

# GENDER

In Central Asia

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# and WATER

Newsletter of GWANET Network

## Seminar “Gender aspects in water resources management in Turkmenistan”

Ashkhabad, 7 May 2008

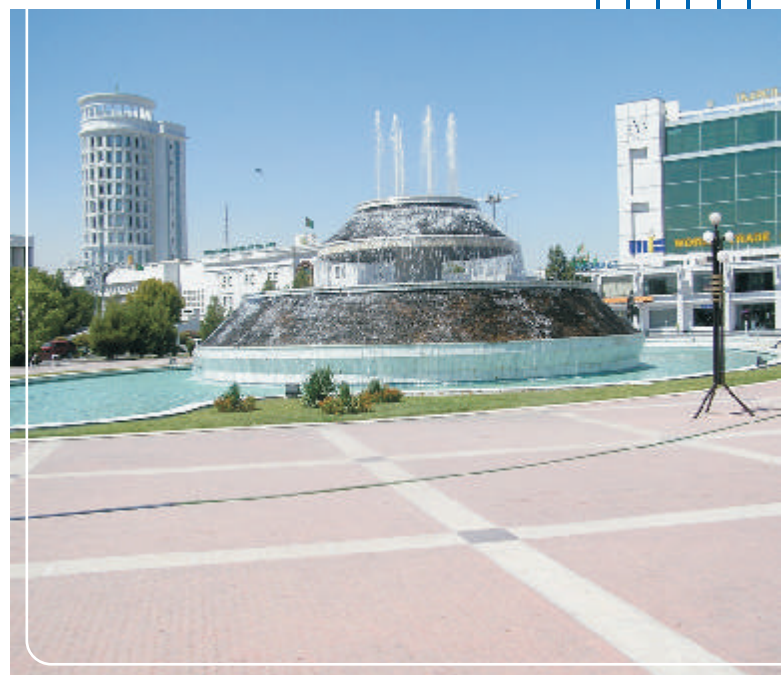
### Gender mainstreaming in Turkmenistan's laws: gender equality and balance

Lidiya Kerimi, Democracy and Human Rights Institute

Gender equality was studied by various international and national agencies in Turkmenistan. The more comprehensive study was conducted within the framework of joint project by UNDP Turkmenistan and the National Democracy and Human Rights Institute affiliated with the President of Turkmenistan.

Woman occupies a fitting place in many spheres of national activity: public authority, local authorities, community, economics, science, literature, and arts. Women play leading roles in health-care and education.

On 25 November 1997, Mejlis (Parliament) of Turkmenistan adopted new laws about elections to the superior public authority - People's Council (Khalk Maslakhaty) and to local authorities - Gengeshi. In December 1998 and April 1999, the Mejlis amended the Law about election of Parliament delegates by new provisions that extended democratic principles of the electoral system, according to internationally-accepted regulations. Another important step was the



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adoption of laws about the Central Election and Referendum Commission of Turkmenistan and about securities of people's suffrage.

The new election law completely corresponds to international documents on elections, including the involvement of women in this process.

There are no any formal quotas for election of women in Turkmenistan. Since the beginning of election process, women take an active part in it. The fact of women's involvement in politics is proved by the following: Mejlis delegate women - 26% (quite high number according to world's

standards); representatives of khalk vekilleri – 7%; gengeshi – 14%. Many women occupy leadership positions, including ministers, representatives in UN, etc.

Once again I would like to emphasize that Turkmenistan has well-developed legal framework of gender equality, and currently there is a task to establish an economic basis to ensure gender equality as provided for in the National Constitution and guaranteed by the President of Turkmenistan. The success of this endeavor largely depends on women, who represent people's interests in the national Parliament.

