



THE IDWSSD AND WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT



**INTERNATIONAL
DRINKING
WATER SUPPLY
AND SANITATION
DECADE**



1981-1990

**STEERING COMMITTEE FOR
COOPERATIVE ACTION**

JULY 1990

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As Barbara Ward wrote just before her death in 1982:

If the 1970s were for the United Nations the decade of conferences, it is perhaps encouraging that the 1980s have been declared the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. To move from the general understanding of Stockholm to the very specific problems of drinking water— with its close links to sanitation, waterborne disease, primary health care, infant mortality and population growth— is a tremendous step forward.

In some Third World countries two of every five children die before they reach the end of childhood, and a prime factor in this mortality is polluted water. So long as parents experience the death of their first children, they will continue to bring more into the world— not out of folly or ignorance, but as an insurance for today's workload and tomorrow's old age..

Many cultures share a profound belief that water is the basic sustenance of humankind. That most fearsome image of pollution, the deliberate poisoning of the wells, has always haunted people. It is not chance that this was the first form of warfare to be outlawed

To give the world clean drinking water and decent sanitation might cost \$80 million a day for the next 10 years. This is trifling compared with the continuing haemorrhage of resources to the instruments of death— on which we spend a shameful \$1,400 million a day

So far, this insane scale of priorities remains acceptable to the rich— to the rich nations of the North, and to the rich minorities in the South. We must be thankful that the 1980s are opening with a practical focus on sanitation, and hope that in easing the daily grind of hauling and carrying water, in saving life, in giving a sense of being cared for, it will help to produce a more stable, a more peaceful, and ultimately a more human plan.

Foreword to Down to Earth: Environmental and Human Needs. Erick Eckholm, 1982.

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INTERNATIONAL DRINKING WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DECADE

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR COOPERATIVE ACTION

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1. Introduction

The overlapping of two important events – the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985) and the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981–1990) – brought to world attention the symbiotic relationships of the goals of the two efforts:

- The agenda of the DECADE for Women was centred on equality (women's rights), development (alleviation of poverty) and peace.
- The objective of the IDWSSD was to provide safe drinking water and sanitation to underserved urban and rural areas by 1990.

Much progress has been made toward reaching both goals, but enormous challenges lie ahead as increasing world populations, more and more concentrated in the urban areas, are aggravating the problems for women and accelerating the demands for services. In this paper, the two goals are condensed into a single problem: **women, water and sanitation**. It is the basic thesis that to make further progress efforts must be more closely coordinated and more heavily supported into the nineties. Recent progress in organizational efforts and structures appear to be more realistically dealing with the puzzles presented by failed or misused systems, disappointing statistics and increasing poverty.

Three areas of concern appear:

- The simplistic conception that “all people are similar and will respond similarly to announced goals and promised rewards.”
- That these goals and rewards can be provided in what are thought to be universally acceptable technical and economic terms.
- The staffing and policies of the international, national and local arrangements for action toward the stated goals.

Two growing intertwined conceptions are described:

- The necessity for understanding the social-cultural frames of reference of the scattered groups of unreached individuals and households in the neglected low income urban and rural areas of the world; and
- The roles of women in organizations and societies everywhere.

These evolving conceptions have influenced and are influencing highest policy levels of global and national programmes. Multiple forces have combined to bring about official recognition of women as invaluable human resources in their communities. Without such recognition, improvements in water supply and sanitation cannot be sustained or effectively used and without women, water, and sanitation, health for all by the year 2000 can never be reached.

The key roles of women in water and sanitation are not a new discovery. Since human settlement began, water has been a basic resource and women have usually been the primary users, providers and managers in households. The IDWSSD, in its efforts to provide clean water and improved sanitation for all in the world by 1990 had perforce had to deal with women.

Since the mid-1970s, women have been increasingly recognized in various UN conferences as the primary force at the community and household level for

Common goal

Official recognition



Everyone celebrates the formal dedication of the new gravity flow water supply in Quiché, Guatemala. The Agua del Pueblo Xajunam project has meant that more than 80% of the homes have standpipes on or near their patios. This public fountain on the plaza outside the school is for communal use.

gaining effective and efficient improvements in uses of water and sanitation and attempts to maintain satisfactory environment in and around homes and communities. It was not, however, until the 1980s that development planners and policy-makers began to understand that for small community-managed systems to be operated and maintained over time women's involvement in community participation must be enhanced and supported.

At the beginning of the IDWSSD the local community was still viewed by most implementing agencies as a source of cheap labour or as a receiving group to take over, use and maintain improvements in water supply and sanitation planned for them by outsiders. Women were usually considered only as the primary beneficiaries of improved services. Now that the IDWSSD is nearly over, most sector agencies have recognized that some institutional structures and women-in-development aspects of their programmes require strengthening if they are to meet the challenge of the 90s. There has been a major shift in perceptions of women and community participation among agencies and professionals involved in the IDWSSD during the last few years.

Obviously, the changes did not occur in a vacuum. Much happened prior to 1980, and parallel activities, particularly in primary health care or in the thinking about women's role in development in general, also had an influence.

A complete evaluation of the IDWSSD and the involvement of women must wait for a systematic analysis of donor projects/programmes and disaggregated country reports. In the meantime this review is intentionally impressionistic and analytical, even perhaps sometimes controversial, based partially on interviews with various actors in the IDWSSD, some eighty relevant documents, and the writer's experience. This approach was used partially because data for exhaustive statistical reviews are not available, but also because it seemed important to record opinions and impressions when dealing with such a massive social change.

WID components



*Habitat
demonstration*

*Mar del Plata
Action Plan*

2. Women, Water and Sanitation

In reviewing the material, it appears that those who are concerned with water sometimes forgot that women in low-income communities are the main providers of water for domestic use. They are also the major or sole providers of food, of child care and training, of primary health care, of the cleaning and management of households and, in rural areas, of at least some of the plant and animal produce. Many women have also taken on some of the tasks traditionally done by their men, who are increasingly away as wage labourers. In growing numbers of female-headed households all over the world, women are the sole family providers.

