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Gender-Disaggregated Data on Water and Sanitation

Why gender-disaggregated data on water and sanitation ?

The majority of the world's poor are women, and many of them lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation. In many countries the effect of this situation is different for women - and for children - than for men. Often women play the main role in water and sanitation management; this ranges from basic water collection to water storage and emptying latrines, but also to employment as water engineers, water managers and water ministers.



Women play a main role in water and sanitation management.

Despite women's numbers and their prominent roles and responsibilities concerning water and sanitation issues, in many countries their needs are often ignored, and women's participation in planning and management of water and sanitation systems is limited. Consequently many programmes lack sustainability and their economic impact is negative.

Efforts must therefore be made to fully mainstream gender into water and sanitation planning and management. Gender mainstreaming in sanitation and water policies requires robust gender disaggregated data that will also allow global and local monitoring of access to water and sanitation by both men and women.

Against this background, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development (UNW-DPC) convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in December 2008 to clarify how to mainstream gender into the water and sanitation sectors by using systematically collected gender-disaggregated data within international and national water and sanitation monitoring systems.

Current data are inadequate

The EGM concluded that not only does the substance need to be reconsidered but also the methods and approaches (e.g. valuing and integrating qualitative data). Neither the quality nor type of data currently collected are adequate to the task of supporting gender MDG goals in water and sanitation.

Using existing mechanisms

Establishing an effective gender-disaggregated data regime will require new indicators, new approaches, and new capacity development approaches. However, much progress could be made by

incorporating gender, water and sanitation indicators and/or questions into existing capacities, surveys, measurements and approaches.

Data still needed

Gender-disaggregated data is significantly incomplete on the key issues below, highlighted by the EGM for further attention:

Private income and expenditures

data on differences between female and male-headed households in expenditure on water and sanitation.

Public expenditures

data on the scale and nature of public sector expenditures on investments for water and sanitation, and their gender-differentiated impacts.



Equal participation in decision-making is essential for sustainable water and sanitation management.

Decision-making and policy

data on decision-making at local level and measures of the participation of women in the water and sanitation sector.

Costs and benefits

data on the economic gain to men and women from access to water and sanitation, or the differential costs to men and women of lack of access.

Time

data on access to water by the time needed to collect water to meet daily basic needs.

Public and school-based water and sanitation

data on the nature or state of sanitation provision in public places and schools, and the provision made for women's or girls' menstrual needs.

Health and sanitation

gender-disaggregated health data should be linked to water and sanitation.

Basic parameters of gender and water and sanitation use

EGM Recommendations

Six gendered indicators on water and sanitation

1

Governments and bilateral donors should support further initiatives to extend efforts to reframe the mechanisms, approaches, and paradigms of gender-disaggregated data collection in the water and sanitation sectors, and to develop specific frameworks and methodologies for their implementation.

2

Meanwhile, existing data mechanisms at local, national and global levels should be improved and deployed to incorporate consideration of gender-disaggregated water and sanitation issues, additionally disaggregated by social strata, class, age, and other key social variables.

3

In this effort key global-level data collection entities (such as JMP/GLAAS, UNDP, the World Bank, the UN Statistical Commissions, and UNIFEM) and national governments should undertake to incorporate into their existing surveys questions and observations **six specific gendered indicators on water and sanitation:**

- on the adequacy and availability of water at the household level for daily needs, distinguishing between reproductive and productive activities of men and women;
- on the time spent, by sex, to collect water, further distinguishing between the work done by adults and children and disaggregated by urban/rural setting;
- on relationships between transportation and gender in collecting water, with particular care taken to distinguish between "carrying" vs "assisted transport" (whether animal or mechanized);

- on what kind of sanitation facilities (if any) are actually used by men and by women and who is not using facilities and why; these data should be further disaggregated by income and by urban/rural setting;
- on women's participation in decision-making processes regarding water and sanitation at all levels, including careful attention to indicators (such as qualitative ordinal scales) that reveal the nature and quality of women's inclusion in decision making;
- on gendered sanitation in schools, including whether facilities are provided separately for males and females, the extent to which existing facilities are actually used by male and female schoolchildren, and the extent to which those facilities meet the specific needs of girls (e.g. safety, privacy, hygiene, and provision of facilities for menstruation).

It also recommended considering indirect indicators on women's time spent collecting water for the sick, and on caring for the sick whose illnesses are related to lack of safe water and basic sanitation.

4

Donor support should be directed to governments and agencies, including NGOs and groups operating at the local level, that are willing to take first steps to engage with and pilot such data collection.

5

Institutional constraints that inhibit the collection of gender-disaggregated water and sanitation data should be identified and monitored, and action plans should be developed to remedy these problems, e.g. by developing capacities.

Time spent on collecting water diminishes time available to women and children for activities such as productive labour and school attendance.



School sanitation should meet the specific needs of girls.



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Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF)



Gender Water Alliance, (GWA)



WaterAid



Women for Water Partnership (WfW)



International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC)



Overseas Development Institute (ODI)



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