

Women as Agents of Change in Water

Reflections on Experiences from the Field



Colophon

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Foreword

UN Women and Women for Water Partnership join the International Decade for Action Water for Life 2005 – 2015 in promoting efforts to fulfill international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015. This includes those of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, and Agenda 21.

The challenge has been to focus attention on action-oriented activities and policies that ensure the long-term sustainable management of water resources, in terms of both quantity and quality, and include measures to improve sanitation, while working towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Achieving the goals of the 'Water for Life' Decade requires sustained commitment, cooperation and investment on the part of all stakeholders from 2005 to 2015 and far beyond. The resolution establishing the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life' (2005-2015), explicitly calls for promoting women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts.

The importance of involving both women and men in the management of water and sanitation and access-related questions has been recognized at the global level, starting from the 1977 United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata, the International

Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade (1981-90) and the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin (January 1992), which explicitly recognizes the central role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. Reference is also made to the involvement of women in water management in Agenda 21 (chapter 18) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Social expectations dictate that women and girls are the primary water carriers for their families; in over 70 per cent of households where water has to be fetched, women and girls do the fetching. Where rural water sources are distant, women walk up to two hours to fetch water. Where urban water is from shared standpipes they may wait in line for over an hour. Survey data for 25 sub-Saharan countries indicate that women spend a total of 16 million hours a day collecting water; the more distant the source of water, the less water the household uses. Evidence from around the world shows that water-related time poverty translates to lost income for women and lost schooling for girls. In addition, high levels of mental stress result when water rights are insecure. All this fetching and carrying causes cumulative wear-and-tear to the neck, spine, back and knees; in effect, a woman's body becomes part of the water-delivery infrastructure, doing the work of pipes. Yet everywhere, water is another word for life; access to water for poor women is one of the highest priorities of sustainable development. As such, the gender-responsive implementation of the

proposed Sustainable Development Goal on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all will be vital.

The differences and inequalities between women and men influence how individuals respond to changes in water resources management. Thus understanding gender roles, relations, and inequalities can help explain the choices people make and their different options. Involving both women and men in integrated water resources initiatives can increase project effectiveness and efficiency. This publication highlights some remarkable cases of members of Women for Water Partnership where women's participation has made a difference. They represent an important contribution to the Water for Life Decade and the lessons emerging from them can support further advances in the implementation of the post 2015 agenda.



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Note from the Author

The International Decade for Action *Water for Life* 2005 – 2015 has focused attention on water cooperation to achieve universal water access and sustainable water management. Impressive strides forward have been made in the course of the Decade, aided by the recognition in 2010 of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation by the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. In 2014 the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme and the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) report indicated that we are well underway to achieving the agreed Millennium Development Goal (MDG7) targets for water, with 89% of the global population having access to an improved drinking water source in 2012 and only three countries failing to reach the 50% MDG target. However, such figures should not let us forget that to date close to 900 million people do not have access to improved water sources and 2.6 billion people lack access to sanitation¹. Nor should we forget that having access to an “improved source” does not necessarily mean that the water is safe and that it is sufficient for sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, there is a strong disparity between rural and urban areas, and women and children are still disproportionately affected by lack of access, especially in least developed countries.

The Water for Life Decade and the Dublin/Rio Principles for Integrated Water Resources Management underline the central role of

women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.² The Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) supports women in performing these fundamental activities. WfWP mobilizes the potential of women’s civil society organizations, their social capital and their ability to change their societies; and creates an enabling environment for meaningful participation of women in decision making, at all levels. This has a dual effect, as having a say in water and sanitation provision and management empowers women, and empowered women transform their communities.

To date, WfWP has grown to 26 women’s networks covering approximately 100 countries, predominantly in the developing world; these networks together have consistently raised the profile of women in the water and development sectors, both in their professional capacity and as a major social group. As an active contributor to the Water for Life Decade, WfWP today looks back on a myriad of concerted actions and successful projects that have improved the living conditions of hundreds of thousands of people and have enabled women to become agents of change in their communities and countries.

This publication pays tribute to the work of women’s civil society organizations by documenting good practices that were presented during two important WfWP co-organised events: the Dushanbe Gender

Forum of the High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation in August 2013 in Tajikistan, and the “Gender-Water-Development; the Untapped Connection” International Conference in November 2014 in East London, South Africa. It zooms in on challenges and lessons learnt as discussed during those high level forums, providing recommendations for making better use of women’s organizations as a partner in water cooperation. These qualitative findings are complemented by a mapping and analysis of WfWP contributions to the Water for Life Decade, conducted by the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH), which will be made available through a separate publication.



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¹ WHO/UNICEF: Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation – 2014 update. Pp V-VII, 2. http://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/JMP_report_2014_webEng.pdf

² Dublin Principle No. 3 - *Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.* This pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources. Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women’s specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources programmes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them. <http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/hwrrp/documents/english/icwedece.html#p3>

1. Introduction



Women's Roles in Sustainable Development

The proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and post-2015 development framework under negotiation by UN Member States at the time of this writing, aim to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable economic and social development that respects environmental integrity and benefits all without distinction. This calls for effective cooperation by all stakeholders, and at all levels.

Women have been formally considered a crucial stakeholder group since the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (1976 – 1985). The central role of the “Women’s Major Group” in achieving sustainable and equitable development was emphasized during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro 1992) and the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995); it was reconfirmed in 2002 during the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD). The outcome documents of Rio + 20, or the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, 2012), recognise gender equality and women’s empowerment as a priority area, with the Framework for Action including specific references to women’s empowerment and gender equality in all twelve thematic areas.³

As the UN Women position paper on the post-2015 development agenda notes, a significant body of research indicates that women’s empowerment and gender equality have a catalytic effect on the achievement of human development, good governance, sustained peace, and harmonious dynamics between the environment and human populations.⁴ This includes the broad domain of water, as water is the key to life and a powerful catalyst for development in itself.

Meeting current and future water needs for food, energy, health, sanitation, economic activity and ecosystem maintenance is one of the main challenges of our times, and central to achieving sustainable development. Notwithstanding the long-time acknowledgement of the importance of women in this sector, the potential contributions of women to water development remain largely untapped to date.⁵

To enable women to contribute meaningfully, the underlying causes of gender inequality need to be addressed. Women’s empowerment and strengthening women’s civil society groups are therefore intrinsic elements of a transformative development agenda.

The Gender–Water–Sustainable Development Nexus

Social differences between women and men result in gender roles that may vary substantially between countries, cultures, ethnicities and generations. Such gender related differences might result in different consequences of policies and programmes

for women and men, influencing their possibilities, potential, and outlook to lead productive lives. Distinctive gender roles also importantly determine the options for women to participate in public life and therefore their potential contributions to society.⁶

³ The thematic areas include poverty eradication; food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture; energy; water and sanitation; sustainable cities and human settlements; health and population; promoting full and productive employment, decent work for all and social protection; oceans and seas; Small Island Developing States; disaster-risk reduction; desertification, land degradation and drought; and education.

⁴ UN Women, *A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment: imperatives and key components*, New York (2013), available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/7/post-2015-long-paper#view>

⁵ Report of the Dushanbe Gender Forum to the High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation (2013), available at: <http://www.womenforwater.org>

⁶ Global Water Partnership (GWP) Gender Strategy (2014), available at: <http://www.gwp.org/Global/About%20GWP/Strategic%20documents/GWP%20Gender%20Strategy.pdf>

The proposed SDGs address many of the structural causes of gender inequality, including issues such as elimination of discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against women, recognizing and reducing unpaid care work, promoting access to and control over assets and property, and reversing unequal participation in private and public decision-making, as well as achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all, access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and ending open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.⁷ A recent global survey on the role of women in development confirms that domestic water and safe sanitation is a domain with a particular strong potential to transform the lives of women and girls.⁸

In many societies and cultures women and girls are the traditional water carriers, while their influence in decision-making regarding water is limited. Yet the positive results of

involving women in the design and planning stages of water initiatives are multiple, from reducing corruption and increasing transparency to better financial management and empowering women by example. As an illustrative example, UNICEF points to the findings of a World Bank evaluation of 122 water projects, stating that the effectiveness of a project was six to seven times higher where women were involved than where they were not.⁹ Involving women in water decision-making also addresses overall questions of gender equality in the process.

The central role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water is anchored in the Dublin Principles that were agreed during the International Conference on Water and Environment (ICWE) in Dublin, Ireland in 1992,¹⁰ have been integrated in the water programmes of UNCED Agenda 21¹¹ and are the corner stones of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) ever since.

Dublin Principle 3:

Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water

This pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldomly and barely been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources. Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women's specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources programmes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them.



The International Decade for Action Water for Life 2005 – 2015

To underpin the importance of water for development and the urgency to achieve internationally agreed water-related development goals, the United Nations General Assembly, on initiative of the

Government of Tajikistan, proclaimed 2005 – 2015 the International Decade for Action Water for Life¹² The goals of the Water for Life Decade are to ensure a greater focus on water issues at all levels, and to stimulate the

⁷ 'Open Working Group Proposal for Sustainable Development Goals' (A/68/970) 2014, available at <http://undocs.org/A/68/970>

⁸ UN Women, *The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Gender Equality and Sustainable Development*, New York (2014), Chapter 6, available at: http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/unwomen_surveyreport_advance_16oct.pdf

⁹ UNICEF: Gender and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), available at: http://www.unicef.org/esaro/7310_Gender_and_WASH.html

¹⁰ The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, Dublin, Ireland, 1992, available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/h2o-dub.htm>

¹¹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Agenda 21 – Part I - Chapter 18 - *Protection of the Quality and Supply of Freshwater Resources: Application of Integrated Approaches to the Development, Management and Use of Water Resources*. Rio de Janeiro, 1992, available at: <http://www.earthsummit2002.org/ic/freshwater/reschapt18.html>

¹² UNGA Resolution 58/217: International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005-2015 (A/RES/58/217), December 2003, available at: <http://www.un.org/es/comun/docs/?symbol=A/RES/58/217&lang=E>

implementation of programmes and projects on water. The resolution specifically calls for the participation and involvement of women in water development efforts, and for the furtherance of cooperation at all levels.

The UN Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication (UNW-DPAC), based in Zaragoza, Spain, is entrusted with the promotion of the Decade. DPAC's mandate includes raising awareness of the general public through inter alia the annual World Water Day, the Water for Life logo campaign, focused campaigns such as those marking World Toilet Day, and coordinated themes with the MDG campaigns. DPAC activities also include information and knowledge management in the UN Water and Sanitation Documentation Centre and the Water For Life Decade web-based knowledge hub.

UNW-DPAC coordinates key information, connects members, partners and external professionals in the water sector, and promotes their cooperation. To date more

than 26 international organisations and 100 national initiatives have joined the Water for Life Decade. The Women for Water Partnership, with its 26 women's civil society networks across 100 countries, is an active contributor to the Decade.

In the course of the Water for Life Decade the major themes of integrated water resources management have been addressed in a dedicated UN Water Day and Year.¹⁴ The Zaragoza Annual International Water Conference, themed with the year's World Water Day, is an important opportunity for key actors to meet and jointly address the challenges the water theme presents. Through the Zaragoza conference and other activities, UNW-DPAC has over the years effectively joined all major stakeholders to address water related issues in a holistic way, forging partnerships at different levels, in which civil society, including the Women's Major Group, has been included as an equal partner.



The Human Right to Water and Sanitation

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) recognized access to clean water and sanitation as a human right. UN Resolution AS/RES/64/292 calls upon States and international organizations to provide financial resources, capacity building and technology transfer to scale up efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.¹³ The human right to water and sanitation has an explicit focus on the most disadvantaged and marginalised, as well as an emphasis on participation, empowerment, accountability and transparency.

'Realising the human rights to water and sanitation: a handbook' developed by UN Special Rapporteur Catarina de Albuquerque, addresses the challenges of translating the human right to water and sanitation into meaningful action on the ground.¹⁵ The handbook provides comprehensive guidance for State actors to create an enabling environment for the implementation of these human rights, with due consideration given to the roles of non-state actors, and the importance of inclusive participatory processes.

¹³ International Decade for Action "Water for Life" 2005 – 2015; Focus Areas, available at: http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/who_has_joined_the_decade.shtml

¹⁴ UNGA Resolution 64/292: The human right to water and sanitation (A/RES/64/292), available at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/292

¹⁵ The full handbook is available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/WaterAndSanitation/SRWater/Pages/SRWaterIndex.aspx>

The right to participation is one of the underlying principles of the human right approach. The handbook states to that effect.¹⁶

The human right to water and sanitation can only be realized effectively through full, free and meaningful participation in decision-making processes by people affected by those decisions. Participation ensures better implementation and enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of interventions, offering the possibility of social transformation. Participation must be an integral part of any policy, programme or strategy concerning water or sanitation.