Four key reasons for involving women are prominent. The *humanitarian* reason for reducing the enormous burden of drudgery to women caused by lack of access to safe water supplies, improved excreta disposal and their consequences was first brought to world attention at the UN Habitat Conference in 1976. Then, participants of a Water Day Symposium, led by Barbara Ward, raised world consciousness when they demonstrated by carrying pails of water on their heads and an official delegate asked, "What on earth does water have to do with human settlement?" During the conference it gradually became clear that water has clear priority in every village, hamlet or home, as a basic key to human survival. The Conference, after intense lobbying by the unofficial delegates, adopted the target of "Clean Water for All by 1990," and the resolution was sent on by participating Governments to the UN Water Conference at Mar del Plata in 1977.

This basic need for water and sanitation had also been forcefully emphasized a year earlier by the UN Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975. The Plan of Action adopted then said:

"Improved, easily accessible, safe water supplies (including wells, dams, catchments, piping, etc.), sewage disposal and other sanitation measures should be provided both to improve health conditions of families and to reduce the burden of carrying water which falls mainly on women and children."

The Action Plan of the Mar del Plata Water Conference in 1977 which laid the groundwork for IDWSSD states that priority attention should be given to the segments of the population in greatest need and suggests coordination of all sectors active in rural areas, utilizing the manpower and other resources and that:

"special emphasis should be given to the situation and to the role of women in the area of public participation."

Secondly, *health* reasons are important. Even though they are difficult to quantify, they must be included because of the close linkages of water to sanitation, water-borne diseases, primary health care, infant mortality and population growth. As Barbara Ward said so eloquently:

"In some Third World countries two of every five children die before they reach the end of childhood, and a prime factor in this mortality is polluted water. So long as parents experience the death of their first children, they will continue to bring more into the world – not out of folly or ignorance, but as an insurance for today's workload and tomorrow's old age." (1982)



Health impacts

Unless women have time, energy and interest in changing their old roles and learning new roles, health impacts will be negligible. Even though measuring impacts on health is difficult because of the many variables at the household level, agreement on the importance of women's roles as facilitators and change agents has continued to increase. With involvement and motivation, significant impacts can be achieved by women.



Women participate fully in a PROWESS training workshop in Nigeria
Photo Ron Sawyer, PROWESS

"Software" payback

Next come *economic* reasons. Arguments about the excessive cost of women-oriented, community-based improvements in water supply and sanitation seem short-sighted. Budgets to cover the software training for community participation, including strategies for involving women in all levels of project cycles – choice of locally appropriate technologies, instructions in their operation and maintenance, and hygiene education for their effective use – are usually estimated at 5-20% of program costs. The costs of not providing such benefits are loss of valued time, continued infant mortality, unnecessary water-related diseases, and mushrooming slums and environmental degradation. Even if software components were 50% of costs, it would be justifiable when the comparison is made with unsupported systems, which become inoperative, unused or misused. Then all you have is cost, with no benefits.

The UN World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) in 1979 emphasized the importance of women's economic roles as well as their domestic ones, and pointed out the need to reduce household drudgery so that women could use their time to participate more in economic, educational, and political activities.

Value of time

Without accessible safe water, women's greatest household drudgery is obtaining supplies and caring for children or relatives sick from diseases related to lack of water. In 1988 the World Bank noted that the time of rural women does have an economic value which, even though small, must be factored into cost-benefits of improvements in water supply and sanitation. With more water, women often gain immediate economic benefits from income-generating activities or subsistence foodstuffs, and these, even though small in cash value, add substantially to family nutrition and earnings. Data show clearly that when the income is women's they will use a larger percentage of it for household needs, often for further improvements in water supply or sanitation.

Women's reasons – are related to all of the above, the humanitarian, the health, and the economic rationales. This was confirmed in July, 1980 at the UN Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen when a strong resolution was passed supporting the goals of the IDWSSD. It called on:

"Member States and UN agencies, including specialized agencies, to promote full participation of women in planning, implementation, and application of technology for water supply projects."



The following excerpts from the Nairobi Conference (1985) *Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancements of Women* built on the growing realization during the Decade of Women that for the unserved populations to have access to water women must participate.

- Governments should integrate women in the formulation of policies, programmes and projects for the provision of basic shelter and infrastructure. (Para. 207)
- Women and women's groups should be participants in and equal beneficiaries of housing and infrastructure construction projects. They should be consulted in the choice of design and technology of construction and should be involved in the management and maintenance of the facilities. Special attention must be given to the provision of adequate water to all communities, in consultation with women. (Para. 210)
- Efforts to improve sanitary conditions, including drinking water supplies, in all communities should be strengthened, especially in urban slums and squatter settlements and in rural areas, with due regard to relevant environmental factors. These efforts should be extended with the participation of women at all levels in the planning and implementation process. (Para. 225)

Women at the UN conferences in Mexico, Copenhagen, and Nairobi, as well as women in the villages in Africa, Asia and Latin America, have all stressed that focus on women does not mean exclusion of men. In all projects women and men must work together, recognizing their local institutional and cultural constraints to improve the quality of their lives. Women's participation is an integral part of community participation and development. In water and sanitation development projects, women are always potentially effective, sometimes "non-public" or "invisible" informal partners, whose contributions are needed to make projects successful as well as for humanitarian health and economic reasons.

All these reasons have been true for years, but public awareness of the constraints which lack of access to safe water and sanitation mean to women and to overall development has increased. The IDWSSD offered an opportunity for planners and policy makers to involve women in reaching their own goals and at the same time become an integral part of the human resource base needed to increase coverage of "sustainable effectively used systems" and to participate in the development process.

3. Mechanisms to Support Women's Involvement

It was not until four years after the IDWSSD Steering Committee for Collaborative Action started meeting in 1978, just after the 1977 Mar Del Plata Water Conference, that the members endorsed the important role that women could play in the programme and decided to establish an Inter-Agency Task Force on Women to promote women's activities in the IDWSSD. At the tenth meeting of the Committee, in November, 1982, two years after the official beginning of the IDWSSD, proposed Terms of Reference and Plan of Action for the Task Force on Women were presented and approved. A Strategy Paper was also requested and published in December, 1983.



