

D R A F T

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202.1 94SE**Sector Paper****WOMEN, WATER AND SANITATION**

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1. INTRODUCTION

In 1989, the Netherlands' Ministry for International Cooperation published its first Sector Policy Paper on "Women, Water and Sanitation". The paper contained background information on the roles of women as providers of water for household and family use, and as managers of traditional water sources. Also, it gave practical recommendations on how to involve women in planning, implementation and management of new water supply and sanitation facilities.

This information has certainly contributed towards a better planning for women's participation in water supply and sanitation projects. Nowadays most proposals and plans contain a paragraph on the necessity for active involvement of women in the project. In most cases also practical measures are identified, such as the requirement to include a specified number of women in any community organization for the management of new facilities for water supply and sanitary improvements, and special training for women to enhance their technical and leadership skills. In the field, however, many obstacles are still in the way of a satisfactory implementation of these plans and measures.

Lack of understanding of gender issues

One major obstacle is a general lack of understanding of gender issues by those who work on planning and implementation of water supply and sanitation projects. In particular, it is often not understood what could be the different interests of women and men in water supply, what it means for women and men to share responsibilities for new facilities, and how to handle the constraints and difficulties which will come up when a meaningful involvement of women is being promoted. Understanding gender differences in effectiveness and impact of development projects is crucial in creating new water supply and sanitation facilities with long-term, positive impacts on the lives of women and men. These conclusions were also made in an evaluation of UNICEF's WID/gender policy and practices in the water and sanitation sector (Woroniuk: 1993).

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Community participation : an underdeveloped concept

Another important constraint is the predominantly technical and institutional orientation of many water and sanitation projects and programmes. Although community participation, or users involvement, is mentioned in most programme and project designs as an important factor in ensuring sustainability of the improvements, its implementation is seldom followed through beyond the mobilization of people for voluntary labour in construction and maintenance. Where a meaningful users involvement in planning and management of improved facilities is generally underdeveloped, women's involvement in these activities will lag behind even more.

New issues

Finally, some new issues have come up in recent years, which have to be taken into consideration when defining a Women and Development policy in the water and sanitation sector. These concern the recognition that fresh water is a finite, vulnerable, and increasingly scarce resource. Scarcity, and increasing capital needs for the provision of fresh water to different categories of users, has led to a rethinking of the value of water in terms of its environmental, social, and economic functions. The notion that fresh water should be treated as an economic good is now being promoted throughout the sector. Policies for distribution, pricing and cost recovery are being developed, not only for the infrastructure of water supply, but for the water itself. It is obvious that such pricing and cost recovery policies can have major implications for women and men's water use, for household and income generating purposes. Poor people, many of whom are women, will lose sources of income when the water needed is too expensive. For household purposes they will easily go back to using polluted, unsafe drinking water, risking the spread of diseases.

Another consequence of water scarcity is the necessity to link improvements in water supply and sanitation to sustainable use and fair distribution of fresh water resources. At the national level governments must take up their roles as controllers and fair distributors of all national water resources. Obviously, women with decision-taking functions should be included in the institutional bodies which will perform these tasks.

At the local level, protection and management of water resources have always been in the hands of the communities concerned, with a strong influence of women who are the main users for household purposes. To ensure sustainable use and fair distribution of fresh water at the local level, the old management roles and in particular the influence of women should be enhanced when new facilities are being developed.

This also applies to improvements in sanitary facilities. Women are not only responsible for keeping the house and its direct environment clean; usually they are also concerned with environmental sanitation in the wider area of the neighbourhood or the village. This implies that women can be

strongly motivated to initiate and support improvements in sanitation, drainage of waste water, waste removal, etc. A policy which encourages and supports such initiatives of women can be expected to lead to efficient and sustainable results.

It has been decided to update the existing policy paper with a new text to include the points mentioned above. The paper starts with a brief introduction into general objectives of a Women and Development policy, and moves on to discuss some important gender issues and the use of a gender assessment study as an instrument to improve project planning and general women and development policy and strategies. The next section deals with the need for a gender-sensitive partnership approach in development projects. Finally two short, summarized checklists are presented. The first is based on the main issues as mentioned in this paper; the second checklist contains a summary of key questions for a gender assessment study.

