expertise gathered at the Forum does not stop with the Water Vision, but is mainstreamed into the follow-up work.

#### **Operationalisation of gender in local IWRM**

In recent years good practices in operationalising gender perspectives in drinking water supply and sanitation, irrigation and the management of catchment and flow areas have developed. The Traditional Irrigation Project in Tanzania is one such project. Female and male staff and women from one of the mixed water users associations presented it. In Tanzania 70% of the labour in agriculture is done by women. Locally established irrigation systems guarantee food production

even in drought. Overpopulation and environmental degradation threaten them and thereby food production and livelihoods. The project addressed irrigation, soil and water conservation and strengthened local organisation and in their gender approach aimed at more equitable roles for women and men. The results: 26,000 farmers, 45% female and 55% male participated in improving their irrigation and land and water management. Together they improved almost 8000 hectares of irrigated land and 4600 hectares for land conservation. And 166 water user groups with female and male members strengthened their organisational and technical skills. The benefits of the gender approach: women got access to water for irrigation as well as domestic use which they previously did *not* have. In the past, women faced a taboo on going to the water intake ‘as the intake would dry up’ and despite their production could not be members of water user groups. Now they are members in their own right, share in group decision-making and both women and men are chairpersons of WUGs and Water Intake Committees. They got self-esteem and increased their food security and income and decide on spending. Even their workload has decreased despite the increased irrigation: the changed gender relationships now allow men to do work that formerly only women could do. Both can now milk and feed cattle and carry fodder, allowing for more equitable division of farm tasks. Work of the project is now being taken over by their own higher level organisation, TIPDO.

Four afternoon sessions took place. The central issue in the session ‘From Bucket to Basin’ was: how can the water needs of those who carry the buckets be met in basin-level water management? Interesting and stimulating examples from both South Africa and India at the policy level and at the grassroots level were presented.

The ‘Sanitation Taboo’ is a major factor in the serious contamination of water resources. It also has a major gender angle, in that it affects particularly girls and women. School sanitation and hygiene provides the opportunity to tackle both. The task is enormous but not impossible when school systems, communities, governments, media and media providers, civil society and others act in partnership. Time for action is *now*.

‘Vision and Action for Gender Equity in the 21st Century’ focused on institutionalising gender after the Forum. Bill Cosgrove presented the Vision history and its process from ‘women as one of the issues’ to recognising that in almost all the water issues male-female differences are of relevance. A gender and poverty angle is thus no separate issue, but is crosscutting. Jan Teun Visscher presented a concept proposal for operationalising gender in integrated water resources management through a professional alliance of those working on gender and water for people, food and nature.

According to the Netherlands Council of Women there is no need to dwell on visions already well represented in the Dublin Principles and Chapter 18 of Agenda 21. The priority is to translate them into collaborative action. Inputs from women water board members, government representatives, water professionals and other water related organisations have resulted in 15 recommendations. These center on (1) gender equality and (2) creating the right environment for participatory approaches and women’s representation in water management bodies and decision-making processes. Most importantly: the Vision Unit and WWC should study and accommodate these as seriously as the group has studied theirs.

Methodologies and tools were the theme of the fourth parallel session. A gender quiz (available in English, Spanish and Portuguese) made clear what gender is and why projects benefit from gender sensitiveness. The team, from Brazil, Kenya and Zimbabwe (women) and Colombia and

USA (men) then presented the Methodology for Participatory Assessment. This links sustainability of drinking water and sanitation services with demand, gender and poverty approaches. It combines participatory analysis at the community level with statistical analysis at the (inter) programme level and has so far been used in 15 countries. Findings show that a combination of sustained and effective services, i.e. used and serving also the poor comes only from a gender angle in demand, participation and empowerment. Participants then practised three tools hands-on.

## **Discussion**

The TIP case discussion focused on resulting gender relations. Did the changes lead to tensions and conflict and how was resistance to cultural change overcome? Three strategies have been necessary: (1) discuss gender with the men (2) mobilise local and national government to adjust bylaws and laws and get extension for women as well as men and (3) giving women access to improved technology which increased their income which made changes in gender roles acceptable to men.

