



# Gender Network News

*Special Edition on Gender and Water*

ADB

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*This is a special edition of the quarterly newsletter focusing on gender and water. Special editions of Gender Network News will focus on gender related work and its nexus with specific themes. For any suggestions and personal experiences with projects specific to a sector or theme contact Jennifer Francis (Telephone 632-5729; E-mail: jfrancis@adb.org) or Zarah Zafra (Telephone 632-6995; e-mail: zmzafra@adb.org) .*

*From: Gender Network Secretariat*

### **Thought for the Day**

Some 6,000 children die every day from diseases associated with lack of access to safe water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene – equivalent to 20 jumbo jets crashing every day.

Source: WHO/UNICEF/WSSCC Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000 Report

## *Editorial*

### **Gender, Water and Poverty – Linking Women to Goals**

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. 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...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.”

An integrated approach to water resources management (IWRM) now seen as vital, combines institutional, managerial, social, gender and economic aspects with technical analyses and problem solving, presenting opportunities for people-centered programming that responds to the various needs of all on an equitable basis.

The benefits of women’s involvement in water resources management that will accrue to women themselves, to society, to the environment, and to the water sector are many:

- ◆ **Economic:** If women have a more effective role in water management, it will boost economic production both in agriculture and small industry. Use of irrigation methods will increase and be improved, and both food security and cash crop production will benefit. Increased services (in provision of refreshments, for example) will also result, leading to increased income. Furthermore, when women share in decisions regarding water resource management it leads to greater efficiency especially for the task of conserving scarce supplies, finding low-cost, sustainable technologies and solutions, and paying the costs for water delivery, operation and maintenance, and conservation.
- ◆ **Financial:** Real user demand is more efficiently and effectively mobilized so that payments for valued services are less of a problem.
- ◆ **Social:** Sharing of burdens and benefits more equitably between women and men tends to increase mutual respect within communities and families. It unlocks the creative potential currently imprisoned by the pressures of maintaining artificial hierarchies, and relieves men of the stress of sole responsibility for the family vis-a-vis the wider community. It allows natural skills and talents of women to flow to the surface, where they can contribute to community and national development. Skills levels in general increase, leading to a rise in incomes.

- ◆ **Environmental:** Broader social participation will result in more effective use of existing water resources through rehabilitation activities, waste reduction and innovative arrangements. Women's involvement in a wide range of activities will facilitate freshwater ecosystem maintenance and protection, and some potential water conflicts can be resolved. An improvement in strategies for water conservation, pollution protection and demand management can be expected.
- ◆ **Nutrition and health:** Since women are generally more concerned with family nutrition and health than men, their greater autonomy over water use will boost health. A gendered approach will also spread concern for nutrition, child-care and health among men. Improved family health generates both social and economic benefits.
- ◆ **Cultural:** An effective and socially useful improvement in women's position has many spin-off effects. The contribution of half the world's population is more effectively mobilized towards other sustainable development goals.

There are clear indications that governments, Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), donor agencies and water professionals have accepted the need for gender perspectives; Yes, the word gender is appearing increasingly in sector strategies; And yes, there are a few countries where the acceptance is being converted into concrete action. At the same time, there are some misdirected responses: "If only the well meaning nongovernment organizations that helped villagers to install pour-flush latrines to improve their sanitation and hygiene had first asked the women about the extra two liters of water they would have to carry for every flush." On an altogether larger scale, the flood protection schemes with dams, dykes and channels that prevent the annual deposition of fertile silt on flooded fields penalize especially the poorer women farmers at the same time as they benefit the rich.

Despite being the primary stakeholders in domestic water management, providers of labor for agriculture and users of common water, experience shows women still have minor roles in water resource planning and management.

The incorporation of gender perspectives into IWRM strategies requires attention to the complex relationship between productive and domestic uses of water resources, to the importance of participation in decision making for all, and to the equitable distribution of benefits from improved infrastructures and management systems. What matters is that solutions should not favor one group over another.

Our mission should not only promote greater inclusion of women in every aspect of WRM. As important as that is, the crucial aspect is the optimum involvement of all sections of society, men and women, rich and poor, in decisions about how to sustain our precious water resources.



Knowledge and experience exist about gender and equity in the water sector. Through the examples and lessons we have published in this issue, we hope it will encourage more good practices and keep a close eye on the speed of reform. At the same time, we commend those who are taking positive action to mainstream gender approaches in their water programs, and we offer encouragement and practical support to anyone seeking to follow suit.