**Birth of
PROWESS**

Also in 1983, a project, PROWESS (Programme on Promotion and Support of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services, UNDP INT 83-003) was approved with initial funding from the government of Norway and subsequently from Canada, the US, Finland and UNDP. PROWESS was designed to provide information and demonstrate how women could be involved in community participation and why such participation made a difference. Women were seen as invaluable potential human resources in the development of improved systems in low-income areas.

The Inter-Agency Task Force on Women and PROWESS, in their interactions with the Steering Committee for Collaborative Action and within the agencies they represented, have helped give visibility to women in the community and other managerial levels. Prior to 1980 there were isolated examples, several with UNICEF support, of successful projects with increased support for women's involvement in community participation, but most of these were pilot, demonstration or small NGO projects, rarely well documented.

WID and the ESAs

During the 1970s and 80s Women in Development (WID) officers and often whole offices were established in most ESAs (External Support Agencies). WID focus has expanded beyond the traditional fields of home economics and health to such areas as agricultural production and income generation. The broad issues of national development and the promotion of women's status have become merged. Sectoral commitment to WID concerns is apparent in ESAs concerned with the water sector and within the relevant ministries/agencies in the developing countries. Specific programmes/actions have been weak, partly from lack of financial and human resources and partly from absence of institutional capacity to identify key gender issues and/or how to implement them.

During the same period, national mechanisms for the integration of women in development (WID) were set up in most countries. Sometimes these were Women's Bureaus, or Ministries of Women's Affairs. Some were National Commissions but most of them were set up to have a coordinating and catalytic role to assist the WID implementation of individual ministries, parastatals, and non-governmental organizations, as noted in *Institutional Framework for WID in Malawi* (Ayse Kudat, 1989).

4. Involvement of Women in the IDWSSD

When the IDWSSD was officially launched in November, 1980 the women in developing countries, with their reorganized Women's Bureaus, their NGOs and their strengthened research organizations, were ready for official recognition of their offers of cooperation to come from UN agencies, donor groups and from their own national IDWSSD planning boards or government ministries. For the five preceding years, following the UN World Conference on Women, women from Western Europe, Canada and the United States, representatives of NGOs, donor groups and UN agencies, as well as concerned individuals, worked with Third World women to develop strategies for giving priority to water and sanitation.

Data were gathered and shared on the socio-cultural aspects of water supply and sanitation with emphasis on women's roles in rural villages and peri-urban squatter settlements. A major finding was that the belief that children's faeces are



Paper galore

harmless, no danger to the health of others, was widespread. Another was that women will organize and/or learn new skills to keep improved systems operating if they fill their needs. Women will revise traditional actions and respond positively to any innovations which reduce their workload and/or increase their cash income. More accessible water does both.

Between 1980 and 1984 there was a great deal of activity, as papers on women and the IDWSSD and studies analyzing women's roles were presented to engineers' groups, development organizations and health panels, published in professional journals and as popular articles. A number of booklets were published by the AITFW and UN agencies including:

- *Women as Innovators*, UNICEF/UNDP
- *Women in Land and Water Development*, FAO
- *Women, Water and Sanitation*, WHO
- *Insights from Field Practice: How women have been and could be involved*, UNICEF/IATFW
- *Is there a better way?*, IATFW
- *Women the Water Carriers and Water Related Diseases*, UNDP

Mary Elmendorf developed a formulation of women's roles in water supply and sanitation, in *Women: Beyond Access to Water*, which was presented at a 1980 USAID conference. The formulation was used at many seminars, workshops and meetings, including the 1980 Women's Mid-DECADE Conference in Copenhagen. The original paper was expanded by Elmendorf and the late Raymond Isely as WASH Technical Report No. 11., *The Role of Women as Participants and Beneficiaries in Water Supply and Sanitation Programs*. This has appeared in Spanish and French and in shorter versions in *World Health Forum* (WHO, 1982), UNESCO's education series (1984), and served as the basis for discussions at the 1984 IRC, INSTRAW, and IDRC meetings in the Hague, Cairo and Manila.

The papers and articles on community participation and women's roles in water and sanitation collected by Elmendorf and Isely were donated to WASH, and two bibliographies prepared as Technical Reports. Combined with these were documents collected during the preparatory stage of PROWESS to provide practical understanding of the issues involved in increasing effective participation of women in community water supply and sanitation programmes. In all, over 800 documents were finally reviewed for the selected and annotated bibliography and literature review on women as users of and contributors to community water supply and sanitation that was published in 1985 by IRC in cooperation with PROWESS as *Participation of Women in Water Supply and Sanitation: Roles and Relations*, by Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma.

Many meetings

Symposiums and seminars were held in 1984 on the subject of women's involvement in water and sanitation activities, including:

- *The International Seminar on Women and the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade*, sponsored by the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), held in Cairo, 12-16 March 1984;



- *Local Decade. men, women and agencies in water and development* organized by the International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation (IRC), held in Amsterdam, 20–22 June 1984; and
- *Women's Issues in Water and Sanitation* organized by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, held in Manila, 24–26 September 1984.

During these seminars and symposiums, experts from all over the world participated, discussed and shared experiences on the issue of women and water. The papers submitted to these meetings and the reports coming out of them provided a wealth of information and recommendations on the subject of women's involvement in water and sanitation activities. Many expanded on earlier concepts, adding local variations, and new roles. Others explored linkages to other sectors and suggested new methodologies. Among these, the seminar, in Bangkok, on *Human Waste Management* sponsored by the Institute of Housing Studies and the Asian Institute of Technology in 1983 was clearly focused on women and community participation.

Social perspective

Social scientists were added to project teams to prepare social impact components and occasionally to work with training experts on human resource development, although the social scientists or health educators usually found their consultation time on project missions much shorter than that of staff engineers and economists.