States have an obligation to create opportunities for and eliminate barriers to



2013 International Year of Water Cooperation

Lack of access to water and water insecurity and risks are not simply a matter of physical scarcity; they are caused by, among other factors, low levels of awareness among beneficiaries, uncoordinated or irresponsible water use and pollution, and conflicts between users. To be able to meet our current and future water needs, we must extend and improve a water governance infrastructure that is rooted in an integrated water management approach and effective and efficient water cooperation. There is now a strong consensus that it is possible to perceive a gradual shift from technical water management to participatory and inclusive water governance. To further this process, 2013 was proclaimed the International Year of Water Cooperation. During the International Year of Water Cooperation, coordinated by UNESCO on

participation as experienced, for example, by women and girls, thereby increasing gender equality. Active, free and meaningful participation goes far beyond information sharing or superficial consultation. Barriers that prevent meaningful participation may relate to language, literacy, meeting times and venue, but also include financial restrictions, lack of information, and socio-cultural traditions that prevent, for instance, women from having a voice in public life. Enabling people, especially marginalised groups, to participate in a meaningful way requires supporting measures that break down these barriers and change the mindset of those in power. The handbook specifically calls for factoring in the costs of participatory processes.¹⁷

behalf of UN Water, a series of events took place to discuss and agree on measures for effective water cooperation, culminating in the High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The conference fully recognised the roles and responsibilities of different actors, including governments, regional and local authorities, international organisations, civil society, academic institutions, the private sector, local communities, indigenous peoples, women, elders, youth, families and individuals, to ensure sustainable management of all water resources.

The fundamental role of women was specifically and prominently addressed through the Dushanbe Gender Forum that was hosted and facilitated by the government of Tajikistan and organised by the Women

for Water Partnership in close cooperation with UNW-DPAC, UN Women and other UN Water members and partners. The outcome documents of the conference highlight the importance of involving grassroots actors and the need to actively invest in women's empowerment, and to create a level playing field for informed decision-making.¹⁸ With respect to participation and inclusiveness, the Chair Summary states (page 12): "Water cooperation should begin and end with women's full inclusion at all levels. There needs to be a critical mass of women in

positions of influence in water management at all levels, which requires targeted investments in women's human capital."

Adequate financing for women's meaningful engagement was included as an important follow-up action (page 12): "It is necessary to create a Women for Water Fund to support women projects and programs in water management, with a scholarship fund to support the training of women water professionals."

Towards this publication on Women's Leadership in Water

With the role of women being acknowledged internationally and increasingly at national levels as well, the challenge now is to move from principle to practice: How to ensure the meaningful participation of women, both in their individual capacity and as major group in society, in situations where there is a traditional gender divide and women are not part of decision-making processes on matters that concern them?

For this reason, Women for Water Partnership, UN Women and UNW-DPAC have partnered to jointly promote women's leadership in water, and to promote enabling environments for women's equal and meaningful participation in decision-making in water and development issues at international, national, and local levels. The focus is on women's civil society organizations in this process and on strengthening national and local actors to contribute effectively. This present publication is one product of this partnership.

The publication provides examples of where women have contributed to the Water for Life decade. It also demonstrates which roles they and their organisations play, how women's meaningful participation can make a difference, and what the preconditions are to use effectively their added value in processes of water cooperation. It is clear that women are often not included in water related decision-making processes. Particular factors obstruct women's participation, whilst others stimulate their involvement. The following case studies illuminate the challenges and opportunities derived from women's experiences in the field, and offer valuable lessons learnt to help create enabling environments for participatory and gender-responsive water governance.

¹⁶ See Booklet 1 – Introduction, page 31, available at: <http://www.righttowater.info/wp-content/uploads/BOOK-1-INTRO-WEB-LR.pdf>

¹⁷ Realising the human rights to water and sanitation: a handbook, booklet 7: Principles – the right to participation, pages 57 – 72. OHCHR, Geneva, 2014, available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/Handbook/Book7_Principles.pdf

¹⁸ The High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation: Outcome Documents, page 12, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 2013, available at: <http://www.womenforwater.org/openbaar/index.php?alinealD=389>

2. Women's Leadership in Water Cooperation: Good practices from the Women for Water Partnership



The perception that an agreement is more effective when its negotiators are few and powerful, runs counter to the construction of social agreements for water cooperation, decision-making and governance. Although such approaches may be tempting to some, their results are often weak because of the lack of awareness about and support from the various stakeholder groups in contention.

In a water-secure world, policies and practices would respond equitably to the water needs of all citizens, regardless of their social identity, status and gender. This would require consulting diverse groups of citizens and stakeholders, but also engaging them during implementation. Stakeholders are any party who may affect or be affected by projects or programmes, ranging from governments, regulatory agencies and businesses to communities, civil society and NGOs.

Traditional, top-down management places women and other civil society groups on the side of the affected, those that need to be provided for rather than participating in their own development. In contrast, participatory water governance considers all stakeholders as actors with common but differentiated responsibilities in ensuring the sustainable use and management of water resources.

Women's groups and networks are organised at local, national and international levels and encompass a diversity of professional, religious, and political affiliations, ethnicities and cultures, as well as thematic interests. The social capital represented by women's organizations can be a substantial resource for collective action at all levels, contributing to social cohesion, democracy, economic development and sustainability of interventions.¹⁹

Evidence shows that meaningful involvement of women in water resources development, management, and use can lead to effective solutions to water problems, helping governments avoid poor investments and expensive mistakes, making projects more sustainable, and ensuring that infrastructure development yields maximum social, economic, and environmental results and furthers sustainable development goals.²⁰

Women's civil society organizations have successfully provided water and sanitation for the poor, curbing corruption and preventing conflicts, increasing resource efficiency, as well as addressing water management in an integrated manner for sustainable livelihoods.²¹ Their strength lies in their ability to reach down into the capillaries of society; they can inform and engage community members, and build trust resulting in locally owned projects and programmes.

This chapter captures good practices from Women for Water Partnership member organisations in different parts of the world and on different water themes.

¹⁹ Alice Bouman-Dentener & Bart Devos (2015): Civil Society – key contributors to water and sustainable development, available at: http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/pdf/OP_CivilSociety_4themes_FORMAT.pdf

²⁰ GWP-TEC Policy Brief 3: Gender mainstreaming: an essential component of sustainable water management.

²¹ Available at: <http://www.womenforwater.org/openbaar/index.php?sitedeelID=95>

The case studies included in this publication are:

- A Transformative Gender-Water-Sustainable Development Agenda: Cooperation of Women's Civil Society Organizations in Tanzania;
- The Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention: Women's Contributions from Armenia and Ukraine;
- Implementing the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in Sankhu, Kavre district of Nepal;
- Social Accountability of Water Provision in Rural Kenya;
- Sustainable Water Governance of Lake Victoria: the Involvement of Women's Civil Society Organizations in Uganda and Kenya;
- The Gender-Water-Sustainable Development Nexus in Nigeria: Women's Empowerment through Water and Sanitation Interventions.

A Transformative Gender-Water-Sustainable Development Agenda: Cooperation of Women's Civil Society Organisations in Tanzania

The WfWP Member Organisations in Tanzania



Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP) is an activist organization established in 1993. The TGNP mission is to promote gender equality at all levels of society. Key activities include policy advocacy, awareness raising and monitoring policy outcomes with respect to gender sensitivity; this includes gender responsive budgeting and gender impact of water policies and programmes. TGNP has included a focus on the gender-water-development nexus and advocates for access to water and sanitation as an important entry point for women's empowerment. The organization has a track record of stakeholder mobilization at national to local levels on various social issues, always applying a gender lens and supporting marginalized groups.

Tegemeo Women Group (TWG) is a grassroots women organisation from Mweteni village, located high up in the Pare Mountains in the Kilimanjaro region of Tanzania. TWG was founded in 2001 by a group of seven local women with the aim to promote women's economic independence and gender equality, and became a member of WfWP in 2005. In addition to supporting local women entrepreneurship, the TWG has taken a leading role in water and sanitation provision for the approximately 12,000 inhabitants of Mweteni. Currently TWG has 25 members.



Women Fund Tanzania (WFT) was established in 2008 as non-profit women's rights organisation based in Dar es Salaam. The organisation builds the capacities of women to realize their full potential and to engage in the transformation of their communities towards sustainable development and social justice. WFT contributes to building a strong women's movement in Tanzania through providing local women's civil society groups with the means, financial and otherwise, for their development and action.



Tegemeo Women Group

The Situation in Tanzania

The United Republic of Tanzania had an estimated population of 50.8 million people in 2014, of which 80% lived in rural areas. Tanzania has one of the highest birth rates in the world and more than 44% of the population is under the age of 15.²² One-third of the country's landscapes is arid to semi-arid. Groundwater, which is the main water source for areas not bordering the great lakes, is increasingly contaminated by toxic drainage, from mining and other sources.²³ In 2012, water and sanitation coverage was reported to be 53.2% and 12.2% of the country's population, respectively. There is considerable urban-rural disparity, however, with 77.9% of the urban population having access to water, while in rural areas this is a mere 44%. Access to sanitation amounts to 24.9% in urban areas, and only 7.5% in the rural parts of Tanzania.²⁴ Water borne diseases, such as diarrhoea, hepatitis A, typhoid fever, and regular cholera outbreaks, are reported throughout the country.²⁵ There is a generalized HIV epidemic; the overall HIV rate is 5.1%, although it reaches as high as 15.4% amongst women in some areas. The 1977 Constitution, in article 12 and 13, asserts that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to equality without discrimination;²⁶ and discrimination on the basis of gender is prohibited, through a special amendment passed in 2000.²⁷ While *de jure* gender equality is anchored in the Constitution, every day reality for women is quite different, especially in rural areas where customary law prevails. Women are typically given few or no rights to land during their marriages – never being permitted, for

example, to add their names to documents indicating ownership of property – and even fewer upon the death of a husband.²⁸ As a consequence, women in Tanzania tend not have secure land tenure, which restricts their ability to obtain sufficient water for their livelihood activities.

The Tanzanian government has sought to provide safe water and adequate sanitation for its people since the country's independence in the 1960s. Through the Water Utilization, Control and Regulation Act of 1974, all water is vested under the State, and registration of water rights is obligatory for all entities that 'divert, dam, store, abstract and use' water.²⁹ A lengthy process of water policy reform led to the adoption of a new National Water Policy (NAWAPO) in 2002 based on the principle of subsidiarity and emphasizing decentralised and participatory water governance in order to serve the vast rural population.³⁰ A comprehensive scheme has been developed to design measures and provide water and sanitation at the local level.³¹ This institutional mechanism for water provision and management calls for state water engineers at national, regional and district levels. Local governments have the responsibility for service provision and 'Community Owned Water Supply Organisations' are foreseen to ensure proper management and maintenance of the installed local schemes. Capacity at the district level is limited, however, and many communities have not yet been reached, in particular those in remote areas such as Mweteni village.

Mweteni Village has faced an acute shortage of safe and clean water for a long time, which has led to an increase of water-related diseases. Fetching water over long walking distances (2 to 5 km) takes a significant toll on the time, effort, and very bodies of women and children. This unpaid care work, because it limits the possibilities for schooling, other productive activities, paid employment, and leisure, hampers their economic and social development. The situation worsened when HIV/AIDS entered the village; time and effort expended to fetch water have multiplied, while low water availability and quality causes diarrhoea, accelerating the progression of the disease.

Not being among the selected villages under the government Water Sector Development Programme (WSDP), the Tegemeo Women Group (TWG) of Mweteni undertook to secure adequate, reliable drinking water for their community themselves. With the support of the Women for Water Partnership and the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, TWG engaged the village leadership and district authorities to jointly develop and implement the project.



Women Organising for Water Provision and Management

Under the umbrella of Women for Water Partnership, women's civil society leaders in Tanzania have organised themselves around issues of water provision and management since 2005. The WfWP small grants scheme along with the women and water workshops organised at the 2007 and 2009 Tanzania Gender Networking Programme gender festivals have resulted in a national Women for Water hub to develop and coordinate

women and water action in the country, and the development of the Women Fund Tanzania as an institutional support mechanism for local women's groups.