The examples presented in the text are mostly from Netherlands' financed and implemented water supply and sanitation programmes.

2. WOMEN, WATER AND SANITATION

2.1. GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

A development project which brings safe water nearer to people's homes can not only significantly improve the conditions of women's lives. It can also affect the social and economic position of women - negatively if they do not share in decisions and management of the new facilities, and thus lose control over an important resource; or positively if they are included as active change agents. A water supply project which involves women as pump caretakers, water committee members, and hygiene informers, can have a considerable impact on women's position in the community. It can enhance their self-esteem, and their esteem in the eyes of others.

Development projects with a specific policy for the involvement of women can be distinguished by a focus on women's practical needs as well as their strategic interests.

PRACTICAL NEEDS of women are linked to their living conditions. If a project aims to meet practical needs of

women, it can help to relieve their burden, improve their health, or support them in earning their own income. Such direct improvements in the living conditions of women can sometimes be made even without their specific participation in decisions about the project and its activities. Projects that focus mainly on practical needs often sustain traditional relations between men and women.

STRATEGIC INTERESTS for women are related to improving their position in society. If a project aims to meet strategic interests of women, it can support the empowerment of women, encouraging them to share with men planning, decision-making and management, and to take part in training. It can also support them to take initiatives for starting other, related development activities.

Practical needs are usually a priority. They must be met before strategic interests can be addressed. An effective gender policy will address practical needs of both women and men, in such ways that it will at the same time address strategic interests of women. Ideally, it will support women to overcome constraints, like lack of access to resources, inhibiting cultural traditions, and lack of self-confidence. It will aim at making women stronger to improve their own lives and, at the same time, improve the living conditions and relationships within the family and the community.

In a low-income area in Karachi a project for the improvement of on-site sanitation was executed, with a high level of women's participation, which was considered remarkable in this traditional Muslim society. The community organizer of the project, a local woman, motivated the other women to supervise construction of latrines in their houses, and to become themselves motivators in their area. They then identified other problems, such as the lack of education for girls and the lack of primary health care. Home schools were set up, with young women trained as teachers, and as primary health workers. This enabled them to earn a small income. The women working in the project are now accepted as resourceful and responsible persons who are vital for the development of the community. Their self-esteem has been enhanced, and they have gained influence over their own lives through earning their own income.

Project and agency staff at all levels should understand the reasons for a gender policy aiming at practical needs as well as strategic interests of women. Gender sensitivity and gender awareness of project and agency staff can be promoted through discussions and training.

Such discussions should also be held with the men in the communities : local leaders, husbands, fathers, sons. They can come to recognize the importance of sharing with women the responsibilities and the benefits of improvements in the living conditions of the family and in the community.

Strategic interests of women can be promoted in water supply and sanitation programmes with an institutional development component through ensuring the employment of women in managerial and leading positions in sector institutions.

Policy measures which encourage women to take up managerial positions will not only benefit the women themselves, but can also support the institutions concerned to adapt a more effective, gender-sensitive approach. If capable women seem not to be directly available to fill these posts, the programme can include a special training for them. Also, women staff members can be seconded, as a learning experience, to foreign experts and consultants who work temporarily for the programme.

2.2. GENDER

The concept of GENDER refers to social and cultural differences between women and men. It emphasizes different needs and interests of women and men, differences in tasks and knowledge, and in access to resources. Gender relations reflect these differences, in the way how men and women behave towards each other and how they can cooperate.

Water and sanitation projects always deal with men as well as women. They affect women and men differently, and women and men, through their different interests, will deal with projects in different ways.

For a project to be successful, women and men both need to be involved, and to share the responsibility for the improvements. It is, then, crucial that gender differences are taken into account in water and sanitation sector policy and planning.

Below, some important gender issues will be discussed with a view on their relevance for the identification of effective policy strategies for the water sector, as well as for project planning and implementation.

*** Gender differences in water tasks, water needs and water uses**

In many countries, particularly in rural areas, women and children collect all the drinking and household water, on average some 40 to 60 litres per household per day. Women are also responsible for the storage of household water, and for an adequate distribution for household purposes. Men tend to assist with collection only when distances are very great, provided they have some means of transport. In that case, however, they may decide to fetch water for the purpose of selling it.

