

Untapped

CONNECTIONS

KEY LINKS

GOVERNMENT
COMMITMENTS

ACTIONS AND
TOOLS FOR
IMPLEMENTATION



Gender, Water and Poverty



WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Untapped CONNECTIONS

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Gender, Water and Poverty: Key Issues, Government Commitments And Actions for Sustainable Development

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Water

is essential to human beings and all forms of life. But pollution and lack of access to clean water is proliferating the cycle of poverty, water-borne diseases, and gender inequities.

At the United Nations conferences of the 1990s—beginning with the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil all the way through to the 2000 Millennium Development Summit in New York, U.S.A. and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa—it became widely accepted that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to poverty eradication. But despite the recognition that advancing women's human rights is key to breaking the cycle of poverty, implementation of this overarching policy agenda has been elusive.

This paper presents an overview of the relationship between gender, poverty and water. The first section explores how, in every corner of the globe, women play a central role in managing water supply and distribution. It also examines how access to water and sanitation has implications for women's health and economic activities. Case studies highlight water projects and initiatives that have succeeded in elevating women's status.

Section two presents strategies for translating government commitments on gender, poverty eradication and water and sanitation into action by advocating for a gender perspective in all water and sanitation related policies. As a fundamental component of sustainable development, water is a strong entry point for global advocacy on connected issues such as human rights, economic justice, poverty, reproductive rights, land, health, HIV/AIDS, and energy. Also in this section, women experts put forth their own guidelines for integrating gender in water use and management for poverty eradication.

Section three, in the form of an insert, is a compilation of existing government commitments on gender, poverty and water—including the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002 Johannesburg, South Africa); the UN Millennium Summit (2000, New York, U.S.); the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995, Beijing, China); the International Conference on Population and Development, (1994, Cairo, Egypt); and global water conferences. Advocates can use this matrix as a tool for monitoring government action. At the end of the paper is a list of websites, contacts and other resources that can be used to get involved.

“A safe water supply and adequate sanitation to protect health are among the basic human rights. Ensuring their availability would contribute immeasurably to health and productivity for development.”

—DR. GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND,
DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Gender Differences In Water Use and Management

The government commitments of the past decade provide a foundation for the eradication of poverty, water-borne diseases and gender inequities. However, successful implementation relies on a better understanding of the different roles and responsibilities women and men have in water access and use; health, sanitation and hygiene; environmental health and ecosystem stability; and public versus private services.

Water Access and Water Uses

In most cultures, women and men have different roles and responsibilities in the use and management of water. Women and girls are responsible for collecting water for cooking, cleaning, health and hygiene, and if they have access to land, growing food. In rural areas, women walk long distances to fetch water, often spending 4 to 5 hours per day carrying heavy containers and suffering acute physical problems. In arid and drought-prone areas the challenge is

compounded. In urban areas, women and girls can spend hours waiting in line to collect intermittent water supplies at standpipes. The inordinate burden of fetching water inhibits women's and girl's involvement in other activities such as education, income generation, cultural and political involvement, and rest and recreation.

Conversely, men in rural areas almost never fetch water, and if they own or have access to land their involvement with water is

Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of women and men and the relationship between them. Gender, therefore, does not simply refer to women or men, but to the way behaviors and identities are determined through the process of socialization. These roles and expectations are culturally specific and they can and do change.

Gender Mainstreaming is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality [by transforming the mainstream].

Source: UN Economic and Social Council, 1997

CASE STUDIES

India

Women's Participation in Watershed Management

In 1995, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union of 215,000 poor self-employed women, launched a ten-year water campaign to revive water sources in drought-prone districts of Gujarat, India. Women comprised seven out of eleven members of watershed committees set up at village meetings, and the chairperson was also a woman. As part of the program, the committees performed soil and moisture conservation work, creating a green belt and grass cover for better retention of water. They also created an irrigation facility to guarantee drinking water. These projects decreased soil salinity, resulting in more fertile land and a more sustainable source of income for women, while generating employment opportunities for about 240 women.

Adapted from SEWA (1995). *Women, Water and Work—SEWA's Membership Campaign*. Discussion Paper Presented at the NGO Forum on Women Beijing 1995 in the theme session, Rural Women in the 21st Century, Empowered through Employment and Organisation, held by International Labour Organisation. Ahmedabad, India.

