

Report of the Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water

Meeting of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality 23 February 2005, Agenda item 6(g)

Mandate/Objective(s) of Task Force:

The Gender and Water Task Force (GWTF) is responsible for the gender issues component of the UN-Water programme which will coordinate the 'Water-for-Life' Decade, 2005-2015. The Task Force activities should aim to bring the gender and water perspective to the forefront of the global agenda, a theme integral to the Decade. This will be achieved by ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into national and international programmes for the Decade, and by linking the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for gender equality with the water and sanitation goals. The gender perspective must be integrated at the global, national, regional and local levels.

Intersessional Activities and Outputs:

1. Members of the GWTF have provided inputs, materials and planning in preparation for the 'Water for Life' Decade 2005-2015:
 - A background paper has been prepared on '*A Gender Perspective on Water Resources and Sanitation*' for CSD-13 (New York, 11 to 22 April 2005). The TF background paper will be the central document for recommendations on gender mainstreaming strategies for the Decade.
 - A short backgrounder on 'Gender and Water' has been prepared for the booklet being produced on the 'Water for Life' theme central to the Decade. The booklet will be released on World Water Day, 22 March 2005.
 - Support to the organization of workshops, side events and/or learning centres at CSD 13 and other venues for capacity building and awareness raising at the national, civil society and local authority levels in the area of gender approaches to water and sanitation management. The TF plans to provide support to events being organized for the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting and CSD-13 that would feature women leaders in water and/or environment ministries, including for the official launch of the Decade.
2. In the context of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), being held in March 2005, DESA's Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) has prepared a paper on "Women 2000 and beyond: Women and Water", which can also be used for the Intergovernmental Preparatory meeting for CSD-13, and the launch of the Water for Life Decade, March 2005. During CSW, a side event is being planned on Women, Peace and Environment, 3 March 2005 (UNEP, WEDO).
3. The GWTF has provided inputs to the Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation, and its recommendations have been incorporated into the final report, "Health, Dignity, and Development: What will it take?" issued in January 2005.
4. Members of the TF have initiated discussions with, and involvement of, female water and environment ministers, as a follow up to UNEP's Global Women's Assembly on the Environment and the Women Leaders Initiative launched at the African Ministerial Council

on Water (AMCOW) meeting in Uganda in November 2004. These women, who have become global 'WASH' (Water, sanitation and Hygiene) advocates, will be key partners in getting the message of mainstreaming gender in water management to the top of the global agenda during the 'Water for Life' Decade. The task manager and other TF members met with several of the ministers of water/environment at The Global Women's Assembly and recent meetings of AMCOW (Entebbe, Uganda, November 2004), the Global WASH Forum (Dakar, Senegal, December 2004), and the SIDS Meeting in Mauritius (January 2005).

5. TF members submitted nominees for DAW's 3-day Workshop on case study methodology for gender mainstreaming in the water and sanitation sector (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 2004). A synthesis report of the case studies will be published, and the full case studies will be featured on the website. These evidence-based examples will stimulate dialogue on gender mainstreaming in water management.
6. Members of the TF are assisting regional and national policy-makers to secure sustainable access to water by strengthening women's involvement in the decision-making process. The TF is currently drafting proposals for specific projects related to gender, water and sanitation management, and micro credit in Uganda and Lesotho. The TF will also assist with drafting project proposals in the field of water and indigenous knowledge for the 'Water for Life' Decade in South America (Peru, Chile).
7. The GWTF contributed photos and text on a 'Women and Water' theme to the exhibition "Making a Difference: Thirty Years of United Nations Efforts to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women", organized as part of the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) and thirtieth anniversary of the First World Conference in Mexico (1975), from 1 March – 30 April 2005. The exhibit has been organized by DAW in collaboration with the Department of Public Information (DPI) and IANWGE. The collected photos can be used for other exhibits during the Decade.
8. The Oxford Roundtable on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Education for Schools was held from 24-26 January 2005 to raise awareness among decision makers, parents and communities of: the importance of water and sanitation facilities in schools to girls' education; and what needs to be done to enable girls to get a quality education. Participants (including banks, NGOs and donors) pledged that all primary schools would receive a '*basic quality package*' of water, sanitation and hygiene education messages by 2015 (UNICEF, IRC and others).