Although improvements in water supply will generally benefit the whole community, women and men may need water for different purposes and consequently have different priorities and interests in the facilities to be installed.

Generally, both men and women in rural areas may depend for their income on a good water supply. Men may use water for brick making, or cattle raising. Besides needing water for family and household purposes, women may require water to make traditional beer, or to produce dyed textiles and other products for the market.

These differences in use and interests can easily lead to problems, when improvements are being proposed which focus only, or mainly, on water supply for the household. Particularly in those areas where fresh water is becoming increasingly scarce, like for example in many parts of Africa and in some parts of India, competition between men and women over the use of water sources is not uncommon. It is clear then, that men's needs should not be overlooked, but also women's needs to use additional water for economic purposes should be taken into account.

In the north-east of Tanzania, cattle raising is an important activity for men. In recent years the area is drying out, mainly through deforestation and overgrazing. Water supply is increasingly becoming a problem, not only for households (in some places women have to walk 8 km or more to fetch water), but also for watering cattle. When improvements in water supply are being discussed in the villages, the differences between men's and women's interests become apparent : the women are mainly interested in having safe and sufficient water near their homes, for the household and small market production. The men want to contribute only to water supply which will benefit their cattle as well.

Unless solutions for these problems can be found within the framework of the project, the women will lose out. Usually they do not have sufficient power to influence decisions which

are primarily in the interest of men. Neither do they have enough income and other resources (e.g. information, skills) to make all necessary contributions for improvements which will benefit themselves and their families.

*** Gender differences in access to income and other resources**

In general, women have less access than men to resources like employment, income, information, education and training, etc. This will inhibit them to participate in projects and to share responsibilities with men on an equal base.

A general policy aiming at women's strategic interests will include measures to enhance their opportunities to take up managerial and leadership positions in sectoral institutions and agencies, in programme and project management, and in the management of water and sanitation improvements at community level.

Gender differences in access to resources is an important area which needs to be adressed in water supply and sanitation policy. Besides adapting strategies towards the empowerment of women, support of the men should be ensured if women's access to resources is to be improved. Project requirements and measures to improve women's access to resources, like for example requiring their participation in community water committees, and organizing special training for women, will be more successful if men are supportive.

In a rural water project in Zambia special training courses were given for women in maintenance and management of the new wells. Also, the project required that at least half of the members of a village water committee should be women. However, it became apparant that many men were quite jealous of this special attention for women. They boycotted the election of able women in the water committees, and prevented as much as possible women's participation in the training.

The project staff tried to break through this pattern by holding discussions on gender issues with

men and women. They thought that better results could have been achieved if these discussions would have been included in a structured way from the beginning of the project.

Women's lack of financial resources is another important stumbling block for them to take initiatives or participate in water supply and sanitation improvements. Generally women, much more than men, are held responsible for supplying household water and for creating and maintaining appropriate sanitary conditions. At the same time, the chance is small that they by themselves will be able to make sufficient financial contributions to any improvements. Careful, gender-sensitive assessments must be made of the consequences of poverty in relation to access to sufficient and safe water and sanitation.

In developing a policy for cost recovery for water supply and sanitary facilities, and in particular for pricing water used for household purposes, specific needs of poor people, many of whom are women, should be taken into account.

If poor women do not have the means of paying for safe drinking water, they will go back to unsafe water sources. This can lead to continued spread of diseases, and minimise any general health benefits from improved water supply facilities in the community.

*** Gender differences in motivation for health and hygiene**

Like the provision of water for the household, general household hygiene and family health are special areas of women's responsibilities and activities. They provide the

first health care for children and other family members. Most of the work in household and community sanitation, including the collection, processing and reuse of waste, is done by women.

Through their responsibility for cleanliness of the house and environment, and their knowledge and experience concerning health and hygiene issues, women, more than men, can be strongly motivated to take action for the improvement of sanitary conditions.

Documentation of initiatives of women in many different countries ("Success Stories", presented at the Global Assembly of Women "Partners in Life", held in Miami in 1991) shows that donors and development agencies could considerably enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of improvements in sanitary facilities if they would start with women's needs and initiatives.

In the Philippines, and in Sri Lanka, women's groups initiated and managed sanitation projects which include building improved latrines, and setting up systems for waste disposal.