Bangladesh

Gender, Poverty Alleviation and Irrigation

In Bangladesh, the Grameen Bank and its sister organization, the Grameen Krishi Foundation (GKF), found that providing women with access to irrigation water was ineffective if they did not also have access to land, credit, seeds and fertilizer. By providing these resources to women, as well as negotiating lease agreements with landowners, women's income from irrigation activities increased by as much as 10 times what they would have earned in wage labor or in traditional female activities. The program linked agricultural productivity and poverty alleviation to women's empowerment, increasing women's self-confidence and reducing their dependence on male intermediaries.

Adapted from Jordans, E. and Zwartveen, M. (1997). *A Well of One's Own: Gender Analysis of an Irrigation Program in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh, International Irrigation Management Institute and Grameen Krishi Foundations, International Water Management Institute.



Water policies and water management systems should be gender-sensitive. They should reflect the division of labor—paid and unpaid—between men and women in all settings related to water.

— THE 2001 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON FRESHWATER, BONN, GERMANY

related to agriculture or livestock. Furthermore, because men's work is considered a part of the productive economy of paid labor, it is generally seen as more worthy of infrastructure investments. As a result, there may be infrastructure for irrigation, but not for safe drinking water within cartage distance or for other activities considered part of the care economy. This limits women's engagement in a range of economic activities that depend on access to safe water, like the preparation of food and other products for local markets.

The absence of women in decision-making positions results in the creation of policies that fail to address women's needs and concerns. Women's equal participation at all levels of decision-making is critical to achieving a more equitable provision of water and sanitation services.

Health, Sanitation and Hygiene

The World Health Organization estimates that 80 percent of all sickness in the world is attributable to unsafe

water and sanitation. Water-borne diseases kill 3.4 million people, mostly children, annually. Millions more are sickened with diarrhea, malaria, schistosomiasis, arsenic poisoning, trachoma, and hepatitis—diseases that are preventable by access to clean water and health care information. Women bear the main burden of caring for those who are ill. This not only limits their income generating activities and education, but medical costs associated with family illness increase household debt and deepens poverty.

Water and sanitation facilities are used by both women and men, but maintenance of family health is mostly viewed as a female responsibility. As a result, women may determine the appropriate domestic use of water, but are rarely involved in decision-making on sanitation and hygiene issues. For example, the availability and placement of toilets has a huge impact on women but in many communities women must walk a long distance to use facilities,

often risking their personal safety—there is an increased incidence of sexual and physical assault when toilets are in a remote location. In rural areas where toilets may be unavailable, deforestation and loss of vegetation have forced women and girls to rise earlier and walk further in search of privacy. Toilets are also unavailable for vast numbers of poor women who work in urban centers. About 1 in 10 school-age African girls do not attend school during menstruation or drop out at puberty because of the absence of clean and private sanitation facilities in schools.

There is also a need for gender-sensitive education on proper sanitation and hygiene practices and this must be made available to men as well as women. With limited investment, education could have a tremendous impact on some common water-borne diseases, such as malaria and cholera. Currently, most health and hygiene education programs are aimed at women, as caregivers and managers of the household.

Environmental Health and Ecosystem Stability

Extensive degradation of ecosystems, polluted water, contamination of groundwater and aquifers, mega-dams, salinization, over-consumption of water in rich countries and by the rich in poor countries, as well as the impact of extreme poverty, have all contributed to an environmental catastrophe in the world's water supply.

In their roles as caregivers and household and natural resource managers, women are most affected by the current global water crisis. Women use vegetation and forests—for medicinal plants, food and fuel, as well as for income generation—but these ecosystems rely on a healthy water supply. As the environment deteriorates, women's livelihoods become increasingly vulnerable.

Population growth is accompanied

The best approach to protecting the world's ecosystems is ensuring that women are involved in integrated land and water use planning.

—THE MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF THE
2ND WORLD WATER FORUM 2000

by a corresponding increase in the rate at which resources are used, including water. Achieving sustainable development will require comprehensive solutions to the interrelated challenges of rapid population growth, global environmental degradation and poverty. Ensuring women's reproductive health and rights is integral to this effort. This includes women's control over the number and spacing of children, maternal nutrition, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

Public versus Private Services

Water is a common good and human right, and should not be commodified for profit; yet increasingly water and sanitation services are

being privatized by multinational corporations. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have aggressively pursued this approach, arguing that water management by large corporations will be more efficient and save governments money. In at least eight African countries, opening the water sector to privatization was a condition for receiving an IMF loan. Thus, countries that are already heavily indebted and have cut spending on social services have been forced to privatize water systems in order to borrow money.

