



United Nations

## International Year of Freshwater 2003



WaterYear2003

### **NEW INTER-AGENCY GENDER & WATER TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED**

*United Nations, New York, 9 September 2003* - A new inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water has been created as part of the activities of the International Year of Freshwater, 2003 to facilitate gender mainstreaming in water-related policies and planning. The first meeting of the Task Force will be held on 10 September 2003.

The role of women in water resources management and sanitation, especially in developing countries, is increasingly recognized at all levels of development activity. As the primary providers of water inputs to domestic consumption, agriculture, and other productive activities, women's participation is critical to the success of water-related projects: these are more efficient and sustainable when women are included, and women's own burdens can be greatly reduced when they are involved in project design.

As global freshwater supplies are degraded and local water resources become scarcer, women's involvement in water-related development efforts has become an urgent priority. Currently, women's involvement in planning and management of water systems is limited, because of technical factors, as well as social barriers to their full participation in the development process.

As work progresses on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set out at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, and reinforced at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002), this new task force, which was created in June of this year, will promote gender mainstreaming in the implementation of MDGs related to water and sanitation and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Moreover, the thematic clusters to be considered by the next two sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) (2004-5) include water and sanitation. As gender is a crosscutting issue for all cycles, the work of this Task Force will be highly relevant to the policy and planning activities of the CSD for the next two years.

The Water, Natural Resources, and Small Island Developing States Branch, Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has been nominated as Task Manager of the Inter-agency Task Force. The Task Force brings together the gender and water focal points from thirteen UN agencies and programmes, including: DESA, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and Sustainable Development Division; Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the International Telecommunications Union (ITU); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); UN-Habitat; the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and the regional

Economic and Social Commissions for Africa (ECA), Western Asia (ESCWA) and Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Three non-UN agencies are also participating: the Gender and Water Alliance, Women's Environment and Development Organization, and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council.

In addition to facilitating a dialogue between gender and water focal points, the Task Force will undertake several other priority activities, including: integrating a gender perspective in the formulation of strategies to meet the MDGs related to water and sanitation; promoting a gender perspective for the main themes of CSD-12 and -13; and providing inputs to the World Water Assessment Programme so that the next edition of *World Water Development Report* (2006) incorporates gender into indicators and policy recommendations.

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