The TGNP national gender festival brings together minorities and disadvantaged groups, providing a space to discuss their most pressing issues and empowering them to take action. Participation in the gender festival

²² World Population Review 2014: *Tanzania population 2014*, available at: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/tanzania-population/>

²³ Rebecca Shore. *Water crisis in Tanzania*, available at: <http://thewaterproject.org/water-in-crisis-tanzania>

²⁴ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation: country tables, update 2014, available at: <http://www.wssinfo.org/data-estimates/tables/>

²⁵ World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Taskforce on Cholera Control: *Cholera country profile: United Republic of Tanzania*, 2008, available at: <http://www.who.int/cholera/countries/TanzaniaCountryProfile2008.pdf>

²⁶ The constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania, 1977, available at: <http://www.cssr.uct.ac.za/sites/cssr.uct.ac.za/files/Constitution%20Tanzania.pdf>

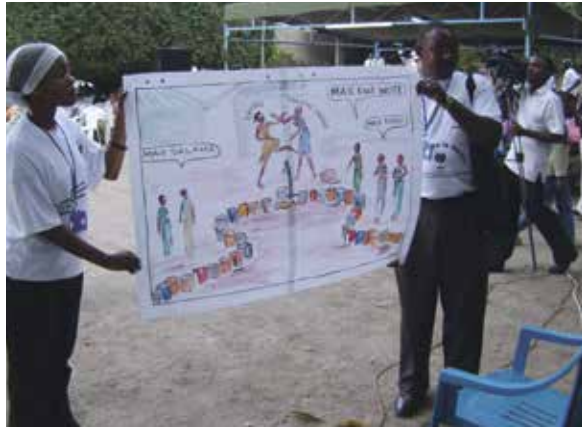
²⁷ C. Mark Blackden & Magdalena Rwebangira (2004). *Tanzania strategic country gender assessment*. Available at: http://www.tanzania.go.tz/egov_uploads/documents/TanzaniaSCGA_sw.pdf

²⁸ USAID country profile: *Property rights and resource governance, Tanzania*, page 4. Available at: http://usaidlandtenure.net/sites/default/files/country-profiles/full-reports/USAID_Land_Tenure_Tanzania_Profile.pdf

²⁹ Barbara van Koppen (2007): *Dispossession at the Interface of Community-based Water Law and Permit Systems*. In: Mark Giordano & John Butterworth: *Community-based Water Law and Water Resources Management in Developing Countries*

³⁰ Subsidiarity, according to the UNCED Agenda 21 (1992), means that water management should be conducted at the lowest appropriate level.

³¹ Ernst Doering: *The reform of the water sector in Tanzania*. FWU, Vol. 3, Topics of integrated watershed management – Proceedings, 2005, available at: <https://www.unisiegen.de/zeu/publikationen/volume0305/doering.pdf>



and the coaching received from TGNP has been indispensable for the development and empowerment of the Tegemeo Women Group. Women Fund Tanzania stemmed from the realization that an enabling environment for women's meaningful contributions to development was largely lacking in the country. While TGNP motivates women to action, effective, on the ground action is severely restricted by the lack of means and tools, and the socio-cultural environment that most women live in and under. Women Fund Tanzania's five core programmes create an enabling environment for women's local action throughout the country, including for the Tegemeo Women Group: 1) grant making, 2) capacity strengthening, 3) resource mobilisation, 4) strategic alliance building, and 5) institutional development of women's civil society groups.

The Tegemeo Women Group (TWG) is a prime example of how a local civil society group, if empowered and capacitated, can lead water and sanitation provision at community level and transform the community in the process. The water and sanitation programme in Mweteni has been operational since 2005, whereby the role of TWG has changed over time. From being a lobbyist in the early days, sensitising the community and pressurising the village leadership to take an active stance in water provision, TWG developed into the

driving force behind community consultations and multi-stakeholder engagement in the development of a comprehensive water and sanitation development scheme with the Same District water engineer. In the course of the phased project, TWG developed capacity for project oversight and took on its financial administration. TWG members have also become trainers on sanitation and hygiene. Throughout the entire project, the Tegemeo Women have played the crucial role of liaising with the District water office and upholding constant communication with community members, informing them of progress and challenges and encouraging them to participate actively in decision-making and to contribute to implementation. Being part of the global WfWP network and the visible support of international peers and the global WfWP secretariat, have given the Tegemeo women face and recognition at home, and the courage and power to uphold their prominent position as guardians of the project and spokesperson for the local beneficiaries. This has ensured that the project remained community focused, while attempts at corruptive practices were effectively curbed.

The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, Women Fund Tanzania, and Tegemeo Women Group thus have complementary roles in bridging the gap between national policy and local implementation in supporting gender mainstreaming and women's leadership in the water sector.



Contributions to the Water for Life Decade: The Mweteni example

Policies, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

Since 2011 Tanzania is involved in the development of a new Constitution. A strong women's coalition, including Women Fund Tanzania and Tanzania Gender Networking programme has consistently and successfully pushed for explicit inclusion of gender equality in this new Constitution.³² The Constituent Assembly which ended towards the end of 2014, has included in the proposed Constitution the specific mention of the right for women to *acquire, own, use or develop land under the same conditions as men*.³³ Having land and water rights for women included in the Constitution will greatly enhance their possibilities to lead productive lives. A challenge in decentralising water supply and management is reconciling national laws and policies with customary law and traditional practices. Local authorities are often not equipped to address integrated water resources management (IWRM), and communities are frequently neither aware of nor organised to practice a participatory approach. In the case of Mweteni, Tegemeo Women Group demanded action from their local governments, initiating the process of securing water title deeds for the springs that supply the village, which were obtained by the village authorities in 2006. This was followed by the protracted development of participatory water governance, whereby the flag of the global Women for Water Partnership and the peer support of TGNP and Women Fund Tanzania helped the Tegemeo Women Group to become and remain an equal partner in the process. TWG has been instrumental in the development of water user committees and an umbrella water users association. As a result, the required

Community Owned Water Management Organisation is now in place and functional; its constitution requires gender balance in these decision-making bodies. As the project has evolved, the village and district authorities have come to acknowledge TWG as a partner for consultation and information on community issues.

Service delivery

Service delivery is the responsibility of the government district water engineer, with whom TWG and WfWP (as financing partners representative) have initiated a local partnership that includes other relevant stakeholders such as the village leadership and the water users association. This participatory and women-inclusive approach has helped to ensure consensus on priority setting for water access by different users at different moments, location of service points, and providing affordable and sufficient water for hospitals and schools (through rainwater harvesting systems). The community has agreed on tariffs and a system is in place for sustainable management of water installations. The water and sanitation programme, which is now almost completed, benefits virtually all of the 12,000 people in Mweteni.

Women's empowerment and capacity development

Tegemeo Women Group positioning themselves as leaders in the water and sanitation project has been a continuous process of capacity strengthening and mind-set change. In 2005, Tegemeo Women Group was an informal grassroots group dedicated to small income-generating activities. In 2015, TWG is a competent membership organisation

³² The Coalition, popularly known as Wanawake na Katiba/Women and Constitutional Rights consists of >50 women rights organizations, including grassroots organization promoting water rights for local communities.

³³ Cheryl Strauss Elhorn (2014). *Tanzania shows it has a women's constitution*. Available at: <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2014/12/03/tanzania-shows-it-has-a-womans-constitution/>



that is capable of project oversight and financial administration and presents its approach at regional and national workshops. The access to the empowerment tools and the financial and fundraising mechanism of WfWP, as well as the continuous support of TGNP, Women Fund Tanzania, and at a later stage, Soroptimist Union of Kenya, have enabled the Tegemeo Women Group to build its capacities and to continue to lead the process in Mweteni despite the many obstacles it has faced.

Spin-off

The case illustrates that cooperation and partnership among relevant stakeholders can result in local ownership of a comprehensive and sustainable water supply and management scheme that addresses the needs of the entire community into the future. In Mweteni, the partnership with the district government and local authorities has expanded to cooperation in other development areas as well. This understanding has also led to a local saving mechanism and revolving fund ('vikoba') that provides women and other members of the community with means for

water system maintenance and collateral for economic investments are a key feature of these women-led development projects. Provisioning water to the five village schools has effectively meant an extra 4 hours per week of teaching and learning. The schools have been able to plant vegetable gardens, the yields of which can improve the nutrition of the pupils and their families. In the local health clinic, now that fetching water is not so laborious, nurses can devote more time to taking care of their patients. And both in the dispensary and the schools, improved sanitation and hygiene have had a positive effect on health. Having sufficient and safe water nearby has given a boost to economic activities in the community with many new initiatives emerging. Now that women's participation and leadership are accepted by the community and the village authorities, TWG has ventured into new areas of community development. TWG worked with the district authorities to bring electricity to Mweteni. One of the TWG members stood for local elections, and at the national level members have given presentations in a number of

workshops to raise awareness, stimulating others to follow their example. The recent inauguration of the water scheme made it to national television, and the partnership of local and national authorities, water sector specialists, civil society, and the donor community has created the potential for scaling up this successful example in the district and beyond.

Challenges

Having been initiated by a local women's group, the project met with resistance and scepticism from the water sector and authorities. Overcoming these obstacles and ensuring that the TWG obtained a seat at the table in decision-making processes has posed a major challenge. The collective force of the Women for Water Partnership and its members in Tanzania has been an indispensable factor in supporting the empowerment of TWG, the development of the Mweteni water and sanitation scheme, the recognition by the local and district authorities, and TWG's pivotal role in the establishment of the water users association. The fact that TWG was able to take the lead in the development phase of the project has

essentially contributed to its success and sustainability.

The same holds true for gaining the trust of the donor community. Funding of the comprehensive scheme has been a major challenge that continues today. The administrative burden to comply with the different and sometimes conflicting donor regulations is one that local actors struggle to shoulder on their own.

Gaining the trust and cooperation of the villagers was another challenge. Mweteni village was subject to a number of consultations and NGO visits in the past. The cooperation of the villagers was asked and obtained during these missions. Expectations were raised but no follow up was done. Villagers, therefore, were very sceptical and uncooperative towards yet another external involvement. It was also difficult for villagers to understand and accept that they have to pay for water services. The TWG, supported by fellow Women for Water Partnership members and local authorities, has managed to mobilize the community to take ownership of the project and to agree on tariffs to ensure sustainability of the water scheme.



The Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention: Women's Civil Society Contributions from Armenia and Ukraine

The organisations



Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)

was established in 1999 as a non-governmental women's organisation of health professionals and environmentalists. The mission of AWHHE is to promote the human right to live in a healthy environment and to address environmental pollution. Key activities include raising public awareness about environmental pollutants, conducting independent monitoring investigations on water supply management, and promotion of the Water and Health Protocol. In recent years water and sanitation have become the main focus of the organisation. Since 1999 AWHHE has implemented more than 90 projects for the promotion of sustainable sanitation and improvement of water supply. To effectively address the water and

sanitation challenges in rural Armenia, AWHHE practices gender-inclusive community involvement and strengthens women's participation in decision-making.



MAMA-86, Ukraine, is a national environmental network established in

1990 by mothers worried about Chernobyl effects on environment and health. It now has 17 branches in the different regions of Ukraine. MAMA-86 promotes eco-democracy, greening policy and practice, equal access to WASH, IWRM and river basin principles implementation, chemical safety, independent research, and public monitoring and lobbying. MAMA-86 works on strengthening the role of women in education and in the decision-making processes for improving the living standards of the citizens of Ukraine.

Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE Water Convention

Access to clean drinking water is taken for granted by many people living in Europe. Yet in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region alone, an estimated 120 million people, i.e. one person in seven, do not have access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. In 1999 the Protocol on Water and Health was adopted by the parties

to UNECE Water Convention (UNECE WC) to ensure universal access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for all citizens of the pan-European region. The main aim of the Protocol is to protect human health and wellbeing through good water management, including the protection of water ecosystems, and by preventing, controlling and reducing

water-related diseases. The Protocol is the first international agreement of its kind, adopted specifically to attain an adequate supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation for everyone, and effectively protect drinking water sources.³⁴

The Protocol on Water and Health provides a framework for the translation of the human right to water and sanitation into practice. The Protocol specifically commits its Parties to promoting equitable access to water and sanitation, and setting specific targets and target dates. Each country that adopted the Protocol has the obligation to provide access to water and sanitation for all its citizens. Moreover, UNECE WC adopted a Gender Action Plan for 2012-2013 to implement the UNECE policy for gender equality and women's empowerment.³⁵

As we know, women often play a key role in the stewardship of natural resources, including water, yet they are neglected in formal decision-making processes. WfWP member organisations AWHHE in Armenia, Earth Forever in Bulgaria and MAMA-86 in Ukraine have taken a leading role in organising civil society contributions to the development and implementation of the Protocol on Water and Health in their respective countries.