UN review

Even though policy makers and planners were listening with less scepticism to the importance of involving women in community participation, it was not until the half-way point that the UN Secretary General, in *Progress in the Attainment of the Goals of the IDWSSD*, in March 1985, acknowledged that "in the past, the roles of women in all aspects of the development and operation of water and sanitation systems have often been neglected." The report recognized women as "consumers of services", with responsibility for ensuring a supply of water for the family, as the principle food preparer and child caretaker, the vital link in the water-sanitation-health chain at the most basic level of primary health care the home. It suggested that mechanisms be established "through which agencies can support women and community participation in planning delivery of services, user-education, and maintenance of facilities."

Giant step

At the OECD/DAC meeting in Paris in September 1985 where the progress and future prospects of the IDWSSD were reviewed the "Conclusions and Recommendations" endorsed by the committee were a giant step forward in support for women's involvement in community participation.

"Meaningful community involvement is more than supply of free labour and local materials or cash contributions. Community participation implies the entire involvement of the community at all stages of project development: from the initial concepts and planning, through the construction, operation and maintenance phases .. Only recently the importance of women's involvement, as part of community participation in order to achieve programme objectives, has become recognized. Women as main traditional users and interest group can contribute meaningfully to local planning, maintenance and management, which



affect effectiveness of operation and use of the facilities. Women also play a major role in improving health, deciding on the use of time saved, as well as in the utilization of water and processed waste for domestic and economic purposes... As a first step leading to the more active involvement of women in sector projects, donors should review how women could become more involved in their ongoing projects, and give appropriate orientation in this area to their staffs. . .

In the same conclusion, it noted that:

“Water supply and sanitation schemes can only be effective if they contain hygiene education components, based on community involvement – in particular that of women. Donors should substantially increase the percentage of resources for software components of programmes in the section, including hygiene education and community participation.”

In 1986 at the thirty-ninth World Health Assembly it was noted in the section on Human Resources that WHO “had played an active part in the movement to promote the role of women in water supply and sanitation... In some countries in S.E. Asia specific support has been provided for community training.” In the document the roles of women were described as labour “in self-help construction”, “caretakers of pumps” or “sanitation promoters.”

At several other regional meetings, including Abidjan in 1986, Recife in 1988, Bolivia in 1989, there was increasing recognition of the importance of involving women in community participation. It was, however, at the Interlaken Consultation of 1987 when the importance of the roles of women was formally confirmed by the IDWSSD. The following recommendations were adopted by donors, participating agencies and programmers of the UN system:

- To take into account in project documents the role and methodology for supporting women and community participation.
- To make use of existing expertise such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community participation groups.
- To establish a budget line for such support and to add staff with specialization in this field.

Formal recognition

5. Impact of Women on the IDWSSD and the IDWSSD on Women

What effect have women had on the IDWSSD?

What effect has the IDWSSD had on women?

The answers to these two questions are difficult to separate; a positive answer to either increases the potentially positive answer to the other. By having more time, energy, better health and higher self-esteem through accessible water and sanitation, women can contribute more to the sustainability and effective use of those improved systems.

- By initiating behavioural change for adequate functioning and appropriate uses of the new systems;
- by promoting better hygienic habits (more bathing and handwashing);
- by increasing their incomes and/or improving their nutrition through vegetables



gardens, chickens, pigs, bees and other micro enterprises;

- by contributing to the cost effectiveness of the investment, which when inoperative or misused is a complete financial loss.

In thinking about women's involvement in the IDWSSD, there are many categories of women to consider. There are the women in professional core posts within the various agencies, the women researchers, both academic and consulting, the women engineers, and, most importantly, women in the Third World, those in professional and/or political positions, in NGOs or in women's organizations, teachers, health workers, and perhaps most critical of all, the individual women in the urban slums and rural communities.

User strengths

This last group, the ultimate *users*, the real target group, had until 1980, usually been considered only as beneficiaries of improvements in water supply, but could now be increasingly perceived as ready and willing to become active participants in water projects. The women at the local level are finally in 1990 being recognized as the real key to effective utilization and sustainability. They determine whether the new systems are used or not, and whether or not they are worth (in their own local personal cost-effective analysis) being maintained and paid for — and most importantly how they are used.

In many instances, it has been the synergistic impact of women at all levels as individuals and groups who have brought about successful projects. According to a PAHO engineer "every trip to Latin America I notice there are more women in the sector, both in the Ministries and in the field. They have more courage, more confidence to speak out. I don't know if it's because of the Women's Decade, as spin-off from the Mexico City Conference, or the IDWSSD. In Mexico more women are Mayors, women heads of water committees, treasurers and some are managing water systems. Women know what they want. What they are willing to pay for."

Kwale example

One example of women at every level is the Kenya-KWAHO/Kwale project, 1975-1988, which brought together many forces. Among the many actors were SIDA (Swedish International Development Authority), UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNDP/World Bank, AMREF, PACT, and PROWESS. The impact on the women, the users, the trainers, the agency staff including many men, in this effort



Examples from Timor, Indonesia demonstrate productivity gains (top picture) when women gain readier access to water and use the time saved; and the health impact from more hygienic use of water.



is another part of such a history. The experience documented in a case study, *People, Pumps and Agencies* (Deepa Narayan-Parker, 1988), strongly demonstrates the impact of a Kenya Women's NGO in integrating "software" and "hardware" at managerial and field levels. And the institutional history showed the impact of women at all levels, of inter-agency cooperation—international, binational, governmental and among NGOs. Women in the developing countries can have impact on policy makers and policy. Their voices have to be heard and their activities seen.

Many people will say Kenyan women are different. And they are! Others will say, "but look at all the outside supports." The answer is there are similar examples in other countries with less money/less technical assistance, but strong support from government departments, local women and/or local NGOs. The following projects also demonstrate the successful roles that women have played at all levels from community, agency, to higher policy levels.