A group of women in Karachi fought successfully for basic services in their neighbourhood, such as regular garbage collection and disposal, replacement of broken sewerage and water supply, and antimalaria fumigation.

In Nepal a women's group played a major role in an integrated project for improvement of the environment, including sanitary elements.

From the experiences with such project it can be concluded that often men become keen supporters and contributors to any initiatives of women when they are successful.

Most water supply and sanitation interventions include a health or hygiene education component. Here, women's motivating role is generally recognized : because of their strong involvement in hygiene and sanitary matters, they are often chosen as the main target group for hygiene education. This approach can be quite successful. But to concentrate exclusively on women will be counterproductive, because also men must be involved in hygiene programmes to get the full benefits of improved hygiene behaviour.

*** Gender differences in hygiene practices and experiences**

When planning a hygiene education component in water supply and sanitation interventions, existing experiences, practices, and knowledge of the people are seldom taken into account. The information offered in the hygiene programme may then bypass completely the reality of women and men's practices and beliefs.

Hygiene education should be based on women and men's knowledge about hygiene and health risks, and on daily practices and problems. These issues should be investigated in a gender-sensitive way, before a hygiene education programme is set up.

Women's problems with hygiene can differ considerably from those of men, not only through their special responsibilities in household hygiene and environmental sanitation, but also because of personal hygiene problems. Menstruation, for instance, is usually not included as a subject for hygiene information. Still it is an important factor influencing ideas and decisions on sanitary improvements.

*** Gender differences in knowledge and experiences concerning water sources and water management**

In many areas of the world, and particularly in rural areas of developing countries, scarcity of clean, safe drinking water is increasingly becoming a problem. For a large part this scarcity is caused by environmental damage. It is not yet common for water supply projects and programmes to take the root causes of water scarcity into consideration. This neglect may easily lead to unsustainable projects : digging of wells in areas where the groundwater level is falling; building dams without proper protection against evaporation, etc.

No programme or project on water supply should be started without a thorough investigation into the environmental implications of water development in the area. Knowledge and experiences of women and men on local water sources are a valuable base on which to build project planning and management.

Generally, the unique knowledge and experience of women on availability and reliability of sources for drinking water, on the preferred quality of water, and on the requirements of environmental protection are not sufficiently recognized by project planners and technical experts. The inclusion of this type of knowledge in project planning is particularly important in areas with increasing water problems, where women, of necessity, have to make judgements on where to go and which water source to use, and how to protect their sources against contamination and waste.

Women in the Nyando plains (Kenya) pointed out the unsustainable nature of solutions drafted by foreign technical experts. They explained that water from boreholes would be unsuitable for domestic and productive use, as it contains high levels of salinity due to volcanic action in the area. The solution they preferred was river water. They knew that this would require a comprehensive strategy that included arresting upriver pollution and flood control mechanisms.

Because of their traditional responsibilities as providers of water for the family, women have been in many places informal managers of water resources. They can be supported to emphasize that role, and take action against degradation of their water sources. In some countries women have organized themselves in protest or action movements against environmental degradation, such as Chipko in India and the Green Belt Movement in Kenya. Strategies could be defined to mobilize such movements for a better protection of water sources, and for a fair distribution of water taking the

concerns of poor people and in particular of poor women into account.

*** Gender assessment study**

To get a clear picture of all relevant gender differences which can influence interventions in water supply and sanitation, a gender analysis or gender assessment study has to be carried out in the project area. A conceptual framework and methodology for such a study has been developed through DGIS as an instrument to facilitate the planning of development projects which will meet the needs of women as well as men, and at the same time will address strategic interests of women ("Gender Assessment Study. A Guide for Policy Staff", 1994)

A gender assessment study is an invaluable tool to understand the ways women as well as men can participate in project activities, contribute to successful improvements, and share in the benefits.

Besides understanding **gender differences**, it is important to have an insight in **gender relations** : how do men and women work together in water supply and sanitation activities; how do they relate in decision making, in financial arrangements; how can they be supported to work together and share responsibilities for new water and sanitation facilities, and for the protection of water sources.

A gender assessment study should be undertaken preferably in the formulation or appraisal phase of a water supply and sanitation project. It should be executed in close cooperation with local (sector) institutions, and with local researchers participating.

