

Gender in International Water Laws: A challenge

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Energy poverty is a problem that has a disproportionate effect on women because they are responsible for supplying their families with food, fuel and water, often without the benefit of basic modern infrastructure.



People lacking access to improved water in developing countries consume far less, partly because they have to carry it over long distances and water is heavy. The average distance that women in Africa and Asia walk to collect water is 6 kilometers.



The average basic requirement for water is 7.5 liters a day, although it depends on the degree of development of the country.

For example, average water use ranges from 200-300 liters per person per day in most countries in Europe to less than 10 liters in countries such as Mozambique.



In rural Sub-Saharan Africa, millions of people share their domestic water sources with animals or rely on unprotected wells that are breeding grounds for pathogens. Close to half of all people in developing countries are suffering from health problems caused by poor water and sanitation.



Unclean water and poor sanitation are the world's second biggest killer of children.


It has been calculated that 443 million school days are lost each year to water-related illness.




A survey of 5,000 schools in Senegal showed that over half had no water supply and almost half had no sanitation facilities.



Water pricing became disputed at the international level because people living in the slums of Jakarta, Manila and Nairobi pay 5 to 10 times more than consumers in London or New York, although, although, by the Principle 4 of Dublin Declaration, water was an economic, productive and MERIT good and so, it has judged to be worth more than its value according to the market.



However, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) suggests that water costs should not exceed 3 per cent of household income, although, consumption of the merit goods does not depend primarily on the ability to pay for the good or service.





Water governance is defined by the political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place, and which directly or indirectly affect the use, development and management of water resources and the delivery of water service delivery at different levels of society.



Gender Sensitive Water Governance

- Recognizing the various purposes for which these local water resources are used by different groups of men and women in the community would help to integrate gender considerations, not only in water resource management, but also in sectors such as urban water supply, agriculture, industry and energy that depend upon water resources.**



Involving both men and women in the design and implementation of interventions leads to effective new solutions to water problems:

Helps governments to avoid poor investments and expensive mistakes;

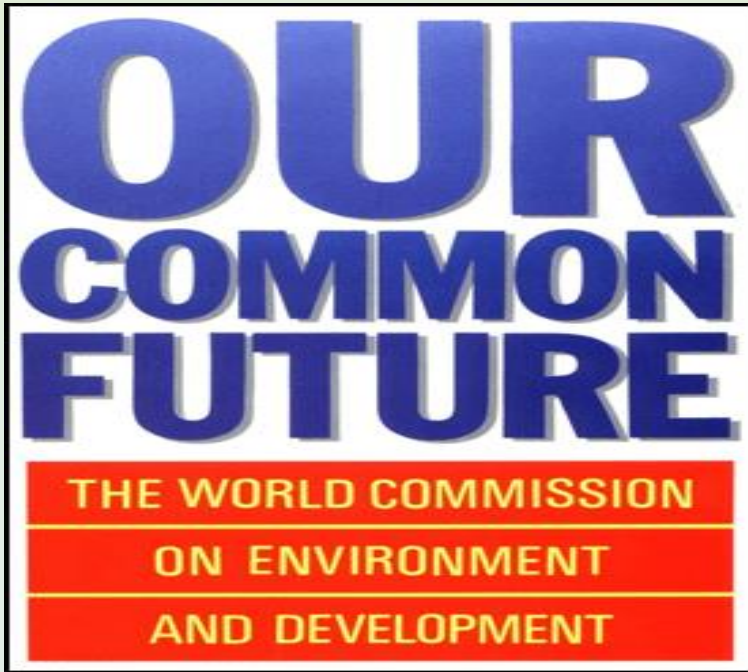
Makes projects and investments more sustainable;

Ensures sustainable development goals, such as reducing hunger, child mortality and improving gender equality.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS FOR WATER GOVERNANCE



- **After the UN Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, governments set up the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which today continues to act as a global catalyst for action to protect the environment.**
- **In the succeeding years, UNEP has integrated environmental concerns into national economic planning and decision-making.**



By 1983, when the UN set up the World Commission on Environment and Development, environmental degradation, which had been seen as a side effect of industrial wealth with only a limited impact, was understood to be a matter of survival for developing nations.

UN Conference on Environment and Development

Background: Brundtland, 1987

The 1987 Brundtland Report, "Our Common Future," helped define sustainable development.

In 1983, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar asked Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland* of Norway to create an organization independent of the UN to focus on environmental and developmental problems and solutions.



The World Commission on Environment and Development, known as the Brundtland Commission, was formed. The Commission's report highlighted how growth rates in both developing and industrialized nations would prove to be unsustainable.

"Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable—to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." — Part One of the [Brundtland Report](#)



*Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, 1986-1990

Understanding of “development” that would support socio-economic development and prevent the continued deterioration of the environment, and to lay a foundation for a global partnership between the developing and the more industrialized countries, based on mutual needs and common interests, that would ensure a healthy future for the planet.

The Dublin Principles of 1992 as Guiding Principles for Water Management:

Box 1.1: The Dublin Principles

1. Water is a finite, vulnerable and essential resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.
2. Water resources development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy makers at all levels.
3. Women play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.
4. Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good.

© Commission for the Dublin Statement to the World Water Conference in the Dublin Region: Conference on Government and Development (UNEP) in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992. The Conference participants agreed to undertake to study carefully the specific activities and means of implementation recommended in the Conference report, and to translate these recommendations into urgent action programmes for water and sustainable development.

In 1992, International Conference on Water and the Environment adopted Dublin Principle which includes fundamental new approaches to the assessment, development and management of fresh water resources, which can only be brought about through political commitment and involvement from the highest levels of government to the smallest communities.



According to Principle 1, fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustainable life, development and the environment.

By Principle 4, water was accepted as an economic, productive and MERIT good.

Principles 2 and 3 hold the key for water governance.

By Principle 2, water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.





By Principle 3, women should be considered in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

According to Principle 3, the pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources.

Acceptance and implementation of Principle 3 requires positive policies to address women's specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources programmes, including decision-making and implementation.

In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration (Resolution A/res/55/2), which set out the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). According to the Target 10; halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.



By the Johannesburg Targets adopted at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, States commit themselves to the additional target of halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015.



The Beijing Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment that was announced at the end of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. It aims to provide equal opportunities for women with men and remove all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making.




International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) works to create the conditions that enable poor rural people to integrate themselves into the mainstream of social and economic development, and to overcome poverty by improving their access to, and control over, fundamental assets such as water, land, financial capital, knowledge and technology.



Beijing+20

- ▶ **From Article 246 to Article 260 of the Beijing Declaration under the Strategic Objective K, the close relationship between Women and Environment have been underlined.**


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By Article 249, Governments have been invited to take measures in order to stop grievances of women and open the doors to women at all levels of policy formulation and decision-making in natural resource and environmental management, conservation, protection and rehabilitation.

By Article 250, the leadership role of women has been mentioned in promoting an environmental ethic, reducing resource use, and reusing and recycling resources to minimize waste and excessive consumption.

By Article 251, Governments have called for providing effective participation of women in the generation of knowledge and environmental education in decision-making and management at all levels.



Women's experiences and contributions should be accepted as an essential requirement for an ecologically sound environment and central pillar of the agenda for the 21st century.

Sustainable Development will be an elusive goal unless women's contributions to environmental management is recognized and supported.