The Situation in Armenia

After independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia experienced a period of transition to a market-driven economy. Over the last two decades significant political, economic and institutional reforms have gradually taken place in the country. One of the major areas undergoing change is the water and health sector. While Armenia has sufficient water resources to provide the total population with safe drinking water,

insufficient investment and the collapse of water supply systems have resulted in inadequate and often unsanitary water supplies. Seventy-five to 85% of water is lost on its way from source to consumers because of pipe deterioration and other reasons. Over the last decade the government of Armenia has taken important steps to improve access, reliability and quality of drinking water and its infrastructure. The water resource balance in many parts of the country has improved and water supply in certain areas has progressed. However, in most parts of Armenia the institutional framework for water supply delivery remains poor. In addition, the sanitation sector had been neglected, particularly in rural areas.

The Role of AWHHE

After Armenia had signed the Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE WC in 1999, AWHHE became a key actor in the implementation of the Protocol. As a national NGO, AWHHE functions as a liaison between the government and civil society and represents the voice of civil society to ensure that policies give due consideration to the gender dimensions of water and health. AWHHE influences policy and monitors State projects to ensure better alignment with the reality on the ground and to safeguard that the local population benefits from investments and interventions. At the same time AWHHE implements projects on service delivery that yield immediate results. An important part of the work of AWHHE is to strengthen local actors, in particular women, to become active contributors to safe water and adequate sanitation in their communities.

³⁴ Economic Commission for Europe/World Health Organisation's Regional Office for Europe, Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, London, 1999, available at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/pwh_text/text_protocol.html

³⁵ UNECE Gender Action Plan: Key to Regional Sustainable Development http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/ECE_GAP_Framework_website1.pdf

Contributions to the Water for Life Decade



Policies, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

In 2007 the Ministry of Territorial Administration asked AWHHE to draft a Financing Strategy for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation in Armenia. Minimum water supply and sanitation standards were agreed upon by the stakeholders, and this involvement elevated AWHHE's profile and strengthened its capacity as a policy advocate.

AWHHE played a significant role in the target setting process under the Protocol on Water and Health to the UNECE WC in Armenia. Through public consultation processes in 3 regions and drawing upon its expertise in water and sanitation management, AWHHE supported the government in developing draft targets appropriate for national and local needs. The process of developing targets, target dates and measures to comply with the requirements of the Protocol is on-going. AWHHE works with a variety of partners: On the international level AWHHE actively participates in the processes of implementation of the Children Environmental Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) as well as the Protocol on Water and Health. At national level, AWHHE participates in multi-stakeholder settings,

such as the National Council on Sustainable Development, facilitated by the Prime Minister, and the Steering Committee of the National Policy Dialogue on water-related issues facilitated by the Ministry of Nature Protection. By raising awareness and building capacity of local actors, AWHHE builds partnerships for sustainable management and scaling up.

Service delivery

Together with partners, AWHHE has implemented more than 25 water and sanitation projects across Armenia, primarily in schools. AWHHE has conducted awareness raising interventions among more than 2000 pupils, staff and parents about environmental health risks and social injustice related to environmental pollution. The water and sanitation projects implemented by AWHHE in 15 rural communities benefited around 20,000 people.

Women's empowerment, capacity development

A major achievement of AWHHE was the inclusion of women in the national dialogue on the Protocol on Water and Health. AWHHE has a consistent focus on women's groups in all its activities, with the aim of increasing the role of both rural and urban women



in decision-making processes at local and national levels. To this end, AWHHE has organised seminars, workshops and trainings to enhance women's awareness and help them to discover their abilities to be active participants in civil society. AWHHE projects developed women's leadership skills, resulting in their increased involvement in community problem resolution through cooperation.

Spin-off

The school water and sanitation projects had a snowball effect on the improvement of the overall water supply in surrounding villages. Tens of individual households installed ecosan toilets, resulting in improved hygienic conditions. In pursuit of the social and economic development of rural communities, AWHHE has carried out combined water and agricultural projects throughout Armenia. Local women increased their incomes thanks to the construction of solar dryers for drying fruits and vegetable, greenhouses for cultivating seedlings, implementation of small grant programmes on beekeeping, rabbit breeding, and purchasing of hens for egg production. Successful activities were scaled up at the local level and showcased in agricultural fairs.

Challenges

AWHHE's multi-level activities bring with them a number of challenges. First, it takes time and effort to build the necessary relationships and trust with the government and the population in the absence of a tradition of government - civil society cooperation at local, district or national levels. Second, the success and sustainability of projects depends on the acceptance and participation of the local population. Small-scale projects that are adapted to local circumstances and take into account cultural differences have proven to be more successful than large-scale projects. The scaling-up and replication of small-scale, tailor-made

projects in decentralised settings is labour intensive and requires social and cultural sensitivity as well as adequate funds. The lack of sufficient financial resources remains a constant battle for AWHHE.

The Situation in Ukraine

Ukraine is considered a "country in transition". Following the Soviet era and independence in 1991, the country suffered a devastating economic blow and the majority of the people live in various gradations of poverty.³⁶ It was estimated in 2010 that approximately 24% of the population in Ukraine lives below the poverty line.³⁷ Access to safe drinking water is one of the largest environmental health problems in the country, both in urban and rural areas. About 75% of the population is supplied by surface water, most of which is not fit for drinking unless treated.³⁸ In addition, water tariffs are rising rapidly. The government is seeking to reform the water sector, and ratified the Protocol on Water and Health in 2003 to address these issues and improve the nation's health.

The Role of MAMA-86

MAMA-86, the foremost environmental, women's and social justice organization in the country, has been a driving force behind the drafting and subsequent implementation of the Water and Health Protocol since 1998. Having built a strong MAMA-86 network throughout the country, it is well positioned to raise public awareness and to develop and lead participatory processes related to different water and sustainable development themes. MAMA-86 also builds capacity for WASH implementation by conducting pilot projects in local communities and training women leaders to move towards self-reliance.

³⁶ Gabriel, Barbara (no date) MAMA-86: Establishing the Connection between Environment and Health Issues and Making them Everybody's Business

³⁷ World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/up.html> (November 2013)

³⁸ Gabriel, Barbara (no date) MAMA-86: Establishing the Connection between Environment and Health Issues and Making them Everybody's Business

Contributions to the Water for Life Decade

Policies, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

MAMA-86 has successfully lobbied and worked with the Ukraine government and supported the formulation of a legislative framework on water and health issues specific to the Ukraine context. Several laws, such as the National Environment and Health Action Plan (2001), the Law on Drinking water (2002), the program on “Drinking Water of Ukraine” (2005), and the national targets for the Protocol on Water and Health (2011), were initiated by MAMA-86 and drafted with strong public participation, informed by MAMA-86’s expertise on water and environmental management. Since 2012 MAMA-86 has chaired the Global Water Partnership of Ukraine. In this capacity MAMA-86 has conducted national policy dialogues and stakeholders consultations on integrated water resources management under climate



change and coordinated the GWP Ukraine contribution to the Integrated Drought Management Programme of GWP CEE and WMO.

Service delivery

MAMA-86 is one of the major organisations implementing the Protocol in Ukraine and in the region. The organisation conducts independent research on drinking water quality and water supply, and also implements affordable and effective technical solutions to improve access to safe water and sanitation for households, communities, schools and hospitals. Since 1999 MAMA-86 has contributed directly to improvement of access to safe water and sanitation for over 40,000 people in urban and rural areas by implementing more than 50 pilots in 12 regions of Ukraine. MAMA-86 works with national and local authorities to ensure equal access to WASH for vulnerable groups: school children, patients in healthcare institutions, pregnant women and mothers with babies. MAMA-86 has initiated and coordinated numerous public consultations, raising awareness and building capacity of the population with a focus on women’s involvement in water and health management issues. Over the past 10 years MAMA-86 meetings reached approximately 250,000 people and its media campaigns reached an estimated 4,000,000. In April 2005, for instance, MAMA-86 organised the Earth Day concert in Kyiv involving approximately 200,000 people. In addition, MAMA-86 has actively engaged women’s organisations in various regional and European policy development initiatives on water and health.

Since 1997 MAMA-86 has grown from 1 drinking water project in 5 locations (Kyiv and 4 local branches) to a network of WASH



projects in 13 regions with over 90 pilot projects in urban and rural areas of Ukraine, all based on local ownership and women leadership. These pilots have resulted in the replacement and/ or rehabilitation of 3 water supply and 2 sanitation infrastructures, installation of 16 water purification systems for schools, boarding schools, kindergartens, sanatorium and maternity hospitals, and construction of ecosan toilets and 9 small wastewater treatment systems for 5 schools and 91 households in different parts of Ukraine.

Protocol obligations. Gaining the trust of authorities and CSOs and local communities alike is an on-going process. Local capacities are often low, and informing and convincing communities on health, sanitation and water practices requires substantial effort and resources. Scaling up successful pilot projects is a challenge; it also requires significant effort and resources to engage local actors and communities, and to build ownership and a legal framework for sustainable use and management. Financial and human resources are scarce, which limits MAMA-86’s activities.

Challenges

Cooperation with the government at different levels has proven to be difficult at times due to constant administrative reforms in the country, lack of political will, and the low capacity of decision-makers to comply with

Implementing the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in Sankhu, Kavre District of Nepal

The Organisation



W-PLUS, Association of Women Professionals in Land Use, was founded in 1997 as an association of women professionals in the land use sector in Nepal. Its 200 members have professional backgrounds in agriculture, forestry, engineering, planning, and sociology. W-PLUS aims to contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources in Nepal, and to increase women's contributions in the sector by creating a platform for sharing, exchange, and building the capacity of women in the country.

The Situation in Nepal

Nepal is endowed with abundant water resources; however, the use of water resources for economic and social purposes, as yet, is limited. Child mortality is exceptionally high, and largely due to poor water supply and sanitation. About 10,500 children die every year in Nepal due to diseases related to water supply and sanitation.³⁹

The legal framework in general - and water laws in particular - are still under development in Nepal. The Interim Constitution of 2007 includes women's rights (article 20) and the right to live in a clean environment (article 16), but no specific mention is made of water.

Nepal is signatory to CEDAW (1979)⁴⁰, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the Millennium Development Goals

(2000); Nepal has also acknowledged the UNGA 2010 resolution on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation (see Chapter 1). A comprehensive policy covering both water supply and sanitation was adopted in 1998, emphasizing the establishment of a decentralised system, which would enable communities themselves to take the lead in the process of needs identification, selection, formulation, implementation and management of water supply programmes.⁴¹ This participatory approach envisaged giving priority to the needs of disadvantaged communities, in using local resources to promote hygiene and sanitation, and minimize environmental impacts. National sanitation coverage was particularly low, with population with access to a toilet a mere 6% in 1990. Nepal developed a South Asian Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN) Master Plan and embarked upon a country-wide sanitation programme to achieve universal access to sanitation by 2017. National coverage was reported to be 80.38% for water and 43.04% for sanitation in 2010, according to the SACOSAN IV database. In 2012, as reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics, national sanitation coverage had increased to 62%. Four of the 75 districts and 20 municipalities were declared free of open defecation.

The Role of W-PLUS

Few people in Nepal know that the provision of safe water and sanitation is a human right. In order to bring about change on both local and national levels, there is a need to raise awareness of the rights established in Article 16 of the Constitution.⁴² W-PLUS builds such awareness and fosters women's leadership in water and sanitation, and enables their

involvement in decision-making processes to help implement the human right to water and sanitation throughout the country. W-PLUS complements the work of State actors by enabling local communities, particularly women, to meaningfully participate in decentralised water and sanitation development and management schemes.



