

Report of the Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water

Meeting of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality 24 February 2004, Agenda item 4(g)

Taskforce Members:

The current membership of the Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water (GWTF) includes focal points for both gender and water issues from the following UN Programmes and Agencies: UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Division for Sustainable Development and Division for the Advancement of Women; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the International Telecommunications Union (ITU); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); UN-Habitat; the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); the World Health Organization (WHO); and regional Economic and Social Commissions for Africa (ECA), Western Asia (ESCWA) and Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Non-UN organizations include: the Gender and Water Alliance; the Women's Environment and Development Organization; the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council; the UN Foundation; and the Freshwater Caucus (CSD).

Mandate/Objective(s) of Task Force:

Using the gender perspective developed at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the Task Force aims to promote gender mainstreaming and women's equality in the implementation of the water and sanitation targets included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) at the global, regional, national and local levels. The activities of this Task Force should reflect a long-term strategy for mainstreaming gender in water and sanitation in national planning documents (e.g., Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) and projects. Among the objectives of the Task Force are:

- Integrate the gender perspective in the formulation of strategies to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to water and sanitation.
- Incorporate the gender perspective (one of the cross-cutting issues) into the water and sanitation thematic clusters of the first cycle (2004-2005) of the programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).
- Provide inputs to the World Water Assessment Programme so that the next edition of *World Water Development Report* (2006) incorporates gender into indicators and policy recommendations.
- Organize side events and updated 'briefing notes' on gender and water to coincide with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Intersessional Activities:

The Interagency Gender and Water Task Force (GWTF) held its first meeting on 10 September, and defined for itself a number of immediate tasks: to provide inputs on a gender perspective in the work of the Water and Sanitation Task Force of the Millennium Project; to demonstrate the importance of women's involvement in water, sanitation and human settlements at the next two sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development; to collaborate with an interdisciplinary team working on

water accounting to disaggregate data on access to water and sanitation by sex; to have a strong presence at other meetings such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); and to collect case studies for a special publication on gender and water.

Members of the GWTF agreed that the MDGs and the goals of WSSD will only be achieved if gender is cross-cutting in the implementation of the goals related to poverty (goal 1), gender (goal 3), and environment (goal 7), particularly regarding women's access to and control of natural resources.

Outputs:

The Task Manager, assisted by a core group of TF members, has been carrying out tasks arising from the first meeting. Several members met (23 September) to review the Background Issues Paper for Achieving the MDGs in Water and Sanitation, and proposed gender perspective inputs for the paper to the MDG Task Force Co-chairs, Roberto Lenton and Albert Wright on 26 September. As a result, the TF on Water and Sanitation is now committed to "...producing a document in which both the critical gender dimensions of water and sanitation issues and the implications of TF recommendations for both women and men are fully explored." The current working outline of the Interim TF report has incorporated gender into each chapter.

The importance of data disaggregated by sex has been a major topic of discussion, but the TF was unable to provide a good methodology for actually disaggregating the data on water and sanitation. Thus the GWTF set up a meeting (14 October) with a group from DESA's Statistics Division and from the Sustainable Development Division who are working on water accounts and water/sanitation indicators. They are working on possible strategies to identify a range of social indicators, and a methodological framework that could be applied in gathering data for indicators in gender and water. In this internal discussion, the GWTF members used a preliminary proposal from FAO as an example. The TF and the water accounting group are developing social indicators that represent the different roles of women and men in water and sanitation.

Activities for the future/next steps:

GWTF members should have a strong presence at events coming up early 2004. In addition, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality will be having an annual meeting on 23-26 February, 2004 at the United Nations Headquarters. And it is particularly important to take note of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). The 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be held from 1-12 March 2004.

It is particularly important to have a GWTF presence at the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, being held from 19-30 April 2004, at which water, sanitation and human settlements are the main themes, and gender is a cross-cutting issue. It has been suggested that one of the CSD sessions should focus on the vital role of women in achieving the goals in water, sanitation and human settlements.

The General Assembly on 23 December 2003 adopted a resolution calling for an International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," from 2005-2015. The Decade resolution recognizes the importance of the implementation of water related programs and projects, "*whilst striving to ensure the importance of women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts*". Thus, it is expected that the groundwork carried out the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force in 2003 and 2004 will be important in the implementation of plans for the Decade and the Decade itself.

Messages for IANWGE

1. In working on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Network members should make sure the direct connection is made between access to water and sanitation and gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. It is particularly important to have a IANWGE/GWTF presence at the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, being held from 19-30 April 2004, at which water, sanitation and human settlements are the main themes, and gender is a cross-cutting issue. A focus on the vital role of women in achieving the goals in water, sanitation and human settlements should be prominent throughout the plenary sessions, side events and learning centres. Updated 'briefing notes' on gender and water should be prepared to coincide with the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development.
3. Members of the Network should encourage their agencies to conduct surveys and gather data disaggregated by sex on water use and water availability. The household is not a good enough unit to measure use of water and sanitation.
4. Gender focal points in each agency are encouraged to connect with water focal points if we are to be successful in this integration.
5. Training programmes in water and sanitation supported by agencies should involve women in technical and managerial areas, so that they can be prepared to take on decision making roles.
6. Community action and social mobilization around the provision of basic social services such as water, sanitation and hygiene provide a valuable entry point for promoting women's empowerment. The Network could promote such an approach.
7. The General Assembly on 23 December 2003 adopted resolution 58/217 calling for an International Decade for Action, "Water for Life," from 2005-2015. The Decade resolution recognizes the importance of the implementation of water-related programmes and projects, "*whilst striving to ensure the importance of women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts*". Thus, it is expected that the groundwork carried out the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force in 2003 and 2004 will be important in the implementation of plans for the Decade itself. The Network will provide a valuable support system for ensuring that gender is not forgotten.