The resulting data should be used in project design and planning, and for the definition of monitoring and evaluation indicators. The data will also facilitate the identification of solutions for problems and constraints which inhibit a meaningful participation of women. Generally, results of gender assessment studies can contribute to an improvement of women and development policy and strategies.

A summarized list of the key questions to be included in the study, with a special focus on water supply and sanitation interventions, can be found in Checklist 3.2. (page 16).

2.3. PARTNERSHIP

It has long been recognized that user participation in water supply and sanitation projects and programmes is an essential requirement for the sustainability of the improved facilities. But it has not always been clear what this participation

should be, and how an agency could work with communities in ways which are profitable and satisfactory to both.

To ensure local support and responsibility for building new facilities, for using them well, and for sustaining them in good order, the community, women and men, and the development agency must work together as partners.

Partnership between agencies and users goes beyond mobilizing the users to make financial contributions and to provide voluntary labour for construction and maintenance. It requires the agency to take seriously the initiatives of the users, women and men, and to encourage them to share with the agency in planning, decision-making, and in responsibilities for management and maintenance.

Any effective partnership approach in water and sanitation interventions will be gender-sensitive; it will emphasize the inclusion of women.

Although it may be expected that a good partnership approach will by definition always reach women as well as men, it will still not be effective if special constraints for women are not taken into account. The most important constraints concern the lack of access to resources, like income, information, skills. Also inhibiting are cultural traditions which keep women from taking part in public activities together with men, or in speaking out in public. Finally, women may lack confidence to take part, due to cultural traditions, but also because of existing policies and practices which have overlooked their concerns and neglected their involvement.

Project staff should be aware of the necessity to support women, and define strategies to overcome any difficulties they may face.

The gender assessment study will provide insights in special constraints for women, and in possible solutions. Nearly always it will be necessary to take a range of specific measures to include women as partners in the project, such as:

- having adequately trained female field staff who can work directly with women, using participatory methods;
- holding meetings at convenient times and places for women;
- encouraging women to take part in planning and decision-making;
- encouraging women to take up leadership positions in local water management;
- having special training for women to enhance their skills;

- organizing gender training for field staff and community members, in particular male community members and local leaders.

It should, however, be kept in mind that special measures for women can never be imposed on them. They must be supported by the women themselves, they have to be explained well to the men, and their implementation has to be closely monitored.

A gender-sensitive partnership approach is not yet commonly applied in water and sanitation projects. Therefore it is important that orientation and training on this approach and on relevant methods to be used in the field, is given to project staff and fieldworkers.

Since several years methodologies and tools are being developed for successful gender-sensitive partnership approaches in water supply and sanitation projects. A whole range of methods have been designed and tested, to assess needs and priorities with communities, to plan activities and design facilities, to monitor and evaluate a project together with the people concerned. An overview of some field guides and manuals describing these methods is included in this paper as Annex I : References and Suggestions for Further Reading.

A series of three manuals with special guidelines on women's involvement and participatory methodologies has recently been published by IRC (see the References and Suggestions for Further Reading). The manuals have been developed by female experts in water supply and sanitation, in workshops held in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The workshops and the publication of the manuals have been financed by DGIS.

3. CHECKLISTS

3.1. GENERAL CHECKLIST

This checklist summarizes the most important issues concerning gender awareness and involvement of women in water supply and sanitation programmes and projects, as they have been presented in this paper. The checklist has been structured somewhat differently from the text in that it follows the stages in the usual project cycle.

For a more comprehensive range of relevant checklists, guidelines, methods and tools the "Gender Issues Sourcebook for the Water and Sanitation Sector" should be consulted. It is published in 1994 by UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Program.

1. Project formulation/appraisal

- * Are the project objectives clearly defined with a view on meeting practical needs as well as strategic interest of women ?
- * Is a gender assessment study being executed in the project area, in cooperation with local (sector) institutions and local researchers ?
Are the results of the study used to review the project idea or proposal in regard of ensuring an optimal incorporation of gender issues ?
Are the results of the study used to define indicators for monitoring and evaluation of women's involvement and gender specific effects of the project ?
- * Are the sector institutions involved in the project prepared to adapt a gender-sensitive approach ?
Will orientation and training in gender issues for project and agency staff be included in the project ?
- * Do the sector institutions involved in the project have a policy to encourage women in taking up managerial and leading positions in those institutions ?
Will they be supported through the project in adapting such policy ?
- * Do the sector institutions involved in the project have any experience in working with participatory approaches ?
Will orientation and training (or refresher courses) in participatory methods and tools for project and agency staff be included in the project ?

