Gender, Water and Poverty

KEY LINKS
GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS
ACTIONS AND TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Gender, Water and Poverty
Gender, Water and Poverty:
Key Issues, Government Commitments
And Actions for Sustainable Development

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Women’s Environment & Development Organization
355 Lexington Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10017-6603, U.S.A.
Tel: 212-973-0325; Fax: 212-973-0335
E-mail: wedo@wedo.org
www.wedo.org

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A safe water supply and adequate sanitation to protect health are among the basic human rights. Ensuring their availability would contribute immeasurably to health and productivity for development.”

—DR. GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND, DIRECTOR-GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
The government commitments of the past decade provide a foundation for the eradication of poverty, water-borne diseases and gender inequities. However, successful implementation relies on a better understanding of the different roles and responsibilities women and men have in water access and use; health, sanitation and hygiene; environmental health and ecosystem stability; and public versus private services.

**Water Access and Water Uses**

In most cultures, women and men have different roles and responsibilities in the use and management of water. Women and girls are responsible for collecting water for cooking, cleaning, health and hygiene, and if they have access to land, growing food. In rural areas, women walk long distances to fetch water, often spending 4 to 5 hours per day carrying heavy containers and suffering acute physical problems. In arid and drought-prone areas the challenge is compounded. In urban areas, women and girls can spend hours waiting in line to collect intermittent water supplies at standpipes. The inordinate burden of fetching water inhibits women’s and girl’s involvement in other activities such as education, income generation, cultural and political involvement, and rest and recreation.

Conversely, men in rural areas almost never fetch water, and if they own or have access to land their involvement with water is limited. In urban areas, men spend shorter periods at standpipes and are involved in other activities such as income generation and political involvement.

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**CASE STUDIES**

**India**

**Women’s Participation in Watershed Management**

In 1995, the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), a trade union of 215,000 poor self-employed women, launched a ten-year water campaign to revive water sources in drought-prone districts of Gujarat, India. Women comprised seven out of eleven members of watershed committees set up at village meetings, and the chairperson was also a woman. As part of the program, the committees performed soil and moisture conservation work, creating a green belt and grass cover for better retention of water. They also created an irrigation facility to guarantee drinking water. These projects decreased soil salinity, resulting in more fertile land and a more sustainable source of income for women, while generating employment opportunities for about 240 women.


**Bangladesh**

**Gender, Poverty Alleviation and Irrigation**

In Bangladesh, the Grameen Bank and its sister organization, the Grameen Krishi Foundation (GKF), found that providing women with access to irrigation water was ineffective if they did not also have access to land, credit, seeds and fertilizer. By providing these resources to women, as well as negotiating lease agreements with landowners, women’s income from irrigation activities increased by as much as 10 times what they would have earned in wage labor or in traditional female activities. The program linked agricultural productivity and poverty alleviation to women’s empowerment, increasing women’s self-confidence and reducing their dependence on male intermediaries.

related to agriculture or livestock. Furthermore, because men’s work is considered a part of the productive economy of paid labor, it is generally seen as more worthy of infrastructure investments. As a result, there may be infrastructure for irrigation, but not for safe drinking water within cartage distance or for other activities considered part of the care economy. This limits women’s engagement in a range of economic activities that depend on access to safe water, like the preparation of food and other products for local markets.

The absence of women in decision-making positions results in the creation of policies that fail to address women’s needs and concerns. Women’s equal participation at all levels of decision-making is critical to achieving a more equitable provision of water and sanitation services.

Health, Sanitation and Hygiene
The World Health Organization estimates that 80 percent of all sickness in the world is attributable to unsafe water and sanitation. Water-borne diseases kill 3.4 million people, mostly children, annually. Millions more are sickened with diarrhea, malaria, schistosomiasis, arsenic poisoning, trachoma, and hepatitis—diseases that are preventable by access to clean water and health care information. Women bear the main burden of caring for those who are ill. This not only limits their income generating activities and education, but medical costs associated with family illness increase household debt and deepens poverty.

Water and sanitation facilities are used by both women and men, but maintenance of family health is mostly viewed as a female responsibility. As a result, women may determine the appropriate domestic use of water, but are rarely involved in decision-making on sanitation and hygiene issues. For example, the availability and placement of toilets has a huge impact on women but in many communities women must walk a long distance to use facilities, often risking their personal safety—there is an increased incidence of sexual and physical assault when toilets are in a remote location. In rural areas where toilets may be unavailable, deforestation and loss of vegetation have forced women and girls to rise earlier and walk further in search of privacy. Toilets are also unavailable for vast numbers of poor women who work in urban centers.