Poor women, as managers of household and community water and related responsibilities, have been first to signal problems with water

privatization, including: astronomical price hikes, in some cases consuming a large portion of monthly income; water cut-offs due to unpaid bills; lack of accountability mechanisms for users; deterioration of water quality; and hygiene issues. In some instances, poor and working women have been forced to decide between paying for water and feeding their children. Protests against the sale of public water services to multinational corporations have been mounted across the globe, from Bolivia to Ukraine, and even in the United States. The city of Atlanta, Georgia recently returned its water system to public control after four years of privatization, citing poor service and price increases.



CASE STUDIES

Honduras

Accessing Reliable and Affordable Water

United by their need for reliable and affordable water, and by the burden of high water prices from private vendors and license holders, women in low income urban neighborhoods in Honduras have taken on and managed their own licensed water vending points. The results are lower and fixed water prices, part-time employment to poor single women with children, and use of the group's surplus for neighborhood projects. Women in the area have also used their own local water supply for income generation through beer brewing, teashops and a launderette.

Adapted from Espejo, N., *Gender and the Management of Drinking Water Supply in Low Income Urban Communities in Latin America*, IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, 1993.

Ukraine

Women Organize for Safe and Accessible Water Supply

Luzanivka, Ukraine was a center for cleaning railway oil tanks and the city's inadequate sewage system meant constant overflows of sewage into peoples' homes and onto the streets. When women approached the local authority they were told that there were no funds to address the problem. That's when MAMA-86, an environmental organization formed by women following the 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, stepped in. Women from the local chapter met with residents, launched a political campaign and filed a legal suit against the local authority. As a result, the government allocated resources to finish construction of a sewage pump, financed environmental works in the district, and closed the hazardous oil-tank cleaning facility.

Adapted from: Khosla, Prabha, *MAMA-86 and the Drinking Water Campaign in the Ukraine*, prepared for the Gender and Water Alliance, 2002.

Tanzania

Gender and Sanitation

In eastern Tanzania, urinary schistosomiasis, a water-related disease, was most common among boys, and women and girls between 10-40 years of age. The incidence among boys was related to the boy's swimming habits. Among women and girls, the disease was associated with the local practice of washing clothes while standing in schistosomiasis-infested water. This finding had implications both for the hygiene education program and for the wells project, which had banned washing clothes at the hand pumps and so forced women to continue their use of open water.

Adapted from: Marie Fry quoted in Ian Smout and Sarah Parry-Jones. *Integrated Development for Water Supply and Sanitation. Developing a practical guide to mainstreaming gender*, WEDC, 1999.

Advocating for the Connections

The on-going follow-up processes of two United Nations conferences—the 2000 Millennium Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)—are entry points for women’s advocacy in the global arena.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of numerical and time-bound targets adopted by 189 governments at the Millennium Summit, is an integrated approach to sustainable development. There are eight Millennium Development Goals, which are a composite of the development commitments from the UN conferences and summits of the 1990s. (See box). They also represent the most comprehensive approach to poverty eradication in history. However, these goals limit gender equity to primary and secondary education (Goal 3).

The WSSD Plan of Action offers renewed commitments to poverty eradication, including specific references to women in the central themes—water and sanitation, energy, agriculture, health, biodiversity and ecosystems.

Most governments and many civil society groups have invested in the implementation and impact of these

two international agreements. In addition, the holistic approach of both agreements means that progress in one area can influence progress in another, thus strengthening linkages on the issues, including the connections between gender equity, poverty eradication and water resources management.

Gender Equality: The Guiding Principle

Women’s empowerment must be promoted as integral to broader issues of health, education, economics, politics, legal systems and decision-making bodies in order for there to be real transformation.

Commitments to gender from past UN conferences must be reintegrated in the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, Goal 7 includes the target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015. Integrating a gender approach into the implementation of this goal would direct water and sanitation sector institutions to develop gender policies that improve water distribution based on the different water uses by women and men.

In WSSD commitments to globalization, energy, capacity-building and science and technology—where the

plan fails to mention the role of women—action should be taken to ensure that implementation includes gender. Notable commitments to sanitation, women’s land rights in Africa, and women’s health rights should be foremost on government agendas for follow-up.

The Tools

Advocates must push governments to use gender sensitive tools to ensure MDG targets and WSSD goals are met. Gender disaggregated data and gender-responsive budget initiatives are two such tools.