Contributions to the Water for Life Decade

Policies, legal frameworks, and institutional mechanisms

Over the past decade the government has invested substantially in water policies and plans to achieve universal access and sustainable water governance. In 2002 the national Water Resources Strategy (WRS) was adopted with verifiable targets for the short-term (up-to 2007), medium-term (2017) and long-term (2027). In 2004 the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation National Policy and Sectoral Strategic Action Plan

set out to achieve full water supply and sanitation coverage by 2017. The National Water Resources Plan of 2005 was formulated in a holistic manner and seeks to achieve development in drinking water, sanitation, irrigation, hydro-electricity, and management of water-related disasters, among other areas, through equitable distribution, participation, and institutional and legal frameworks for coordination, transparency, and sustainable management. As a result, most of the water projects have been handed

³⁹ Helvetas Water Resources Management Programme (WARM-P), available at: http://nepal.helvetas.org/en/our_projects/warm.cfm

⁴⁰ The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

⁴¹ Nepal Water Supply Sector Policy 2055 B.S. and Drinking Water Regulation.

⁴² The Right to Water, available at: <http://www.righttowater.info/nepali-women-gain-water-and-sanitation-after-human-rights-campaigns/>.



over to user committees, municipalities, water supply organisations or community-based organisations. Capital investment by the government is limited to a maximum of 90% of project cost in the case of rural water supply schemes.

At the community level, Water Use Master Plans (WUMP) have been recently used in various projects. WUMP is a planning tool at the level of the lowest planning unit that focuses on uses and conservation of water resources available to the community. A WUMP is prepared with the active participation of the local community and aims to be gender balanced and inclusive.

Community mobilization and service delivery in Sankhu

W-PLUS, in association with the Friends of Sankhu (FOS), has mobilized women's groups to form cooperatives at Sankhu, Kavre district of Nepal. W-PLUS conducts capacity building and awareness raising, particularly on water management and sanitation. Nine women's cooperatives have been formed

to tackle the range of development needs, including building small infrastructure to provide drinking water and sanitation. As a pilot project, a 7000-liter water tank was built through a cost-sharing scheme between FOS and the community members. Over 5 years, more than 200 drinking water facilities and over 3000 toilets were built. A total of 100 women in the community have been trained on solid waste management and income generation through fertilizer production. The women's cooperatives collect funds to cover operations and maintenance.

Results

Today, women of Sankhu are aware of the benefits of water and sanitation. They are mobilized together and have formed a cooperative. The literacy classes provided by FOS and waste management skills learnt from WPLUS have empowered them. The women of Sankhu developed their leadership skills through active involvement in the cooperatives, and in working for the socio-economic development of the community. The nine functional cooperatives have

come together to form federation which has been providing savings and credit services to its members. Literacy has increased to virtually 100% as school drop-out rates have decreased significantly as a result of having adequate sanitation facilities. The community has been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF).

Challenges

Although Nepal has achieved its MDG target of decreasing maternal mortality, water and sanitation are still major challenges in the country. Even though progress has been made on eliminating open defecation, other aspects of sanitation, such as menstrual hygiene management, remain critical. Women and girls generally feel ashamed during their periods and hesitate to talk about problems at work, school, and home related to menstruation. In order to ensure the health and hygiene of girls and women, socio-cultural changes are necessary but will take considerable time and effort, especially in rural areas.

Although many water schemes and projects have been prepared and implemented,

sustainability in general and functionality in particular pose major challenges. About 43% of all schemes are not functioning properly and are in need of either major repairs or reconstruction. The water supply, sanitation and hygiene sectors in the country are highly fragmented, resulting in lack of coordination and proper planning.

While policies and institutional mechanisms are in place, decentralised water governance is as yet not effective in practice. The meaningful participation of community groups, including women, is a transformative process that is considered crucial. But such processes take time and require adequate support and effort. Examples such as Sankhu are few and far between. Civil society organizations, which could facilitate a participatory approach and local capacity development for effective decentralised water governance, are still poorly developed in Nepal. Women's civil society organizations in particular need support and investment if the promise of their meaningful participation for gender sensitive, sustainable development is to be fulfilled.

Social Accountability of Water Provision in Rural Kenya

The Organisations



Soroptimist Nakuru Club is a member of Soroptimist International Union of Kenya (SIK). SIK was established in 1995; at present there are 12 clubs with 150 members in different parts of Kenya. SIK is an active contributor to the WASH programme of Soroptimist International of Europe, which has been running since 2007.

Mwihoko Women Group is a local grassroots women's organisation in Ndibai village of Miti-Mingi, Nakuru Kenya. Its 22 members came together to jointly address the water situation in their community, with the aim of providing sufficient and safe water, at a reasonable distance, for their families and their community, thus relieving the burden of walking long distances to fetch water, and freeing up time for economic development.

The Situation in Kenya

In 1974 Kenya launched the National Water Master Plan to ensure availability of potable water at reasonable distance to all households by the year 2000. A number of institutional arrangements were made to achieve this

The Role of the Mwihoko Women Group

While the Mwihoko Women Group was founded to address women's water issues in their community, the rainwater harvesting project was designed and managed for them by a local Kenyan NGO. The Mwihoko women

target. In 2002 a new Water Law was adopted. Yet despite the government's ambitious water supply development programme, over half of the rural population does not currently have access to potable water.⁴³

The deficit of water for basic needs especially affects women. To help alleviate the stress women encounter in accessing water, SI Union Kenya has implemented a number of water projects including the Mwihoko rainwater-harvesting project, supervised by the SIK Nakuru Club. The role of SIK Nakuru Club is to monitor progress, and to coach the local Mihoko women on taking leadership on water and sanitation issues.

There are 660 households in Ndibai village. Most households get their water from the local river, which is at least a 20-minute walk away. Alternatively, households can purchase water from water sellers at 10 Kenyan shillings (or about \$USD 0.11) for 20 litres. Water is brought up from the river on peoples' backs, by bicycle or donkey cart. When the river is dry, people tend to dig holes in the riverbed at night and return in the morning when the holes have filled with some water. There are water quality concerns in this area, since the water apparently has high salt and fluoride content.

were marginalized after the initial pilot stage. Coached and trained by Soroptimist International Kenya and SIK Nakuru Club, the Mwihoko Women Group has assumed leadership, contributed funds and labor, and

engaged the community and the village leadership, making water and sanitation provision a joint effort of community members with local authorities. In this way

they have created local ownership, enhanced sustainability, and ensured that the project reached the intended beneficiaries.

The Role of the Soroptimist Nakuru Club

The role of the Soroptimist Nakuru Club initially was to monitor project implementation on behalf of WfWP, and to coach the Mwihoko women so that they would gradually take the lead in their local process. Seeing that the project management was failing, that project deliverables did not benefit the intended beneficiaries, and that the Mwihoko women were no longer involved by the implementing NGO, SIK Nakuru Club informed their national Union and facilitated a fact finding mission. As a result, Soroptimist Union of Kenya has taken over the project

management and SIK Nakuru Club conducted intensified training and coaching, positioning the Mwihoko women as leaders in their community water supply. This has turned the project around from a potential failure into a promising success and has ensured that the project results are more sustainable. In the process, SIK Nakuru Club detected corruptive practices by project management, which were jointly and successfully addressed by SIK and WfWP.

Contributions to the Water for Life Decade

Policies, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

Community members are now fully aware of their rights and responsibilities; they have turned from beneficiaries into partners. Open communication and cooperation have been developed with the local authorities to ensure that water provision will be managed and maintained properly. As part of the project, a community resource centre was built for the Mwihoko Women Group to conduct their gatherings and development activities.

Service delivery

In 80 households a rainwater harvesting system was established serving 480 people: 40 households received a tank of 5000 litres and 40 one or two tanks of 2500-3000 litres, including filters. In 5 schools



10,000-litre rainwater harvesting systems were established, providing at least 2040 schoolchildren with water. As a pilot sanitation component, 3 eco-toilets and a shower room were built to assist women in the Miti Mingi area to access decent sanitation and clean water; a 10,000-litre

⁴³ Albert Mumma: Kenya's New Water Law: an analysis of the implementation of Kenya's Water Act 2002 for the rural poor. In: Community-based Water Law and Water Resource Management 158 Reform in Developing Countries (eds B. van Koppen, M. Giordano and J. Butterworth), CAB International 2007, available at: http://www.iwmi.cgiar.org/Publications/CABI_Publications/CACABI_Series/Community_Law/protected/Ch%2010.pdf

rainwater catchment tank was installed to support the sanitation efforts as well as income generation. The women's group contributed money and raised over 2000 Euros which they used to purchase land (one hectare) for the eco toilet.

Women's empowerment and capacity development

Positioning Mwioko Women Group as WASH leaders in their community is a continuous process of empowerment and capacity development. The role of the Soroptimist Union of Kenya as a strong and influential women's network in the country, and its SIK Nakuru Club in proximity of the Mwioko Women Group, have been indispensable in this process. Their support is on-going to ensure the continuous involvement of the Mwioko Women Group in community decision-making and development.

Spin-off

Once the Mwioko Women Group had taken the lead and responsibility for their project, they initiated a revolving fund. The money was used to purchase 22 dorper goats, one for every member. Each member also received two hens and a cock. The eggs improve family nutrition and any excess is sold. Proceeds from the sale of eggs and goats are re-invested to ensure continuity of production. Furthermore, a resource centre / production shed was built and is managed by the women for training purposes and the production of materials for project implementation.

Challenges

Maintaining their position as project owners and implementation partners has been a prime challenge for the Mwioko women and their Soroptimist peers. The remote location

made it difficult to communicate frequently and to monitor closely. This allowed the project manager to withhold vital information and to exclude Mwioko Women Group from decision-making, leading to diversion of project funds and the Mwioko women's revolving fund savings, poor quality of the rainwater harvesting systems installed, and marginalisation of the Mwioko women. The intervention of WfWP, resulting in removal of the local implementing NGO, and the



continuous support and coaching by the SIK Nakuru Club has rebuilt trust and cooperation of the local partners and jointly they have managed to overcome the obstacles. The project was turned from a potential failure into a promising success, sparking the interest of neighbouring communities and resulting in improved livelihoods and a community partnership for sustainable water management.

Sustainable Water Governance at Lake Victoria: The Involvement of Women's Civil Society Organisations in Kenya and Uganda

The Organisations



Katosi Women Development Trust (KWDT) was established in 1996 with a mission

to improve the living standards of poor communities, in particular women, in rural Uganda. KWDT is registered with the Uganda NGO Board, the Mukono District and the National Association of Women Organizations of Uganda as a Women's development organization. With a coordination office in Kampala and a field office at Katosi landing site, KWDT brings together 492 women in 17 groups.

KWDT has been awarded the FAWCO HIV/AIDS grant in 2011, and the 3rd Kyoto Grand Water Prize and the Rio+20 Best Practice Award in 2012.



Soroptimist International Union of Kenya (SIK), member of Soroptimist International

of Europe (SEI), was established in 1995; at present there are 12 clubs with 150 members in different parts of Kenya. Soroptimist International of Europe is a women's service organisation in Europe and parts of Africa with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. SIE strives for a better world for women and children through awareness, advocacy and action. SIE services local communities and stimulates active participation in decision making at all levels of society. On average SIE supports 6,750 projects with a gross net amount of € 7.5 million per year inclusive of mentoring and scholarship projects. SIE has supported WASH projects related to safe drinking water and sanitation since 2007.

Lake Victoria: a Fragile and Vital Ecosystem

Lake Victoria is Africa's largest lake and a major freshwater source for riparian countries of the Lake and the White Nile. It is an important economic resource for East Africa, supporting a multi-million dollar fish export industry and serving millions of local consumers. Lake Victoria is also rich in biodiversity, with some 400 endemic fish species. Lake Victoria's wetlands filter sediment and nutrients from entering the lake, provide a habitat for fish breeding, and generate medicinal plants, building materials,

fuel wood and fodder for a large rural population.⁴⁴ Three of the five neighboring countries divide the surface area of the lake, which totals 68,800 square kilometers: Kenya (6%), Uganda (45%) and Tanzania (49%). Population growth around Lake Victoria is among the highest in the world, putting the ecosystem under increasing pressure. Water quality has declined greatly due to eutrophication arising from increased inflow of nutrients. The rivers feeding into the lake are increasingly polluted by municipal and

⁴⁴ UNEP/World Agroforestry Centre: Mainstreaming Multilateral Environmental Agreements for Human Development. Available at: http://www.unep.org/training/programmes/Instructor%20Version/Part_2/Activities/Interest_Groups/Decision-Making/Supplemental/Enviro_Agreements_for_Human_Dev_rev2.pdf

industrial discharge. Overfishing, introduction of exotic species, deleterious land use practices and pollution from various sources have contributed to oxygen depletion and mass extinction of indigenous fish stock.⁴⁵ Parts of the lake are no longer accessible to the local population because land has been bought by private companies or licenced for specific activities.