About 1 in 10 school-age African girls do not attend school during menstruation or drop out at puberty because of the absence of clean and private sanitation facilities in schools.

There is also a need for gender-sensitive education on proper sanitation and hygiene practices and this must be made available to men as well as women. With limited investment, education could have a tremendous impact on some common water-borne diseases, such as malaria and cholera. Currently, most health and hygiene education programs are aimed at women, as caregivers and managers of the household.

Environmental Health and Ecosystem Stability
Extensive degradation of ecosystems, polluted water, contamination of groundwater and aquifers, mega-dams, salinization, over-consumption of water in rich countries and by the rich in poor countries, as well as the impact of extreme poverty, have all contributed to an environmental catastrophe in the world’s water supply.

In their roles as caregivers and household and natural resource managers, women are most affected by the current global water crisis. Women use vegetation and forests—for medicinal plants, food and fuel, as well as for income generation—but these ecosystems rely on a healthy water supply. As the environment deteriorates, women’s livelihoods become increasingly vulnerable.

Population growth is accompanied
by a corresponding increase in the rate at which resources are used, including water. Achieving sustainable development will require comprehensive solutions to the interrelated challenges of rapid population growth, global environmental degradation and poverty. Ensuring women’s reproductive health and rights is integral to this effort. This includes women’s control over the number and spacing of children, maternal nutrition, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.

**Public versus Private Services**

Water is a common good and human right, and should not be commodified for profit; yet increasingly water and sanitation services are being privatized by multinational corporations. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have aggressively pursued this approach, arguing that water management by large corporations will be more efficient and save governments money. In at least eight African countries, opening the water sector to privatization was a condition for receiving an IMF loan. Thus, countries that are already heavily indebted and have cut spending on social services have been forced to privatize water systems in order to borrow money.

Poor women, as managers of household and community water and related responsibilities, have been first to signal problems with water privatization, including: astronomical price hikes, in some cases consuming a large portion of monthly income; water cut-offs due to unpaid bills; lack of accountability mechanisms for users; deterioration of water quality; and hygiene issues. In some instances, poor and working women have been forced to decide between paying for water and feeding their children. Protests against the sale of public water services to multinational corporations have been mounted across the globe, from Bolivia to Ukraine, and even in the United States. The city of Atlanta, Georgia recently returned its water system to public control after four years of privatization, citing poor service and price increases.

**Case Studies**

**Honduras**

**Accessing Reliable and Affordable Water**

United by their need for reliable and affordable water, and by the burden of high water prices from private vendors and license holders, women in low income urban neighborhoods in Honduras have taken on and managed their own licensed water vending points. The results are lower and fixed water prices, part-time employment to poor single women with children, and use of the group’s surplus for neighborhood projects. Women in the area have also used their own local water supply for income generation through beer brewing, teashops and a laundrette.


**Ukraine**

**Women Organize for Safe and Accessible Water Supply**

Luzanivka, Ukraine was a center for cleaning railway oil tanks and the city’s inadequate sewage system meant constant overflows of sewage into peoples’ homes and onto the streets. When women approached the local authority they were told that there were no funds to address the problem. That’s when MAMA-86, an environmental organization formed by women following the 1986 disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant, stepped in. Women from the local chapter met with residents, launched a political campaign and filed a legal suit against the local authority. As a result, the government allocated resources to finish construction of a sewage pump, financed environmental works in the district, and closed the hazardous oil-tank cleaning facility.

Adapted from Khosla, Prabha, MAMA-86 and the Drinking Water Campaign in the Ukraine, prepared for the Gender and Water Alliance, 2002.

**Tanzania**

**Gender and Sanitation**

In eastern Tanzania, urinary schistosomiasis, a water-related disease, was most common among boys, and women and girls between 10-40 years of age. The incidence among boys was related to the boy’s swimming habits. Among women and girls, the disease was associated with the local practice of washing clothes while standing in schistosomiasis-infested water. This finding had implications both for the hygiene education program and for the wells project, which had banned washing clothes at the hand pumps and so forced women to continue their use of open water.

