



# Gender and Water in Sri Lanka

**Global Water Partnership  
and making of the “Mainly  
Male” Hague Vision**

**Need for a Forum / Pressure Group**

**Advocacy needed to promote the  
Third Dublin-Rio Principle**

**1999 – ADB Sponsorship of a National Meeting for Women Water Professionals in Colombo (NetWwater)**

**2000 - NetWwater makes up 1/3 the Sri Lankan contingent in the WWF2 Hague, presence in Gender Day at WWF3 Kyoto, Partners Forum Member for Dams and Development Program**

# NetWater Vision 2004

Recognition of the role of

- Women as water users
- Women as decision-makers especially at community level
- Women professionals in the water sector; and

**The need for gender balance  
at all levels of future decision  
making  
and**

**An IWRM focus for the  
sustainable use of water  
resources**

# Ancient Water Wisdom

1. "Let not a drop of water go to the sea without being made use for mankind"  
– King Parakramabahu the Great  
(1153 – 1186 AD)

2. "Your Majesty the birds that glide the skies and animals that roam the forest have an equal right to live and move anywhere in this country as you have. The land belongs to the people and all other living beings. You are only its trustee."

- Arahat Mahinda (250 BC)

# Invocation

**Participation and Good governance**

**May the rains fall on time**

**May the fields flourish**

**May all beings be well and happy**

**May the king be just.**

*Gender Issues are Governance Issues*



# Woman, Water & Wisdom

## Agenda

- Skills upgrading for women water professionals
- Intergenerational equity
- Community women: women water professionals interface for promotion of two-way knowledge linkages-social responsibility

# *Triple Burden of Sri Lanka Women Water Professionals*

1. Domestic responsibilities
2. Professional Duties
3. Outdated thinking – *inability of society / agency to match perceptions with reality.*

# Skills Upgrading

- Some successes
- Exposure to national / international workshops
- Matching WWP to opportunities
- Communication training
- Utilization of strong points and capacity building

- Strong positives -  
a forum where official persona is shed and negotiation takes place, critically outspoken, agree on duplication / replication, joint planning  
– training ground for IWRM.

# Intergenerational Equity

- School programs
- Need for water literacy
- Unilever's calendar (1999 & 2000) for school children
- Pinga Oya tributary of Mahaweli River (multi-ethnic, multi-religious, highly polluted downstream problems for Mahaweli dams)

- Hydrosolidarity (SIWI) + Accessing Political Decision-makers (Hague Vision)
- Problems caused by demoralized stakeholders, local political godfathers, bureaucratic insulation and fragmented water sector
- Engaging with schools and local level stakeholders
- Creation of Muslim Womens' Forum

- Engaging with political decision-makers
- Developing water and religion programs
- Emergence of a multistakeholder dialogue community to Cabinet level

# Positive Outcomes

- Energized local bureaucracy
- Review of river abuse
- A voice for communities
- Water literate youth
- Identification of gender specific problems
- Included in Clean River Initiative as one of two pilot areas (First Inter-Ministerial Initiative between Ministry of Environmental and Ministry of Irrigation & Water Management)



# Positive Outcomes

- To be used as a catalyst to trigger stakeholder action in other basins.
- Link up with University / Private Sector / NGO / government stakeholders

# Information Outreach

- Citizens right to development information
- Translation of Global Water Partnership TEC document on IWRM, World Commission on Dams and Gender Mainstreaming Manual to Sinhala.

*“The Manual on Integrated Water Resources Management published by the Global Water Partnership (GWP) is one of the most important documents in this field and has so far been available only to a select few who are conversant in English. Therefore I congratulate NetWwater (Network of Women Water Professionals) for undertaking the translation of this valuable book into Sinhala and making it available to a larger audience.”*

**Gamini Jayewickreme Perera,**

(former) Minister of Irrigation and Water Management  
Colombo, Sri Lanka

- **Speaking assignments by NetWwater members at community national level.**
- **NetWwater as Partner Organization for the National Dams and Development Dialogue**
- **Youth Program.**

# Challenges not Problems

- Breakdown in GWP funding
- Postponement of activities leading to loss of confidence with community stakeholders
- Economic crisis of the country leading to diminished local support
- Problems in extending information outreach
- Limited organizational facilities

# MENU

- ☀ Water Literacy and Awareness Building for Female Politicians – interactive problem solving workshop and follow up
- ☀ Identifying opportunities for Women Water Professionals.
- ☀ Pinga Oya to Nanu Oya - sustain and extend activity to neighbouring Mahaweli tributaries.

- ✱ Regional Capacity Building
- ✱ Water Watch – Media link up for promoting stakeholder awareness?
- ✱ Gender sensitization for the hydrocracy for improving water governance.
- ✱ Private Sector linkages



A WOMAN'S  
WORK IS

NEVER DONE!!!



**“A woman’s intelligence is no longer than a kitchen spoon”**

**- *Sri Lankan proverb***

**✿ Unblocking the kitchen sink**

**(a conduit for improved flow of water information leading to better water governance)**

✿ Stirring the Pot

Transfer of appropriate technology and know-how to communities.

✿ Rocking the Cradle

Intergenerational equity through water literacy for youth

✿ Making ends meet

Cost-effective solutions

✿ Walking the last mile....

Advocacy – Persuading powerful decision makers to walk the talk.

# BP Amoco Advertisement

**IT IS NOT THE END OF THE  
PROBLEM  
BUT THE SOLUTION MUST BEGIN  
SOMEWHERE**