

Module B1

Women and Men's Experience and Interpretation of their Reality

Time

2 hrs

Material

The teaching aids required for the session are:

- Whiteboard
- Whiteboard markers
- Flipchart and markers

Examples/Handouts

International Examples

Examples from Pakistan

Note: depending upon the target group of participants either use the examples to illustrate training points or explain concepts or give these as a handout.

Guideline / Procedures and Main Training Points

1. Introduction to Module B1

Procedure

- Start the session by stating the topic and objective of the module

Topic: Women and Men's Experience and Interpretation of their Reality

Objective: to understand that women and men experience and interpret their reality differently and the need to examine the underlying perceptions and assumptions

- Introduce and state the main training points of Module B1

Introduction

- attitudes and stereotypes feed gender biases in general and the gender blind approaches in water sectors.
- in general because women have much less economic, social and political power, their viewpoints are not heard or registered easily;
- understanding gender roles, relations and inequalities can help explain the choices people make and their different options
- a concerted effort is needed to explore the impact of underlying and unquestioned perceptions on water system design and management

Main Training Points

1. The different ways in which women and men experience changes in water availability, services or water policies
2. Need for a concerted effort to assess underlying perceptions and assumptions

2. Training Point 1

The different ways in which women and men experience water availability, services or water policies

Procedure

- brainstorm with the participants on training point 1 and write down the relevant responses on the whiteboard
- ask 1 or 2 participants to summarize main training points on the whiteboard as you go along

Training Points

Women and men have different interests in, and derive different benefits from, the availability, use and management of water. For example, women produce 60 percent to 80 percent of the food in developing countries, yet women's role as farmers is frequently overlooked by policy makers and irrigation managers. As a consequence, women farmers often lack access to water supplies (when, for example, land titles are required for irrigation systems in areas where women cannot own land).

Women and men differ in their responsibilities; for instance, women the world over are primarily responsible for household water collection, transport, use and management, and the priority they place on water for domestic use can put them into conflict with men, who may want water for productive purposes.

Women and men also differ in the ways in which they use water as a productive resource (for instance, to irrigate household gardens vs. cash crops); in their access to and control over water resources; in their priorities for water resources development; and in their ability to bargain, negotiate, and voice their needs, both at home and in the community at large.

In addition, women, particularly women living in poverty, disproportionately bear the brunt of inadequate services and environmental degradation, which can translate, for instance, into longer treks to sources of water (which in turn reduce the time available for work and school and can expose women and girls to harassment and assault).

For men the bottom line is that water is available for their domestic needs, without their own efforts, so they are not likely to be too concerned with issues of service or ease of availability. Women also have to manage the household economy and the rising prices of water mean cuts elsewhere. Because men are largely above and aloof from domestic water problems, these problems are not a priority for water policy or programmes.

3. Training Point 2

Need for a concerted effort to assess underlying perceptions and assumptions

Procedure

- read through the summary of training point 1 to lead on to training point 2
- brainstorm with the participants on training point 2 and write down the relevant responses on the whiteboard
- ask 1 or 2 participants to summarize main training points on the whiteboard as you go along

Training Points

Understanding gender roles, relations and inequalities can help explain different perceptions and assumptions that people have, the choices they make and the options they exercise.

In the context of water, women are seen as water managers in the domain of domestic water use or, at best, agricultural workers or farmers.

The tragedy of gender perceptions related to the water sector in Pakistan is that often women see themselves in ways that are directed by patriarchy and male dominant viewpoints, and think that domestic water supply is their responsibility.

There are romanticized renderings of women collecting water from long distances, washing clothes, watering animals. Water vessels and pitchers used by women to fetch water are part of the folklore of many parts of the world. These images have become pointers for the policy makers who have created a false division of 'male water use' and 'female water use'.

Thus in Pakistan, as in many parts of the developing world, there has been little policy or programmatic action to lessen the burdens of women carrying water for domestic use.

Another instance of the crucial role of perceptions has to do with water as an economic commodity which is being promoted in many quarters. From a gender perspective this presents a problem.

If water is treated as a purely economic good, and tied with narrowly-defined economic efficiency, then women and some poor men may not be able to access and use this resource freely. While there has been little systematic exploration of this issue in Pakistan, the prevalent perceptions are quite clear.