The on-going follow-up processes of two United Nations conferences—the 2000 Millennium Summit and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)—are entry points for women’s advocacy in the global arena.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of numerical and time-bound targets adopted by 189 governments at the Millennium Summit, is an integrated approach to sustainable development. There are eight Millennium Development Goals, which are a composite of the development commitments from the UN conferences and summits of the 1990s. (See box). They also represent the most comprehensive approach to poverty eradication in history. However, these goals limit gender equity to primary and secondary education (Goal 3).

The WSSD Plan of Action offers renewed commitments to poverty eradication, including specific references to women in the central themes—water and sanitation, energy, agriculture, health, biodiversity and ecosystems.

Most governments and many civil society groups have invested in the implementation and impact of these two international agreements. In addition, the holistic approach of both agreements means that progress in one area can influence progress in another, thus strengthening linkages on the issues, including the connections between gender equity, poverty eradication and water resources management.

**Gender Equality: The Guiding Principle**

Women’s empowerment must be promoted as integral to broader issues of health, education, economics, politics, legal systems and decision-making bodies in order for there to be real transformation.

Commitments to gender from past UN conferences must be reintegrated in the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, Goal 7 includes the target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015. Integrating a gender approach into the implementation of this goal would direct water and sanitation sector institutions to develop gender policies that improve water distribution based on the different water uses by women and men.

In WSSD commitments to globalization, energy, capacity-building and science and technology—where the plan fails to mention the role of women—action should be taken to ensure that implementation includes gender. Notable commitments to sanitation, women’s land rights in Africa, and women’s health rights should be foremost on government agendas for follow-up.

**The Tools**

Advocates must push governments to use gender sensitive tools to ensure MDG targets and WSSD goals are met. Gender disaggregated data and gender-responsive budget initiatives are two such tools.

Gender disaggregated data is necessary for improving women’s access to information and management processes such as watershed management. Gender budgeting is a critical tool for ensuring that government policies and spending promote equity and human rights.

Rather than advocating for increased budgets for women, gender budget initiatives allow government departments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to assess the differential impact of specific policies on women and men.

In their own interest, women advocates must also promote the need for mechanisms to monitor and regulate voluntary partnerships between multinational corporations, governments and civil society. These partnerships have been promoted as a possible government tactic for achieving the goals of the Millennium Summit and the WSSD. But without regulations and a system for monitoring such partnerships pose a serious danger in the form of power imbalances that lead to greater harm than benefit. This has often been true in the case of partnerships on water privatization.

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Implementing water-supply and sanitation programmes is a national responsibility that requires women’s participation at every level of planning.

—AGENDA 21 OF THE 1992 UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL
Beyond the UN

Although it remains the dominant area for furthering peace, human rights, sustainable development and social development, women’s advocacy must reach beyond the United Nations. Increasingly the international financial and trade institutions—the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank—are determining global water policy.

As governments relinquish control of domestic water systems under pressure from these international institutions and regional trade agreements, transnational corporations are gaining unprecedented access to national and local water supplies. As a result, short-term private sector profits are taking precedence over actual human needs, and women’s central role in water resources management continues to be ignored. Therefore, women must take their advocacy to these institutions. Pushing for gender equality and greater coherence in these institutions is critical to achieving desired policy outcomes.

**WOMEN SET GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

**Nijmegen, Netherlands, December 2002:** At an expert consultation, organized by WEDO with support from the United Nations Population Fund, women set guidelines for implementing government commitments to gender equality, poverty eradication and access to water and sanitation.

**Integrate Gender in Water Policies and Institutions**
- Government policies and programs must be guided by the principle that water is a human right and by a holistic approach to water resources management.
- Women’s empowerment and the equitable provision of water services must be integral to poverty eradication strategies.
- National ministries, water and sanitation departments and local governments must adopt and implement gender policies in consultation with poor women.
- Governments must protect the knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and rural women.

**Support Women’s Empowerment and Build the Capacity of Local Women’s Organizations**
- Local women’s organizations must have access to information and decision-making at all levels on issues related to poverty and water.
- Governments must allocate resources to women’s organizations for capacity-building, training, and the establishment of women’s water networks to enable equal management of water resources.
- Local governments and public sector unions must build alliances with women’s organizations to manage water resources and jointly establish time-bound targets.

