

the **Gender**
approach to
Water Management



Lessons Learnt Around The Globe

Findings of an electronic conference series convened by the
Gender and Water Alliance

January – September 2002



GWA Secretariat,
c/o IRC International Water
and Sanitation Centre
P.O. Box 2869
2601 CW Delft
The Netherlands

© Gender and Water Alliance, 2003

Any part of this publication, including the illustrations (except items taken from other publications where the authors do not hold copyright) may be copied, reproduced or adapted to meet local needs, without permission from the author/s or publisher, provided the parts reproduced are distributed free, or at cost and not for commercial ends, and the source is fully acknowledged.

A reference copy of this publication is also available online at:
<http://www.genderandwateralliance.org>

Maharaj N. (2003)
*The Gender Approach to Water Management:
Lessons Learnt Around The Globe*
Gender and Water Alliance

ISBN Paperback 1 84380 020 9

Published for the Gender and Water Alliance by WEDC.

English version distributed by WEDC,
Loughborough University,
Leicestershire,
LE11 3TU, UK.

Telephone: +44 (0) 1509 222885
Fax: +44 (0) 1509 211079
Email: WEDC@lboro.ac.uk

Printed by Hickling and Squires



Introduction

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002, world leaders committed themselves to a gender approach within international water management policy and practice. Detailed commitments were contained within the Plan of Implementation, while the Political Declaration stated (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.”

Commitments with reference to gender and water made in the Plan of Implementation at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, September 2002

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 role of law... and enable women producers to become decision makers and owners in the sector, including the right to inherit land.”

www.johannesburgsummit.org



This followed similar statements made in 2001 at the Inter-ministerial Conference on Freshwater held in Bonn, Germany, where government representatives responsible for the management of water resources stated in their final declaration:

“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.”

At the highest levels, therefore, lessons have been learnt since the 2nd World Water Forum held in The Hague in 2000: both efficiency and equity goals are being promoted by the adoption of a gender approach. The human and social dimensions of water management are to be the cornerstone of all new initiatives.

But how is such policy to be implemented? What follows at the operational level? *What* are “gender-sensitive infrastructure and services”? *How* do you strengthen the role of women and ensure they have an equal voice and choice?

Finding the answers via e-conferencing

As it happens, over 1,100 professionals connected with the water sector have been addressing these questions for much of the year 2002. In the course of this year, the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) held three electronic conferences to exchange information on gender mainstreaming in the water sector. These were held simultaneously in four languages, so as to draw in a

wide range of experience based on work carried out in different corners of the world.

The theme of the conference series was *Successes and Failures in Gender Mainstreaming in International Water Resources Management (IWRM)*. Participants came from local government departments, from universities and other research institutions, from international and national non-governmental organisations, from agricultural organisations, United Nations agencies, from professional associations and networks and from elsewhere. There was an even mix of men and women.

Some of the 82 case studies they presented were based on project reports and experience, not on structured research. Despite the uneven nature of this reporting system, however, one could begin to perceive the outlines of a comprehensive picture. Certain patterns could be discerned; some themes became commonplace.

The raw material from the e-conferences is now available to researchers and analysts for more careful study. This booklet is only a first look at the lessons that are currently emerging from the information that has been gathered.



Our water is better managed when women and men make decisions together



Understanding of 'gender' needs to be promoted

If the global water sector is to implement gender-sensitive management practices — as resolved by senior policy makers — some intensive and urgent work is needed to disseminate information to practitioners within the sector on basic concepts connected with 'gender' and 'the gender approach'.

This became very clear from the discussions that were held during the GWA e-conference series. Of the 1,100 conference participants, about 900 were from non-English-speaking parts of the globe. At the start of the process, many of them had little idea of what it meant to adopt a 'gender sensitive approach' in water management. Some did not understand what the word 'gender' implied.

It emerged that knowledge on the gender dimension of water management is much more easily found among English speakers than among French, Spanish and Portuguese speakers. Thus, for a gender approach to be implemented at local and regional levels, a great deal more information on this subject has to be disseminated in languages other than English. The responses to the e-conferences suggested that there is a great deal of demand for this and participants called repeatedly for training to be offered in French- and Portuguese-speaking Africa, and in all the countries of Latin America. They urged wider dissemination of information on the concepts and linkages outlined below.