There is a need for re-defining water pricing, affordability and access, and making a clear separation between water for livelihoods and otherwise. However, it should also be clear that water does have 'value', including economic value, and that common perceptions do not include an awareness that irrigation water certainly, is provided below its economic value.

Very few studies have systematically explored the impact of underlying and unquestioned perceptions on water system design and management.

A concerted effort is needed, within the IWRM approaches, to ensure that water users, conservers, planners and executers are helped to re-examine some of their own underlying perceptions and assumptions and those of groups they are interacting with.

While some attempts at addressing women's practical needs in domestic water management and small scale water projects have been made, they remain largely invisible in water institutions, and are not much in the picture in terms of water policies, strategies, programmes and conservation initiatives.

As Pakistan faces a bleak future in terms of water availability, high population growth rates and the depletion and pollution of its water bodies and systems, women are not generally recognized as an especially vulnerable group in terms of impacts, nor as a legitimate group to engage in the efforts to ward off the impending water-related difficulties. They are not recognized as a party to the current debate in the country on dams, water distribution and competing demands.

Given that the water sector is considered outside the purview of women as such, there are few women in Pakistan who have become prominent in this area as visionaries, scientists, planners, managers, technicians, researchers and professionals. The possible and actual interests, professions, careers and academic excellence of women in relation to water, hardly forms part of prevalent perceptions.

This can take the form of ensuring that women are fully informed of options and costs. It can also mean more actively promoting women's access to credit for sanitation and offering women training in income generating skills such as water management and mason training for sanitation.

4. Winding up

Procedure

- Wind up the module with a summary and thanks to the participants
- If more than one session in the workshop, announce break and time to return for the next session

Examples of Module B1

Women and Men's Experience and Interpretation of their Reality

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

Assumption against Gender Realities

One experience that brings forth some aspects of people's perceptions and expectations is local community water supply project in Benin under Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) Programme to construct boreholes funded by the Belgian NGO PROTOS in Benin. The immediate objective was not only to provide safe drinking water, but also to reduce the burden of chores for women. There was an underlying perception that women would use some of the time they saved on income generating activities, increasing their economic independence.

Benin: Borehole has Unforeseen Effects for Women. 2004 showed that approximately a year after the borehole was completed it turned out that women, did indeed spend more time on their husbands' fields, while quite a few men had increased the size of their fields. Although some women had increased the size of their own plots, their number was relatively small. So in a way men gained while for women one heavy task (carrying water) was partially replaced by another (agricultural labour).

Perception studies of women in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam showed that women put a greater value on their household sanitation than men do. According to *August 2004 Bulletin: women place a higher value on household toilets*, women in all three countries consistently gave higher 'value for cost' scores to household sanitation systems than men did. There was also evidence that the extra work involved in keeping toilets clean and ready for use inevitably fall on the women in the family. Yet they gave satisfaction levels of 75-100 percent.

NATIONAL EXAMPLES

Men Interpreting and Reporting about Women's Needs

A *Social Assessment Report, IBDR, 2001, Community-District Infrastructure Services Project, Azad Kashmir*, showed that in an area where 20 percent of the households were women headed, all the community and social organizations had male members only. The community organizations and Government departments did not think it necessary to consult women, even though they were the decision-makers in 20 percent of the rural households.

- Women themselves seem to have stayed away from water related platforms, because it was 'not their business'.
- Meetings were initiated, women expressed their concerns and viewed water as a health related concern and related it further to childcare and medical facilities.
- The perceptions of local men about water were quite different from that of women.

Gender Roles and Safe Drinking Water

According to a *Formative Research to Design a Behaviour Change Strategy for Hygiene Promotion in Pakistan, USAID/Raasta, 2007*, boiling as part of purifying water emerged as the most practical option which was carried out by women and seldom delegated to another household member. Boiling water in large quantity for longer use or in case of a large family emerged as a problem in terms of the lengthy procedure which takes up a lot of time and effort, given the daily workload of women. On the other hand the major barrier for getting water from filtration plant and for getting chlorine sachets was convincing the men to do it. Again getting water from filtration plant was subject to distance, transport cost and free time for household members.

As in fetching water, gender roles in purifying water clearly showed a burden on women. Purification methods for which families had to step out (eg going to bazaar to buy chlorine in the market) was less preferred due to reluctance of men. On the other hand practicing purification method at home (filtering/sieve water through cloth or boiling/filling of water in plastic bottle) were preferred which clearly placed the responsibility on women.