**Monitor Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty and Water Programs**
- Governments must collect gender-disaggregated data and develop gender-sensitive indicators in all sectors, including water, sanitation, agriculture, and irrigation.
- Governments must apply a gender lens to all aspects of policymaking—from administration and engineering, to access and control of resources.

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**The UN Millennium Development Goals**

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a Global Partnership for Development

For a complete listing of MDG targets and indicators visit www.un.org/millennium/
## PARTICIPANTS OF WEDO’S EXPERT CONSULTATION ON GENDER/POVERTY/WATER

**December 2-3**  
**Nijmegen, Netherlands, 2002**

**Lorena Aguilar**  
IUCN, Costa Rica  
lorena.aguilar@iucn.org

**Alice Bouman**  
Netherlands Council of Women, Netherlands  
a.bouman@wxs.nl

**Irene Dankelman**  
University of Nijmegen and WEDO, Netherlands  
irenenov@antenna.nl

**Jennifer Francis**  
Gender and Water Alliance, Netherlands  
francis@irc.nl

**Annelie Joki-Hubach**  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands  
www.minbuza.nl

**Prabha Khosla**  
WEDO consultant, Canada  
prabha@idirect.com

**Katarina Korytarova**  
University of Nijmegen, Slovakia  
katka_sk79@hotmail.com

**Marie Kranendonk**  
Women in Europe for a Common Future, Netherlands  
wecf@wecf.org

**Rebecca Pearl**  
WEDO, USA  
Rebecca@wedo.org

**Radhika Ramasubban**  
Centre for Social and Technological Change, India  
socetc@vsnl.com

**To Tjoekler**  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands  
www.minbuza.nl

**Mihaela Vasilescu**  
Institute of Public Health, Romania  
avasilescu@xnet.ro

**Hellen Wangusa**  
African Women’s Economic Policy Network (AWEPON), Uganda  
awepon@africaonline.co.ug

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## Resources

**Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)**  
Gender and Women WSSD Survival Kit  
www.wedo.org/wssd/survival-kit.htm

**Other Organizations and Institutions**

- UNFPA  
  www.unfpa.org
- World Water Council/3rd World Water Forum  
  http://www.worldwatercouncil.org
- UNEP Freshwater Portal  
  http://freshwater.unep.net
- Gender and Water Alliance (GWA)  
  http://www.genderandwateralliance.org
- IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre  
  http://www.irc.nl
- UNIFEM—Progress of the World’s Women  
  www.unifem.org
- Public Services International Research Unit  
  http://www.psrui.org
- International Water Management Institute  
  http://www.cgiar.org/iwmi/index.htm

**Millennium Development Goals**

- United Nations  
  www.un.org/millenniumgoals
- United Nations Development Program  
  http://www.undp.org/mdg
- World Bank  
  www.worlddevelopmentgoals.org
- Indicators  
  http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp
- Country Reports  

**World Summit on Sustainable Development**

- WEDO’s Gender Analysis  
  http://www.wedo.org/sus_dev/analysis2.htm
- Official UN website  
  http://www.johannesburgsummit.org
- UNDP Capacity 2015  
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
29th Session
Geneva, November 2002
General Comment No. 15
>> www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/6c15.doc

International Conference on Freshwater
Bonn, December 2001
Ministerial Declaration and Bonn Recommendations for Action
>> www.water-2001.de/
Ministerial Declaration
Gender
Water resources management should be based on a participatory approach. Men and women should be equally involved in managing the sustainable use of water resources and sharing of benefits. To achieve equity, in many parts of the world the role of women in water management needs to be strengthened and their participation broadened.

Bonn Recommendations for Action—Action in the Field of Governance
3. Promote Gender Equity
- Water management policies should distinguish between water users by gender and should allow men and women equitable access to water resources, including safe drinking water and sanitation.

World Summit on Sustainable Development
Johannesburg, September 2002
Political Declaration and Plan of Implementation
>> www.johannesburgsummit.org
Political Declaration
Principle 18: We are committed to ensure that women’s empowerment and emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation of the Summit

Plan of Implementation
II. Poverty Eradication
6. (d) Promote women’s equal access to and full participation, on the basis of equality with men, in decision-making at all levels, mainstreaming gender perspectives in all policies and strategies, eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against women, and improving the status, health and economic welfare of women and girls through full and equal access to economic opportunity, land, credit, education and health care services.
10. By 2020 achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.
(a) Mobilize international and domestic financial resources at all levels, transfer technology, promote best practice and support capacity-building for water and sanitation infrastructure and services development, ensuring that such infrastructure and services meet the needs of the poor and are gender-sensitive.
(b) Facilitate access to public information and participation, including by women, at all levels in support of policy and decision-making relating to water resources management and project implementation.