Basic conceptual underpinnings of the gender approach

- **Gender** refers to the specific roles and responsibilities adopted by women and men in any society. It is related to how we are perceived and expected to think



We can be different AND be equal

and act, as women and men, because of the way society is organized, not because of our biological differences.

- **A gender approach** implies that attitudes, roles and responsibilities of men and women are taken into account, that it is recognized that both sexes do not necessarily have the same access to, or control over, resources, and that work, benefits and impacts may be different for both groups. The gender approach requires an open mindedness and aims at the fullest possible participation of both women and men. It highlights:
 - The differences between women and men's interests even within the same household and how these interact and are expressed.
 - The conventions and hierarchies which determine women and men's position in the family, community and society at large, whereby women are usually dominated by men.
 - The differences among women and men based on age, wealth, ethnic background and other factors.



- The way gender roles and relations change, often quite rapidly, as a result of social, economic and technological trends.

The term 'gender' should not be used to refer predominantly to women. **Gender mainstreaming** is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation policies or programmes, in all areas at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's, as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.

- At the institutional level, **a gender perspective** means generating strategies for changing the unequal relations of men and women to resources, decision-making and rights. It is not sufficient to have just a single 'gender person' focusing on these issues. Gender is often side-streamed rather than mainstreamed, due to lack of understanding and the will to change.
- Attempts to mainstream gender can be potentially destabilising if they are formulated and implemented in a manner that is inappropriate to the local cultural context. Such approaches generate resistance.

Clear links have been demonstrated between gender, water access and poverty. Households headed by women are more likely to be poor than those headed by men, and women in male-headed households often have less access to productive resources and opportunities than men.

Common gender problems in the water sector

Lessons from experience

The 82 case studies that were examined in the e-conferences came from a wide range of localities – from Ethiopia to Bangladesh to the Ukraine. Originating in highly diverse social, political, cultural and economic settings, they naturally dealt with a range of different issues — from flooding to irrigation to refugee camp water supply. However certain themes constantly recurred. These offer us some insight into the most relevant issues that impinge on any effort to bring a gender approach into water management at local and regional levels.

Below, we present a series of excerpts from the case studies to give readers a glimpse of the ways in which gender issues intertwine themselves with other factors in the social environment, hampering efforts to promote effective, efficient and equitable water management. Then in the following section we give examples of actions needed to address these problems.

Traditional cultural norms

A common theme in the case studies was the centrality of traditional cultural norms as a rationale for gender inequity in the water sector. Perceptions about gender roles affect decision-making arrangements, access to power and resources, public participation, and water access itself. This can undermine good policy on the part of implementing agencies. In the case of South Africa, for example, excellent national policy provisions have not yet proved effective in giving women a greater voice in water decision-making because of countervailing cultural norms.



from the case studies ...

Gender policy undermined by cultural constraints

“In South Africa gender equality is guaranteed by the Constitution, and the water and sanitation policy also sets quotas for participation of women in water management issues. The government has established institutions to support gender mainstreaming at all levels, e.g. Gender Commission and the Office of the Status of Women. However, a study funded by the Water Research Commission revealed that the 30% quota for women’s participation at all levels required in terms of the water policy did not guarantee meaningful participation of women in decision-making because women were reluctant to voice their opinions in mixed groups due to cultural constraints, lack of appropriate knowledge and poor self concept. Cultural norms forbid women to assert themselves in public forums with men. Gender equity is also not promoted at household level. Cultural norms and customs of the community are often not congruent with the principles of gender equity as articulated in the water policy.”

From: South African experience of gender mainstreaming within IWRM Policy and legislative framework
Based on a study by Priscilla Monyai, University of Fort Hare, South Africa

The observations made about the effect of cultural norms in South Africa can be extended to most other parts of the world, highlighting a need to challenge time-honoured custom and promote changes in social behaviour in a sensitive way. Actions needed may include the deliberate inclusion of female project staff, the use of gender experts, special planning for holding meetings and to ensure the involvement of all sections of the community. Often special efforts are required to include women, but in other cases, for example on hygiene promotion, it may be men who are excluded

and need to be involved. Similarly, as a case study by SEWA from Gujarat in India showed, equity is important not only between women and men, but also between poor women and better-off women.

Self esteem and public participation skills

Case studies from Africa, Latin America and Asia revealed that equitable water management was severely impeded by the low self-esteem displayed by women where public functions were concerned. Gender mainstreaming efforts were shown to be successful when efforts were made to increase not only women’s capacities and skills, but their own appreciation of their capacities. These successes had a marked

from the case studies ...

