



**Economic Commission for Africa
Southern Africa Office, Lusaka, Zambia**

Water 4 Life

**Report of the Seminar on
Gender and Water Resources Management in Africa**



9 March 2005

Pretoria, South Africa

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR AFRICA**



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POUR L'AFRIQUE**

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9 May 2005

**Seminar on Gender and Water Resources
Management in Africa**

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**REPORT OF THE SEMINAR ON GENDER AND WATER
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA**

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACGD	African Centre for Gender and Development
AMCOW	African Ministers' Council on Water
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECA-SA	Economic Commission for Africa Office in Southern Africa
GWA	Gender and Water Alliance
GWP	Global Water Partnership
GWP-SA	Global Water Partnership Southern Africa
IUCN	World Conservation Union
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
IWSD	Institute of Water and Sanitation Development
PANAFCON	Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDD	Sustainable Development Division
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

A. BACKGROUND OF THE SEMINAR

1. The seminar on Gender and Water Resources Management in Africa, jointly organized by UN-Water/Africa, ECA's Office in Southern Africa (ECA-SA), and ECA's Sustainable Development Division (SDD), took place as a follow-up to the gender commitments made by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) during the Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (PANAFCON, December 2003, Addis Ababa).

2. The main aim of the seminar was to translate the gender commitments in an implementable 10-year action plan for mainstreaming gender in Africa's water policies, programmes and projects to be adopted by AMCOW. The action plan would coincide with the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life', starting from 22 March 2005. The seminar further aimed at strengthening partnerships for enhanced gender advocacy in the water sector. In addition, it aimed at participants' increased sensitization on the importance of mainstreaming gender in water management and at imparting ideas on how to incorporate a gender perspective in their own work. Specifically, the seminar had the following objectives and expected output:

Objectives:

- 1) To promote implementation of the African Ministerial Commitments on gender and water (PANAFCON 2003);
- 2) To initiate policy dialogue aimed at developing a concrete action plan for mainstreaming gender in all activities developed in Africa as part of the International Decade for Action: "Water for Life" 2005 –2015;
- 3) To create awareness for the importance of mainstreaming gender in water management for improving women's lives and sustainable development.

Expected output:

- 1) Recommendations for implementation and achievement of the AMCOW gender commitments;
- 2) Strengthened partnerships for an AMCOW action plan of mainstreaming gender issues in the International Decade;
- 3) Enhanced sensitisation on the importance of mainstreaming gender in water management at all levels (regional, basin, national, local).

B. ATTENDANCE

3. Fifty-six participants attended the seminar. These included representatives from the governments of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, representatives from research institutions, community-based organizations, and NGOs from Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, attended. UN-HABITAT and UNICEF Angola, and WMO were represented. Other participating international organizations represented included the Global Water Partnership (GWP), IUCN, the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and the Institute of Water and Sanitation Development (IWSD). The

group constituted of both water experts with limited involvement in gender and water issues and gender and water advocates. The list of participants is attached as Annex 4.

C. OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SEMINAR

4. The Coordinator of the UN Water/Africa group and Senior Regional Adviser of Water Resources Development & Management, Dr. S.M.K. Donkor who initiated the Seminar started proceedings with brief opening remarks and introduced Mr. Dickson Mzumara, Officer-in-Charge of ECA-SA to Chair the Session. In his opening statement, Mr. Mzumara welcomed the participants and thanked the government of South Africa for hosting the seminar. He referred to the objectives of the seminar and explained that the seminar was a follow-up to the gender commitments made by the African Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW) during the Pan-African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water (PANAFCON) in December 2003 in Addis Ababa. He made reference to the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which already expressed concern over the integration of a gender perspective in policies and programmes for sustainable development and called for equal access to safe water. He further provided the linkage with the African Water Vision and its gender commitments, recently endorsed by the African Union, which preceded the PANAFCON. He then highlighted important events and activities as well as organizations in the area of gender and water, including the International Decade Water for Life, the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force, the WASH forum, and the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA).

