



Gender Mainstreaming in Water Policies and Actions

'In order to increase efficiency, impact and sustainability overall in the water sector, women need to take part in all levels of decision-making, making use of their knowledge' (AMCOW Policy on Mainstreaming Gender in the Water Sector in Africa, 2011)

WHY

Women and girls are key actors within WASH

Women and girls are the primary water-carriers for their families, doing the fetching in 77% or more of households (MDGs Gender Chart, 2015)



Female-headed households, adopt labour-intensive manual technologies

(such as buckets) more often, whereas men use water pumps and river diversion (IWMI, 2012; study conducted in Ghana and Zambia)



Key Actors within WASH

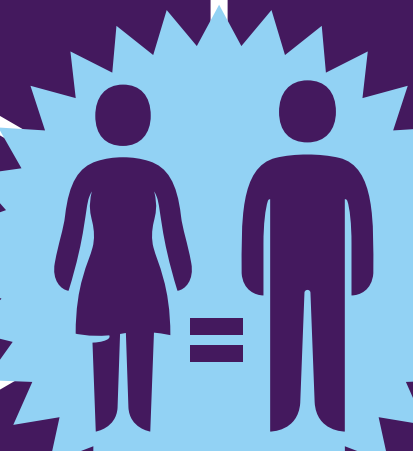
Irrigated and Rain-fed Agriculture

Access to Water

Women's Participation River Basins and Deltas

Decision-making

Differential Impact



Limited participation

Women play an important role as mediators in conflict resolution, being very effective in behind-the-scene persuasive discussions, but are not (yet) involved in public mediation (IWMI Working Paper 171, 2016)



The time women gain as a result of drinking water programmes is approximately **one to eight hours per day**. This is then used for parenting, small trade, attending school (for girls) and rest (SDC, 2008)



The leadership experience of women

in Water Management Groups empowered them to stand as candidates for local government elections in 2016 in the project area in coastal Bangladesh, with 20 female members elected (Blue Gold, 2016)



The gender unawareness of hydropower projects

increased gender disparities by imposing a disproportionate share of social costs on women, without giving them a fair share of the benefits (in SADC, 2015)

For more information and more detailed examples, please see corresponding [Memo](#)

Policy Challenges Policy Opportunities

Policies and actions on all **three MFA areas of water management primarily consider technical aspects**, with social dimensions not (sufficiently) recognised or being ignored.

- Consider and address social dimensions, such as the different roles and needs of women and men in using and saving water, and the crucial role of women in agricultural production.

- Apply gender analysis tools, such as reflected in the [Memo](#) and in the MER/Dutch Sustainability Unit's [Quick Reference Guide](#).

Water management policies and actions in river basins in particular are considered mainly technical areas, with social dimensions ignored.

- Operationalise the role of women in decision-making processes on RBM by ensuring explicit attention to gender issues and constraints, e.g. in a policy framework and/or ToR for a programme or project.

- Water management projects with infrastructure components need not only environmental impact assessments but also gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessments.

Roles of women in water productivity are often acknowledged, but without recognition of gender constraints and decision-making potential.

Identify constraints (e.g. related to access to water, membership of water users' organisations) by using tools such as gender analysis,

for example the World Bank's ['Checklist for Integrating Gender-Related Issues in Agricultural Water Management'](#).

A common pitfall in WASH is to maintain or even increase women's work burden by reinforcing their commonly accepted roles and not involving men in terms of sharing responsibilities and workloads.

- WASH programmes can also promote positive and respectful roles, responsibilities and relationships between women and men, as recognised, for example, in the

['Resource Guide: Working Effectively with Women and Men in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programs'](#).

Water is a Dutch 'Top Sector' product but often lacks gender integration.

- Integrating gender will strengthen the rating of the Dutch water sector.

- FDW (the Sustainable Water Fund) included stronger and more explicit requirements for gender in its [Policy Framework for its third Call \(2016\)](#), compared with previous calls.

Promising Pathways



Enhance equitable decision-making on water management by women and men

- Ensure women are represented and meaningfully participating in decision-making bodies at all levels, from Water User Associations to RBOs.
- Build the capacity of men and women in such bodies on technical, gender and leadership issues.
- Ensure men and women as water stakeholders influence decision-making.
- Encourage internal policies and bylaws of such organisations to be gender-aware.
- Base decision-making on insights into gender-specific needs and impacts.

Case: In [Blue Gold](#), gender and leadership training for all Executive Committee members (male and female) of Water Management Groups is provided to boost women's active participation and encourage men to create space for them.



Increase women's contribution to and benefits from 'more crop per drop'

- Consult women and ensure their needs are addressed in the design of water infrastructure and apply women-friendly criteria for water-lifting technologies.
- Involve women in water-saving measures and ensure access to relevant technologies.
- Target men and women for extension activities, setting target(s) and/or quota for women's participation while addressing specific constraints for women.
- Increase women's productivity and income by increasing access to loans, services, and markets.
- Encourage more equitable intra-household decision-making on production and spending of income.

Case: [SMIS](#) has put in place a rule that men and women from the same household attend training, whereas previously only one person per household was allowed, effectively excluding women.



Enhance sustainability in WASH through new roles for women and men

- Consult with women and men, girls and boys to ensure designs meet their needs, including allowing water-saving.
- Ensure water harvesting and recycling of (domestic) water also involve women as actors and beneficiaries.
- Ensure women are represented and meaningfully participate in WASH Committees, without only reinforcing stereotype gender roles.
- Target men and boys to share responsibilities for WASH, reducing women's workload.
- Promote the adoption and application by water operators of a gender approach.
- Enhance a gender-sensitive working environment within water operators, with more gender-balanced and gender-sensitive staff.

Case: [WOP++](#) intends that all water utilities will develop gender strategies and integrate them in their activities.