Gender disaggregated data is necessary for improving women’s access to information and management processes such as watershed management. Gender budgeting is a critical tool for ensuring that government policies and spending promote equity and human rights.

Rather than advocating for increased budgets for women, gender budget initiatives allow government departments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to assess the differential impact of specific policies on women and men.

In their own interest, women advocates must also promote the need for mechanisms to monitor and regulate voluntary partnerships between multinational corporations, governments and civil society. These partnerships have been promoted as a possible government tactic for achieving the goals of the Millennium Summit and the WSSD. But without regulations and a system for monitoring such partnerships pose a serious danger in the form of power imbalances that lead to greater harm than benefit. This has often been true in the case of partnerships on water privatization.

Implementing water-supply and sanitation programmes is a national responsibility that requires women’s participation at every level of planning.

—AGENDA 21 OF THE 1992 UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

Beyond the UN

Although it remains the dominant area for furthering peace, human rights, sustainable development and social development, women's advocacy must reach beyond the United Nations. Increasingly the international financial and trade institutions—the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—are determining global water policy.

As governments relinquish control of domestic water systems under pressure from these international institutions and regional trade agreements, transnational corporations are gaining unprecedented access to national and local water supplies. As a result, short-term private sector profits are taking precedence over actual human needs, and women's central role in water resources management continues to be ignored. Therefore, women must take their advocacy to these institutions. Pushing for gender equality and greater coherence in these institutions is critical to achieving desired policy outcomes.

The UN Millennium Development Goals

- 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger**
- 2. Achieve universal primary education**
- 3. Promote gender equality and empower women**
- 4. Reduce child mortality**
- 5. Improve maternal health**
- 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases**
- 7. Ensure environmental sustainability**
- 8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development**

For a complete listing of MDG targets and indicators visit www.un.org/millennium/

WOMEN SET GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Nijmegen, Netherlands, December 2002: At an expert consultation, organized by WEDO with support from the United Nations Population Fund, women set guidelines for implementing government commitments to gender equality, poverty eradication and access to water and sanitation.

Integrate Gender in Water Policies and Institutions

- Government policies and programs must be guided by the principle that water is a human right and by a holistic approach to water resources management.
- Women's empowerment and the equitable provision of water services must be integral to poverty eradication strategies.
- National ministries, water and sanitation

departments and local governments must adopt and implement gender policies in consultation with poor women.

- Governments must protect the knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and rural women.

Support Women's Empowerment and Build the Capacity of Local Women's Organizations

- Local women's organizations must have access to information and decision-making at all levels on issues related to poverty and water.
- Governments must allocate resources to women's organizations for capacity-building, training, and the establishment of women's water

networks to enable equal management of water resources.

- Local governments and public sector unions must build alliances with women's organizations to manage water resources and jointly establish time-bound targets.

Monitor Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty and Water Programs

- Governments must collect gender-disaggregated data and develop gender-sensitive indicators in all sectors, including water, sanitation, agriculture, and irrigation.
- Governments must apply a gender lens to all aspects of policymaking—from administration and engineering, to access and control of resources.

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Resources

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

Gender and Women WSSD Survival Kit
www.wedo.org/wssd/survival-kit.htm

Other Organizations and Institutions

UNFPA www.unfpa.org

World Water Council/3rd World Water Forum
<http://www.worldwatercouncil.org>

UNEP Freshwater Portal
<http://freshwater.unep.net>

Gender and Water Alliance (GWA)
<http://www.genderandwateralliance.org>

IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre
<http://www.irc.nl>

UNIFEM—Progress of the World's Women
www.unifem.org

Public Services International Research Unit
<http://www.psir.org>

International Water Management Institute
<http://www.cgiar.org/iwmi/index.htm>

Millennium Development Goals

United Nations www.un.org/millenniumgoals

United Nations Development Program
<http://www.undp.org/mdg>

World Bank www.developmentgoals.org

Indicators http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp

Country Reports <http://www.undp.org/mdg/countryreports.html>

World Summit on Sustainable Development

WEDO's Gender Analysis
http://www.wedo.org/sus_dev/analysis2.htm

Official UN website
<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>

UNDP Capacity 2015
<http://www.undp.org/wssd/capacity2015.html>

International Commitments* On Gender, Poverty and Water

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

29TH SESSION

Geneva, November 2002

General Comment No. 15

>> www.unhcr.ch/html/menuz/6/gc15.doc

The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights...The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, affordable, physically accessible, safe and acceptable water for personal and domestic uses.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Johannesburg,
September 2002**