5. In her opening statement by H.E. Buyelwa Sonjica, Minister for Water Affairs and Forestry in South Africa, read on her behalf by Ms. Barbara Schreiner, Deputy Director General Policy and Regulation, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), South Africa, the Minister welcomed the participants to Pretoria. She explained the relevance of gender issues in water management and made reference to the PANAFCON following the gender targets set in the African Water Vision. The Minister thanked ECA and UN-Water for the organization of the seminar and other activities to support the implementation of the African Water Vision. She further welcomed the participants on behalf of AMCOW. In addition, she shared information and best practices about the way gender has been mainstreamed in South Africa's water policy documents placed into the framework of post-apartheid South Africa. Best practices included the legal mechanisms in place to reallocate resources from those who have been favoured by history to those who have been neglected, the cooperation with other Ministries, and a quota system for appropriate community, racial and gender representation in catchment, regional and local water institutions. Furthermore, she highlighted the appointment of previously disadvantaged persons in the Ministry and training for its officials in gender issues.

6. After the statements, a video was shown highlighting the impact of poor water conditions' on poor people's and especially poor women and girl's lives.

D. SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

7. The official opening was followed by a plenary session with three presentations, discussing the concepts of gender, illustrating the importance of mainstreaming gender in water management, and paving the way for work to be done in parallel sessions.

Participants thereafter worked in thematic group sessions to define concrete recommendations in the form of a draft action plan for mainstreaming gender in Africa's water policies, programmes and projects within the framework of the International Decade for Action. The parallel sessions' findings were presented in plenary, after which the way forward was discussed. The provisional organization of work and the annotation of the parallel sessions are attached as Annexes 1 and 2 respectively.

1 Plenary presentations

8. Ms. Tacko Ndiaye, Economic Affairs Officer, ECA's African Centre for Gender and Development (ACGD), presented a paper with the title: 'Why is it critical to mainstream gender in water resources management in Africa?' She explained the different gender concepts and gender approaches and how they relate to water issues. She further explained the linkage between gender, poverty and water deprivation, which she also related to key gender issues such as gender insensitivity of current macroeconomic frameworks, discrepancies between women's workload and their entitlements, women's limited participation in decision-making related to water resources management, and the lack of sex-disaggregated indicators and statistics. In conclusion, she presented a framework for mainstreaming gender in water resources management, with main emphasis on defining stakeholders and users, priorities, the different levels of operation and achievable targets.

9. The presentation was followed by a 'case study example on mainstreaming gender in water resources management in Africa: South Africa', presented by Barbara Schreiner, Deputy Director General Policy and Regulation, DWAF, South Africa. She presented a paper co-written together with Barbara van Koppen, Principal Researcher, Africa Regional Program, International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and Shalili Misser, Transformation Unit, DWAF. She presented the policy/legal framework on gender and water issues adopted by the South African government and informed participants about the quota system to guarantee equal participation by gender and race in decision-making in the newly established catchment management agencies. Particular attention was given to the process towards the adoption of this policy measure following long consultations and discussion with stakeholders. She stated that it had been particularly difficult to get marginalized groups and especially poor women involved. She further indicated the present state of affairs as being in an infant state and indicated the challenge of bridging the gap between policy and implementation. The lessons learned by the government were mainly: the important role of the state in the empowerment of women and the need for gender-disaggregated data for effective policy-making and implementation.

10. The third presentation by Saskia Ivens, Associate Gender Expert, ECA-SA, introduced the participants to the work for the parallel sessions. The presenter made the linkage between the African Water Vision gender commitments, followed by the gender commitments arising from the PANAFCON, and the draft action plan to be developed during the seminar. The expected output of the parallel sessions related to the objectives and expected output of the seminar: to come up with concrete recommendations in the form of a draft action plan for mainstreaming gender in Africa's water policies, programmes and projects within the framework of the International Decade for Action. An action plan framework for use in the parallel sessions was presented.