VI. Health and Sustainable Development
47. Strengthen the capacity of health-care systems to deliver basic health services to all...and to reduce environmental health threats, in conformity with human rights and fundamental freedoms and consistent with national laws and cultural and religious values...
(j) Transfer and disseminate...technologies for safe water, sanitation and waste management...taking into account country-specific conditions and gender equality including specific technology needs of women.

VIII. Sustainable Development of Africa
61. Achieve significantly improved sustainable agricultural productivity...
(b) Promote and support efforts and initiatives to secure equitable access to land tenure and clarify resource rights and responsibilities through land and tenure reform processes which respect the rule of law...and enable women producers to become decision makers and owners in the sector, including the right to inherit land.

Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
Actions to be taken by governments at the national level
72. (e) Ensure universal and equal access for women and men throughout the life-cycle, to social services related to health care, including education, clean water and safe sanitation, nutrition, food security and health education programmes;

MILLENNIUM SUMMIT

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 55TH SESSION
New York, September 2000

Millennium Declaration
>> www.un.org/millennium/

Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Target 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US $1/day.
Target 2: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer hunger

Millennium Development Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
Target 4: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education by 2015.

Millennium Development Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health
Target 6: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

Millennium Development Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Target 10: Halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water

The key role of governments in
The important role of
The actions advocated here are based on integrated water resources management... special attention should be paid to the poor, to the roles, skills and needs of women.

2ND WORLD WATER FORUM

The Hague, March 2000
>> www.worldwaterforum.net/

3. The Main Challenges
Meeting Basic Needs: to recognize that access to safe and sufficient water and sanitation are basic human needs and are essential to health and well-being, and to empower people, especially women, through a participatory process of water management

5. The Actions
The actions advocated here are based on integrated water resources management... special attention should be paid to the poor, to the roles, skills and needs of women.

SECURING THE FOOD SUPPLY
• The important role of women in food production, the storage and preparation of food and improvements to the nutritional value of food
• The key role of governments in empowering communities and fostering the involvement of different stakeholders, especially women, in policy-development, and implementation in rural areas, thereby enhancing the transparency and accountability of institutions that are involved in the development and implementation of those policies
• The need to secure equal access for all farmers, especially women, to productive resources, such as water, land, propagating material, technology and the results of applied research

PROTECTING ECOSYSTEMS
• The best approach is integrated land and water use planning, at the basin level, within a broader ecosystem context, in which all sectors assume their responsibility, and all stakeholders, especially women, who bear the brunt of poor water management, are involved...

MANAGING RISKS
• Consultation with the public should take place at all stages. Raising public awareness is essential in taking management decisions, as is the involvement of local communities, with men and women on an equal footing.
• Women and children are usually the most vulnerable to water-related disasters.

GOVERNING WATER WISELY
• The participation of all stakeholders at all levels of International Water Resources Management, with special attention to gender and youth.
• More involvement of women in water management as important stakeholders, especially in developing countries.
• The formation of an inter-ministerial committee on gender. The reallocation of budgets in water projects and representation of women was discussed.

Meeting the Challenge: The Ways Forward

It is recommended that:
• The important role of women in water management is recognized and an international committee must develop practical proposals for addressing gender concerns at the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003.

ICPD+5

21ST SPECIAL SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, July 1999
>> www.un.org/popin/unpopcom/2nd sess/gass/251a1e.pdf

II. Population and development concerns
A. POPULATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT
18. (a) Continue to support declines in infant and child mortality rates by strengthening infant and child health programmes that emphasize... clean water sources... and improvements in household sanitation...

C. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION
29. In planning and implementing refugee assistance activities, special attention should be given to the specific needs of refugee women, children, and elderly refugees. Adequate and sufficient international support should be extended to meet the basic needs of refugee populations, including the provision of access to... clean water, sanitation...