Transboundary cooperation among the countries bordering Lake Victoria dates back to the beginning of the 20th century. The rapid deterioration of the lacustrine ecosystems in the mid-1990s led to increased cooperation between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda through their National Environmental Action Plans. In 2003 the three governments signed an agreement for the conservation and sustainable utilization of the resources of Lake Victoria.⁴⁶ Currently the Lake Victoria Basin Commission, a specialised agency of the East Africa Community, is responsible for the sustainable development and management of Lake Victoria basin. The Strategic Action Plan for the Lake Victoria Basin, adopted by the East African Community in April 2007, identifies 4 key transboundary environmental issues: 1) land, wetlands and forest degradation, 2) fisheries, habitats and biodiversity, 3) pollution and 4) water balance, water use management and climate change.⁴⁷

Around Lake Victoria, women represent 70-85% of the workers involved in fishing, processing and marketing – although usually combined with other activities like farming. Their work has an important impact on environmental and overall sustainability, both with respect to sustainable fisheries and the rehabilitation of water catchment areas.⁴⁸ With the mounting pressure on Lake Victoria,

women are also facing problems in sustaining their livelihoods.

The Situation in Uganda

The Constitution of Uganda (1995) has provisions for the conservation and management of the environment and natural resources; article 39 covers the right to a clean and healthy environment. The framework for environmental regulation and the sustainable management of natural resources is well established through the National Environment Act, the Land Act, the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act, the Water Act and the Investment Code Act, which requires every holder of an investment license to ensure that their business enterprise does not cause any damage to the ecology or the environment.⁴⁹ The reality, however, is quite different, with unsustainable agricultural practices, deforestation and water pollution posing serious problems for the Lake Victoria ecosystem, its inhabitants, and its users. Fishing is a major source of employment, but overfishing poses a serious risk, reflected in the increase in the number of fishers from approximately 35,000 in 2000 to over 54,000 in 2006.⁵⁰

Katosi Women Development Trust works with rural women in fishing communities of Mukono District, Uganda on the Northern shore of Lake Victoria. Programmes include economic empowerment, health, and leadership and political participation. Environmental conservation practices are embedded in all KWDT programmes, with a focus on sustainable agricultural practices and promotion of renewable energy. The organisation builds local ownership and women's capacities for self-reliance.

KWDT Contributions to the Water for Life Decade

Policies, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

In the process of addressing community water problems, KWDT realised that direct interventions alone were insufficient to achieve sustainable change. Whereas women could build water and sanitation facilities for households, there was also a significant need for sanitation facilities in communal places such as markets, hospitals and schools that are ordinarily a direct responsibility of government. In cases where women provided facilities such as communal wells, their use and sustainability required the intervention of local government authorities to enforce applicable rules and regulations. The women therefore went beyond direct service provision to attract the attention of local government and intervene in policies and programs at a higher level.

KWDT involvement in policy influence began with community dialogues that brought together community members, leaders and relevant local government policy makers to jointly discuss a particular problem, such as open defecation or the failure of community projects due to corruption and bribery tendencies among local leaders and members of the community. The roles and responsibilities of the authorities and

different stakeholders, including community members, were discussed, as well as relevant laws and law enforcement. At the end of the dialogue, the community designed an action plan towards solving their problems. To date, 11 community dialogues have been held that engaged over 1095 people in discussing WASH issues.

Building on the community dialogues, KWDT organised advocacy clubs to participate in and influence decision-making in county and district meetings – the first of its kind in the region – which resulted in better informed communities, improved working relationships with local governments, and improved service delivery.

Service delivery



Since 2002, KWDT has run an integrated WASH programme supporting rural women and their communities to access safe water and adequate sanitation, stimulating behavioural change to improve sanitation and hygiene practices, and minimising water-related diseases. Between 2005 and 2011 the programme resulted in rainwater harvesting facilities for 195 households and 20 schools benefiting 9190 pupils. In addition, KWDT supported the construction of 31 community wells that benefited over 8300 people from 1040 households.



⁴⁵ Erik Ochieng Oghello et al. (2013). Lake Victoria and the common property debate: is the tragedy of the Commons a threat to its future? In: Lakes, reservoirs and ponds, vol. 7(2), 101 – 126, available at: <http://www.limnology.ro/Lakes/2013/201307208.pdf>

⁴⁶ East African Community, Protocol for the sustainable development of Lake Victoria. November 2003, available at: http://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/Lake_Victoria_Basin_2003.pdf

⁴⁷ Olof Drakenberg (2007): Environmental Policy Brief for the Lake Victoria Basin. Available at: http://www.vub.ac.be/klimostoolkit/sites/default/files/documents/env_policy_brief_lake_victoria.pdf

⁴⁸ M. Medard et al. Women and gender participation in the fisheries sector in Lake Victoria. Available at: http://www.worldfishcenter.org/Pubs/Wif/wifglobal/wifg_africa_victoria.pdf

⁴⁹ Christine Echokit Akello (2007): Environmental Regulation in Uganda: Successes and Challenges. In: Law, Environment and Development Journal Vol 3(1) p. 20, available at <http://www.lead-journal.org/content/07020.pdf>

⁵⁰ National Fisheries Resources Research Institute Uganda (2006): Contribution of Lake Victoria Fisheries to Economic Growth, Poverty Reduction and Development. Available at: http://www.firi.go.ug/tech_reports



More recently KWDT facilitated the installation of 5 rainwater harvesting tanks and toilets for households, as well as rainwater harvesting systems and two 'five-stance' ventilated improved pit latrines for Kamda secondary school and St. Kizito Ngombere primary school, benefitting 34 teachers and 1032 pupils. The sanitation facilities include a public toilet for use by community meetings and the local market. Benefits are most visible during the rainy season when sanitation-related diseases are rampant in fisher communities due to open defecation. Capacity building included leadership skills for 48 women leaders, retraining 24 women masons in tank construction and maintenance, and coaching 55 water user committee members to develop the knowledge and skills to manage water sources. A documentary was produced to raise awareness on the benefits of good sanitation and hygiene practices. A follow-up project started in January 2014, which includes construction of 32 rainwater harvesting tanks, 32 domestic bio sand water filters, and 16 domestic sanitation facilities for 32 households, as well as training of 64 KWDT women leaders, 403 group members and 29 women masons.

Women's empowerment

Access to water and sanitation in their homes has increased the social status and self-confidence of women, helping them to engage in activities to gain economic independence and, in many cases, enabling them to support their children and other dependents as well.

KWDT is engaged in a long-term process, building grassroots community and advocacy groups, empowering women and increasing their participation in decision-making at various levels, so as to sustain changes and achievements. The number of local women who are leaders of local water user committees, village councils, parent school committees, beach management units, etc. continues to grow.

The local government authorities have come to appreciate the work that women do in the community, and now regularly consult KWDT women prior to designing any projects or programmes. The Muwumuza women's group of Ngonve, for instance, one of the 18 KWDT groups in this village, was given a community development grant by local government, which focused on women's economic empowerment.

Spin-off

KWDT experience shows that social, political and economic empowerment do go hand in hand. Over time, KWDT women have even been able to stand and be elected for local leadership positions.

The KWDT water dialogues have increased accountability through inviting local leaders to the meetings, where they are answerable to the communities. A total of 11 water sources have been repaired after these dialogues. In addition, a new platform for exchange of information has facilitated participatory water governance and informed decision-making, which goes beyond the water sphere. There is ample evidence that women's participation in local government meetings has greatly increased attention by local authorities to the water and sanitation needs of the communities. Income generation and economic empowerment through sustainable

agriculture and sustainable fishery activities are major spin-offs with considerable scaling-up potential. The work of KWDT has transformed the community and is reducing the contamination of the lake Victoria in the process.

Challenges

A women's organization working in the water-gender-development nexus in a rural setting faces many challenges related to poor roads, infrastructure and communications, not to mention traditional gender roles and stereotypes. KWDT's approach has proven to be successful but presents a challenge in itself. The demands for KWDT services are much higher than what KWDT can offer at present. KWDT is only able to cover barely half of Mukono with its limited staff and resources. For fundamental changes to take place among the people of traditional communities requires enormous capacity building and training. The KWDT network has grown from just one group in 1996 to 17 groups in 2014, which translates into countless hours in trainings, exchange visits and orientations. The older groups help to orient the new groups, but overall coordination falls on the KWDT professional staff. Moreover, financial limitations are severe: Project budgets do not allow for sufficient resources to be devoted to the social dimensions of

empowerment, capacity development, and local ownership building.

The Situation in Kenya

The Mau Forest complex, located in Kenya's Rift Valley, has an area of 273,300 hectares (675,000 acres) and is the largest of the five Kenyan watersheds. It is the source of major rivers that provide 60% of Lake Victoria's water and subsequently feed the Nile River. The Mau Forest ecosystem is a key provider of invaluable socio-cultural and ecological services, including regulation of river flows, flood mitigation, water storage, recharge of ground water, reduced soil erosion and siltation, water purification, biodiversity, micro-climate regulation, and forming the backbone and lifeline for many Kenyan communities. It hosts a variety of wildlife, historical features and forest types, such as bamboo jungle.

The forest is home to the Ogiek people, whose hunter-gatherer lifestyle was sustainable until recent decades. Due to incursions by other ethnic groups, parts of the forest area have been cleared for settlement. This and other human activities, including agriculture and logging, have reduced the Mau Forest to a quarter of what it once was, disrupting the forest's role in storing and distributing



water to outlying areas and threatening the livelihoods of the approximately 10 million people that depend on the rivers fed by the forest complex.⁵¹ In 2008, the inauguration of the Sondu-Miriu hydro power plant was postponed due to low water levels, which are said to be a consequence of the destruction of Mau Forest.

Spearheaded by the government of Kenya, CSOs, the private sector, and a number of international and regional organizations embarked on the restoration of the Mau Forest ecosystem, and conservation and rehabilitation of the water catchment areas. During the 2007/2008 post-election violence

in Kenya, which severely affected the Mau forest region, the Soroptimist International Union of Kenya played a key role in helping families, particularly women-headed households, resettle. That same year the region was hit by a major drought, water was rationed, animals died and harvests were lost. The local communities, supported by SIK, agreed it was in their best interest not to cultivate in the forest; instead they moved and helped to maintain restored forest areas as part of the rehabilitation programme of the Kenyan government.

Soroptimist Kenya Contributions to the Water for Life Decade

Policies, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

In 2011 the Kenya Forest Service and the Soroptimist International Union of Kenya signed a Memorandum of Understanding to partner for the rehabilitation and protection of the Mau Forest ecosystem. SIK adopted five hectares of Likia Forest to be rehabilitated in three years.

Service delivery

SIK raised funds in collaboration with the European and global Soroptimist federations to restore ecosystems services and to provide sustainable livelihoods for the local population. In the course of 3 years some 20 hectares were reclaimed. The Mau forest rehabilitation project did not include a WASH component. However, a rainwater harvesting facility was installed, and solar power lanterns and torches were provided to the forest

guards as part of replacing fossil fuel use with cleaner and renewable energy. SIK has supported various WASH activities in both urban and rural areas of Kenya, ranging from environmental sensitization of women and their families to providing support to communities to enhance safe water and sanitation and a clean environment. This included the purchase and installation of more than 350 household water tanks for clean and safe drinking water benefiting over 2,400 people, and the construction of 50 toilet blocks in disadvantaged communities and schools to reduce poor human waste disposal and environmental contamination. The toilet blocks are equipped with tilly tins and taps to improve hygiene, and approximately 1,200 people have benefited. SIK is an active contributor to the eradication of open defecation in poor neighbourhoods of Nairobi. Public sanitation facilities have been

built and are managed by local women as means of generating income.

Women's empowerment

SIK works with communities and schools through its existing clubs. The SIK clubs, in turn, identify women's groups within their jurisdiction that can become resources for training and other development interventions. Women's civil society organisations in the region have been strengthened in the process of conserving forests and water catchment areas and protecting livelihoods. Notably, the project created important income generation possibilities for local women – such as growing seeds and fashioning bamboo products – enabling them to escape dependency and become active contributors to social change.

Challenges

The short duration of the agreement with the Kenya Forest Service limited the possibilities

of changing the mind-set and engaging the communities through the active participation and leadership of their women. The communities that moved from the forest to allow for forest restoration for the most part are yet to be resettled or to be involved in economically productive activities. In addition, building partnerships in which the goals of all partners are equally taken into account and roles are clear takes considerable time and effort.