2 Parallel sessions

11. Parallel sessions were organized in the following areas:

- 1) Water, gender and public health
- 2) Equitable access to water for productive use
- 3) Gender, water and ecosystems
- 4) Improved participation by water users in water programmes and projects for increased gender responsiveness and sustainable development
- 5) Mainstreaming gender in national, regional and basin water policies and collaboration between ministries.

12. The group discussions on the action plan were preceded by presentations by the facilitators of the sessions and a few other presenters. The presentations introduced the participants to the subject and its key issues, after which the priority areas for action in the area of the session's theme were discussed and concrete objectives and activities were defined. See Annex 2 for an overview of the presentations and a detailed description of the sessions' contents.

3 Plenary session: reports from parallel sessions and way forward

13. During the plenary session, the group made reports on their work. Each group presented priority areas for action and concrete objectives and planned activities. Following the group reports, the way forward from the seminar to a finalized action plan was discussed.

3.1 Reports from parallel sessions

14. Parallel session 1 focused on 'Water, Gender and Public Health'. The group reported that after presentations and discussion, including a general overview, a case study from Sudan, the Millennium Development Goals and the Declarations of Niamey and Bamako, it identified the priority areas for action as follows:

- Define indicators and collect baseline data disaggregated by sex at various levels;
- Review how the country gender policy strategies relate to the AMCOW commitments;
- Set-up or strengthen monitoring systems and data information management;
- Set-up an Africa Hygiene network including civil society;
- Improve sanitation provision;
- Focus on women in decision-making and women's technical expertise as crosscutting issue;
- Conduct regular livelihood analyses with a focus on improved health, transformation of structures at policy and organizational level and attention to vulnerability and access to resources;
- Raise awareness on gender and water management at different levels;
- Consider culture and religious sensitive actions as crosscutting issue;
- Improve urban sanitation.

15. Parallel session 2 centered its discussions on the theme 'Equitable access to water for productive use'. Following presentations and discussion on essential women's land and water issues and African water laws and their impact on gender relations and women's access to water for productive use, the group identified the priority areas for action as follows:

- Improve communication between local people and high-level policy makers in all areas and levels;
- Improve communication between the different stakeholders including departments of water, agriculture, land, environment, finance and local government in all actions and levels;
- Build upon community-based natural resource management and indigenous knowledge;
- Secure access to land by women;
- Ensure access to credit/financing institutions by women irrespective of land title;
- Enhance agronomy research and extension;
- Improve access to markets;
- Enhance research and training services in the field of gender and water;
- Guarantee access to water at an affordable cost;
- Improve access to appropriate technologies;
- Improve the availability of infrastructure for multiple water uses;
- Pay attention to formal water rights;
- Ensure fair distribution of water, by prioritizing small-scale water uses;
- Give priority to domestic and small-scale water uses by women and men in transboundary water issues;
- Support gender commissions to mainstream gender in water and other production factors.

16. The theme for parallel session 3 was 'Gender, Water and Ecosystems'. Presentations included reflections on key issues and challenges for improved water governance and the gender mainstreaming strategy initiative of UN-HABITAT's Water for African Cities Programme. Following discussions, the following priority areas for action were identified and presented:

- Build capacity for gender-sensitive policies and regulations for the management of ecosystems at various levels;
- Pay proper attention to gender roles and traditional wisdom in ecosystem management;
- Address water requirements for the protection of ecosystems;
- Define and collect baseline information and indicators on ecosystems.