Jennifer Francis  
Social Development Specialist (GAD)

## A. ADB's Gender and Water Activities

### 1. Bangladesh Second Small Scale Water Resources Development Sector Project II

The sector project, approved in 2001, aims to establish sustainable, stakeholder-driven, small-scale water resources management systems with special attention to the poor. Gender issues in the water sector not only involve access to water for better health, sanitation, and nutrition, but also questions the rights, responsibilities, and participation at all levels of water resources management to improve productivity and conservation of natural resources. During the design of the project, specific gender interventions were identified under each component based on stakeholder consultations with men and women. As a result, a gender action plan was prepared.

Key features of the Gender Action Plan include: (i) increasing women's participation in water related governance: 1/3 female members required in operation and maintenance (O&M) Committees, in Project Implementation Committees, and in Water Management Associations representing women farmers, fisherwomen, landless women and women laborers; (ii) assessing women's needs through collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative gender disaggregated data throughout project life but initially to develop appropriate mitigation measures for groups of fisherfolk likely to be negatively affected; (iii) developing gender sensitive training modules and training nongovernment organizations and executing agency staff at the field level; (iv) reviewing Labor Construction Society guidelines to establish women-only groups for earthworks and monitoring work and salary differentials between men and women; and (v) identifying indicators and guidelines for gender-based reporting under the O&M Management Information System. Project funds have been allocated to recruit consultants with gender expertise to assist with the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

### 2. Second Red River Basin Sector Project, Viet Nam

This innovative sector project, approved in 2001, introduces integrated water resource management in the Red River Basin of Viet Nam, and supports infrastructure improvements and rural development investments in communes and villages. The project includes a comprehensive gender action plan. In the water resources management component, gender-specific measures include: (i) incorporating gender issues in action plans and implementing guidelines; (ii) requiring female representation in the Red River Basin Organization; (iii) addressing gender issues in integrated water resources management; and (iv) engaging a specialist on gender and public health.

In the water services investment component, every subproject will include gender analysis and specific measures to address women's needs, with the needs of poor ethnic minority women being given highest priority; all new water user groups and forest user groups formed will include at least 40% women in their management committees, and management committees for participatory irrigation management and rural development support will include at least 40% women; all irrigation and drainage management committees must provide personnel statistics by gender specialization, and demonstrate that female staff have the same opportunities as male staff; women will have equal work opportunities and equal pay in construction work on subprojects; and domestic specialists will provide gender training to all other consultants and executing agency staff involved in project implementation. General loan covenants support the gender action plan and women's representation on certain project implementation committees.

### 3. Kazakhstan Rural Area Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project

The water supply and sanitation sector in Kazakhstan has been in serious condition since the independence from the former Soviet Union due to the complete collapse of the former water supply systems. ADB's rural area water supply and sanitation (WSS) project, approved in 2003, is designed to improve the living and health conditions of selected rural communities by establishing safe, easily accessible and sustainable WSS infrastructure services. As women are often excluded from the planning and implementation activities, key features of the Gender Action Plan include: (i) establishing water consumer groups with women as managers and participation in decisions regarding location of WSS services; (ii) reserving 40% of participant's places for capacity building programs on financial management, operation and maintenance, and accounting for women; (iii) creating employment opportunities for women at the water sector committee and local government levels; (iv) ensuring that of all trainees in the hygiene and sanitation education, 50% will be women; (v) developing gender disaggregated indicators to monitor involvement of women, men, the elderly and the poor in the various projects. Project funds have been allocated to recruit a gender consultant to support the GAD initiatives under this project.



### 4. Sri Lanka Secondary Towns and Rural Community-Based Water Supply and Sanitation Project

The project, approved in 2003, aims to increase the capacity of water sector institutions to operate, maintain and augment existing water schemes and to invest in new ones in the rural and urban areas. A gender action plan was developed during the loan-processing phase with specific activities and gender based targets under the main components of the projects. These activities and targets are: (i) 50% of women in community meetings, community groups activities and community based organization committees; (ii) holding separate discussions for women regarding choice of

technologies for water supply and sanitation (WSS); (iii) recruiting qualified women for the project implementation; (iv) participating professionals of the national water supply and drainage board NWSDB in trainings must be 20% women; (v) designing awareness campaigns about WSS to emphasize the role of women as providers and users of water; (vi) ensuring that professional and technical staff of the project monitoring and implementation units and counterpart nongovernment organizations will comprise 25% of women. General loan covenants support the gender action plan.