**Political Declaration
And Plan of Implementation**

>> www.johannesburgsummit.org

Political Declaration

Principle 18: We are committed to ensure that **women's** empowerment and emancipation and **gender** equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation of the Summit

Plan of Implementation

II. POVERTY ERADICATION

6. (d) Promote **women's** equal access to and full participation, on the basis of equality with men, in decision-making at all levels, mainstreaming **gender** perspectives in all policies and strategies, eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against **women**, and improving the status, health and economic welfare of **women and girls** through full and equal access to economic opportunity, land, credit, education and health care services.

10. By 2020 achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers...

(a) Improve access to **land and property**, to adequate shelter and to basic services for the urban and rural poor, with special attention to **female heads of households**.

IV. PROTECTING AND MANAGING THE NATURAL RESOURCE BASE OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

24. ...achieve the millennium development goal of safe drinking **water** and basic **sanitation**

(a) Mobilize international and domestic financial resources at all levels, transfer technology, promote best practice and support capacity-building for **water and sanitation** infrastructure and services development, ensuring that such infrastructure and services meet the needs of the poor and are **gender-sensitive**.

(b) Facilitate access to public information and participation, including by **women**, at all levels in support of policy and decision-making related to **water resources** management and project implementation.

VI. HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

47. Strengthen the capacity of health-care systems to deliver basic health services to all...and to reduce **environmental health** threats, in conformity with **human rights** and fundamental freedoms and consistent with national laws and cultural and religious values...

(l) Transfer and disseminate...technologies for safe **water, sanitation** and waste management...taking into account country-specific conditions and **gender** equality including specific technology needs of **women**;

VIII. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA

61. Achieve significantly improved sustainable agricultural productivity...

(b) Promote and support efforts and initiatives to secure equitable access to **land tenure** and clarify **resource rights** and responsibilities, through land and tenure reform processes which respect the rule of law... and enable **women** producers to become decision makers and owners in the sector, including the right to inherit **land**."

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FRESHWATER

Bonn, December 2001

Ministerial Declaration and Bonn Recommendations for Action

>> www.water-2001.de/

Ministerial Declaration

GENDER

Water resources management should be based on a participatory approach. Both men and **women** should be involved and have an equal voice in managing the sustainable use of **water resources** and sharing of benefits. The role of **women** in **water** related areas needs to be strengthened and their participation broadened.

Bonn Recommendations for Action—Action in the Field of Governance

3. PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

• **Water** management policies should distinguish between **water** users by **gender** and should allow men and **women** equitable access to **water resources**, including safe drinking **water** and **sanitation**.

• **Water resources** management should be based on a participatory approach. Men and **women** should be equally involved in managing the sustainable use of **water resources** and sharing of benefits. To achieve equity, in many parts of the world the role of **women** in **water** management needs to be strengthened and their participation broadened.

• **Water** experts and policy makers should be trained to work in a **gender-inclusive** manner. In many places, specific support is also needed to empower **women** to take up leadership and managerial roles in **water resources** policies and management.

• **Water** policies and **water** management systems should be **gender-sensitive**. They should reflect the division of roles and labour—paid and unpaid—between men and **women** in all settings related to **water**. Data relating to **water** should be disaggregated by **gender**.

BEIJING+5

**23RD SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, June 2000**

>> www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/as2310rev1.pdf

Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Actions to be taken by governments at the national level

72. (e) Ensure universal and equal access for **women** and men throughout the life-cycle, to social services related to health care, including education, clean **water** and safe **sanitation**, nutrition, food security and health education programmes;

* This matrix is specific to commitments on gender, poverty eradication and water. Government commitments to women's rights and empowerment across the social, economic and political spheres are embodied in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development Programme for Action at www.un.org/popin/icpd2.htm and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing Platform for Action at www.un.org/womenwatch/confer/beijing/reports.

MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 55TH SESSION

New York, September 2000

Millennium Declaration

>> www.un.org/millennium/

Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US \$1/day.

Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer hunger

Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in

primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education by 2015.

Millennium Development Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

Millennium Development Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 10: Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

2ND WORLD WATER FORUM

The Hague, March 2000

Ministerial Declaration of the Hague on Water Security in the 21st Century

>> www.worldwaterforum.net/

3. The Main Challenges

Meeting Basic Needs: to recognise that access to safe and sufficient **water and sanitation** are basic human needs and are essential to health and well-being, and to empower people, especially **women**, through a participatory process of **water management**

5. The Actions

The actions advocated here are based on integrated **water resources management**...special attention should be paid to the poor, to the roles, skills and needs of **women**...