17. Parallel session 4 focused on 'Improved Participation by Water Users in Water Programmes and Projects for Increased Gender Responsiveness and Sustainable Development'. After presentations and discussions on gender networking for improved participation in water programmes and projects and the experiences of a case study pilot

project on rainwater harvesting in Kenya by both the organizers and participants, the group identified the priority areas for action as follows:

- Build the capacity of water managers to analyze and address gender issues at project management level;
- Develop guidelines on gender mainstreaming at all levels from policy making to implementation and use by the beneficiaries;
- Conduct research projects to identify existing initiatives for change processes and share best practices;
- Improve gender-disaggregated data collection in the area of water;
- Provide training in IWRM for committees;
- Ensure replication of successful projects, e.g. the rainwater harvesting project in Kenya;
- Undertake regular assessment of the quality of participation of women in water resources issues;
- Establish country water partnerships in Southern Africa;
- Construct more ferrous cement tanks in the Rift Valley in Kenya;
- Increase public participation in water projects;
- Mainstream gender at school level;
- Improve the management of droughts, floods and desertification by 50% in Africa;
- Share experiences of water projects related to gender issues, review the need for centres of excellence or clearing houses;
- Develop a programme on water supply and sanitation for the SADC region.

18. The theme for parallel session 5 was 'Mainstreaming Gender in National, Regional and Basin Water Policies and Collaboration between Ministries'. Following a short presentation on the topic and discussion, the group identified and presented the priority areas for action as follows:

- Include social/gender aspects in the training curricula of engineers;
- Empower women through the provision of information based on a rights based approach;
- Collect credible and gender-disaggregated data on water, sanitation and hygiene;
- Assess the gender sensitivity of country's water policies and legislation and establish reporting mechanisms;
- Promote learning between countries, especially from countries that have mainstreamed gender in policy/law;
- Strengthen the links between policy and implementation;
- Develop gender-sensitive indicators and reporting mechanisms;
- Link continental, regional and subregional commitments with national/basin water policies.

19. In summary, the main recommendations of the last group were:

- Develop and promote practical guidelines for gender mainstreaming in IWRM;
- Develop information and knowledge management systems on gender and water.

3.2 Way forward

20. The seminar participants discussed the way forward from the seminar to a finalized action plan. They decided that a core team consisting of ECA, the facilitators, and a number of other participants would continue work to finalize the draft action plan by the end of April. They further agreed that the main recommendations of parallel session 5 on mainstreaming gender in water policies would be treated as a kind of framework which all the other recommendations would fit. When the action plan has been finalized and discussed among the group members, it will be shared with other UN-agencies after which it will be sent to the African Ministers' Council on Water.

E. OFFICIAL CLOSURE OF THE SEMINAR

21. Ms. Ethne Davey, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa, Chair of the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), and Vice-Chair of the Global Water Partnership Southern Africa (GWP-SA), read a message from Ms. Marcia Brewster, Task Manager of the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force (see Annex 3). She focused on water as an important strategic resource, essential for sustaining life and development, personal dignity and human security. She raised the related gender concerns including women's limited access to and control over water despite of the role they play in water management, conservation and safeguarding health. She further indicated the benefits of improved water and sanitation access to women and society as a whole, such as improved health and education, economic benefits and increased food security. She argued that more training for water specialists in social development, sanitation and hygiene education is needed as well as affirmative action programmes to train more women in water and sanitation. The appointment of women water ministers in several African countries was applauded and she hoped that these women ministers would change the nature of the debate and policies in water resources and sanitation management. She further expressed her wish that the seminar would bring a network of committed individuals forward to work together in the International 'Water for Life' Decade.

22. The representative of the South African government, Ms. Barbara Schreiner, thanked the participants as well as the organizers for their contribution to the seminar. She appealed to participants to facilitate UN-Water/ECA's work in finalizing the action plan and she asked everyone to use the new contacts for strengthened partnerships and advocacy for gender equality in water resources management.