Gender roles self-perpetuating

“An argument that was frequently employed by respondents was that, in general, men are better equipped than women with knowledge and representation skills to participate in decision-making processes and organisation. This argument is part of a self-enforcing process. It starts with people’s individual perception about ‘male’ and ‘female’ skills, behavioural patterns and gender ideology with regard to respective responsibilities within the household. As this results in a situation in which the man usually takes responsibility for economic transactions, representation and legal matters, he is likely to gain familiarity with the different procedures, processes, formal requirements, and market arrangements, thereby fulfilling the expectations with regard to ‘male’ skills and capacities.”

From: *Indigenous forms of water management in the dry zone of Sri Lanka*
By Irna van den Molen



multiplier effect. Time and again, the case studies demonstrated that once women had been helped to develop an appreciation of their own capacities, they applied their energies to other communal projects. Furthermore, it may be necessary to raise the skills of women and poor men to equip them for public participation and decision-making.

Gender inequality in employment

Inequitable cultural norms are not only found at community level, conference participants pointed out. They are also to be found in a range of institutions connected with the water sector – as an in-depth analysis of one water company in Colombia illustrated.

from the case studies ...

A typical staffing scenario in the water sector

“Staff: 1,226 (988 men, 238 women). Only 3 women hold middle management positions. The majority of them hold administrative positions (accountants, secretaries, receptionists, data entry). Women get recognition only when they speak another language, have obtained graduate degrees abroad and are very efficient. Men, on the other hand, are promoted with the support of their political godfathers, although there are exceptions. The plant operation activities only involve the work of 7 women, whose orders are resisted by men. Internal planning does not take into consideration the practical or strategic needs of women.”

From: *Gender study of EMCALI, Colombia* (Aqueduct and Sewage Management Office, Cali Public Services)

Link between status, income and water access

Many of the case studies demonstrated a link between this culturally based inequity and women’s low incomes. In particular, where agriculture and food production was



United we stand. Divided we fall.

concerned, the influence of gender inequity in keeping women poor and overworked was extremely noticeable. This is illustrated by a research study on irrigation practices among groundnut producers in Gujarat, India.

from the case studies ...

Irrigation decision-making for high value groundnuts

“The gender differentiation was very clear: there was very little involvement of women at the decision-making level. This is not to say that women were not involved in the cropping pattern- they indeed were- and were often involved in doing the harder, back-bending tasks, but they were not involved in decision-making, including those of irrigation practices... It was simply a male prerogative and this became even more evident when we undertook village level meetings to discuss location of these water-harvesting structures, financial contributions towards it, etc. In my opinion, women are often marginalised when the stake on the crop is very high, like in the case of groundnut, whose harvest would determine the economy of that household for the whole year.”

From: *The Impact of Activities taken up by Aga Khan Rural Support Programme-India on Women*
by Vikas Nath



In parts of Asia, one researcher noted, although women's homestead gardens are sometimes an important source of household income, work in them is categorised as domestic work, not commercial. Thus, those gardens cannot get irrigation water and women end up working longer hours to bring water to their crops.

Gender differentiation in irrigation management

A general pattern of systematic disadvantage was found in numerous case studies dealing with irrigation.

from the case studies ...

Most human effort in African smallholder irrigation is female

"Most of the human effort in smallholder irrigated farming is provided by women. Women have expanded their traditional agricultural obligations into the irrigation sector, often more than doubling their workload as agricultural activity grew from a single crop in the year to, in some cases, three crops. Their household incomes increased and more children could be sent to school and the women worked harder and longer to compensate for the loss to the system of child labour.

At scheme level, women were seriously under-represented on management committees and seldom had access to technical training of any sort. They were virtually excluded from decision making both by numbers and perceived lack of capacity. Men largely assumed management and maintenance tasks, often encouraged by attitudes among agency staff, although they were not necessarily best placed to accomplish those tasks in a timely manner."

From: *The role of women in African smallholder irrigation*
By Felicity Chancellor

In Asia, too, the case studies revealed an increase in women's participation in irrigation without a corresponding increase in decision-making power.

from the case studies ...

