Gender mainstreaming in IWRM

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THE GENDER WATER Alliance (GWA) was established in June 2000, to promote gender mainstreaming (GM) as an integral part of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). GWA is an international network open to all organisations and individuals involved in IWRM and currently consists of 171 members from all over the world. It is hosted by a secretariat at the IRC-International Water and Sanitation Centre in the Netherlands and governed by a steering committee elected by the members. It is an Associate Programme of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) funded by governments of the Netherlands and United Kingdom.

As a network the Alliance is working to achieve equity and equality amongst women and men, irrespective of age, colour, religion, culture, languages or income, in the use, management, and development of sustainable water resources. This is by advocating for equitable distribution of responsibilities, burdens and benefits.

http://www.genderandwateralliance.org/

The GWA conducted a series of e-conferences (Jan-May 2002) and the Water Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) facilitated and consolidated the lessons learnt from these on behalf of the alliance.

Objectives of the e-conferencing

The purpose of the e-conference series was to collect, share and analyse information on the successes and failures in the practice of mainstreaming gender and to make recommendations for improving practice.

This meant:

- Providing current information on the state of the art of GM including concepts and definitions of gender in IWRM;
- · Promoting the sharing of experiences and knowledge of alliance members and building on the practice of GM through case studies; and
- Providing specific recommendations.

The two conferences were *'State of the art: gender mainstreaming in IWRM'* and *'Successes and Failures of Gender Mainstreaming in IWRM- Case Studies'*. Four conferences ran in parallel, in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, using broadly similar agendas. Translations of the summary reports from each of these were produced in all languages. The synthesis of all these outputs depicts the range of discussion topics with examples, across the four languages. This presentation is not intended to cover all points made but aims to share some of the lessons learnt and facilitate discussions on how these can be integrated in sector programming/activities.

Participants profile

Participants represented a wide diversity of geographic locations, namely Brazil, Canada, Caribbean, Central and South America, France, Indian Ocean, Middle East, Portugal, West, Central, East and North Africa, UK, USA.

In terms of the professional profile, a wide range of institutions[1] representing local government; donors; universities and research institutions; professional associations and networks; resource and documentation centres; project offices; the media; international and national NGOs; gender specialists; and agriculture specialists. The following table shows the language profile of subscribers.

Language	E	S	F	P
Conference one	280	260	146	117
Conference two		297	200	N/A

Participants had different levels of familiarity, experience and expertise relating to these issues. For example, Spanish and Portuguese participants ranged from those who had very little understanding to those who showed extensive knowledge of the related concepts and available literature.

English language participants looked for concrete, practical implementation methodologies, while the Portuguese wanted a basic overview of some of the issues relating to what constituted a knowledge gap.

Recommendations from GM in IWRM

The following is a synthesis of the main recommendations made across all the four language discussions. The origins of contributions are denoted by (E), (F), (S), and (P) to indicate English, French, Spanish and Portuguese e-conferences respectively.

Concepts and linkages on definitions of GM gender

- There was consensus that gender is a sociological concept by which roles and relationships for men and

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[1] Across this range of professional areas and skills, technical, social and institutional approaches were apparent, which addressed both rural and urban issues.

women are assigned by patriarchal societies on the basis of their sex. This results in women's subordination, marginalisation and exclusion from social, economic and political processes (E). Experience of gender is also affected by age, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic class (F). A gender approach is one element of a broader participatory approach that seeks to address these inequalities (F).

- Gender is a global issue due to the universal elements of sexual inequality. However a global solution to GM and its implementation is impractical due to North/ South and regional variations in experiences (F).
- A general assertion was around the dangers of referring predominantly to *women when we* use the term 'gender', rather than to women and men (F) (E).
- Implementing a sustainable gendered approach requires fundamental changes to occur at a societal and cultural level (S). It is often seen as simply a politically correct term, with questionable political will behind it, resulting in insufficient funding levels to fully support it (F). At the institutional level, a gender perspective means generating strategies (e.g. social position, education, salary) for changing the unequal relations of men and women to resources, decision-making and rights (S). Lack of qualified personnel and policies is a limitation (S) however, it is not sufficient to have just a single 'gender person' (E). Generally, gender is often sidestreamed due to lack of understanding and the will to change. The inclusion of gender as a concept in projects does not necessarily ensure that a gender perspective is maintained (E).
- GM can be potentially destabilising if implemented in an inappropriate manner to the local cultural context (F). Such approaches generate resistance as they are more than mere discourse and impact on the reality of people's lives (S).

Gender, water, poverty and health

- Households headed by women are more likely to be poor than those headed by men (S). There are direct links between poverty and access to water and continuity of its supply (S).
- Links between water and health in respect of vector control, pollution and the potential benefits of improved WRM (P) need to be addressed to reduce health care expenses (F).
- Better access to water (S) with the consequent effects on health provides more time (F) and opportunities (P) for employment opportunities for women.

Gender and class, caste, ethnicity and inequality

- A lengthy discussion ensued in the English conference about the impact on access to WATSAN of wider structural inequalities *such* as caste and class, and to what extent GM could overcome these effects, if at all.

South Asian experience noted that discrimination practices, entrenched in the caste system, could undermine efforts towards community empowerment. Examples from Nepal were given of cutting pipelines to lower caste communities in times of social tension.
- The suggested solution was to have different sets of water taps for different caste groups, with lower caste members receiving operation and maintenance training and proportionate representation on user committees. Experience of gender and its relation to water is also influenced by ethnicity (S).
- To make water schemes sustainable, some effort has to be made to address these wider aspects of inequality, thus extending the nature of these projects from improvements to WATSAN to wider poverty alleviation and reducing vulnerability of communities.