Annex 1: Provisional organization of work

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Seminar on Gender and Water Resources Management in Africa

**Pretoria, South Africa
9 March 2005**

PROVISIONAL ORGANIZATION OF WORK

08:00-09:00 hrs	Registration
09:00-09:45 hrs	Official Opening of the Seminar Statement by the Representative of ECA Opening Statement by the Representative of the Host Country
09:45-10:30 hrs	Plenary presentations - Why is it critical to mainstream gender in water resources management in Africa? (Tacko Ndiaye, Economic Affairs Officer, African Centre for Gender and Development, ECA) - Case study example on mainstreaming gender in water resources management in Africa: South Africa (Barbara Schreiner, Deputy Director General Policy and Regulation, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa) - Introduction to the parallel sessions and recap of the

gender and water commitments of the African Water Vision and PANAFCON (Saskia Ivens, Associate Gender Expert, ECA Southern Africa Office)

10:30-11:00 hrs	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
11:00-13:00 hrs	Parallel Sessions Water, gender and public health Equitable access to water for productive use Gender, water and ecosystems Improved participation by water users in water programmes and projects for increased gender responsiveness and sustainable development Mainstreaming gender in national, regional and basin water policies and collaboration between ministries
13:00-14:00 hrs	<i>Lunch Break</i>
14:00-15:30 hrs	Continuation Parallel Sessions
15:30-16:00 hrs	<i>Tea/Coffee Break</i>
16 :00-17.30 hrs	Plenary session Report from parallel sessions & way forward
17:30-18:30 hrs	Official Closure of the Seminar Message from the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force Award of certificate of participation Closing Statement by the Host Country
19:30 hrs	Dinner/reception

Annex 2: Annotation – parallel sessions

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Seminar on Gender and Water Resources Management in Africa

**Pretoria, South Africa
9 March 2005**

ANNOTATION - PARALLEL SESSIONS

SESSION 1: WATER, GENDER AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Facilitators: Noma Nyoni-Neseni (Deputy Director Operations, Institute of Water and Sanitation Development, Zimbabwe)
Salamatou Mariko (Director, Women Network for Development, Niger)

Presentations:

- Gender issues in water, public health and sanitation (Noma Nyoni-Neseni)
- A case study on the experience of Sudanese Development Association (SDA) in implementing water management project with especial emphasis on gender (Manahil Ibrahim, Ministry of Irrigation, Sudan)
- Overview of the Millennium Development Goals on water, sanitation and health (Noma Nyoni-Neseni)
- Water, gender and the declarations of Niamey and

Bamako (Salamatou Mariko)

Contents: Urban and rural women's specific needs for drinking water and sanitation related to their socio-economic and marital status and age. The health consequences and its burden on women and men, the responsibility and role of stakeholders in the provision of safe water and sanitation in urban and rural areas. E.g. the implications of unsafe water and lack of sanitation, the distance to water or water privatisation. What can AMCOW do to reach MDG goal 7, target 10 and to ensure sustainable access for 'all' to safe and adequate water supply and sanitation services to meet basic needs?

Recommended literature: Makoni, Fungai S., Gift Manase, Jerry Ndamba, Patterns of domestic water use in rural areas of Zimbabwe, gender roles and realities
&
Declarations de Bamako et Niamey (in French)
&
Ibrahim, Manahil, A case study on the experience of Sudanese Development Association (SDA) in implementing water management project with especial emphasis on gender (ECA/SA/S/Gender/2005/04)
&
UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation, Health, Dignity, and Development: What Will it Take? Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Final Report, Abridged Edition
&
WASH Forum endorses concept of women WASH advocates, press release

SESSION 2: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO WATER FOR PRODUCTIVE USE

Facilitators: Ethne Davey (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa, chair Gender and Water Alliance, vice-chair Global Water Partnership Southern Africa)
Barbara van Koppen (Principal Researcher, Africa Regional Program, International Water Management Institute)

Presentations:

- Essential Women's Land and Water Issues (Ethne Davey)
- African Water Laws: the impact on gender relations

and women's access to water for productive use
(Barbara van Koppen)

Contents: Poor women and men's specific water needs for productive use and how these are linked to water rights and land tenure. The responsibility and role of stakeholders in the provision of water for productive use (e.g. farming and other income-generating activities) to all –including the poor and poor women in particular. Where access to water is linked to land tenure, what are women's legal rights to land tenure and to what extent does it influence their access to water? What can AMCOW do to fulfill poor women and men's specific water needs for productive use thereby to ensure that water does not become the limiting factor in food security, how to make sure women's multiple water needs are taken into account?