- * Will the environmental implications of the project be investigated, taking into account the knowledge of local women and men on appropriate use and protection of water sources in the area ?

- * Are any (present or previous) initiatives of women's groups or organisations for the improvement of water supply and environmental sanitation in the area considered for support through the project ?

- * Are any efforts for environmental protection, in particular concerning protection of water sources and fair distribution of water, through local (women's) groups or movements considered for support through the project ?

2. Project preparation

- * Is sufficient female project field staff available to work with women in the communities ?

- * Has **all** project staff, including technical as well as social field staff, got an orientation or training in gender issues ?

- * Is **all** field staff sufficiently trained in participatory methodology ?

- * Are women and men in the communities equally well informed and consulted about the projects aims and objectives; about the most appropriate technologies to be used; about project requirements; about expected short term and long term inputs and contributions of community members; about expected results and benefits of the project ?

- * Are women's (present or previous) initiatives, or apparent motivation of women for improvements e.g. in hygiene, environmental sanitation, protection of water sources, etc. taken into account in the selection of specific communities for the project ?

3. Project planning and implementation

- * Are planning and implementation of the project organised and executed in a participatory approach, with optimal involvement of the community and in particular women ?

- * Will discussions on gender issues be held with community members, in particular with the men, to sensitize them on the necessity to share with women the responsibilities and the benefits of the project ?
- * Are adequate measures taken to solve problems and remove constraints for women to participate on an equal base with men ? (Measures will be based on the findings of the gender assessment study)
- * Are planning and implementation of the project organised and executed in such ways that women and men can optimally work together ? (Organisation of the cooperation between men and women will be based on the findings of the gender assessment study)
- * Are cost recovery measures and financial arrangements made in such ways that poor people, and in particular poor women, will not be excluded from using the improved facilities ?
- * Are adequate measures taken to ensure environmentally sound and sustainable use of water sources, and to avoid possible negative effects on the environment through the project ? Has in particular women's support of such measures been secured through the project ?

4. Monitoring and evaluation

Specific indicators for monitoring and evaluation will be based on the findings of the gender assessment study. Here only some general key issues are mentioned.

- * In what ways have practical needs of women been met through the project ?
- * In what ways have strategic interests of women been met through the project ?
- * In what ways has the project taken women's initiatives and women's motivation into account ?
- * In what ways has the project contributed to women's general access to resources ?
- * Are women and men sharing in responsibilities and benefits of the project ? If so, how ?

- * How effective have been the measures taken to solve problems and remove constraints for a proper participation of women ?
- * How effective have been the cost recovery measures and financial arrangements taken through the project, in terms of not excluding poor people, and in particular poor women from the benefits of the project ?
- * In what ways has the project contributed to the adoption of a gender-sensitive approach by the sector institutions involved ?
- * In what ways has the project contributed to the adoption of a participatory approach by the sector institutions involved ?
Is a gender-sensitive and participatory approach being used for monitoring and evaluation ?
- * In what ways has the project contributed to an environmentally sound and sustainable use of water sources, avoiding negative effects on the environment ?
How has women's support of such measures been secured ?

3.2. SUMMARY OF KEY QUESTIONS FOR A GENDER ASSESSMENT STUDY

This checklist is based on the summary of key questions in "Gender Assessment Study. A Guide for Policy Staff", published by DGIS, 1994. The questions have been adapted for water supply and sanitation interventions.

- * Analysis of target group
What are water tasks, water needs, and water uses of (different categories of) women and men; cooperation of women and men in water and sanitation tasks; gender-related access to and control over resources; gender differences in practices, experiences and beliefs concerning water and sanitation issues; gender differences in knowledge and experience concerning local water sources and environmental problems in relation to water use ?
- * Analysis of institutional setting
What is the gender capacity of the institutions to be involved in the project ?
Are there any (other) women's organisations or (environmental) movements which could be relevant for the project ?
Are there any present initiatives of women's groups for the improvement of water supply and sanitation ?
- * Analysis of project idea/proposal