### Challenges and prospects of IWRM in Turkmenistan

**Usman Saparov, Member of GWP CACENA, Deputy Director of Institute “Turkmensuvlymtaslama”**

Some features of Turkmenistan's water resources:

- 82% of water resources flow from transboundary basins

- Forecasted groundwater reserve is about 3.0 billion m<sup>3</sup>/year
- Major aquifers are located in undeveloped and poor populated areas
- Return flow contains remains of mineral fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants and, at present, is not suitable for domestic and industrial water supply
- Return flow can be used for irrigation of salt-tolerant crops in light soils and in flooded desert pastures.

#### Water resources in Turkmenistan (50% flow probability)

River, gauging station	Flow, mm <sup>3</sup>	Note
Amudarya, Kerki	22000	According to interstate agreement, for Turkmenistan
Murgap, Tagtabazar	1550	
Tejen, Pulikhatun	770	
Atrek, Chat	170	
Small rivers	310	
Groundwater	270	
Return water	5350	Report data, 2002 r.

Development of water-consuming production sectors is associated with:

- Higher water use efficiency
- Improved water management
- Wider use of return water and unconventional sources

The administrative-territorial system of water management is characterized by the following:

- it does not provide effective management and equal water supply along a hydrographic network
- the established water delivery schedules are sometimes broken at tail parts in low-water years
- local water management communities has not been established yet at on-farm level
- water management at the on-farm level is undertaken by staff of etrap organization on the basis of contracts concluded with farmers
- it is associated with uncoordinated management actions within the boundaries of single water basin
- such centralized management of allocation, control and accounting of irrigation water against the background of numerous water users, poor and lack of water meters makes management difficult and reduces water use efficiency
- water productivity and discharge are estimated as a whole for each etrap and daikhan associations and by average values.
- poor capacities of water management organizations and lack of a system of measures to guarantee stable, reliable and uniform water supply

The existing water legislation makes provision for:

- first-priority meeting of drinking and domestic needs of population
- embargo on usage of potable groundwater for needs other than drinking and household water-supply
- procedure and forms for involvement of communities and citizens in actions aimed at rational water use and protection
- set of measures to conserve river water availability and keep river unpolluted

The main reasons for the implementation of IWRM are as follows:

- Current lack of coordination in water use and protection among different economic sectors
- Fragmentation of management by differed interlinked types of water resources (surface, ground, return)
- Gap and lack of coordination between water-management chains and levels
- Lack of mutual interests among water management agencies and water users in higher water productivity
- Poor public participation at all hierarchical levels

In order to raise public awareness:

- A booklet on Integrated Water Resources Management was published in national language
- An information package of the conference "Implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management in Achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals" was published as well.

### **Women's role in water management and use in Turkmenistan**

#### **Roza Berkeliyeva, Institute «Turkmensuvlymtaslama»**

The development of equality between man and woman, the creation of favorable conditions for personal development, the achievement of equal treatment of girls, women, the enhancement of their status in family and the society, as a whole, and the wider involvement in decision-making processes take difference paces in different countries but are irreversible. Gender issues have been addressed already in the Central Asian countries as well. However in agriculture, where traditions and prejudices become more apparent than in any other area, such problems have not yet been disclosed adequately. Meanwhile, there exists a direct link between the agro-socio-economic indicators and poverty in CAR countries and the status of women. (Stulina G.V. "Gender, water, and poverty", Almaty, 2004).

According to official returns, the share of women in administration and management is 17% in Turkmenistan. The percentage of women involved





as permanent or seasonal workers, mainly, in common labor and hard physical activity is substantial. At present, there are no women referring to category “professional”. (Share of farmer-women is minor and refers to category “other” in statistical reports).

The analysis of gender balance survey in water and land resources management and use, as conducted using FAO methodology, in representative farms of two velayats (provinces) show that situation in Turkmenistan is closely approximated to that in other region's countries:

- Women in agriculture form the basis of food production and family nutrition, as well as of family's income
- Women are extremely concerned with health, education, and employment.
- In low-income families, woman contributes a lot of her time (up to 70%) to reproductive area (child delivery and upbringing, child and household care, etc.).
- Women's labor is neglected and low-paid in many cases.