A mixed panel from the Global Water Partnership, ITN Philippines, IIDS/Sussex University, UNIFEM and Water Aid and led by Ismael Serageldin and participants welcomes the alliance as a formal gender (and not: women) lobby. They advised to add the community dimension through organisations and individuals representing community gender issues. Addressing gender further means demystifying gender, addressing value systems and cutting out the stereotyping of women as victims and beneficiaries only. Using broader tools that are gender sensitive is to be preferred over separate gender tools. Institutional change for operationalising gender in the overall water sector is another crucial aspect to be addressed in a follow-up programme, including the transformation of senior management attitudes and arriving at a better gender balance among professionals in water management. Changing the sector begins with access of girls to basic education, said HRH Prince Willem Alexander. Fragmented operations in the field should be addressed. Also in other groups it was stressed that the sector does not yet cater for the reality that domestic water supply is also used for small scale production and irrigation water for domestic use.

In sanitation the institutional problem is that no ministry or department is eager to take the subject field up, 'every one passes the bucket to someone else'. Another institutional problem is associated with the shift of ESAs from supporting projects to supporting institutional development and adopting the demand-based approach. Because there is no institutional demand for sanitation it does not get onto the agenda of government and institutions. Sanitation is further much broader than the disposal of human wastes. It has to be addressed in its broader societal context such as women who take care of the sanitation requirements of family members with HIV/AIDS and care for children.

Links between pricing and quality of service (meeting male and female demands) and the indicators for good governance in the communities and in institutions: how monitor whether institutions actually practice methods that lead to gender and poverty specific demand responsiveness and participation?

## Conclusion and recommendations

Form an alliance of organisations and persons who deal with gender and water and formulate jointly a follow-up programme incorporating the comments.

1. The global lack of sanitation and its impacts on women on girls can no longer be tolerated. Get sanitation on the agenda of governments and institutions and responding to the needs women and men have. The hands-on practice with forum participants learned that females and males experience different benefits of water and sanitation and support improvements for different reasons.
2. Recognise grassroots reality on water use and management. Poor families need water not only for domestic uses but also for productive uses. At the household level water use is integrated. Women are farmers and producers, but their irrigation water needs are often ignored. Improved access by women to water technology, their organisation in water users associations, women taking up leadership positions, this all requires more confidence building, organisation, learning of new skills. This is a process that takes time.
3. Invest in organisation and capacity building. Interesting examples from SEWA and ADB urban water supply projects show that women's improved access to water and technology, empowerment in organisation, their election as leaders is well feasible but this requires investment. Capacity needs to be built and officials and consultants, staff, including engineers, need to have the tools and training and retraining in order to implement gender-sensitive approaches to integrated water management. The timing needs to follow the process of organisation and empowerment rather than what policy makers and donors impose.
4. Have pro-poor and gender-inclusive policy and legal frameworks. The national Water Act the South African is a best practice of policy and law that aims to redress races and gender inequities from the past. It recognises that scarce water needs to be redistributed if poor people need to improve their access to water.
5. Have a water reserve for priority allocation of to meet basic water needs of poor people. This encompasses water for domestic use but also for productive activities at household level. This is to be extended to agriculture and other economic activity that helps meeting income needs of the poor give legal recognition to local-level water users associations vest water rights and membership of water users associations etc. in the users of land and water (often women farmers) and not in the land owners (mostly men who are not necessarily farming).
6. Implement and monitor implementation of progressive policy and law and measure, understand and evaluate the gender impacts.
7. Create the organisational structures that bridge the gap between bucket and basin. For example, in forming Catchment Management Agencies, the South African government tries to organise the unorganised (who are the poor and often female farmers) in Smallholder Fora that influence decision-making. The challenge remains to facilitate the interface between the bucket and basin level.

## **Actions**

The session resulted in the following planned action:

1. The formation of a gender alliance started at the end of the session.
2. A follow-up workshop on gender and water for people, food and nature, in which it will be jointly formulated how 'action will be put into action'. The Vision Unit will host the workshop.
3. Resources to enable regional knowledge centres to expand training and backstopping in methods and tools for gender and poverty sensitive service assessments.

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