SECURING THE FOOD SUPPLY

- The important role of **women** in food production, the storage and preparation of food and improvements to the nutritional value of food

- The key role of governments in empowering communities and fostering the involvement of different stakeholders, especially **women**, in policy-development, and implementation in rural areas, thereby enhancing the transparency and accountability of institutions that are involved in the development and implementation of those policies.

- The need to secure equal access for all farmers, especially **women**, to productive resources, such as **water**, land, propagating material, technology and the results of applied research.

PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS

- The best approach is integrated land and **water** use planning, at the basin level, within a broader ecosystem context, in which all sectors assume their responsibility, and all stakeholders, especially **women**, who bear the brunt of poor **water** management, are involved...

MANAGING RISKS

- Consultation with the public should take place at all stages. Raising public awareness is essential in taking management decisions, as is the involvement of local communities, with men and **women** on an equal footing.

- **Women** and children are usually the most vulnerable to **water**-related disasters.

GOVERNING WATER WISELY

- The participation of all stakeholders at all levels of International Water Resources Management, with special attention to **gender** and youth.

- More involvement of **women** in **water** management as important stakeholders, especially in developing countries.

- The formation of an inter-ministerial committee on **gender**. The reallocation of budgets in **water** projects and representation of **women** was discussed.

Meeting the Challenge: The Ways Forward

It is recommended that:

- The important role of women in **water** management is recognised and an international committee must develop practical proposals for addressing gender concerns at the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003.

ICPD+5

21ST SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, July 1999

>> www.un.org/popin/unpopcom/32ndsess/gass/215a1e.pdf

II. Population and development concerns

A. POPULATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

18. (a) Continue to support declines in infant and child mortality rates by strengthening infant and child health

programmes that emphasize...clean **water** sources...and improvements in household **sanitation**...

C. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

29. In planning and implementing refugee assistance activities, special attention should be given to the specific needs of refugee **women**, children, and elderly refugees. Adequate and sufficient international support should be extended to meet the basic needs of refugee populations, including the provision of access to...clean **water**, **sanitation**...

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6TH SESSION

New York, April 1998

Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management

>> www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd.htm

Decision 6/1: Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management.

10. (a) The CSD urges: Governments to ... (x) mobilization of financial resources and mainstreaming of **gender** issues

into all aspects of **water resources** management.

11. ...Because **women** have a particular role in utilizing and conserving **water resources** on a daily basis, their knowledge and experience should be considered as a component of any sustainable **water** management programme.

13. ...It is particularly important to broaden **women's** participation and integrate **gender** analysis in **water** planning.

HABITAT II

Istanbul, June 1996

Habitat Agenda

>> www.unhcs.org/unhcs/english/hagenda/

Chapter III. Commitments

D. GENDER EQUALITY

46. We commit ourselves to the goal of **gender** equality in **human settlements** development.

(c) Collecting, analysing and disseminating **gender**-disaggregated data and information on human settlements issues, including statistical means that recognize and make visible the unre-

munerated work of **women**, for use in policy and programme planning and implementation;

(d) Integrating a **gender** perspective in the design and implementation of environmentally sound and sustainable resource management mechanisms, production techniques and infrastructure development in rural and urban areas;

(e) Formulating and strengthening policies and practices to promote the full and equal participation of **women** in human settlements planning and decision-making.

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

Beijing, September 1995

Beijing Platform of Action

>> www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/

Strategic objective K.2.

Integrate **gender** concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

256. By Governments:

(f) Promote knowledge of and sponsor research on the role of **women**, particularly rural and indigenous **women**, in...**irrigation, watershed management, sanitation**.....focusing particularly on indigenous **women's** knowledge and experience;

(k) Support the development of **women's** equal access to...**safe water**...through participatory needs assessments...and policy formulation at the local and national levels;

(l) Ensure that **clean water** is available and accessible to all by the year 2000 and that environmental protection and conservation plans are designed and implemented to restore polluted **water** systems and rebuild damaged **watersheds**.

Strategic objective K.3.

Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on **women**.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

258. By Governments, regional and international organizations and non-governmental organizations, as appropriate:

(a) Provide technical assistance to **women**, particularly in developing countries, in the sectors of...**fisheries**...to ensure...the development of environmentally sound technologies and of **women's** entrepreneurship;

(b) Develop **gender-sensitive** databases, information and monitoring systems and participatory action-oriented research, methodologies and policy analyses, with the collaboration of academic institutions and local **women** researchers, on the following:

(i) Knowledge and experience on the part of **women** concerning the management and conservation of **natural resources** for incorporation in the databases and information systems for sustainable development;

(ii) The impact on **women** of environmental and natural resource degradation, deriving from, inter alia...**drought, poor quality water...desertification**...

(iii) Analysis of the structural links between **gender** relations, environment and development, with special emphasis on particular sectors, such as...**fisheries...water resources and sanitation**;

a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including...**safe drinking water, sanitation facilities**...

21. Urban poverty is rapidly increasing...It is a growing phenomenon in all countries and regions, and often poses special problems, such as...**contaminated water and bad sanitation**...An increasing number of low-income urban households are female-maintained.

32. Rural poverty should be addressed by:

(b) Promoting fair wages and improving the conditions of agricultural labour, and increasing the access of small farmers to **water**...., including for **women**....on the basis of equality;

The Commission recommends that countries give priority attention to the integrated management, mobilization and use of **water resources** in a holistic manner, while stressing the importance of the involvement of local communities, in particular **women**.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Cairo, September 1994

>> www.un.org/popin/icpd/conference/offeng/poa.html

Principle 2

Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development...They have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including...**water and sanitation**.

3.13. Widespread poverty remains the major challenge to development efforts. Poverty is often accompanied by ...low status of **women**...All these factors contribute to high levels of fertility, morbidity and mortality...Poverty is also closely related to...unsustainable use and inequitable distribution of such **natural resources** as land and **water**...

4.11. ...Greater investments should be made in appropriate measures to lessen the daily burden of domestic

responsibilities, the greatest share of which falls on **women**. Greater attention should be paid to the ways in which **environmental degradation** and changes in land use adversely affect the allocation of **women's** time. **Women's** domestic working environments should not adversely affect their health.

8.2. ...large segments of many populations continue to lack access to clean **water and sanitation facilities**...Large numbers of people remain at continued risk of infectious, parasitic and **water-borne** diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria and schistosomiasis...

8.10. All countries should give priority to measures that improve the quality of life and health by ensuring a safe and sanitary living environment for all population groups through measures aimed at...ensuring access to clean **water and sanitation**...

UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Paris, June 1994

>> <http://www.unccd.int/main.php>

Preamble

Stressing the important role played by **women** in regions affected by **desertification** and/or **drought**, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and **women** at all levels in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of **drought**...

Part II: General Provisions

ARTICLE 5

(d) promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly **women** and youth, with the support of nongovernmental organizations, in efforts to combat and mitigate the effects of **drought**;

Part III, Section 1

ACTION PROGRAMMES – ARTICLE 10

(f)...provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both **women** and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes...

Part III, Section 3:

SUPPORTING MEASURES – ARTICLE 19

1. The Parties recognize the significance of capacity building—that is to say, institution building, training and development of relevant local and national capacities—in efforts to combat **desertification** and mitigate the effects of **drought**. They shall promote, as appropriate, capacity-building:

(a) through the full participation at all levels of local people, particularly at the local level, especially **women** and youth, with the cooperation of non-governmental and local organizations;

3. ...to promote understanding of the causes and effects of **desertification** and **drought** and of the importance of meeting the objective of this Convention. To that end, they shall:

(e) assess educational needs in affected areas, elaborate appropriate school curricula and expand, as needed, educational and adult literacy programmes and opportunities for all, in particular for **girls and women**, on the identification, conservation and sustainable use and management of the **natural resources** of affected areas...

WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Copenhagen, March 1995

>> www.un.org/esa/socdev/docs/summit.pdf

C. Commitment 2

We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world...

(b) ...efforts should include ... **safe drinking water and sanitation**...Special priority will be given to the needs and rights of **women** and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty, and to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons;

CHAPTER II – ERADICATION OF POVERTY **Basis for action and objectives**

19. ... **Women** bear a disproportionate burden of poverty...Absolute poverty is

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2ND SESSION

New York, April 1994

>> www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd.htm

Chapter ID: Health, Human Settlements, Freshwater.



