

GENDER

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and WATER

Newsletter of GWANET Network

Positive social changes in drinking water use with participation of women

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According to the World Bank and WHO more than billion of people have no access to safe water and more than 2 billion of people have no respective sanitation. There are important interrelations between water supply, sanitation and poverty, since people are more sensitive to diseases without clean water.

WHO data prove that every minute 6 children die from diseases related to poor-quality water. Children cannot go to school due to diseases and malnutrition. Every day about 5-7 million of people die and many thousands suffer from diseases resulted from poor-quality water.

If the existing tendency in water resources use and management remains, then by 2025, 4 billion of people will live under severe water stress. Lack of water access can undermine livelihood and food stability (70 % of world's water is used for agriculture).



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Based on stated above, we can come to a conclusion that water and sanitation deal with all main development spheres: poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, development of private sector and participation in sustainable management. If we fail to find cooperation ways in countries using shared water sources, regional peace and security can be exposed to the greatest risk.

Why gender and water?

In Tajikistan, drinking water supply is still low. Only 65% of urban population and 22 % of rural population have access to pure drinking water through water pipe systems.

Since the independence of Tajikistan existing water supply systems were disabled due to civil confrontation, economic crisis and cessation of state subsidies during post-war time.

There are three main water supply systems in Tajikistan:

- 1 Water is taken from rivers and transferred through one or more pumping stations to reservoirs, from which it is distributed to households by gravity.
- 2 It is based on one or more bore wells of artesian sources, from which water is delivered by pumps to reservoirs or water towers and distributed to households by gravity. Such systems are mainly used in densely populated valleys and cotton-growing regions in Khatlon province.
- 3 The most applicable phenomenon in highlands is joining water pipe system with mountain river or natural spring and depends on gravity.

According to the Report on poverty alleviation strategy in Tajikistan the Government is planning to improve access to pure drinking water for up to 80 % of population by 2015. In this context local authorities should make sure that when designing and implementing the program they should take into account needs of both men and women.

As for official attitude to water, there is a view in Tajikistan that water has value only if it is used in direct economic production: in agriculture or in industry.



For example, every year it becomes more difficult for rural families to get water after October, when cotton is already harvested and there is no need in irrigating cotton plantations.

Water pipe pumping stations are stopped to operate during October-April in order to reduce costs of electric power supply. Thus, during winter many villages, where there are no wells, have no sufficient drinking water. Such attitude to drinking water supply to rural population leads to abrupt health deterioration, which has direct economic consequence for families themselves as well as for the community.

Research carried out in Temurmalik and Beshkent regions of Khatlon province showed that people had no access to pure drinking water. One of the objectives requiring efforts and time is to get water and to travel far to deliver water from adjacent water sources.

Irrigation canals polluted with fertilizers are a source of drinking water for many women.

Irregular water supply and improper water storing in households lead often to eruption of infectious diseases.



Source:
<http://www.asia-travel.uz/tajikistan/intro-r/foto4-big.html>

Every day work of women within investigated villages is to bring water, store it for drinking needs, making food and washing. During a day woman spends 5-6 hours to walk 3-5 km to bring water. Such affects negatively family income rate. From the other hand it prevents women from taking part in economic activity.

Experience of other countries shows that active participation of women in water supply management can facilitate to increase agricultural production and to develop small-scale private business. It leads to positive social changes at local level.

There are some examples when gender accounting gives benefits for both men and women. For example, the British Organization "WaterAid" uses gender approach in all its programs.

It was revealed in Ethiopia that pure drinking water supply to users reduced significantly morbid events related to water and exhaustion of women. As a result well-being of all village people was improved. After water supply improvement families became to spend more time with children, tension was mitigated and girls began to attend schools.

Gender method is an interrelation between men and women and management can not be

sustainable when one half of population (women) is not taken into account or overworked. There is need in that men and women take equal part in realizing and managing water supply. Then the whole community will gain benefits.

Gender program in rural area in Tajikistan

Under the Tajik conditions equal participation of women in water supply and management as key users and water managers, as well as involvement in community mobilization can strengthen role of women in the community and lead to positive social changes.

It was evident according to NGO «Parastor» activity results in Temurmalik and Beshkent regions in Khatlon province of Tajikistan.

Arrangements on creation of environment were carried out within the Program «Water supply, sanitation and public health» implemented by the international organization OXFAM in Temurmalik region in Khatlon province with participation of NGO «Parastor» in order rural women could take part in decision making process on drinking water use.