These data show that to unlock the potential of women, the latter should be empowered so that they could be involved in decision-making at national level as engineering specialists.

However, as study of gender structure of technical institutes' students shows, male students dominate there: for example, a share of female students in hydrological and land reclamation department of the Turkmenistan State Agricultural University is about 3%. This is quite low so that one

could speak about change of this situation in the near 10 years. Besides, the quality of professional training of water and agricultural specialists is very low now as a result of transition to single-language teaching in training centers. Present generation in the higher education institutes has very low interest in learning Russian, which is the only change to get access to technical information. Many decision-makers at the national level start to understand this gap. Some of key specialists at the Agrarian University have already stated publication training materials in Turkmen. In this context, publication of a book “Integrated Water Resources Management” (U.Saparov, O.Djuma-durdiev, 2005) within the framework of GWP CACENA was very timely. This book, in Turkmen language, states basic principles and conditions for implementation of IWRM, gives short history of water management in Turkmenistan, describes creation of favorable conditions for the implementation of national IWRM programs and preliminary measures for IWRM in Turkmenistan.

Women could be involved in soil and water resources management at farm level only after they became familiarized with the key positions of IWRM conception and their future benefits. Therefore, the development and implementation of a program that could be aimed at both raising public awareness about water management as a whole and would provide for information and training workshops for rural people would also promote movement in this direction. This can be implemented, perhaps, by establishing field schools or a special information/training center under umbrella of the Ministry for Water Resources or under a project with community organization.

### **Capacities of Turkmenistan's community-based organizations in gender mainstreaming**

#### **Zalina Rossoshanskaya, Community-based organization BOSFOR**

Ratification (in 1999) by Turkmenistan of the Aarhus Convention on access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental measures enables women to participate in decision-making in environmental measures and in formation of environmental policy.



The Constitution of Turkmenistan and all nature conservation laws guarantee access of women to environmental information. The national state standard “Environmental impact assessment of planned economic or other activities in Turkmenistan (EIA)” includes special article for public participation in EIA and access to environmental information on EIA that complies with the requirements of the Aarhus Convention.

The transition period in Eastern Europe and CIS countries gave them a unique opportunity to create a basis for sustainable development while avoiding mistakes made by western countries in nature conservation and natural resources management. Community-based organizations (CBO) (including women's ones) may be very important in this context. By using information, which can be extracted from similar foreign organizations, as well as experience of the latter, local CBOs can contribute to sustainable use of all environment's components, based on national features. CBOs may mobilize women and recall them to a sense of their responsibilities for environmental situation, including water management, thus, contributing substantially to social structure enhancement.

Within the framework of Turkmenistan's National Action Plan for Environmental Conservation, a range of measures have been undertaken with active involvement of women and various non-governmental organizations. As a result, the country's public was provided with information about national and local issues and relevant measures and actions undertaken to solve them.

The efforts of Turkmenistan's environmental CBOs - Turkmen Society for Nature Conservation (TSNC), Turkmenistan's Union of Hunter and Fisher Communities, Turkmen Geographical Society, community-based organizations “Ecofund”, “Ecoforest”, women's organizations and others - are aimed at disseminating environmental information and searching ways for raising performance efficiency, developing and implementing specific measures for nature conservation. The leading organization is TSNC, which became a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature for its activity in nature protection and environmental information dissemination. This organization represents mainly opinions of women and children in the country. Based on those opinions, a lot of scientific papers were published on ecology and nature conservation, including the Red Book of Turkmenistan (1st and 2nd editions).

Many ecological initiative groups without a status of non-governmental organization operation in all the regions of Turkmenistan, mainly at national reserves, institutes of higher education and secondary schools. Women and children take an active part in those groups. The groups contribute substantially to solving of environmental issues typical for the country.

To support ecological community-based and women's organizations, the National Program for Environment Conservation makes provision for a system of small grants to be allocated to public non-profit organizations for implementation of projects aimed at achieving concrete results in environmental conservation and promoting public ecological movement .