UN CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Rio de Janeiro, June 1992

>> www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21text.htm

Political Declaration—Principle 20

Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

Agenda 21

CHAPTER 3 – COMBATING POVERTY

Programme Area: enabling the poor to achieve sustainable livelihoods

38 (p) Provide the poor with access to fresh water and sanitation

CHAPTER 18 – PROTECTION OF THE QUALITY AND SUPPLY OF FRESHWATER RESOURCES: APPLICATION OF INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO THE DEVELOPMENT, MANAGEMENT AND USE OF WATER RESOURCES

Programme Area A: Integrated water resources development and management

18.9. ...To design, implement and evaluate projects and programmes that are both economically efficient and socially appropriate within clearly defined strategies, based on an approach of full public participation, including that of women...in water management policy-making and decision-making;

18.12. ...Development of public participatory techniques and their implementation in decision-making, particularly the enhancement of the role of women in water resources planning and management;

18.19. The delegation of water resources management to the lowest appropriate level necessitates educating and training water management staff at all levels and ensuring that women participate equally in the education and training programmes. Particular emphasis has to be placed

on the introduction of public participatory techniques, including enhancement of the role of women...

(d) Capacity-building

18.22. ...International agencies and donors have an important role to play in providing support to developing countries in creating the required enabling environment for integrated water resources management. This should include, as appropriate, donor support to local levels in developing countries, including community-based institutions, non-governmental organizations and women's groups.

Programme Area B: Water resources assessment

Means of Implementation

(c) Human resource development

18.33. ...Establishing and strengthening education and training programmes on water-related topics, within an environmental and developmental context, for all categories of staff involved in water resources assessment activities, using advanced educational technology, where appropriate, and involving both men and women;

(d) Capacity-building

18.34. ...Strengthening of the managerial capabilities of water-user groups, including women...to improve water-use efficiency at the local level.

Programme Area C: Protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems

(c) Human resource development

18.45. ... establishment of ... education/training courses on water resources protection and conservation for laboratory and field technicians, women and other water-user groups.

Programme Area D: Drinking Water supply and sanitation

18.48. The New Delhi Statement... Institutional reforms promoting

an integrated approach and including changes in procedures, attitudes and behaviour, and the full participation of women at all levels in sector institutions;

Activities

18.50. b. People and institutions:

- Human resource development at all levels, including special programmes for women;

- National and community management:

ii. Encouragement of the local population, especially women, youth, indigenous people and local communities, in water management;

(c) Human resource development

18.53. ... countries provide adequate training for women in the sustainable maintenance of equipment, water resources management and environmental sanitation.

(d) Capacity-building

18.54. The implementation of water-supply and sanitation programmes is a national responsibility...a high degree of community participation, involving women, in the conception, planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation connected with projects for domestic water-supply and sanitation.

Programme Area E: Water and Sustainable Urban Development

Activities

18.59. f. Provision of enhanced access to sanitary services:

iv. Mobilization and facilitation of the active involvement of women in water management teams;

Means of Implementation

(c) Human resource development

18.62. ...Special provision should be made for mobilizing and facilitating the active participation of women...in water management teams and for

supporting the development of water associations and water committees... Special education and training programmes for women should be launched with regard to the protection of water resources and water-quality within urban areas.

Programme Area F: Water for Sustainable Food Production and Rural Development

Objectives

18.68. The key strategic principles for holistic and integrated environmentally sound management of water resources in the rural context may be set forth as follows:

b. Local communities must participate in all phases of water management, ensuring the full involvement of women in view of their crucial role in the practical day-to-day supply, management and use of water;

d. It is necessary to recognize and actively support the role of rural populations, with particular emphasis on women.

Means of Implementation

(c) Human resource development

18.80. d. Train staff at all levels, including farmers, fishermen and members of local communities, with particular reference to women.

CHAPTER 24 – GLOBAL ACTION FOR WOMEN TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

24.3. Governments should take active steps to implement the following:

d. Programmes to promote the reduction of the heavy workload of women and girl children at home and outside...and to promote the provision of environmentally sound technologies which have been designed, developed and improved in consultation with women, accessible and clean water, an efficient fuel supply and adequate sanitation facilities

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WATER AND ENVIRONMENT

Dublin, January 1992

Dublin Statement and Principles on Water and Sustainable Development

>> www.wmo.ch/web/homs/documents/english/icwedece.html

Principle 3

Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

This pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources.

Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women's specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources programmes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them.

CEDAW

(CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN)

December 1979

>> www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

Article 14 (2). ...eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men

and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

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