The program was initiated in August 2003 within 13 villages in Temurmalik region and within 2 villages in Beshkent region. These regions are located in the southern part of the republic and due to civil war many water supply points in rural makhallyas were destroyed or became outdated. These 15 villages have more than 15000 households.

People use water from springs and Surkhob river by walking more than 5 km. Mainly children, in particular, girls deliver water. Hence many of them abandon school or are behind and at an early age girls have gynecopathy.

The project goal is to improve competence of rural women in water resources management and to involve them into Public Water Committee activity. Women as managers can impact on decision making on drinking water supply as a result of breakage of water supply points.

Public Water Committees were created in each rural community during the project. Their activities were directed at use, conservation and management of water systems rehabilitated at the

expense of funds of international and government organizations. These are hand pumps, pumping stations, water pipe units, reservoirs for water and wells, which provide village people with drinking water.

Usually Water Committees include 10-14 persons. Respected and active community leaders were elected to Water Committees during community meetings with participation of people from each makhallya. At the same time men prevail in all Public Water Committees. There was elected in one woman to five Water Committees and women were ignored in remaining 10 Committees.

Problems were emerged during the project implementation. They prohibited women from taking part in Public Committees. In particular, it is due to mentality of rural population and a remained stereotype that woman should be at home. All such barriers were overcome with support by region khukumat and chairmen of local dzhamoats and Woman's Councils.



In this context meetings were organized with chairmen of local authorities and self-administration and the followings were discussed:

- Involvement of both men and women at all governance levels and performances can accelerate to achieve sustainability in water resources management on-site;
- More integrated and sustainable water management can evidently improve gender-related situation in order to assure access to water resources for both men and women.

Project Actions

- 1 Questionnaires were developed for step-wise inventory of potential beneficiaries (women and men) within all 15 villages in order to understand gender and analyze leadership;
- 2 Mini-research was carried out to define barriers and restrictions hindered women in participation;
- 3 Discussions and interviews were conducted with both men and women and relations were established with dzhamoats to collect qualitative information and define needs and priorities of target group;
- 4 3 workshop modules were developed as understandable diagrams, schedules and photos to aware local rural communities in Temurmalik and Beshkent regions regarding existing drinking water-related situation and essential public participation in addressing problems.

Workshops were directed at improving knowledge in the field of gender, using findings and skills in water resources management, acquainting Public Committee members with notion of tolerance on drinking water use.

425 people took part in workshops. Workshop themes are given below:

- «Gender and Water»
- «Addressing problems related to drinking water use»
- «Water resources use management»

The workshop «Gender and Water» was conducted in 15 communities for men and women and separately for mixed group;

Trainings on addressing conflicts related to water resources use and management were held for 175 members of Public Water Committees within 15 villages in Temurmalik and Beshkent regions.

- 5 Information on project progress and participation of rural women in Public Water Committee activity in Temurmalik and Beshkent regions was always published in newspapers «Charkhi gardun», «Khalk ovozi» and «Minbari khalk»;
- 6 Booklet «Zan va ob» was based on real-life stories related to participation of women;
- 7 «Participation of women in decision making in rural communities of Tajikistan» Project activity

was presented during the conference «Development of local community in Central Asia» held in Osh in April 2004.

Changes in lives of women in 15 villages of Temurmalik region

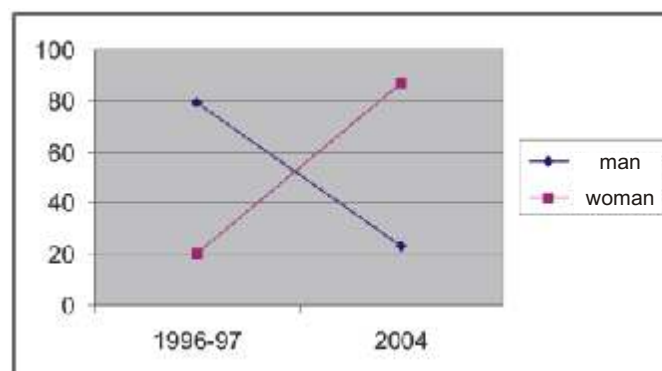
- 1 Woman's representation was improved within 15 Public Water Committees;
- 2 Men changed their view on actions of women taking part in water system management. Funds were established within Water Committees in villages Chilcha, Khalkayer and Shibonay. They are used to maintain pumps and pumping stations. Woman was elected to be responsible for fund in 15 Public Water Committees by common voting;
- 3 Women in Public Water Committees were initiators to conduct khashar in order to clean reservoirs for water, water pipes and collectors in villages Chilcha, Kushkiya, Kiblai and Mamurdasht. They prepared dinners for people taking part in khashars.
- 4 Public Water Committees members mobilized communities for addressing drinking water-related problems in their villages.