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

6TH SESSION
New York, April 1998
Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management
>> www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd.htm

Decision 6/1: Strategic Approaches to Freshwater Management.
10. (a) The CSD urges: Governments to...
(x) mobilization of financial resources and mainstreaming of gender issues

HABITAT II

Istanbul, June 1996
Habitat Agenda
>> www.unchs.org/unchs/english/hagenda/

Chapter III. Commitments
D. GENDER EQUALITY
46. We commit ourselves to the goal of gender equality in human settlements development.
(c) Collecting, analysing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information on human settlements issues, including statistical means that recognize and make visible the unrecognised and under-represented work of women, for use in policy and programme planning and implementation;
(d) Integrating a gender perspective in the design and implementation of environmentally sound and sustainable resource management mechanisms, production techniques and infrastructure development in rural and urban areas;
(e) Formulating and strengthening policies and practices to promote the full and equal participation of women in human settlements planning and decision-making.
Widespread poverty remains available. All countries should give priority to particular sectors, particularly on indigenous women’s knowledge and experience.

Strategic objective K.2.
Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN
256. By Governments:
(f) Promote knowledge of and sponsor research on the role of women, particularly rural and indigenous women, in: irrigation, watershed management, sanitation...focusing particularly on indigenous women’s knowledge and experience;

(k) Support the development of women’s equal access to clean water...through participatory needs assessments...and policy formulation at the local and national levels;

(l) Ensure that clean water is available and accessible to all by the year 2000 and that environmental protection and conservation plans are designed and implemented to restore polluted water systems and rebuild damaged watersheds.

Strategic objective K.3.
Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.

FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN
Beijing, September 1995
Beijing Platform of Action
>> www.un.org/womenwatch/ daw/beijing/platform/

Commission on Sustainable Development
Copenhagen, March 1995

C. Commitment 2
We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world...

(a) efforts should include...safe drinking water and sanitation...Special priority will be given to the needs and rights of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty, and to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons;

CHAPTER II – ERADICATION OF POVERTY
Basis for action and objectives
19. ... Women bear a disproportionate burden of poverty...Absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including...safe drinking water, sanitation facilities...

21. Urban poverty is rapidly increasing...It is a growing phenomenon in all countries and regions, and often poses special problems, such as...contaminated water and bad sanitation...An increasing number of low-income urban households are female-maintained.

32. Rural poverty should be addressed by:
(b) Promoting fair wages and improving the conditions of agricultural labour, and increasing the access of small farmers to water...including for women...on the basis of equality.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Cairo, September 1994

Principle 2
Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development...They have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including water and sanitation.

3.13. Widespread poverty remains the major challenge to development efforts. Poverty is often accompanied by...low status of women...All these factors contribute to high levels of fertility, morbidity and mortality...Poverty is also closely related to...unsustainable use and inequitable distribution of such natural resources as land and water.

4.11. Greater investments should be made in appropriate measures to lessen the daily burden of domestic responsibilities, the greatest share of which falls on women. Greater attention should be paid to the ways in which environmental degradation and changes in land use adversely affect the allocation of women’s time. Women’s domestic working environments should not adversely affect their health.

8.2. ... Large segments of many populations continue to lack access to clean water and sanitation facilities...Large numbers of people remain at continued risk of infectious, parasitic and water-borne diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria and schistosomiasis...

8.10. All countries should give priority to measures that improve the quality of life and health by ensuring a safe and sanitary living environment for all population groups through measures aimed at...ensuring access to clean water and sanitation...

UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
Paris, June 1994
>> http://www.unccd.int/main.php

Prologue
Stressing the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought...

Part II: General Provisions
ARTICLE 5
(d) promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of nongovernmental organizations, in efforts to combat and mitigate the effects of drought.

Part III, Section 3:
SUPPORTING MEASURES – ARTICLE 19
1. The Parties recognize the significance of capacity building—that is to say, institution building, training and development of relevant local and national capacities—in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. They shall promote, as appropriate, capacity-building:
(a) through the full participation at all levels of local people, particularly at the local level, especially women and youth, with the cooperation of nongovernmental and local organizations;
3. to promote understanding of the causes and effects of desertification and drought and of the importance of meeting the objective of this Convention: To that end, they shall:
(e) assess educational needs in affected areas, elaborate appropriate school curricula and expand, as needed, educational and adult literacy programmes and opportunities for all, in particular for girls and women, on the identification, conservation and sustainable use and management of the natural resources of affected areas...