Gender and traditional roles relating to water

- Perceptions about appropriate roles and behaviour that are allocated according to gender are a limiting factor with regard to GM. For instance, traditional roles suggest that women have a mainly reproductive and domestic role regarding water use, while men hold a more productive and public role.
- This is further reinforced by aspects of women's behaviour and perceptions, promulgated by socio-cultural forces e.g. low self esteem, lack of confidence, illiteracy, reluctance to interact in public forums and with strangers (E). All this precludes GM and needs to be addressed. Each community needs to be assessed in relation to this (S).

Legal, political, administrative and technical issues

- Women's exclusion from water management committees is an example of their wider marginalisation in society (P). Addressing this aspect of inequality can empower women to engage in other development activities (S).
- In IWRM, women are clearly under-represented in technical areas, and over-represented in administrative areas (E).

Lessons learnt for GM in IWRM

Definition of gender

- Greater clarity and simplicity is required on definitions of GM as transferring meaning across languages requires specific terminologies to be developed (F) (P).

Promotion of GM concept

- The concept of GM should be promoted amongst both women and men (F)(E);
- These definitions should make clear that GM is a means of strengthening solidarity between men and women to

improve the lives of all (F), with the emphasis towards power sharing rather than power reversal (F);

- Resistance to GM is a result of social and cultural factors and these areas need to be addressed (F);
- GM should ideally be developed in collaboration with the wider population to encourage ownership of the concept (F);
- GM should be promoted at several different levels: conceptually, and at the field level for implementation (F) and presented in a way that is relevant and meaningful to existing water management frameworks e.g. its benefits to the effectiveness and efficiency of water management should be emphasized;
- · GM should be linked to wider sustainable development goals (E).

Capacity building/enabling environment
The following issues were raised around this:

- It should require the involvement of all actors (F) beginning with the education of children (F)(S);
- Women's absence in water management was noted despite it leading to improvements (F). To enhance this, basic training and new skills in literacy, technical, financial and management issues should be offered to women (F) and specific courses to enable them to engage in decision-making processes at the community level (S);
- To avoid the marginalisation of gender in certain areas only, it should be mainstreamed at all levels – policy, practice and programme. Hence institutions need to have the willingness and capacity to institute GM and ensure gender specialised skills are employed (E);
- Adequate funding and resources should be allocated to carry out effective GM, its activities and analysis (E);
- Capacity-building should be facilitated from the bottom up, (collectives are useful here).

Planning GM of IWRM projects
- Careful planning is necessary at all stages of projects and programmes to ensure clearly defined objectives, principles and methodologies (E);
- Planning needs to be flexible to take account of changes suggested by results of GM impact assessment (F);
- A gender perspective should be built into; longer term projects may be useful in ensuring GM (S);
- Socio-cultural and economic factors that influence the experience of gender (F) such as wealth and ethnicity, which bring with them associated inequalities (E) should be taken into account.

Methodology for mainstreaming gender
This requires scrutiny of the following:

- An analysis of the current state of GM in the organisation (S);

- A review and analysis of different users' (women's and men's) practices should focus on all areas of water use, both domestic and productive (F) e.g. kitchen gardening applied at the micro-level (at community, household or small-scale project level) (E);
- The analysis should also entail current and future, priorities, access, control and concerns about location, technologies etc relating to water resources (F) (E);
- At a professional level, understanding of the issues and how to implement GM needs to be fostered. GM tools should be developed for adoption and use by water management (F) and specialised advocacy materials focusing on gender and water issues should be produced for distribution (P);
- Gender should be raised as an issue constantly at workshops, meetings and discussion forums as part of an ongoing programme of gender sensitisation (E);
- In carrying out the analysis it is important that gender disaggregated data is collected, and that women's contributions are given equal weight.

GM policy
- Policy change to reflect the adoption of GM principles is required (E) (F) (S);
- This legitimates the authority of decision makers to effect changes (E);
- GM should be reviewed in both financial institutions and governmental decision-making bodies to counter the lack of coherence between discourse and practice (S);
- A topic for review is the women's participation in IWRM, and its impact at the domestic, institutional and policy formulation levels (S);
- A better understanding of current water resources legislation is required if change is to brought about (P).

Impact assessment of GM
A systematic assessment should be built into all IWRM projects (F) to ensure assessment *of the* progress, strengths and weaknesses of GM (E)(F) e.g. management performance indicators, work plans, budgets and levels of women's representation in leadership and technical positions (E).

Summary and conclusions
The term 'gender' is not a global phrase, understood by and translated easily to all. However, it seems that the conference phases achieved some consensus on its meaning. Dependent on socio-cultural factors, different impacts and effects of being a woman or a man are experienced; generally though, it is more likely in any context for women to suffer aspects of marginalisation and subordination than are men.

This extends to all aspects of life including the use and access to adequate water supply and sanitation facilities. Projects which aim to address difficulties experienced in this area must take into account wider inequalities caused by factors such as caste and ethnic group, class, and the

traditional roles and expectations associated with these, in order to achieve any sort of sustainability.

Many additional ideas were offered towards success in GM in IWRM based on participants experience and knowledge. These included:

- providing clarity on terms and definitions to counter fears and opposition;
- wider methods of promoting the concept and facilitating an enabling environment to ensure its acceptance;
- advice on planning and methodological approaches to GM in projects including impact assessment;
- thoughts on what policy changes are required and how to bring these about.

For more details, please see the GWA website at http://www.genderandwateralliance.org

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