Achievements:

1. Equal participation of both men and women, rich and poor people, as well as religious leaders in social life in their villages in order to address problems related drinking water supply;
- 2 Women recognized that they should take part in local water resources planning and management;

- 3 Development of mechanism for mutual understanding to address drinking water-related problems among men and women;
- 4 Strengthening of Public Water Committees as local self-administration to conduct public works - khashars;
- 5 Reduction of number of diseases related to poor-quality water.

Results of initial research on woman's employment within villages in Temurmalik region showed very clearly sharp increase of employed women rate.



Foreign Experience:

Flowing upstream: The challenge of mainstreaming gender in water governance

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On 6 September 2007, the Steering Committee of the Gender and Water Alliance elected Sara Ahmed as the new Chairperson of GWA. Here she outlines the challenges ahead.

I would like to begin by thanking all of you for your messages of support and letting you know how honoured I am to take over the position of GWA Chairperson from Ethne Davey. Ethne has shown us that leadership is not about power or position, but about being inclusive, listening to the voices of the quiet majority and above all being accountable to our members, partners and the larger constituency of poor women, men and children that we serve. Thank you Ethne for helping the GWA build a principled foundation.

As the GWA grows in size and scope of work, demonstrating that more equitable and gender-sensitive IWRAA is not only possible but desirable, we continue to face several challenges. Let me outline some of these challenges on which I hope our work over the next few years will focus:

- 1 The challenge of understanding gender, and by extension gender mainstreaming, as not simply a question of numbers (women on water committees, for example) but of transforming, indeed setting the agenda for, our water policies bureaucracies and agencies.
- 2 The challenge of access to low-cost and culturally appropriate water and sanitation facilities, particularly for poor women and girls, in rapidly growing urban environments and emerging peri-urban centres.
- 3 The challenge of understanding climate change or variability and what it means for our water resources, food security and for the adaptive strategies of the poor and vulnerable, living in areas prone to increasingly intensive floods, pervasive drought or coastal surges and storms.
- 4 The challenge of HIV/AIDS and how it continues to devastate poor families, women and community water supplies, especially in the African continent.
- 5 The challenge of good water governance which is accountable to poor women and men, ensures transparent decision-making processes and provides genuine space for the powerless to participate, voice their concerns and build empowered and sustainable community institutions.

As gender advocates, we work at many institutional levels with a very clear mandate that gender for us is more than simply the social relationships of power between women and men, but also encompasses a broader understanding of diversity and social inclusion. We bring a range of skills and experiences to our strategies on capacity building, knowledge management and policy advocacy, learning from each other in enabling environments that facilitate collaboration and partnerships.

However, it is the silent majority around the world, the individuals, households and communities that we work with and to some extent 'represent', where I personally feel that the challenge of mainstreaming gender-equitable and sustainable water management lies.

As we move ahead in our goals, the GWA looks for your continuing support, for new and innovative ideas to take forward our agenda and for strengthening both our global and regional processes of water advocacy and community practice.

We hope that you will continue to engage in dialogue with us through our web-site, our listserv or by e-mail.

Thank you for your support.

Source:
Bulletin № 50-November 2007

Focus group discussions, reviewing current gender and water-related problems, identifying key directions for actions

Sh.Sh. Mukhamedzhanov

The agrarian reform carried out in Central Asian republics has had not only positive consequences like the introduction of private ownership of land and grown agricultural produce into the agriculture in these republics, but also negative ones, which have affected both men and women at local level.

During a meeting with women in Osh province, an interesting fact from their life was established. According to Aynagul Nasyrova, manager of Agricultural Extension Service, there is no gender problem regarding women protection in Kyrgyzstan, today it is necessary to protect men. In her opinion, men, unlike women, have hardly been adapting to market conditions formed after the Soviet Union's collapse.

There is no doubt that the problem of men protection exists not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in all Central Asian states. Aynagul seems to be right, and this statement is consonant with the discussions on the issue held at the interstate workshop in Almaty in 2004. The absence of work places, low salaries at state organizations in cities, absence of initial capital and equipment, high interests on credit, small lands in rural areas incite men to seek for jobs in large cities or outside their country. As a result, the whole hard work in agricultural production falls on women's shoulders.