The potential of women's involvement in the rehabilitation and sustainable management of Mau Forest is huge: Women's civil society organizations and networks in Kenya have the social capital and empowerment tools; they also have access to key players in their country. What is lacking is the financial means for scaling up a successful pilot to make a real difference.



⁵¹ African Wildlife Foundation, The Mau Forest: Africa's water tower. Available at: <http://www.awf.org/landscape/mau-forest-complex>

The Gender-Water-Sustainable Development Nexus in Nigeria: Women's Empowerment through Water and Sanitation Interventions

The Organisations



Women Environmental Programme (WEP) is a non-profit, non-religious voluntary organization established in 1997 by a group of grassroots women in Nigeria with the aim of addressing gender injustices related to the environment and the economic and social rights of women, children and young people in Nigerian society. WEP headquarters are in Abuja with operational offices in North Central and North East Nigeria States. WEP coordinates the African Women Major Group at the United Nations, and has observer status with the United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.



Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN) was established in 1993 as a non-religious, non-political, not-for-profit NGO and was incorporated with the Kano State government as a Community Development Association in 1995, and with the Corporate Affairs Commission in 1998. From its headquarters in Kano, WOFAN works with about 1,500 women's community groups (20–25 women per group) in 30 local government areas across four states: Katsina, Sokoto, Kano and Bauchi. Presently WOFAN cuts across the border with the Republic of Niger into Sinder and Maradi states. WOFAN aims for self-reliance of local communities

through women's empowerment and gender inclusive projects that are developed and implemented by the communities themselves. Water and food security are main themes of the organisation.

The situation in Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with a population of about 167 million. While Nigeria is well endowed with water resources of both surface and ground water, there are major challenges in providing sustainable and equitable access. Lake Chad for instance, which at its peak served 30 million people, has been decimated.⁵² Adding to the complex nature of water resource management in Nigeria are the uncertainty and compounding factors related to climate change. Seasonal cycles are disrupted, and the weather is becoming fiercer with increased frequency and intensity of storms, floods, droughts, and soil degradation, all of which have exacerbated poverty, malnutrition and a series of health and socio-economic consequences.⁵³

Nigeria set out MDG targets for attainment of water supply and sanitation coverage of 75% and 65%, respectively, by 2015. Nigeria also acknowledged the human rights to water and sanitation at UN General Assembly in 2010. A recent national assessment revealed a 65% coverage for water supply and 41% for sanitation.

In Nigeria, as in many other African countries, water for sustainable livelihoods poses a major challenge. Women are particularly affected since they are largely responsible for finding and fetching water for their families and livelihoods. They often walk miles in search of water, carrying heavy containers, frequently encountering violence and harassment along the way. They may have to wait for hours at water-access points, and pay exorbitant prices, especially in contexts where water provision has been privatized. The lack of water and sanitation keeps many women and girls in a cycle of poverty. Fetching water

is time consuming and physically challenging, thus limiting their opportunities to attend school or earn an income. Available water is often contaminated, even deadly, without treatment and filtration. The consequences of climate change, such as floods, drought, and water scarcity, add to the burdens of local women, threatening their livelihoods and health, and impeding their social and economic development.

Contributions to the Water for Life Decade

Capacity development and women's empowerment

Nigeria has invested in women leadership at all levels. The number of women in water governance has increased to include a minister, five commissioners of water resources at the state level, one managing director and six executive directors of river basin development authorities in 2013. Political leadership is complemented by women's leadership in professional NGOs. The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) national coordinators have played a key role in the promotion and communication of the water and sanitation

agenda; and the WSSCC WASH Ambassadors are important contributors to awareness raising on sanitation and hygiene, and to the mainstreaming of gender into the water and sanitation sectors in Nigeria.

Women's leadership at the community level is also increasing and paves the way for achieving sustainable water governance on the ground and for building resilience to climate change-induced water scarcity and/or floods (see examples below). Women's civil society leaders work closely with their political allies to forge changes from within government institutions and ministries.

Contributions of WEP-Nigeria

Women Environmental Programme addresses water and environment issues in Nigeria through a gender lens, furthering women's meaningful participation in the implementation of projects and programmes that concern them. WEP uses its water and environmental programmes as an entry point for improving women's rights and

empowerment. Besides building water points and training local people on adaptive strategies to reduce the negative effects caused by climate change, core activities of WEP include capacity building for women so they can take up leadership roles. WEP is a partner in the Girls and Women Initiative (G-WIN) project instigated by the Nigerian

⁵² Statement Hon. Mrs. Sarah Reng Ochekepe, Federal Minister of Water Resources, Nigeria, on the occasion of the High Level International Conference on Water Cooperation, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, 20th August 2013, available at: http://www.wsscc.org/sites/default/files/statement_by_the_hon_sarah_ochekpe.pdf

⁵³ Building Nigeria's response to climate change (BNRCC): Climate change information on Nigeria, 2014, available at: <http://www.nigeriaclimatechange.org/ccinfo.php>

government for the empowerment of rural girls and women to be key drivers in decision-making processes in the water sector. WEP also supports local communities in rainwater harvesting for economic and domestic uses. The six targeted communities have established over twenty rainwater collection points and storage facilities.

The “SHIT” business model

WEP supports local communities to turn waste into opportunity. The “SHIT” business model regards sanitation as a development opportunity with a positive economic value. The WEP’s “SHIT” business model has been adopted by the G-WIN project of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources, Nigeria, as a means of increasing access to WASH services in the country. The WEP initiative provides access to WASH services in public places by providing toilets and urinals for income generation. So far, eight enterprises have been created in four states where WASH facilities have been installed to provide services to the public for a modest fee.

The G-WIN project

In the G-WIN project five ministries (Water Resources, Agriculture, Works, Health, Communication) collaborate to empower hard-to-reach women and girls in the country. WEP-Nigeria is a civil society partner in this programme.

G-WIN aims to build the capacity of women and girls to be leaders in water management, in the provision of water and sanitation in public places, and in improving the hygiene conditions of the rural population. The programme was officially launched in January 2014 by the Hon. Minister Sara Reng Ochekepe. WEP has since trained rural women and girls in four pilot states (Abia, Bauchi, Plateau and Osun). Over 40 women in each state received training on community-led total sanitation (CLTS), slab construction and facility

maintenance; over 20 women per state were trained on leadership and conflict resolution. As a result of this project, WASH committees have been formed in 40 rural communities with women in leadership roles; slab pit latrines were built to ensure open defecation free (ODF) status; and income is generated for women through the establishment and management of four water points or kiosks.

Communicating climate information

To address the serious negative effects of climatic events on agricultural production, WEP works with the Ministry of Environment to train agricultural extension service officers on communicating weather and climate information to rural farmers, including women. The decisions of rural farmers to plant and harvest are shaped by traditional knowledge of weather patterns, but these are rapidly changing in often unexpected ways. To make informed decisions today, farmers need access to information gathered by meteorological stations across the country. The project tailors information to be broadcast and understood by rural women.

WEP has trained over 150 agricultural extension service officers in Benue, Plateau and Niger states on interpreting and communicating climate information for farmers. A database was created of rural women who receive regular messages with climate information for planting and harvesting. The project succeeded in establishing meaningful relationships between meteorological agencies, extension officers, civil society and community-based organisations and the media for the purpose of informing local farmers. Wide dissemination of best adaptation practices and their adoption by local farmers, in particular women, have changed the way agriculture is practiced in the participating states.

Contributions of WOFAN

WOFAN works in rural Nigeria on access to safe water and sanitation for improved livelihoods, and on rainwater harvesting and wastewater management for irrigation purposes. These initiatives have led to the production of cash crops, rather than reliance on subsistence farming. WOFAN trains women and young people in hand pump repairs and maintenance, making them more self-sufficient in solving their problems.

An important aspect of WOFAN’s approach is institutional capacity building. At the grassroots level, WOFAN supports the development of women self-help groups that then become part of the WOFAN network and can benefit from trainings and projects. WOFAN has registered 1,500 community groups with over 2,250 members, of which 60 groups are particularly active. At state level, WOFAN has engaged and coached nine wives of state governors as WASH Ambassadors, who actively promote gender mainstreaming in the water and sanitation sector. As a result, every local administration in Katsina state

now addresses WASH issues and includes women at the grassroots level in the decision-making process so that the outcome is more gender-responsive and addresses the needs of the community at large.

A joint WOFAN-USAID project in Northern Nigeria provided access to adequate water and sanitation, while empowering women to actively participate in decision-making, service delivery, and maintenance. The project resulted in the installation of 200 boreholes with hand pumps, 286 compartment ventilated improved pit latrines, 126 urinals and 42 hand washing facilities for 120 primary schools and non-formal learning centers in participating states.

From WASH to climate-resilient sustainable agriculture

WOFAN partnered with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in a two-year project on climate resilient agriculture. The project addressed all aspects of the agricultural value chain – from seed multiplication and crop agronomy, improved processing and



preservation methods, packaging and storage, to opening up market outlets and building business management skills of women and young farmers in Northern Nigeria. WOFAN's demonstration farm has trained 25 women to work with women in their respective communities, reaching 1250 participants who have planted drought-resistant, high-yielding seeds, resulting in increased crop yields and three harvests per year.

Making women's voices heard

Informing rural women of their rights and presenting them with tools for self-reliance is another important element of WOFAN's work. For example, women's groups and networks were able to participate in a popular radio programme, where they can speak up on the barriers they encounter, share lessons learnt, and advocate for the translation of election promises into action. While reaching many listeners and raising awareness, making their voices heard has generated recognition and self-confidence.

Results

The cooperation between women's civil society organizations and government has resulted in women-led projects that have improved rural water supply and sanitation services in their communities and regions. These activities have also contributed to climate resilience and to the economic empowerment of the women involved. The work of WOFAN and WEP has increased the recognition of women as having skills and knowledge outside the scope of their traditional roles. The voice of women in their families and communities has been strengthened such that they are better able to negotiate their own needs. Many of these women have achieved greater autonomy and independence, which has led to new economic opportunities.

Challenges

Working on the water-gender-development interface as women's civil society organisations poses many challenges, since reaching out and empowering women often meets with cultural and social resistance. Gender-based violence and insecurity are common, as are the time conflicts between family responsibilities and project participation.

Adding to the already complex nature of water resource management are the uncertainties and risks related to climate change – more frequent inland flash floods, coastal flooding, droughts, etc. Relying on static models for forecasting water events is no longer feasible, requiring solutions and management plans to be adaptive and resilient by including provisions that account for climate change.

The water, sanitation and gender nexus receives less priority compared to other sectors in Nigeria – and in most countries. Lack of funding for women's civil society organisations, in general, and for their WASH and climate resilience interventions, in particular, is a constant limitation. Innovative financing schemes are needed, to address the specific challenges of participatory water and sanitation provision and management in rural situations and should be adequately considered in future programming.

3. The Role and Added Value of Women's Civil Society Organisations and Networks



Participatory Water Governance: the Human Rights Based Approach

Sustainable use and management of water resources is largely about people; it requires a good understanding of the social context in which a water management system needs to function. The human rights-based approach (RBA), which underlies UN development policies and programmes, takes this social dimension into account. RBA places people at the centre of the development process. In doing so, it addresses social inequalities as root causes for the lack of access to water.

The rights-based approach establishes the obligations of States to ensure that basic water needs are met, but equally empowers people to claim their rights and fulfil their obligations as valuable members of society.⁵⁴ RBA is implicit in the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and was further strengthened through the recognition of safe water and sanitation as a human right by the UNGA resolution in 2010. Other IWRM areas such as water quality, managing water scarcity and risks, and transboundary waters are governed by the principles of equitable and reasonable

use and the “no harm” principle as stated in the UN Water Courses Convention or the ECE Water Convention respectively.

Participation is a key element of the human rights-based approach. While States are the prime duty bearers for providing the basic water needs and their political will is essential, they are not solely responsible. Meaningful progress will only be made if other stakeholders join in and fulfil their specific roles. But participation is not a given, especially for marginalised groups that do not have a say in policy decisions that concern them. As such, women’s voice, agency, participation, and leadership in the water and sanitation domains should be considered and actively promoted.

Participatory water governance requires that the roles of stakeholders outside the (professional) water sector are acknowledged and that they are included in the development, implementation and management of facilities and water resources management schemes.

Demonstrating the Added Value of Women’s Civil Society Organisations

In many societies and cultures women are the traditional water carriers, but their influence in decision-making regarding water is limited. The positive results of involving women in the design and planning stages can be multiple, from creating local ownership and adequately addressing the needs of the community, to building sustainable solutions

and using indigenous knowledge that prevents expensive mistakes.