Many more examples

- In Indonesia (documented by PROWESS/PKK/WHO/Ford Foundation)
- In Guatemala (IBRD/ADP/USAID)
- In the Philippines (IDRC/Philippines)
- In Sri Lanka (IDRC/SARVODAYA)
- In Mexico (PROWESS/UNICEF/UNAM, and CIDA/IDRC/GAT)
- In Bangladesh (ICDDR, PROWESS/UNDP, AGFUND, UNICEF)
- In Togo (CIDA/CUSO)
- In Zimbabwe (IBRD/NORAD)
- In Kenya (FINNIDA)
- In Rwanda (CARE/USAID/WASH)
- In Mexico (SIRDO, IDRC, GTA)

An IDRC (International Development Research Centre) representative in Asia (Lee Kam Wing 10/2/89) replied to a question about the large number of IDRC water projects led and managed by women by saying:

"I don't think there was a deliberate policy by us to actually appoint women as project leaders, but when an opportunity for leadership is given to women, they were able to bring into the project concerns which men were not able to do, concerns especially related to how women perceive their needs, their views of how water projects are planned and managed."

NGO role

One example of many local NGO projects, planned at a 1984 Manila IDRC Seminar on *Women's Issues in Water and Sanitation*, was reported by Mediatrix P. Valera, the project manager, at the 1988 Seminar on *Participation of Women in Water Supply and Sanitation*. This project was carried out by the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), composed of businessmen who contributed a percentage of their profits, for the implementation of potable water supply projects to help communities improve their lives and environment. PBSP used a community organization approach without a focus on women. However, as it developed, women expressed interest in serving as planners, implementors, and



Women as leaders

beneficiaries. In her analysis of the project Valera observed, "Since the majority of the project participants were women, they were assigned to teach other users (members of their families and others in the neighbourhood) regarding proper pump usage, maintenance and proper use of the water to protect it from contamination. We believe this made a positive difference as far as community acceptance is concerned."

Another Asian example comes from the project experiences of the Indonesian Family Welfare Movement, PKK, in West Timor in collaboration with PROWESS/UNDP, WHO, and Ford Foundation. In a summary paper, *From Rhetoric to Reality, Women and Water*, Deepa Narayan-Parker, the Chief Investigator of the project, establishes the positive impact of women on project success and their gradual emergence as leaders. Through extensive data collection from 1985-1988 she documents and clearly quantifies the dramatic changes in the water situation and in the economic, emotional and social quality of women's lives after one and a half years of village organizational activities. In conclusion, she states that the data clearly establish:

- women's involvement is not a mystical affair, nor is it a matter of "head counts"
- participation and changes in participation can be measured and quantified
- a strategy focused on participation and human development has positive impact on water and women but goes beyond both towards self-sustained development
- this impact, even changes in leadership and self-confidence, can be measured in a short period of time
- women's involvement does not imply exclusion of men.

Participatory approach

Another example of increased involvement of women is noticed in the restructuring of NGOs such as CARE, one of the most active in the sector, to function in a more participatory mode. In 1985 a workshop to develop methods for CARE staff in Africa to achieve more community participation was coordinated by Paula Donnelly-Roark with WASH funding. One of the participants, Mike Godfrey, was assigned to Rwanda and given CARE support and backing in designing and managing a project based on the participatory approaches developed in the workshop.

Two evaluations one in 1987 and another in 1989, note the truly collaborative efforts of project staff, GOR representatives, local officials and the water users. It is regarded as one of the most successful projects in the country.

On November 6, 1989, Dr. Rudi Horner, Director of CARE's Primary Health Care Sector, said that the largest item in the 1990 PHC budget is for 26 Water Supply and Sanitation Projects in 20 countries, with the rest a little more than half divided between 34 PHC projects and 13 food-assisted MCH programs. She added that water and sanitation are considered of prime importance in CARE programs and that women are being recognized more and more as key elements in sustainable community managed water and supply in the sector.

In a project jointly funded by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the government of Togo, which is executed by Canadian University



Women and the UN

Service Overseas (CUSO) the "strategy was to make women visible as staff of the project." The project has a bicephalous structure with a Project Director, a Canadian, and a National Project Coordinator, a Togolese. The coordinator is a woman seconded from the Ministry of Social Affairs, with extensive experience as a rural animator with the Rural Women's Centres network in Togo and with previous experience on another rural water supply project funded by USAID. She is committed to seeing that women achieve a minimum of 50% participation in the project.

The project had three principal objectives: 1) to provide adequate and safe water supplies to 65,000 rural inhabitants with the condition for selection that the villages assume responsibility; 2) to fund micro-projects in sanitation and income generation; and 3) to establish in-country training at all levels to help insure that the benefits of village initiatives continue. In 1983, CIDA had a large number of professional women on their staff and were very supportive of woman social scientists analyzing their water and sanitation projects. It was not until 1989, however, that CIDA added a WID specialist to the sector to make a critical analysis of women's involvement in all their IDWSSD projects.

Another group to consider are the women in core posts with the UN System. Since 1982, the professional women at the Inter-agency Task Force on Women, by actively participating with the Steering Committee for Cooperative Action, have had a big impact on the growing acceptance of the need for integrating software and hardware components by largely male engineers and other technicians there. Ma Yansheng, UNICEF Advisor on Community Participation, and Dunja Pastizzi-Ferensic, Director of INSTRAW, noted that in the period 1983-86, the Steering Committee's attitude toward women's activities in the program changed from one of reluctant formal acceptance to viewing the participation of women in water projects as a basic resource necessary for the goal of community-managed systems. This has also been one of the main concerns of the present and former programme managers of PROWWESS, Siri Melchior and Sarah Timpson, both of whom have played important roles in the Task Force. All four feel that women's presence in the Steering Committee stimulated closer collaboration among UN agencies and greater coordination with NGOs in strengthening community participation by involving women in all activities.

6. Milestones

When the IDWSSD began, planners talked about *coverage*, meaning number of installations wells, pumps, etc., even though many reports, including the 1976 World Bank study by Saunders and Warford had earlier documented the large percentage of improved systems not working five years after installation coverage no longer covering.

Local Responsibility

It was not until 1987 that the shift of project activity at the local level from *initiation* to *responsibility* with its accompanying refocusing of view of community participation and women's involvement, was forcefully presented by Paula Donnelly-Roark, in *For the Design and Management of Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation Projects* published jointly by PROWWESS/UNDP and WASH/USAID. This paper provided a new analytic framework for donor decision-



Sustainability

makers, planners and project managers in terms of project design, implementation and evaluation. The importance of continuing operation and maintenance had long been stressed, including the 1972 classic *Drawers of Water* (G. White, et. al., 1972) which stressed the need for including data on local people's beliefs and criteria about water use in project planning to obtain acceptance and continued use. (See also Whyte, et al 1978 and Racelis 1980.)