Recognise both women and men as farmer irrigators

"If women are farm decision-makers, they clearly need water for their farms, they need to become members of water users associations and be eligible and elected for leadership positions. Schemes collapse if irrigation projects fail to be gender-sensitive in localities where women constitute a considerable part of the farm decision-makers. Agencies need to recognise both women and men as farmer-irrigators and members of water users associations, and to ensure a bottom-up organisation in which members can elect their leaders and hold them accountable. This is both a productivity and equity issue."

From: *Successful Gender Mainstreaming in Irrigation*
Nine comparative case-studies in Burkina Faso, South Africa, India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka
International Water Management Institute (IWMI)



For sustainable water development both men and women must be involved in decision making.



Conclusion: Capacity building needed at various levels

The case studies above have revealed that gender mainstreaming faces deep seated problems. Policy changes have to be implemented via a massive effort at capacity building. Many of the case studies demonstrated the gender imbalances which disadvantage women. At community level, various kinds of skills need to be developed among women to enable them to effectively participate in public affairs, while at the same time guarding against increasing their workload. Gender also needs to be seen in the overall context of poverty and the men in the community must be involved. This will help both men and women appreciate the benefits of a gendered approach in water management.

At project management level, the conference concluded that many managers do not understand gender issues, and do not really know how to mainstream them in their work. Efforts are needed to present gender in a way that is relevant to water managers. Water-sector staff then need training in implementing the gender approach, while at national, district and regional levels, capacities need to be developed in collection of sex disaggregated data, gender analysis, policy development, programme and project design and assessment. Guidance is needed on appropriate gender and social equity approaches related to priority developments in the sector, such as privatisation, multiple uses of water and land, and integrated management of water resources. These are addressed in later sections of this booklet.

Actions needed for implementation of the gender approach

Based on the gender issues that have been documented above and broader experience of mainstreaming gender in the water sector, e-conference participants created the following list of key actions needed, under seven headings.

1. *Integrate gender concerns into state policy:* A gender analysis should be included in the process of designing and implementing public policies on water, and include:

- Existence and functioning of participatory mechanisms for decision-making.
- Creation of spaces, decision making bodies, responsibilities and accurate mechanisms to move forward in the construction of gender equality.
- Democratisation of information.
- Political will for effective policy implementation.



At all decision making levels and processes a gender perspective is essential and not just additional.



from the case studies ...

Few Latin American countries have gender policies

“In the Dominican Republic, there is a regulation of the National Water Authority requiring that at least 40% of the Water Committee members must be women. In other countries this issue has not been addressed. In Mexico, the 1992 National Water Act and its 1994 regulations do not make reference to gender equity. In Colombia, gender equity is not mentioned in the legislation relative to the water sector.

“In general, in the countries of the region, there are National Policies on Gender, such as the case of Bolivia and the National Program for Equal Opportunities, PROEQUIDAD, established by the Mexican Government in 2001 (with few results due to the fact that less than 0.1% of the national budget is assigned to programmes for women). However, water sector policies often use neutral language and have not incorporated a gender perspective.”

From: *Comments in the Spanish e-conference*

2. Enhance institutional will and develop comprehensive strategies for gender mainstreaming in national, regional and international institutions, including government, donor and civil society organisations:

- Develop national and organisational gender mainstreaming policies in line with UN recommendations.
- Establish targets and benchmarks, e.g. a balance in representation for women and men in decision-making bodies and national, regional and international fora.

- Educate and sensitise boards of directors so that they apply, encourage and support a gender perspective.
- Establish strategies to promote staff skills in, and understanding of, gender issues.
- Train women in technical areas so they can participate at higher levels of the sector.
- Change rules unfavourable to women.

from the case studies ...

Institutions need internal gender policies

“At the institutional level, CARE-EI Salvador stated that in December 1999 the organisation approved the implementation of its Gender and Diversity Policies. These policies are now being evaluated in order to analyse the changes that have taken place in the organisation. However, regional institutions that promote the incorporation of a gender perspective in water management projects do not necessarily have an institutional policy regarding this matter. Furthermore, even though some of the working teams do have a gender balance, women working in the social areas are easily intimidated by men from the technical areas.”

From: *Comments during the e-conference in Spanish*

- ## 3. Train local communities to know and master techniques that enable a change in role and focus for both women and men in water resource management and in the decision making process. This



training should provide the opportunity for effective participation by women, so they can exercise their functions at local level, on the water basin committees, and also in the formulation of public policies.



Together we are stronger

from the case studies ...