The examples in chapter 2 demonstrates how women-led projects can build community involvement and ensure that their interventions reach the intended beneficiaries. They are prime examples of an

integrated approach and include institutional arrangements for maintenance and management that fit the local circumstances, and that are endorsed by the community. WPLUS, for example, clearly illustrates the added value of using civil society organisations for involving local people to further sustainability and ownership of decentralised water schemes in Nepal, helping to close a gap in the approach of the government.

Corruption prevention and financial efficiency through women’s involvement are evidenced by the examples of the Mwhoko Women in Kenya and Tegemeo Women in Tanzania, where the transparency and accountability mechanisms of their social networks have improved project oversight, management, and monitoring. Furthermore, procurement has proven to be much cheaper when done by the women themselves.

Women’s involvement can bring new clarity and energy to ensure effective and responsible water use and management through a (water) stewardship approach.⁵⁵ The work of Katosi Women Development Trust, Uganda and Soroptimist International Union of Kenya around Lake Victoria exemplifies this.

Women’s organisations do not only operate at the community level. Their social networks enable them to work on different levels simultaneously. Deeply rooted socially, they have a potential to bridge levels and sectors, while practicing an integrated, people-centred approach. AWHHE and MAMA-86, for instance, play a proactive role in the national legislative adaptation and implementation Protocol on Water and Health to the 1992 Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and

International Lakes. Besides raising awareness and building capacity of the population, and of women in particular, these organisations conduct independent research on water quality and are actively implementing water and sanitation projects in their countries, thus contributing directly to improving health outcomes.

Working with women’s civil society organisations adds significant value in terms of building grassroots networks whose social capital in turn fuels and organises bottom-up development. The work of WOFAN and WEP in Nigeria illustrates the importance of self-help groups that empower women to address the water-food-energy nexus in an integrated way, building climate change resilience of the rural poor. In the same way KWDT in Uganda creates sustainable income generation along the shores of Lake Victoria in Uganda, while SIK stimulates payment for ecosystem services on the Kenyan side. Saving mechanisms and revolving funds (‘vikoba’) that provide women and other members of their communities with collateral for economic investments are a key feature of these women-led development projects.

Women’s civil society organisations influence both community members and local authorities, and effectively bridge the gap between citizens and their governments (see for instance the Nepal example and KWDT example). At the same time, women’s national and international networks provide the evidence base for informed decision-making by Civil Society in liaising with governments. Notable examples of effective contributions to national and regional policy processes are the involvement of AWHHE and MAMA-86 in the Water and Health Protocol. The work of TGNP and WFT shows women’s contributions to anchoring the fundamentals of good

⁵⁴ Emily Filmer Wilson (2005): The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development: the Right to Water. Available at: <http://www.crin.org/docs/right-to-water.pdf>

⁵⁵ Stewardship is about taking care of something that we do not own. Stewardship approaches that focus on the management of public goods like forests, fisheries or, in our case, freshwater resources, are based on the premise that we are all accountable for the sustainable management of those resources and are, therefore, based on collective responses. We define water stewardship as: “The use of water that is socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and economically beneficial, achieved through a stakeholder-inclusive process that involves site and catchment-based actions. Good water stewards understand their own water use, catchment context and shared risk in terms of water governance, water balance, water quality and important water-related areas; and then engage in meaningful individual and collective actions that benefit people and nature.” AWS 2013; <http://allianceforwaterstewardship.org/become-a-water-steward.html#what-is-water-stewardship>

governance in national constitutions.

The local-to-national work of women's civil society organisations on the gender-water-development nexus is strengthened

Instruments and Tools of Women's Civil Society Organisations

The most powerful instrument to contribute to achieving universal access to water and sustainable water governance lies in the women's civil society network structure itself. By uniting women citizens from different social strata and sectors, the Women's Major Group provides a platform to raise awareness, discuss different opinions and opposing interests, and forge partnerships that jointly address a common problem. Moreover, women's organizations, when empowered and enabled, have the potential to build on local ownership and to develop and scale up successful community interventions.

Social network building can take on different forms depending on local circumstances and cultures. Several examples are outlined in chapter 2:

- The pending formation of the Women for Water HUB (Tanzania) unites women's CSOs and NGOs around water-gender-development cooperation. Apart from being a platform to discuss, lobby and coordinate action, the HUB is envisioned to support local actors through tailor-made programmes to strengthen their capacity, access information and financing, and build partnerships, including with relevant government entities;
- In rural areas in particular, local self-help groups are created, that are supported by a regional or national umbrella organisation

and facilitated by the WfWP global network through which diverse knowledge and capacities are shared and put to use in order to achieve common development goals.

with professional staff (Nigeria, Uganda). Receiving local and national peer support is indispensable for women in circumstances where constraining gender roles prevail and women's involvement in public life is not readily accepted. Once established and accepted, such local structures constitute an effective tool for replicating and scaling up successful pilots;

- Having an overarching umbrella enables individual organisations to unite on the water-gender-development nexus and has created a strong voice in international agenda setting.

Building trust is an essential and often overlooked element in establishing local ownership and commitment. Being part of the community, understanding its language and culture, adapting to the time perception, rhythm and mores of their respective communities, and acknowledging local leadership and decision-making structures are amongst the factors that explain the success of women's civil society organisations in bonding and bridging. Gaining the trust of communities and obtaining the support of traditional leadership take time and perseverance but are crucial tools for success.

Instruments of social dialogue are an intrinsic element of the work of many women's civil society organisations. Social dialogue is used for mobilising and sensitising local

communities, but it is equally used with the local authorities in the water sector – community interface. It is also practiced at both national and international levels, giving decision-makers a better understanding of realities on the ground.

Strengthening capacities of local actors is an important instrument in decentralised water provision and governance. While over the past decades considerable progress has been made in the creation of institutions and frameworks for decentralised governance and improved basic service provision, local authorities often do not have the means and capability to meet all of their obligations. At the same time, civil society structures and their capacity to complement the work of local authorities are underdeveloped. The Women for Water Partnership has developed a set of generic empowerment tools based on the field experiences of its members. In this approach, capacity is developed on-the-job through identifying women leaders and involving them in the development, implementation and management of their community-owned projects from day 1. Seed-funding (Women Fund Tanzania) is coupled with peer learning, partnership building, public exposure and prolonged training and coaching. Access to relevant information that is put in context and made understandable is another key element. It is provided through partnering with relevant institutions, or tailor-made if such institutions are not available.

Water projects are an excellent medium to further women's active participation and leadership, and women-led projects an effective empowerment tool. Empowered women transform their communities as is clearly illustrated by the Mweteni example where the women spearheaded social and economic development activities by building a community centre, advocating for access

to electricity and improvement of roads, as well as training community members and expanding income generating activities.

Investments in strengthening women's civil society organisations pay off in manifold ways and create tremendous potential for scaling up decentralised water and development interventions and implementing internationally agreed water- and equity related Sustainable Development Goals.

4. Challenges and Lessons Learnt in Promoting Women's Engagement in Water Cooperation

Women's civil society groups represent a reservoir of largely untapped potential for bridging stakeholders and sectors, bringing about transboundary exchange and cooperation, and preventing and resolving conflicts around water. Making full use of this potential will help to accelerate the implementation of water-related development goals and contribute to inclusive and sustainable governance of the resource.

Concrete examples of participatory approaches that engage women in water illustrate the value of including women's voices in decision-making at all levels, strengthening women's civil society groups to be able to play a pro-active role in cooperation processes, and empowering individual women to contribute to local ownership, preventing corruption, and scaling up successful community interventions.

Overcoming Barriers to Women's Meaningful Participation

As we have seen in the examples, many of the challenges that WfWP member organisations face are either directly or indirectly related to working in rural areas of the developing world, where water sources are remote, scarce and/or contaminated, and where customary law prevails, both in terms of water rights and with respect to gender equality and the position of women in public life. These are some of the challenges that need to be addressed in the post-2015 development agenda, given the structural nature of rural-urban disparities in water access, and the social and economic development gaps, generally.

Working in the water-gender-sustainable development nexus addresses traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Reaching out and empowering women often meets with cultural resistance and much time and effort goes into changing the mind-set of those in power who set the water agenda. Drivers for change include:

- Gender equality in national legislation. The example of Tanzania illustrates how the lack of land and water rights for women keeps them trapped in poverty;

- Strong political leadership committed to gender equality. The example of Nigeria shows the catalytic effect of a gender-sensitive water minister cooperating with strong women's leadership, which has resulted in the expansion of a women leaders network at intermediate levels that guides and stimulates women-inclusive water governance and action;
- Support by local leadership is equally important as it gives women the respect and recognition in their communities that are needed to function as an equal partner and driver for community participation. Mweteni village in Tanzania is a case in point, where the publicly expressed support of the District Head has helped to empower the Tegemeo women;
- Having the backing of a peer network that provides moral support, training, coaching and backstopping. Especially in situations where women's leadership is not readily accepted, Women for Water Partnership has positioned individual member organisations as respected partners and provided entry points at policy and decision-making levels to which they would not have been granted access on their own;



- Having the means and tools for reinforcing capacity and building strong women's civil society groups is a prerequisite that is often lacking in practice.

Decentralised water supply and management and its specific challenges warrant serious consideration. The majority of people that lack access to water and sanitation live in remote areas where centralised water supply and management are not feasible. While countries may have decentralised water management policies and programmes in place (such as in Nepal and Tanzania), local authorities and institutions do not necessarily have the means and capacity to meet the extent of their responsibilities. Oftentimes there is no tradition of government-civil society cooperation, and civil society organisations are still poorly developed. WfWP member organisations are experienced in strengthening local civil society and building cooperation with relevant governmental and other stakeholders, despite resistant cultural norms, lack of political will, limited capacity and/or vested interests in existing water management structures.

Bringing successful pilots to scale poses a serious challenge. Small-scale projects that are adapted to local circumstances and take into account cultural differences have proven to be more successful than large-scale projects in many rural areas, for instance, in Armenia. The scaling-up and replication of small-scale, tailor-made projects in decentralised settings is labour intensive and requires social and cultural sensitivity as well as human resources.

Given the sheer size of many developing countries and the large number of rural communities, serious scaling up would be necessary to achieve meaningful results. While scaling potential is considerable and much desired by adjacent local communities in areas where WfWP member organisations are working, capacity is insufficient, both in terms of time and human resources, but primarily because of financial constraints (for example, KWDT, Uganda).

Financial limitations are a generalized and often overwhelming limitation for women's civil society groups. The fact that



volunteers may run civil society groups can be misinterpreted as meaning that civil society contributions are free. Even with volunteer staffing, expenses need to be covered. Project management costs and organisation support costs should be taken into account when factoring in civil society participation in projects and activities.

Project budgets are often skewed towards infrastructure and do not allocate sufficient resources to the social dimension of water provision and management, notably empowerment, capacity strengthening and local ownership building, which are core elements of women-led projects and indispensable for making decentralised systems function sustainably.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Women-Inclusive Water Cooperation

Effective water cooperation should be based on a human rights approach, which means that the interests of different parties are recognized and the legitimacy and interdependency of the roles of different stakeholders are taken into account. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities is needed for the Institutional mechanisms guiding water cooperation. Strengthening institutional mechanisms requires resources and should also include strengthening partnerships with other organizations that have complementary roles and expertise.

Civil society organisations have the capacity to reach, empower, represent and/or defend vulnerable and socially excluded groups – as well as to trigger change and social innovation. The roles of women's civil society organisations may vary but typically include awareness raising, creating community engagement, coordinating action, monitoring, strengthening women's capacities, bridging between governments and citizens, and influencing decision-making on issues of mutual concern.

Targeted investments are needed to bring women's civil society organizations to the

level and scale that are needed to deliver on the proposed water SDG and targets.

The four prerequisites to enable meaningful engagement of women consist, first and foremost, of governments willing to involve women in decision-making processes backed up by valid legislation, policies, and regulations. Secondly, decision-making should be inclusive and on the basis of equality, which means equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men in their different – and similar – roles in society. This is a key element of good governance and a principal responsibility of all levels of government under the human rights based approach. Third, women will be motivated to engage if concrete results may be expected. Providing an enabling environment for women's leadership in water projects will produce manifold results in terms of cost efficiency and sustainability of interventions as well as the spin off for social and economic development. Fourth, investment in the social capital of women's organisations facilitates community involvement and brings to the fore women's skills and leadership that can be effectively used for building and strengthening decentralised water governance.

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