Now the focus has changed from coverage to sustainability. The basic idea is to involve the community – the users – in the choice of and planning for new facilities which they want and will be able to operate and maintain over time. The importance of understanding the human dimension, popular participation and behavioural changes necessary for successful projects were discussed on panels at the 1978 meeting of the American Society of Civil Engineers, and at subsequent professional meetings during the IDWSSD.

**Sustainable and
Effective Use**

Based on extensive field activities, PROWESS/UNDP was able in 1988 to develop a planning and evaluation framework called *PEGESUS* that combined a development management approach with clearly defined and measurable goals. *PEGESUS* stands for Partnership to Evolve and Grow Effective and Sustainable Utilization of Systems. For community based projects which cannot function with blueprints it identifies the primary management task as “designing a learning environment.” The overriding objectives are stated as “achieving sustainable and effectively used water and sanitation systems through methods that are replicable.” The development of a single framework acceptable to managers, technicians and WID specialists everywhere is a major breakthrough in making women's involvement part of mainstream concerns.

**Community–
Managed Systems**

Another milestone was passed with the increasing use of the concept of community–managed systems instead of the extensions of centralized services. In reviewing the documentation the first official paper using the term community–managed, was a 1989 Strategy Brief, *Rural Water Supply in Sub-Saharan Africa*, prepared by John Kalbermatten for the World Bank. Kalbermatten, in his energetic search at the World Bank for appropriate low–cost technologies in the mid–seventies and later through the UNDP/IBRD programmes, was exploring simultaneously the constraints to the acceptability of improvements by users and the ability of communities to continue operation and maintenance.

**Human Resources
Development (HRD)**

In 1988, Martin Beyer highlighted the importance of the human dimensions in the sector in a special edition of *DECADE Watch*. He said “Basic human resources development effort starts at the community and individual levels... Every man, woman and child should be involved.” WHO has prepared special cases studies which highlight this need, although most budgeting and planning for HRD is still limited to technical staff.

At the 13th Inter–American Congress of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering in 1982 in Panama several papers dealt with human resources including one by Anne Whyte focused on the importance of user's choice in community involvement supported by a national policy. Another by Mary Elmendorf, expressed the importance of recognizing women as primary managers of water, who made many of the choices, and noted the need for special training so they could perform their old roles better and their new roles more effectively,



if women are not to continue as invisible, "underused" human resources.

By 1988 the International Training Network for Water and Waste Management, (ITN) which had produced an extensive set of audiovisual and printed materials on low-cost water supply and sanitation, community participation and health education during the early years of IDWSSD, had eight centres operating and more planned. However, most of the training is for technical staff. The UNDP/World Bank program has recently started collaborating with PROWESS on developing participatory training, using primarily the techniques developed and tested during IDWSSD by Lyra Srinivassan, based primarily on SARAR methodologies.

Workshops which have highlighted the need for (and the "how to") issues of women's involvement have been conducted in several regions by INSTRAW in collaboration with UNDTCD and ESCAP. They have been praised for their effectiveness in presenting the issues and some answers to senior managers and civil servants from governments and ESAs.

More emphasis is required and larger budgets must be provided for training community workers and users as decentralization increases. WHO also is giving increased emphasis to analysis of various aspects of community training. In this scenario women as part of community participation efforts come into clear focus as basic human resources with training needs, in order to better perform their traditional roles and to learn new skills. Women also are increasingly recognized as trainers within their own communities and households.

Support Services

At the beginning of IDWSSD, support services were focused primarily on strengthening the national water agencies and on human resources and training which was directed primarily toward assisting technical manpower to extend their coverage. Now the emphasis has changed to needs for institutional restructuring, with more emphasis and training at the local and regional levels.

According to a PAHO official, three Latin American countries have made great strides in decentralization and strengthening regional institutions, but within many countries water and sanitation are still separated from each other and within WHO vertically from primary health care/family health.

Pakistan is embarking on a major effort of decentralization and institutional strengthening, including new emphasis on community and women's participation. India and several Latin American countries have already begun.

Evaluation

As noted above, a recent milestone was the development by Deepa Narayan-Parker in 1989 of an analytical framework, PEGESUS, for planning and evaluating community managed systems. As she noted, "flexibility can be made less threatening, community management and women's involvement less mystical, and projects more responsive to community talents and needs." She forcefully argues for the need to put evaluation tools back in the hands of the community.

The evaluation criteria of projects have changed along with other conceptual changes from coverage and health impact, to functioning and utilization (*MEP*, WHO 1983), to effective use, sustainability and replicability (*Goals and Indicators*, UNDP/ PROWESS, 1989).



*Community Self
Financing*

Another interesting event, perhaps a related milestone, is the concept of Community Self-Financing, presented by CARE Indonesia Country Director, Justin R. Jackson, at the 1988 International Water Resources Association's 6th World Congress in Ottawa, as a "solution to Indonesia's clear water needs." The idea of making loans available for communities to finance their own improvements in water supply was based in part on a study (Judd, et. al.), which found among other things that:

- Most of the rural communities surveyed have a great need for improved water systems and are willing to self-finance them.
- The desire for self-financing is greater in communities with many income-generating activities because people have less time to fetch water themselves.

Willingness to Pay

Willingness to pay is a consideration that has been a factor in project planning since before the beginning of the IDWSSD. The CARE Indonesia USAID-commissioned study found, as have numerous others since the World Bank's studies starting in the late 70s, that "the willingness of rural communities to pay for water facilities is dependent less on the economic ability to finance such a system, but more on other factors or combination of factors." The major factors and their influence on willingness to pay include:

- Lack of easy access to water significantly increases the willingness to pay.
- The greater the opportunity for employment or income-generating opportunities, the greater the willingness
- A nearby community with a piped water supply can have a positive influence on willingness to pay.
- Conversely, the perception of access to grant-type water projects correlates with low willingness to pay.