Training for women bears results

"*Watersheds and Gender* is the name of a new project, coordinated by CARE-El Salvador in association with 3 NGOs, that is being carried out in three regions of El Salvador and covers 18 municipalities. It has promoted leadership in women, encouraging them to sit on the board of directors of various water systems and training them as Community Producers/Promoters and Managers of small-sized companies. Ana Victoria Mejía has played an important role in this project; her work has had an impact on 24 neighborhoods, while other promoters only reached an average of 15. Women have acquired agricultural technological knowledge and are performing tasks that, in the past, have been considered suitable for men only."

From report on:
Agua project: Access, management and rational use of water, El Salvador

4. *Demonstrate what differences a good gender approach can make:* The e-conferences showed that, among those who practice gender and social equity approaches, there is no lack of evidence. This information should be widely disseminated throughout the water sector and used as a basis for training and advocacy at all levels.
5. *Integrate efforts in gender and water with other themes, such as poverty, pollution, health, environmental education, leadership and exercise of citizenship.*

from the case studies ...

Culture is dynamic and can develop

"It is the women of Baldia who are the main agents of change and the focal point of all the community based development activities. Initially, the girls were not allowed to come out of their homes, but once the community understood the programme and outcome, and trusted the intention of the project, all the traditional barriers were lifted to the women's participation in community development. It is essential to have women at all levels of the development projects to break the barriers of tradition.

Had the community organiser been a man instead of a woman in the Baldia Soakpit Project, the integration of women in the community development process would not have happened, because of the traditions and outlook of society. Traditions have strengths and weaknesses - it depends how sensitive one is while making interventions. Sensitivity is needed towards traditions and cultures when making project interventions, but culture is a dynamic phenomenon and can develop."

From: *A strategy for the integrated development of squatter settlements: a Karachi case study*
By Q.A. Bakhteari



Integrating gender and poverty concerns into water management principles

A gender perspective can be valuable to policy makers who aim at achieving poverty-reduction goals via interventions in the water sector. Since women are the majority of the world's poor, gender equity in the water sector will naturally have a positive effect on social welfare. The e-conference concluded with the following interesting example of how gender and poverty could be integrated into water management principles.

1. *Continue to manage water as a social good*
 - Meet basic human needs for the domestic and productive uses of water of women and men within households. All residents in a service area should be guaranteed a basic water quantity for livelihood needs of men and women under any privatisation agreement.
 - Meet basic ecosystem needs for water. Natural ecosystems should be guaranteed a basic water requirement for the preservation of natural resources and their uses by poor women and men under any privatisation agreement.
 - The basic water requirement for domestic and small-scale productive use by women, men and children should be provided at subsidised rates when necessary for reasons of poverty.

2. *Use sound economics in water management*
 - Water and water services should be provided at fair and reasonable rates and with a payment system that is flexible to reflect that women and men in different socio-economic groups have different income patterns and mobility.
 - Whenever possible, link proposed rate increases with agreed-upon improvements in service, based on consultations with women and men users in the different user categories.
 - Subsidies, if necessary, should be economically and socially sound and take into account the power relations within families.
 - Private companies should be required to demonstrate that new water-supply projects are less expensive than projects to improve water conservation and water-use efficiency before they are permitted to invest and raise water rates to repay the investment.

3. *Maintain strong government regulation and oversight*
 - Government should retain or establish public ownership or control of water sources.
 - Public agencies and water-service providers should monitor water quantity, quality and reliability of delivery and convenience of service hours for women and account for their services to male and female heads of households. Governments should define and enforce water quality laws and set and enforce standards for service delivery. If the contractors do not deliver accordingly, an agreed lower tariff will be charged to the consumers for the period concerned.
 - Contracts that lay out the responsibilities of each partner are a prerequisite for the success of any privatisation. The contracts should include clauses on service delivery and expansion to the urban poor.
 - Clear dispute-resolution procedures should be developed prior to privatisation, and women and men users know their rights and how to act when these are not met.
 - Independent technical assistance and contract review should be standard and involve expertise on social aspects, with a gender and poverty focus.
 - Negotiations over privatisation contracts should be open, transparent, and include representatives from all affected stakeholder groups including women and men users (separately, as their interests are not the same).