## B. Highlights Around the World

### 1. Limai, Cameroon: A Women's Project or Equality of Women and Men?

Limai, a community in Cameroon in West Africa, had a relatively well functioning water service. It used a demand-responsive approach, more equitable contributions, and a stronger, more capable and more autonomous water management organization. The history of Limai's water service has to be seen in the context of its location in the region of Bassa, north of Cameroon. Women in this region marry into the village of their husbands and continue to be considered strangers, although they belong to the same ethnic group as their in-laws. The shared experience has caused high solidarity among them and has stimulated them to unite and organize around their most pressing need, a better domestic water supply. The women formed a group that initiated the water project, chose the locations and raised the initial capital by cultivating a communal field. Having gotten the project off the ground, they then invited men into the local water committees that manage the service. The management work is divided along gender lines: a man is in the chair at village level and a woman is the village water treasurer. Women chair water committees at neighborhood level. Men committee members clear the paths and sites from vegetation, open and close the water points and manage conflicts, spending in total about three times as much time as women members. Previously, the women's group raised all income to maintain the service. Recently they have been able to convince the men to also contribute financially as the domestic water benefits all members of the households, and not just the women.

## Cross Regional Learning: Case of Nepal Building Gender Responsive Water User Associations

In support of ADB's *Irrigation Management Transfer Project (IMTP)*, the Nepal Gender and Development Specialist initiated a pilot project under the IMTP Panchakanya subproject. The pilot project as this case describes, *Building Gender Responsive Water User Associations (WUA)* demonstrates ways in which women can better contribute to irrigation management, cost recovery and improved agricultural production. As a result of the pilot, gender strategies were developed in all IMTP subprojects, which were also replicated in subsequent irrigation projects.

At the start of the pilot project, women comprised 15% of the WUA but most felt they were there only to meet the Government's mandated quota for women. The challenge was to mobilize community willingness and support for more participation of women in WUA decision-making bodies. Women were particularly interested in irrigation management, cropping patterns, and canal protection. To increase understanding of how the irrigation distribution system worked, a three-dimensional model of the Panchakanya system was built with the participation of women and men WUA members. The WUA then created a Women's Facilitator Group (WFG) made up of 23 women and 2 men representing the main, branch and outlet canals as catalysts for change. The WFG identified its own training needs which included building their technical capacity on canal operation and maintenance, water distribution and management, increasing gender sensitivity, strengthening the WFG's organizational development skills, and an observation tour to agricultural centers, farms and research stations for improved farming practices. After the training, the WFG organized themselves into small groups to motivate women and men in the community to work towards a more equitable distribution of water. At the end, a workshop was held to share project results with government, NGOs and WUA members of other IMTP subprojects.

The pilot project resulted in (i) amending the WUA constitution to allow membership of wives and adult male and female children of households with land ownership; (ii) incorporating the WFG as an arm of WUA; (iii) increasing women's representation in the WUA to 60% within one year; (iv) constructing an additional 500 meters length canal exceeding the project objective of total irrigated area by 50 hectares; and (v) increasing 80% household participation in irrigation service fee payments.

The pilot project was quite successful in demonstrating that (i) the establishment of the WFG as an arm of WUA is a viable option to facilitate women's participation in strategic planning and shared control over decision-making; (ii) technical training for women on irrigation management contributes to building women's confidence to participate more effectively in the WUA; (iii) increased support by women for canal cleaning results in increased water flow and reduced operation and maintenance costs; (iv) more equitable distribution of water leads to increased user willingness to pay the irrigation service fee and sustain its benefits; (v) women are willing to switch from mono-cropping to multi cropping given training in new seed varieties and new production methods; and, (vi) women's increased participation in decision-making levels of WUA has promoted partnership between men and women in the communities.



## 2. Java, Indonesia: Effects of Gender-Sensitive Assessment on Gender Relations

Women in Sewukan community in Magelan district, Java, Indonesia had never met other than in social or religious events. Their participation in the evaluation of 11 water systems in their community affected gender relations in several ways:

- ◆ **Recognition of ‘power on.’** Initially, the village head had considered consulting women on technical design and workmanship of the systems a waste of time. He said that women knew nothing about such aspects. However, his views and those of the other men changed when the group of women came with concrete design errors such as too low a ratio of cement to sand in concrete mixing and a too low entry point for the water pipes in the reservoirs. In contrast, the men’s group brought out only very general remarks such as a lack of training. The experience led the *kepaladusun* to make the unusual remark in public that the women had brought out more useful technical observations than the men. When the men presented the outcomes in the plenary meeting (women and men alternated in presentations and the men started), they presented only the women’s findings, until a man in the audience asked: “But what about our findings?” and everyone began to laugh.
- ◆ **Introduction of ‘power over.’** The women’s own evaluation of the design and quality of the existing services also served to put two women’s needs on the agenda for the new water supply: a better distribution of domestic water and the addition of sanitation to the project. Because the community already had eleven small domestic water supplies, the male leaders had assumed that there was no need for a 12<sup>th</sup> system. They had therefore decided that the new water supply would be built for irrigation. The women’s evaluation of the water quantity then showed that while all households had access, the distribution of water throughout the community was skewed.
- ◆ **Emergence of ‘power within’ and ‘power with.’** Through the process, the women had become aware that they had the same water and sanitation problems. They said that, although they were organized and held women’s meetings, they had not previously discussed anything other than social and religious issues. In the assembly where they presented their findings along with the men, they stated that they wanted to set up committees in each of the six community neighborhoods to participate in the design of the new water supply system and monitor the contractors on their quality of construction. The male leaders supported this idea stating that, if the work was not done well, they would use the legal means open to them to ensure good quality design and construction.

### C. Events and Meetings

#### 1. Workshop on Women’s Participation in the Promotion of Social Development: Lessons from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean

The workshop was held in Tokyo and Saitama, Japan from 27–30 October 2003. Yuriko Uehara, Senior Social Development Specialist of the Mekong Department attended this workshop sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and co-organized by the Inter-American Institute for Social Development under the Japan Program of the Integration and Regional Programs Department, and the IDB Office in Japan. ADB and IDB collaborated on this initiative to develop the concept and identify women’s organizations in the Asia Region. The objectives of the workshop were to: (i) analyze the diverse roles that women and women’s organization have played to promote equitable and inclusive social development in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Asia; (ii) identify strategies and programs that effectively promote women’s participation in social development initiatives; (iii) open opportunities for the exchange and experiences and for networking; (iv) identify lessons that the two regions can exchange with regard to women’s participation in social development processes. The workshop was opened by a seminar focused on the changing role of women in social development in Japan followed by a three-day workshop in Saitama which was divided into

four sessions: (i) Women’s Mobilization for Community Development; (ii) Women’s Leadership in Political Participation; (iii) Women’s Policy Agenda and Women’s Roles in Policy Dialogues and Decision Making Processes; and (iv) Synthesis. In summary, the workshop highlighted the different roles played by the governments in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. Though there are a number of common constraints, differences were found in the role and interests of the state i.e., in Asia, women demand state support to meet their needs while in Latin America and the Caribbean, the state tends to be grasped as more ‘opposing’ entity. The staff reflected that the Multilateral Development banks can support this upward transition through various means and that mere participation or representation cannot automatically bring forth the changes or alter the course of actions. Unless women entering into the political realm work consciously addressing gender and other crucial equity issues, their representation is likely to remain as a token.

#### 2. Conference on Women and Agriculture

The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) Conference on Women in Agriculture was held from 19-21 November 2003 at the Heritage Hotel in Manila, Philippines. Jennifer Francis, Social Development Specialist of the Poverty Reduction and Social Development Division made a presentation on *Women Farmers Access to Water—a dead end?* and chaired the session on women’s access to water resources. The workshop was designed to identify the issues and develop strategies to facilitate women farmers’ participation in decision-making by sharing experiences and lessons learned from their fellow-farmer women from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Day 1 of the workshop was dedicated to discussing issues pertaining to greater access to land and water for women farmers which included three panel discussions on: (i) equitable and sustainable access of women farmers to land resources; (ii) equitable and sustainable access of women farmers to water resources; and (iii) women farmer’s involvement in freshwater management. Day 2 was dedicated to building the capacity of women farmers in trade negotiations.

Gender bias and gender blindness persist: farmers are still generally perceived as ‘male’ by policy-makers, development planners and agricultural service deliverers. For this reason, women find it more difficult than men to gain access to valuable resources such as land, credit and agricultural inputs, technology, extension, training and services that would enhance their production capacity. However, staff reflected that while it is important for women farmers to have a separate body or platform, unless they are fully integrated and represented by large numbers in male dominated groups, they will remain politically and economically disadvantaged. Building capacity of women farmers’ to represent governing structures of agriculture at all levels must therefore constitute a central pillar in any future agricultural development strategy.

### D. Useful References

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