Recommended literature: African Water Laws Workshop, Plenary Statement of Participants

SESSION 3: GENDER, WATER AND ECOSYSTEMS

Facilitators: Tabeth Chiuta (Water Programme Coordinator, IUCN ROSA)
Julie Perkins (UN-HABITAT)

Presentations:

- Reflections on Key Issues and Challenges for Improved Water Governance (Tabeth Chiuta)
- UN-HABITAT's Water for African Cities Programme: Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Initiative (Julie Perkins)

Contents: The impact on poor women and men of climate variability and water scarcity, because of over-exploitation of renewable and non-renewable water resources and the pollution and degradation of watersheds and ecosystems. How could (women's) traditional knowledge about the protection of water sources be used for integrated water resources management? What is AMCOW's role?

Recommended literature: Chiuta, Tabeth, Gender, Water and Ecosystems: Reflections on Key Issues and Challenges for Improved Water Governance (ECA/SA/S/Gender/2005/03)

SESSION 4: IMPROVED PARTICIPATION BY WATER USERS IN WATER PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS FOR INCREASED GENDER RESPONSIVENESS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Facilitators: Mildred Mkandla (External Relations Director, EarthCare Africa Policy Monitoring Institute, Kenya)
Yvette Ramos (consultant, representing WMO)

Presentations:

- Gender networking for improved participation in water programmes and projects (Yvette Ramos)
- Case study from a pilot project on rainwater harvesting in Kenya (Mildred Mkandla)
- Experiences in participating in the rainwater harvesting project (Agnes Kimer, Secretary, Namelok Kipuo Dokoya, Kajiado, Rift Valley, Kenya)
- Benefits of participating in the project and its impact on the community especially women and girl children (Alice Ngiroiya, Water management team committee member, Namelok Kipuo Dokoya, Kajiado, Rift Valley, Kenya)

Contents: How can AMCOW encourage women to participate as water users during planning and implementation of water activities at community level to ensure that the water needs of women and poor men are addressed? Is an enabling environment created at the local level and are financing arrangements sustainable? E.g. using women's water wisdom, building women's capacity for sustainability of the management of the water projects, incorporating indigenous knowledge and perspectives, ensuring gender-sensitive technology, women's access to credit and finances, and the use of a pro-poor approach. The session will also consider how to ensure that gender-sensitive ideas at national government level are implemented at community level.

Recommended literature: Mkandla, Mildred, Pro-poor Strategies to Meet Basic Needs: The Case of Women and Rainwater Harvesting in Kajiado District, Kenya, in: African Water Journal

SESSION 5: MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND BASIN WATER POLICIES AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN MINISTRIES

Facilitators: Barbara Schreiner (Deputy Director General Policy and Regulation, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, South Africa)
Tacko Ndiaye (Economic Affairs Officer, African Centre for Gender and Development, ECA)

Presentations: (In plenary session)

Contents: To what extent has gender been mainstreamed in the different water policies of national governments, water basin organisations and IGOs? Have water policies and laws been harmonised with other relevant policies and laws that affect gender relations (e.g. is collaboration taking place between ministries of water and housing, health, gender and agriculture)? Have regional and international water treaties that affect women and men been domesticated? Has an enabling environment for mainstreaming gender in water resources management at national, regional and basin level, been created and are the financing arrangements sustainable? Are gender-disaggregated water data collected at national and local level and are they applicable to and used for policy-making? The need for institutional reform, e.g. are women taking up key positions in water decision-making bodies? How to secure and retain skilled and motivated female water professionals? What is AMCOW's role?