2ND SESSION
New York, April 1994
>> www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd.htm
Chapter ID: Health, Human Settlements, Freshwater.
The Commission recommends that countries give priority attention to the integrated management, mobilization, and use of water resources in a holistic manner, while stressing the importance of the involvement of local communities, in particular women.
Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

Agenda 21

CHAPTER 3 – COMBATING POVERTY
Programme Area: enabling the poor to achieve sustainable livelihoods

38. (p) Provide the poor with access to fresh water and sanitation

CHAPTER 18 – PROTECTION OF THE QUALITY AND SUPPLY OF FRESHWATER RESOURCES: APPLICATION OF INTEGRITY AND SUPPLY OF FRESHWATER

Programme Area A: Integrated water resources development and management

18. 9. To design, implement and evaluate projects and programmes that are both economically efficient and socially appropriate within clearly defined strategies, based on an approach of full public participation, including that of women in water management policy-making and decision-making;

18. 12. Development of public participatory techniques and their implementation in decision-making, particularly the enhancement of the role of women in water resources planning and management;

18. 19. The delegation of water resources management to the lowest appropriate level necessitates education and training water management staff at all levels and ensuring that women participate equally in the education and training programmes. Particular emphasis has to be placed

on the introduction of public participatory techniques, including enhancement of the role of women;

(d) Capacity-building

18. 22. International agencies and donors have an important role to play in providing support to developing countries in creating the required enabling environment for integrated water resources management. This should include, as appropriate, donor support to local levels in developing countries, including community-based institutions, non-governmental organizations and women’s groups.

Programme Area B: Water resources assessment

Means of implementation

(c) Human resource development

18. 53. Establishing and strengthening education and training programmes on water-related topics, within an environmental and developmental context, for all categories of staff involved in water resources assessment activities, using advanced educational technology where appropriate, and involving both men and women;

(d) Capacity-building

18. 54. The implementation of water-supply and sanitation programmes is a national responsibility. A high degree of community participation, involving women, in the conception, planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation connected with projects for domestic water-supply and sanitation

Programme Area C: Protection of water resources, water quality and aquatic ecosystems

(c) Human resource development

18. 45. Establishment of education/training courses on water resources protection and conservation for laboratory and field technicians, women and other water user groups.

Programme Area D: Drinking Water supply and sanitation

18. 48. The New Delhi Statement... Institutional reforms promoting an integrated approach and including changes in procedures, attitudes and behaviour, and the full participation of women at all levels in sector institutions;

Activities

18. 50. b. People and institutions:

- Human resource development at all levels, including special programmes for women;
- National and community management:
  - ii. Encouragement of the local population, especially women, youth, indigenous people and local communities, in water management;
- (c) Human resource development

18. 56. The implementation of water-supply and sanitation programmes is a national responsibility. A high degree of community participation, involving women, in the conception, planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation connected with projects for domestic water-supply and sanitation

Programme Area E: Water and Sustainable Urban Development

Activities

18. 59. f. Provision of enhanced access to sanitary services:

iv. Mobilization and facilitation of the active involvement of women in water management teams;

Means of implementation

(c) Human resource development

18. 62. Special provision should be made for mobilizing and facilitating the active participation of women...in water management teams and for supporting the development of water associations and water committees...

Special education and training programmes for women should be launched with regard to the protection of water resources and water quality within urban areas.

Programme Area F: Water for Sustainable Food Production and Rural Development

Objectives

18. 68. The key strategic principles for holistic and integrated environmentally sound management of water resources in the rural context may be set forth as follows:

b. Local communities must participate in all phases of water management, ensuring the full involvement of women in view of their crucial role in the practical day-to-day supply, management and use of water.

d. It is necessary to recognize and actively support the role of rural populations, with particular emphasis on women.

Means of implementation

(c) Human resource development

18. 80. d. Train staff at all levels, including farmers, fishermen and members of local communities, with particular reference to women.

CHAPTER 24 – GLOBAL ACTION FOR WOMEN TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

24. 5. Governments should take active steps to implement the following:

d. Programmes to promote the reduction of the heavy workload of women and girls at home and outside...and to promote the provision of environmentally sound technologies which have been designed, developed and improved in consultation with women, accessible and clean water, an efficient fuel supply and adequate sanitation facilities

International Conference on Water and Environment

Dublin, January 1992

Dublin Statement and Principles on Water and Sustainable Development

>> www.wmo.ch/web/homs/documents/english/icwenedec.html

Principle 3

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

CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

December 1979

>> www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

Article 14 (2) a. Eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:

(h) To enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.