Identifying key directions for actions

The held meetings with rural people in Osh province (Kyrgyzstan), Fergana and Andizhan provinces (Uzbekistan), and Sogd province (Tajikistan) demonstrated that problems are identical almost in all of these countries.

The main problem is related to the low profitability of agricultural production and lack of other kinds of jobs for both men and women. Moreover, the fact is indicative that not having an opportunity to earn enough money to maintain their family, men are now leaving their lands under the care of women, in search of a job to other regions and countries.



Source:
<http://congenialw5296.livejournal.com/17392.html>

Problems:

- Decrease in male population in rural areas;
- Unskilled jobs for women in rural locality;
- Low earning in rural areas and low profitability of agricultural production;
- Quality of water - drinking and irrigation (chemical laboratories)
- Water supply
- Low qualification of irrigator women
- Lack of extension service in rural areas
- Lack of water specialists in irrigation and water supply (from among women)
- Improvement of rural women education
- Awareness of gender issues among men and women in rural areas



Ways to solve:

- Provision of quotas by the Government for training women - water specialists
- Promotion of clean drinking water supply programs
- Dissemination of information sheets, involving specialists
- Implementation of governmental programs in districts
- Study of women employment in rural areas
- Experience exchange on gender problems
- Coordination of extension services for solving agricultural and hydro-reclamation problems.



Short-term actions

- Development and dissemination of information sheets in rural areas
- Raising of public awareness of existing governmental development programs
- Study of women employment in rural areas
- Establishment of a group of consultants (involving a lawyer)
- Development of network/discussions in the Internet.

TEN "GOLDEN RULES" FOR A GENDER APPROACH IN DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION PROGRAMMES

1. Information

Make sure that information reaches all women and men. Different groups use different channels and they also differ in literacy and areas of interest;

2. Mini-gender analysis

Discuss with women and men how work and decisions in water supply and sanitation are divided. Asked about who decides, both men and women usually say the men. Discussing the process often reveals that both sexes play a role. Both groups also often come to their (own) conclusion that women do much of the work, but are not much involved in decisions. This provides a good basis for discussing implications and change;

3. Facilitation of meetings

Ensure women and men can equally well take part in meetings by taking specific measures: times and locations are suitable for both sexes, men understand and support the value of women's participation, women are informed and encouraged to attend, seating and language are arranged so that all can hear and understand, speaking out by women is facilitated (women sit together, breaks for internal discussion, choose spokeswomen, etc.), women's views are included in the minutes and reflected in decisions, if needed a separate meeting is held with (poor) women, e.g. at their places of work;

4. Planning decisions

Ensure -and collect evidence- that (poor) women and men have had a say in, and all groups achieved mutually agreed decisions on, at least the following decisions: types, design and location of facilities and decisions on local maintenance, management and financing systems;

5. Organizations

Determine [by law] that a minimal proportion of members of planning and management organizations is female. Enable women and men of the different groups to choose their own representatives on the basis of suitability and trust for the various tasks. Encourage that women are chosen in financial positions as they tend to be more trustworthy. Help establish locally agreed rules and procedures for representatives to regularly account for their work to those who have chosen them;

6. Hygiene education

Involve women and girls as planners, change agents and managers, not as passive audiences. Have separate hygiene programmes for men which address their own responsibilities and practices as well as gender relations that affect health/hygiene. Gender-blind hygiene promotion often gives women and girls more work, do not address the male control of resources and overlook that young women can often not change behaviour of male relatives and go against hygiene views of older female relatives;

7. Training and employment

Make sure that both sexes are trained for technical, managerial and hygiene tasks. Adapt training to the requirements of women (place, methods, duration). Achieve an equitable division in paid and unpaid jobs and jobs with a higher and lower prestige;

8. Means for improvements

Ensure that credit, materials and skills for making own water/sanitation/hygiene improvements are available to women and men. Link water and sanitation projects with livelihood approaches;

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9. Gender-sensitiveness and skills

Achieve, on the basis of a participatory analysis of their own experiences and interests, that agency staff and management, and staff of training institutions, are aware why gender is important and practice gender approaches;

10. Staffing

Employ female staff and equip them, as well as male staff, for dealing with gender issues. Work in cases of shortage of female staff with gender-

sensitive male staff who in their turn work with local female intermediaries (local women of whom the communities accept that they work directly with male outsiders).

Source:
IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre

If you have any message or material you wish to post in the Newsletter or on the project web-site, please, send it on the following address:

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