From: *Summary of the 3rd English Language E-Conference*
by Christine van Wijk



6. *Take account of local cultural realities:* Since there is obviously quite a lot of culture-specific gender expertise in countries, getting together and forming advisory groups on which policy makers and programme managers can call for advice is one option to make this know-how more operational.
7. *Pay more attention to the economic relevance of the projects/programmes for poor women:* In the drinking water supply and sanitation sector, we should manage water as an affordable basic need for elementary domestic consumptive AND productive uses by women and men. Likewise, access to sanitation facilities can considerably improve productivity. In the other sectors, such as irrigation and coastal zone and wetlands management, recognition of existing gendered uses of water by poor people is the starting point for a more balanced and socially just development.

Mainstreaming gender in community water projects

Key strategies to follow

Participants in the e-conferences identified strategies that had been developed by their own institutions to implement the gender perspective in local projects. They were:

- *Separate data by men and women.* During the process of planning, designing and evaluating water projects, it is essential that the question 'who' should be asked at all stages. Who benefits from current and proposed management arrangements? Both men and women? Who gets water for their agricultural pursuits? Who contributes labour to the project? Establish quality indicators to measure the impact of intervention in terms of gender.
- *Schedule meetings at times convenient for women as well as men.* Very often projects fail because of this simple omission: decisions are made at times when women are busy with household tasks. Instead, project leaders should ensure that the time and place of meetings are optimal for members of both sexes. Everyone – men and women – should be properly informed about the meeting. It should be ensured that women are seated in a good place in the meeting-room, not at the back where they cannot be heard.
- *Ensure the participation of both women and men in key decisions about the water system.* Build in mechanisms to effectively gather their input on issues. Ensure that half of the Water Committee members are women and they hold key positions.



from the case studies ...

'Community participation' leading to gender imbalance

"This project was implemented at the end of 1998 in 16 communities in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. Carried out by the Colombian research institute, CINARA, it evaluated projects developed with community participation, but without a gender focus. It established that men with higher incomes, who usually exercise community leadership, dominated the discussions conducted by the Water Committees. Women were not involved in activities related to O&M in treated water projects. In addition, women did not hold important positions in those committees. Seven committees were formed by men only."

From: *Participatory Evaluation of Water Projects in the Andean Region*

- *Plan training sessions that allow everyone, male and female, to participate.* Ensure that the entire community understands the projected benefits of optimal participation by all. Address the inhibitions experienced by women, and the fears or reluctance of male community members.
 - *Mobilise female project staff, both within the technical services and as local intermediaries.* It is far easier for female project staff to gain the confidence of women and help them to overcome their feelings of inadequacy. At the same time, it is also less threatening for male members of the community when female professionals start working with their female family members.
- *Technical training for both men and women.* Often, within water projects, technical tasks are remunerated, or better remunerated, than simple labour contribution. To ensure that members of both sexes are able to benefit equally from water projects, it is necessary to enhance women's skills.
 - *Acknowledge women as producers and users of irrigation water,* so that they can improve their participation in organisations of irrigation users. In many farming systems, women's involvement is overlooked at present.
 - *Carry out workshops on gender aimed at men* to facilitate their sensitisation and encourage greater openness towards the participation of women.

This booklet is one of a series of advocacy materials prepared for the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) by WEDC, Loughborough University, UK with an international GWA team. It was written by Niala Maharaj and edited by Ian Smout, drawing on comments from other members of the team. The draft booklet was reviewed by Helen Derbyshire and Jennifer Francis. The booklet will also be available in French, Portuguese and Spanish.

Summaries of the e-conference discussions on which this publication is based can be found on the GWA website: www.genderandwateralliance.org. A complete set of the case studies and the proceedings (in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) is available on CD and can be obtained by contacting the GWA Secretariat or WEDC.

Published for the Gender and Water Alliance by WEDC, Loughborough University, UK



ISBN 1 84380 020 9

© Gender and Water Alliance

The Gender and Water Alliance

The Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) is an informal network of 200 organisations and individuals that promote the gender approach to water management. Launched at the 2nd World Water Forum in The Hague in 2000, GWA undertakes collaborative activities on a global level in the area of training and capacity building, collection and dissemination of information, advocacy, pilot projects, and policy analysis and development. GWA members have contributed to the most important discussions on water management at international and regional levels in the past two years. In March 2003, the GWA will bring out the first of a series of global reports on gender and water, as well as other information products.



GWA Secretariat,

c/o IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre

PO Box 2869

2601 CW Delft

The Netherlands

Tel: +31-15-219 2943

Fax: +31-15-219 0955

email: francis@irc.nl

www.genderandwateralliance.org

ISBN 1-84380-020-9