In 1999-2001, small grants were awarded to 28 projects submitted by different community-based ecological organizations.



The community-based organizations in Turkmenistan have already gained substantial experience from project implementation with donor support. Besides, thanks to previous sponsored programs, they developed considerable material and technical capacities for new projects in order to meet present needs of the society.

## WORKSHOP RESOLUTION

Participants of the workshop have agreed that

- At present, gender mainstreaming in developing, implementing, and analyzing projects is still led by donor agencies mainly.
- While medium and higher level professionals have general idea about gender mainly through their participation in international workshops, the lower level and the general public are far from understanding of the role of gender approaches as a whole and, in particular, in water management.
- Despite awareness on gender approaches, few specialists (including decision-makers) share opinion on their importance.
- Lack of general access to Internet services and professional/technical literature on gender issues reduces opportunities for gender mainstreaming.

In order to overcome this situation, the following needs to be done:

Establishing a technical resource center/Center of technical information/ for water professionals and the public. The Center would imply a research library (both in paper and in e-form), a network of 10 PCs with access to Internet, a multimedia

projector, and screen. Such center could be established either under umbrella of the Turkmenistan's Ministry for Water Resources or on the basis of existing resource centers (The Bosfor organization expressed their will to provide available resources as equipment for such center) provided that donors' support would be available for office renting, communication/Internet services, and salaries of Center's manager/librarian.

- providing free access for Turkmenistan's research community to scientific-technical information both in paper and in e-form;
- enabling environment for exchange of opinions on tendencies of research and advanced methods/approaches development;
- creating conditions for e-learning and training of scientific and technical staff from state institutes and departments, including in gender issues
- raising public awareness (mainly youth).
- reviving cooperation with leading research institutes, international and donor organizations.

Center's prospects:

Depending on size and mechanism of financing and/or co-financing and on Center's status, the following work could be undertaken additionally by the Center:

- Organization of courses for training in gender issues, in partnership with invited/international leading specialists.
- Thematic lectures for the public in partnership with international lecturers.
- Preparation and implementation of exchange programs.



## “Formation of WUAs in Kyrgyzstan”

E.P. Sakhvaeva

### Introduction

On-farm Irrigation Project, implementation period – 2001-2008. The project consists of 3 components:

1. WUA formation and development – US\$ 6.3 million.
2. Infrastructure rehabilitation, operation and maintenance – US\$ 22 million.
3. Assistance in implementation – US\$ 0.7 million.

Project goal: Increase crop production through stable and reliable water distribution in 120,000 ha of irrigated lands in all the provinces of the republic.

### Importance of the issue or initiative

Formation and strengthening of viable Water Users Associations (WUA), which could assume the maintenance of on-farm irrigation infrastructure earlier belonging to kolkhozes and sovkhoses.

Physical rehabilitation and restoration of on-farm irrigation and collector-drainage infrastructure for guaranteed irrigation water supply to farmers in the project area of 120,000 ha.

### Results/practical experience

There are 462 WUAs, of which 451 are officially registered. The number of members in 462 WUAs is 175,157 people.

The area of irrigated lands served by WUAs is 712,000 ha, which accounts for 70% of the total irrigated lands in the republic.

Training courses were developed and organized for WUAs on the following themes: “WUA formation and development”, “Management and administration”, “Financial management, operation

and maintenance of structures”, “Water use”, “Monitoring and assessment”, “Legal framework for WUA activities”. Assistance is provided to WUAs in drawing up yearly plans for operation and maintenance, including costs and establishing irrigation service fees.

For the implementation period, 1063 km of irrigation canals were repaired, 142 km of collector-drainage network were cleaned and repaired, 429 gauging stations were constructed, 2299 outlets and other structures were installed at canals. Water availability was raised in 106,200 ha of irrigated lands. 121,418 ha of irrigated lands were covered by rehabilitation.