Activities for the future/next steps :

GWTF members (and other members of IANWGE) should have a strong presence at events organized to launch and celebrate the 'Water for Life' Decade, in order to guarantee that the gender perspective is mainstreamed into the global water and sanitation agenda. For example, TF members are organizing and supporting side events and learning centres at CSD-13 and other venues to promote gender approaches to water and sanitation management. TF members (i.e., Gender and Water Alliance, IW Learn, UNDP) are also providing capacity building support for national and regional initiatives to incorporate a gender perspectives in water and sanitation programmes.

Working closely with the women ministers of water and/or environment at CSD-13 will be important for advancing the gender and water perspective at the global and national levels during the 'Water for Life' Decade. It is hoped to include representatives of these women leaders in a network on gender, water and sanitation.

The General Assembly Resolution proclaiming 2005 to 2015 as the Water for Life Decade recognizes the importance of ensuring the participation of women in all water-related development efforts. The TF can assist in these efforts by providing content on gender and water (combining goals 3 and 10) to the MDG website with information and 'best practices'.

GWTF members will be developing policy, advocacy and training materials for the Water for Life Decade, in order to ensure that the gender perspective is reflected in the global water and sanitation agenda. UNICEF, IRC and others are providing Water and Environmental Sanitation (WES) content for Girls Education curricula, in the context of the Oxford Roundtable held in late January 2005. TF members (ESCAP, UNESCO) will attend a training workshop on 'Promotion of Women's Participation in Water Management' to be held in Tehran, 23 - 24 February 2005. A paper on "Mainstreaming gender in policies, institutions and projects on water resources management" has been prepared by ESCAP for this workshop.

The TF will also work with the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) to provide inputs on gender-relevant indicators and policy recommendations for the next World Water Development Report (WWDR 2006).

The TF should promote the integration of gender in national/regional development projects that support water and gender issues. An outcome would be the establishment of a platform for advocating the importance of gender mainstreaming in water management schemes.

To address gender equality on the societal level, members of the TF will assist in providing information on gender sensitive budgeting at national levels. This will serve as a tool to examine whether actual expenditures and planned budgets reflect the policy commitments on gender equality. The TF will also promote the collection and use of data disaggregated by sex by the Joint Monitoring Programme to contribute to gender sensitive policy formulation.

Messages for IANWGE

1. The International Decade for Action "Water for Life", 2005-2015 promotes the importance of the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, "*whilst striving to ensure the importance of women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts*". Members of the Network should support national and regional initiatives to prepare Decade programmes that incorporate a gender perspective.
2. It is important to have an IANWGE/GWTF presence at both the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (28 February to 4 March 2005) and the 13th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (11-22 April 2005). A focus on the central role of women in achieving the goals in water and sanitation and human settlements should be prominent throughout the plenary sessions, side events and learning centres.
3. Members of the Network should promote gender mainstreaming in programmes for reaching the MDGs in water and sanitation.

4. Members of the Network should support initiatives to target women for training and capacity building. In particular training programmes in water and sanitation must involve women in technical and managerial roles to ensure their presence in the decision-making process.
5. Synergies among Network members can be promoted by sharing expertise, networks and information systems. The gender focal points and the water focal points should be connected within each agency to identify successful strategies for involving women in water and sanitation projects at all levels. This will be fundamental to improving the performance of the programmes.
6. Community action and social mobilization around the provision of basic social services such as water, sanitation and hygiene provide a valuable entry point for promoting women's empowerment. The Network could promote such an approach.
7. Members of the Network should advocate for gender at three levels, with coordination at each level. First, the UN agencies and other international organisations must be encouraged to incorporate gender into their water and sanitation agenda. Second, country-level water and sanitation projects must integrate a gender perspective. Third, gender must be mainstreamed into projects at the local level, and community involvement ensured.

Taskforce Members:

Focal points for both gender and water issues from the following UN Programmes and Agencies: UN DESA, Division for Sustainable Development and Division for the Advancement of Women; FAO; IFAD; ITU; UNICEF; UNDP; UNEP; UNESCO; UN-Habitat; UNIFEM; UNHCR; WHO; ECA; ESCWA; and ESCAP. Non-UN organizations include: the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA); the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO); the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC); the UN Foundation; and the Freshwater Caucus for CSD as an observer.