

- *Inclusion of gender trained staff and long-term, gender sensitisation programmes at all levels:*
  - increase in technical and scientific education for women;
  - supporting water professionals and communities in implementation of gender in IWRM.
- *Increased budgetary allocations to social aspects within environmental protection and water management:* Indicate what proportion of national budgets is spent on social aspects such as community related activities and set targets for improvement over the years.

## Remember gender

The links between gender, poverty and water are easiest to identify when we look at domestic water use and sanitation practices. Gender is also a key variable when we look at economic activities, at income generation in general and farming in particular. Men and women should be equally represented when decisions are made that affect productive activities they are engaged in to assure equal access and control over water, land and markets. Poor men and women are often the first to suffer when the aquatic environment is degraded.

*"Sometimes women-specific support is needed to empower local women to take up leadership roles, but more often training of water experts and policy makers will be justified in order to guide them to work in a gender-inclusive manner".*

Ms Eveline Herfkens, Minister for Development Cooperation, The Netherlands.

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## The Gender and Water Alliance

The Gender and Water Alliance is a network of 115 organisations and individuals from around the world with an independent steering committee. It is an Associated Programme of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) funded by the governments of the Netherlands and United Kingdom. Because of the pooled experience and skills contained in this network, the GWA offers a mix of information and knowledge sharing activities such as electronic conferencing, a web site, advocacy leaflets and video, annual reports, capacity building and pilot programmes.



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## Sidestream or Mainstream?

### Making all water uses the business of women and men

**Everybody, men, women and children must help manage and share water fairly.** Conflicts over 'troubled waters' - sometimes too much, too little or too polluted - must be avoided. They harm people, food production, nature, the environment, and sustainable development in general.

*"Women in the Visayas in the Philippines reported that their views are increasingly met with respect and their needs met with regard to time of meetings, design of water supply and design of latrines".* World Water Vision, 1999

Research and practical experience from the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) have demonstrated that effective, efficient and equitable management of the available water is only achieved when both women and men are involved in making decisions on how to best share, supply and protect water.

A gender sensitive approach shows that women and men have distinctive roles and responsibilities in water. Striking a gender balance ensures that:

- Old and new roles and responsibilities of all women and men are mobilised to best effect for the well-being of all;
- the creativity, energy and knowledge of both sexes contribute to making water schemes and eco-systems work better; and
- the benefits and costs of water use accrue equitably to all groups.

### Explaining mainstreaming gender to water professionals

*"I encourage the (male) engineers to look at the impact that each decision will have on the lives of men, women and children in the watershed community. What I say to them is, disaggregate all information and data you collect by men, women and children. Break down the project into components and activities to be implemented and look at the differential impact on men, women and children. When you do this, you can easily see and understand gender differences. Project components can then be planned to address the different needs, bringing in much-needed flexibility to implementation."*

Vasudha Pangare, National Standing Committee for Watershed Development and Water Resources Management, Government of India

Gender is a key variable when we look at economic activities, at income generation in

general and farming in particular. In sanitation women are the main beneficiaries of improved latrine use and hygiene promotion close to the home. They are responsible for the hygiene of the family. In a number of countries they are also earning money by producing and selling latrine parts.

### Efficiency

When women and men share decisions, costs, burdens and benefits of water resource management, the results are:

- reduced wastage of time, money and resources;
- deepened community involvement and commitment;
- a greater pool of creativity available for the task of conserving scarce supplies, finding low-cost, sustainable solutions, and paying the costs of water delivery and conservation.

### Effectiveness

Women comprise the largest category of water-users in the world. In many cultures, women and men share water management between them. Through their long experience both groups have valuable and complementary knowledge and expertise. Involving both groups in planning and execution of water programmes means benefiting from this massive resource, high personal interest and commitment in effective

and efficient water services. The value women place on this commodity is also vital in the search for the most cost-effective decisions and management.

### Equity

Efforts to attain sustainable development will never succeed if the needs of all water users are not addressed. This includes female-headed households (numbers are rising in many parts of the world), women involved in agriculture and food production, and those running small businesses. Many woman-hours and child-hours are now lost every year to the drudgery of carrying water for long distances, or looking for far away places for sanitation. Women's health is severely affected, and so is their ability to take advantage of educational and training opportunities that can help them combat poverty.

*"Because gender disparities and even severe marginalisation of women exist in many countries, large infrastructure projects like dams or their associated irrigation schemes can present unique opportunities for reforms, in areas like land tenure, that can contribute to reversing the situation."*

World Commission on Dams: Dams and Development, Earthscan, 2000

### Essential next steps

Essential next steps that need to be pursued include:

- *Laws and policies relating to water should be revised: where necessary to give men and women independent rights to land, water, property and inheritance.*
- *A male-female perspective should be included systematically in the development of all national/regional policies and programmes: Relegating women's issues to one sector such as "women's development" or addressing them through isolated programmes does not improve male-female cooperation.*
- *Effective representation of women in all water management organizations, from the community to the basin level: Where influence is unbalanced, affirmative action is required that goes beyond numbers and which shows that the interests of women and men are equally respected.*
- *Gender disaggregation of information and knowledge sharing: Progress is achieved when all human related data that are presented are routinely sub-divided for sex and social indicators such as class and poverty. Further analysis is required to ensure equal distribution of work, power, paid opportunities, skills development and capacity building.*