Due to a rapid growth in prices for construction work during the past 3 years, the project faced a challenge to address the deficiency of funds to complete the work. In some cases, it was difficult to carry out rehabilitation work owing to weakness of contractors.

In the republic, 35 Water Councils with an area of 228,000 ha of irrigated lands were established. The activities of public Water Councils are mainly aimed at addressing conflict situations between individuals on water distribution, agreeing water rotation and water supply schedule, and considering issues related to operation and maintenance of inter-farm part of canals in hydro-geographic zone. Water Councils are involved in raising grant funds from donors for repair and cleaning of Specific canals and structures. Altogether 13 Water User Association Unions (Federations) with an area of 115,338 ha of irrigated lands were legally registered in the republic.

### What did not work and why?

As experience has shown, during their formation and development WUAs face a number of problems and drawbacks as follow:

1. Low irrigation service fees. In the republic, established tariffs for irrigation water supply

services for WUA's own needs vary from 21 to 659 soms per ha. According to the estimations of international and national experts, about 500 soms per ha is required for adequate recovery of operation and maintenance costs;

2. Irrigation service fees are paid by water users, of which about 60% through in-kind payment, labor inputs, and 40% in money terms;

3. Most WUA Councils are still passive in their activities, and don't fulfill their control functions, due to which there is no transparent governance, the trust of water user farmers is low, affecting WUA development;

4. WUA members have not completely understood the essence of WUA functioning as an independent, voluntary and promising organization;

5. In some cases, local authorities exert pressure upon WUA administration, violating provisions in WUA Charter;

6. In some regions, in particular in Chui province, government officials negatively react to WUA development, not understanding that today WUA is a fragile organization requiring all-round support. At present, there is still no alternative for WUA, as a union for on-farm network operation, and its functions can be fulfilled only by agricultural cooperatives (if local officials achieve their formation and development);

7. The issue on the exemption of organizations transferring waterworks facilities and appropriate infrastructure free of charge (rural administration, cooperatives and other entities), from value added tax (VAT) has not been solved. VAT rate under free property transfer is 20% of the market value of an object or structure as well. This infringes their right to property, thus impeding WUA development;

8. Practically more than 400 WUAs don't have material and technical basis (excavation equipment, transport vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles), necessary office equipment such as computers, faxes, which negatively affect their development;

9. There are cases when fiscal agencies check WUA's financial and economic activities, neglecting WUA Charter provisions;

10. Sometimes selected zone representatives of WUAs representing the interests of water users don't realize their powers and obligations completely. Because of that, water users have no information on made decisions.

### **Positive sides:**

Initially, it was supposed that the project would provide support to 160 WUAs, but support is provided to practically all established 462 WUAs: data on their work, structure are gathered, necessary consultations are held and so on.

Farmers express satisfaction with support provided under this project.

Representatives of the World Bank have also highly appreciated project outcomes and expressed an opinion that achieved outcomes are higher in Kyrgyzstan than those of similar projects in other countries.

### **Key points for knowledge sharing and dissemination (on a broader scale)**

Inflation, especially for construction materials, should be considered in cost determination of repair work.

It is necessary to popularize the positive experience of WUA formation and development via electronic communications and mass media; it may be necessary to create a website of the project. Prepared training material may be disseminated.

Training should be organized for women on WUA management, leadership skills, agrotechnical practices and so on.



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### On-farm irrigation system rehabilitation in “Besh-Baatyr” WUA, contract PVO – 63

*Contractor:*  
“Kyzyl-Kiya TSK” Limited Company

*Cost of work:*  
9.8 million soms, increase of the cost up to 10,5 million soms.

*Construction period:*  
27 March 2006 – 1 April 2008.



“Besh-Baatyr” WUA. Head intake structure at Zhin-Zhigen canal.  
before and after rehabilitation

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**GWAnet**  
Central Asia

**ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IS ONE OF WAYS FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY**

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