Again and again the finding that willingness to pay is related to time saved and that in turn to the availability of income-generating opportunities brings us back again to women. "It is the time of the women in the household that matters most, since most of the work of getting water falls to them," noted Churchill et. al. in the 1987 World Bank publication, *Rural Water Supply and Sanitation: Time for a Change*. A recurrent theme during the IDWSSD among researchers and project planners as well as at many of the UN conferences since 1975 has been the time and energy lost by women by lack of access to safe water and the critical need for income-generating activities.

In 1983, Titi Memet, UNICEF Regional Director, said it was "difficult to know which should come first in development the income-generating opportunities for women or the improvements in water and sanitation." The Women's Bureau in Sri Lanka found a similar linkage in 1983 in their OEF/US AID project where micro-industries, i.e., bee-keeping, produce, etc., led to requests for improved water and sanitation.

As has been noted in projects in Latin America, Asia and Africa, women will be more willing to pay than men would be for time saved, since it is usually their time. Also research shows that even with a small amount of cash income, women have increased decision-making power within the home and will also use larger



*Excreta disposal
technologies*

percentages – in fact most of their earnings – for household improvements to meet basic needs and for education. Even when there have been no income-generating activities for women, they have organized themselves and taken over fund-raising to keep community water systems workings, as in Panama, Indonesia, Thailand, Kenya and Mexico. Willingness to pay also is greater when cost of purchased water, for instance from trucks or vendors, is high. In many, should we say most urban slums, such as Quito and Tegucigalpa, poor people are paying many times more per litre than their wealthy neighbours.

One of the outstanding impacts of women on the IDWSSD has been their search for new solutions to excreta disposal. According to Fred Reiff of PAHO, "More and more women in Latin America want flush toilets, not necessarily with piped sewerage. Pour-flush latrines will do, but they want porcelain and usually the pedestal type. Women say they're cleaner, less smelly and easy for children to use not dangerous." During the IDWSSD, as more women see or hear of options, the demand rises for improved latrines. During the project preparation in 1983 the women in Honduras requested help in finding a composting latrine suitable for use in their homes, as a way to cut fertilizer costs in the income-generating scheme they were starting. They had heard of such latrines elsewhere but had never seen one. As Piers Cross, Zimbabwe UNDP/WB noted, the idea is to help women become leaders in building latrines, managing water committees and as village health educators. This was demonstrated by Quartul Ain Bakhteari in Pakistan (1981).

Behavioural Change

Another milestone has been the acceptance by engineers and public health specialists of the necessity for parallel understanding of target population individual criteria for choice, their built-in traditional perspectives. These cultural patterns, always changing, are now accepted as essential materials for study and focused change, behavioural change

The three major messages which were woven into the UNDP/WB training modules in 1982-83 have finally become an integral part of total IDWSSD strategy:

- technology is not enough
- to change behaviour is more difficult than to change technology
- germ theory alone is not enough motivation to effect change in behaviour.

To these three has been added a fourth message:

- For women to be effective change agents in health-related behaviours, motivation must fit their self defined values, priorities and choices.

Messages alone are not enough, but their incorporation into participatory training of local women can bring results, as was dramatically shown in Bangladesh. In the highly transient, primarily illiterate poor population of Dhaka, there was a 25% reduction in diarrhoeal diseases in children under six after a community education program carried out by 1822 local women volunteers in 51 communities in the years 1981-1987. The program was based on three behaviours already practised in the community which were shown to influence the incidence of diarrhoea.



Women's Roles

The three main messages reinforced by local volunteers were:

- wash hands after defecation and before preparing and consuming food (focused on mothers),
- do not allow small children to defecate in the living area; take them to a latrine or especially designed spot,
- do not keep piles of garbage exposed in the living area (see case study by Elise Shallon, UNDP/PROWESS 1988).

The recently published research on household behavioural patterns in two Egyptian villages highlights the linkages between patterns of storing water and its daily uses within the local environment of surface and ground water availability as well as problems of drainage. Women have suggested practical solutions such as carts for collecting waste water but feel powerless to influence local governments (Samiha El Katasha and Anne D. White, 1989).

A recent analysis of various case studies on women in development singled out the SIRDO (Integrated System for Recycling Organic Wastes) project in Mexico which both improves sanitary conditions and offers possibilities for income generation as the most interesting.

“...the SIRDO project from Mexico mobilized women to control their environment through an age-old tradition devised by women: the conservation and recycling of waste. The instinct is old but in this case it addresses a problem that is a creation of our present day civilization. Extension of the debate about women and development from a narrow definition of economics to encompass the wide range of challenges facing humanity today such as environmental problems will be... the great leap forward...” (Vina Mazumdar in *Supporting Women's Work in the Third World*, 1989)

7. Issues and Recommendations

For the 1990s, the Framework for Global Cooperation is being developed, existing IDWSSD mechanisms such as the Inter-Agency Task Force for Women and PROWESS should be reviewed for relevance to the goals for the year 2000. Great strides have been made in developing methodologies and strategies which increase the potential impact women can have on water and sanitation systems. As plans are made for institutionalization and replicability, these tools will increase the positive impact of these systems on women, and of women on water, sanitation, health and development. Momentum must not be lost.

As the IDWSSD nears its end most will agree that:

“Women are not a special interest group in water and sanitation, they are a mainstream interest group. This is both as beneficiaries (a lessened burden being a prerequisite for contributing to other development activities) and as partners (without their involvement, projects risk being inappropriate and failing)”

(Siri Melchior, 1989).



Participation techniques exist for involving both men and women, as these pictures from Nepal show.

Involving men and women

Developing countries must lead the way

Explicit strategies must be used to involve women and communities in needs assessments, design, planning, implementation and the crucial follow-ups necessary to attain sustainable and effective use. If a special emphasis is not placed on women, then men and women will continue in their old stereotyped ways.

Techniques must be used that understand and respect the existing social structure so that men do not feel threatened by, but instead proud of women's participation, as men and women work together to improve their communities and the quality of their lives for themselves and their families. Knowledge about how to make informed choices and change behaviours must be acquired not just from media and messages but from participatory research and training within the communities.