Recommended literature: Schreiner, Barbara, Barbara van Koppen, Shalili Misser, case study example on mainstreaming gender in water resources management in Africa: South Africa (ECA/SA/S/Gender/2005/02)

Annex 3: Message from the Interagency Gender and Water Task Force**Gender and Water Resources Management in Africa Workshop**

Pretoria, 9 March 2005

Women's Access to Water: a security issue

Message from Marcia M. Brewster

Task Manager, Interagency Gender and Water Task Force

United Nations Division for Sustainable Development**Chairperson, Ministers, Ambassadors, Ladies and Gentlemen**

For women in Africa who lack access to safe drinking water and sanitation, these amenities are a matter of survival, personal dignity and human security.

Water is increasingly becoming an important strategic resource, essential for sustaining life and development. Control over water is a source of power and economic strength, and it can be a root cause of socio-political stress. Gender considerations are at the heart of providing, managing and conserving our limited water resources and safeguarding health through proper sanitation and hygiene.

As women are primarily responsible for the use and management of water resources and sanitation, they have accumulated an impressive store of environmental wisdom, being the ones to find water, to educate children in hygiene matters and to understand the impact of

poor sanitation and health. At the same time, women and girls are obliged to walk many hours every day to collect water, which may expose them to threats of violence and health hazards.

Having access to water nearer the household reduces the time women and girls spend collecting water, allowing them time for other activities, including training, childcare, growing food and income generation programmes. Yet women often have no voice and no choice about the kind of services they receive.

Improving access to water and sanitation and changing hygiene behaviours have large benefits to society as a whole (through improvements in health, education and the economy in general), which justify continued public sector support to communities and households. The success and effective use of water and sanitation facilities will depend on the involvement of both women and men in selecting the location and technology of such facilities, and taking responsibility for management, operation and maintenance.

The role for women in constructing and maintaining water and sanitation facilities should not be underestimated; it can vary from fundraising to active work on construction, preventive maintenance and repairs to paying for water with labour.

Food security is often dependent on women's subsistence production to feed families. This, in turn relates to access to water for productive use, and may be dependent on land rights. Women's accumulated knowledge is valuable for managing and protecting water sources and

watersheds. Women and indigenous groups will only have secure access when they are recognized as citizens, landholders and contributors to the development process.

It is clear that for increased security of water supply and sanitation, training and capacity building is much needed. At present most of the training available is aimed at water resources and water supply specialists, with very few programmes in developing countries aimed at expertise in social development, sanitation or hygiene education.

However, in countries such as South Africa, Lesotho and Uganda affirmative action programmes have been introduced to train women for water and sanitation related careers, including science and engineering. At the local level, women have found their voices and have now been trained to locate water sources in the village, decide on the location of facilities and to repair pumps, resulting in a considerably decrease incidence of breakages.

It is interesting to note that in these three countries, the Ministers of Water Resources are Women.

Our UN Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water has been working with some of these women ministers of water and compiling recommendations for action to secure access to water and sanitation for women and men during the **Water for Life Decade**, which will begin on 22 March. The recommendations are contained in the paper: "A

gender perspective on water resources and sanitation”, which you have received.

It is my conviction that for the first time in history the women ministers of water and environment constitute a critical mass of people who can change the nature of the debate and policies in water resources and sanitation management.

The issue of water security for women in Africa is one of the most fundamental problems facing them. This event is extremely valuable in defining the issues and developing a network of committed individuals who will work together to find solutions to these problems. We look forward to working together with all of you during the International ‘Water for Life’ Decade.

On behalf of GWP and GWA I would like to Thank UNECA (United Nations Water/Africa Economic Commission for Africa) for inviting us to participate in the Water for Africa conference.

Thank You

Annex 4: List of participants**Angola**

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