As noted in the 1988 UNDP-World Bank Annual Report: The primary actors in water and sanitation development have been and will continue to be the developing countries themselves. Although external support is vital, success ultimately depends on the national efforts of individual countries; coordination of activities within countries will aid achievement of success. Key roles within these countries will be played by women in the communities without whom the improvements in water supply and sanitation cannot be sustainable or effectively used and without whom health for all by the year 2000 can never be hoped for.

UNDP is organizing a global consultation on water supply and sanitation in India in September 1990 during which major issues constraining the sector, the accomplishments of the IDWSSD and the extension of water and sanitation to the still unserved millions will be discussed. The question here is: *what is being done about assisting governments to build flexibility into their administrative organizations, to decentralize, and to maximize their human resource base by incorporating women at all levels from ministries (including Women's Bureaus) to NGOs and to local water user groups in their planning, implementing, and evaluating success and failures of the 80's of improvements in water supply and sanitation.*



Political will

Before countries themselves can be expected to further strengthen their programmes and make structural adjustments, UN and other agencies must examine their own operations and demonstrate that they have the political will to include women in policy making, planning and operation. The Interagency Task Force for Women (LATFW) was originally composed of concerned active women from most of the agencies. Now it is composed largely of men, who indeed have worked hard to promote the need for women's participation in community managed systems within their agencies and the Steering Committee.

Resolutions about involving women at all levels have been passed at every World Conference and at IDWSSD meeting since 1975, but implementation in the UN Agencies seems to have been slow and perhaps even wavering. In UNICEF/WET there are no women now. The two vocal women who helped get the Task Force started have not been replaced since one, the Senior Advisor on Community Participation, retired and the other, a health education expert, was transferred.

Reversing trends

The gradual replacement of women by men in policy and field positions since the mid-eighties is not limited to the UN system, but the organizational structure is less conducive there to gender issues than in several other agencies. The Inter-American Foundation, in spite of reaching an all time high of 43% women staff in 1983, has seen a rapid decrease since 1986 both in staff and in support to projects which benefit women. (See *The Bureaucratic Mire: Women's Program in Comparative Perspective*, Staudt, 1989).

Now that a Collaborative Council has been formed does the Interagency Task Force for Women need to be enlarged to encompass WID and PHC voices? What financial resources are needed to make it most useful? And what about ESAs, bilaterals and NGOs? How can these relate most effectively to the national mechanisms set up in each country during 1975-1985 to support women's activities? How can ESAs support and strengthen national machinery?

Role of PROWESS

The UNDP/World Bank Program's move to build closer ties with PROWESS/ UNDP and NGOs as a part of human resource, development and training is a positive step. Another positive step is the addition of PROWESS Advisors in the Regional Water and Sanitation Groups (RWSGs). PROWESS for the last several years has been chairing the Inter-Agency Task Force for Women, in association with INSTRAW.

"PROWESS is on a powder keg of demand" according to one UN advisor. "The door is open" says another. Concrete tools and methodologies have been tested and designed in the field which show how to involve women, and how to show that their involvement makes a difference. In fact, basic tools to measure the impact of women's involvement on themselves and on project "success" as defined by sustainable effectively used systems — have now been developed and tested.

Influencing strategies

How can these findings be mainstreamed? How can they become a part of country strategies? What now needs to be done to incorporate the need for women's involvement at the community level in national policies? Would the Delhi Meeting be the appropriate platform to share training materials, review research findings and disseminate the results of successful demonstration and larger scale projects to top government officials?



Could regional and/or selected national workshops be organized by IAFTW and PROWESS to examine in detail progress made during the IDWSSD? Can a standardized framework for analysis of women and IDWSSD be developed? Great strides have been made but the new lessons learned both successes and failures need to be shared and documented. The great leap forward between 1980-85 at the international seminars, forums, and UN conferences where the linkages between women's goals and IDWSSD goals were highlighted and networks started should be built upon.



A Zimbabwean woman uses a pocket chart to register her vote during a PROWESS-sponsored workshop. Workshops and seminars provide the opportunity to share lessons and experiences

New Delhi opportunities

Women from national Women's Bureaus, NGOs, WID offices in bilateral agencies, project directors, etc. must be ready in New Delhi:

- to share their own evaluations of the potential for and constraints to reaching the goals of the year
- to discuss the possibilities for applicability of the participatory techniques and methodologies of PROWESS in enhancing the involvement of women in their countries
- to bring information about women as part of the human resource base in their countries, including agencies—governmental and non-governmental—who are training women for community work water users groups, health committees, etc.
- to come with specific suggestions for cooperative actions and changes needed to overcome constraints in reaching the goal of "health for all by 2000."

Part of the plan would provide support for translation, publication and distribution of selected "Lessons, Strategies, and Tools" for PROWESS so they could be evaluated for relevance to country problems and circulated.

International workshop

An international workshop should be carefully planned to bring together selected participants from the productive workshops of the mid 1980s with other researchers and project managers, to review recent findings and make suggestions for additions or revisions of methodologies for understanding behavioural factors and decision-making. *Women and Management of Waste* should be a special panel within this workshop. The focus should be on behavioural changes and improvements in household environment, as well as evaluation of technologies.

New roles for the 1990s

PROWESS, the Inter-Agency Task Force for Women, and INSTRAW should be funded for the 1990-2000 period to carry out mandates as redefined by the Collaborative Council.

Keeping up to date

Researchers, ESA representatives, and project managers must be ready to contribute documentation for updating the 1985 IRC bibliography on *Roles and Realities of Women in Water Supply and Sanitation*.



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This document is one of a series of booklets prepared on behalf of the Steering Committee for Cooperative Action for the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. Titles in the series are:

- 1. Report on IDWSSD impact on Diarrheal Disease**
- 2. The IDWSSD and Women's Involvement**
- 3. Human Resources Development in the IDWSSD**
- 4. IDWSSD activities in Technical Information Exchange**
- 5. Report on IDWSSD impact on Dracunculiasis**
- 6. Report on IDWSSD impact on Schistosomiasis**

Copies of the documents are available from the CWS Unit, World Health Organization, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.

