

Module B6

Pressure of Political Constituencies and Citizens Groups

Target Group

Project Managers, Civil Society Activists, Community

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 B6

Procedure

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

Topic: Pressure of Political Constituencies and Citizens Groups

Objective: To understand the role of political constituencies and citizens groups in the process of gender mainstreaming in IWRM.

- Introduce and state the main training points of Module B6

Introduction

- Political pressure here does not mean pressure through political parties per se. It refers to the much bigger potential of citizens' groups lobbying for change in favor of gender equality.
- Many measures of women's empowerment (that have reduced the gender gaps in developed countries), plans of action for the advancement of women (that seek to address the disadvantages faced by women in developing countries), and increased participation of women in formal political structures have come about largely as a result of consistent and hard hitting lobbying by groups of men and women (sometimes working in tandem).

Main Training Points

1. Pressure of political constituencies and citizens groups can be an effective tool for change in favor of gender equality.

2. Training Point

2.1. Training Point 1

Pressure of political constituencies and citizens groups can be an effective tool for change in favor of gender equality

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

- In terms of gender mainstreaming and gender institutionalization in IWRM initiatives and plans, as well as the water sectors, consistent lobbying is crucial among lawmakers, bureaucrats, policy makers, the media and the public at large.
- NGOs and citizens groups, backed by groups within parliaments can build **the critical mass** for concrete commitments and implementation of gender balanced approaches in IWRM.
- The wide range of actions which citizens can take in this regard includes from street protests and campaigning through media to their engagement in local governance planning in water sector, advocacy through contacts and even in engagements in national policy and planning process.

3. 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 B6

Pressure of Political Constituencies and Citizens' Groups

INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES

Importance of Political Constituencies and Citizens' Groups

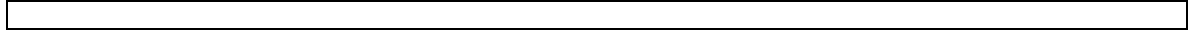
Political pressure here does not mean pressure through political parties per se. It refers to the much bigger potential of citizens' groups lobbying for change in favour of gender equality. Many measures of women's empowerment (that have reduced the gender gaps in developed countries), plans of action for the advancement of women (that seek to address the disadvantages faced by women in developing countries), and increased participation of women in formal political structures have come about largely as a result of consistent and hard hitting lobbying by groups of men and women (sometimes working in tandem).

In terms of gender mainstreaming and gender institutionalization in IWRM initiatives and plans, as well as the water sectors, consistent lobbying is crucial – among lawmakers, bureaucrats, policy makers, the media and the public at large. NGOs and citizens groups, backed by groups within parliaments can build **the critical mass** for concrete commitments and implementation of gender balanced approaches in IWRM.

There are as yet few examples of this type of action in IWRM experience for gender mainstreaming but there are many examples from the environment sector where consistent lobbying by both men and women have resulted in the reversal of poor or inequitable approaches and decisions by governments. The Chipko Movement of North East India is famous for the tenacity and commitment of local women who chained themselves to trees to stop them from being cut down, thus forcing the government to change its policies. A national coordinated campaign led by women to stop the construction of a dam on the River Narbada in Central India has prevented the government so far from initiating the infrastructure.

Informal Action towards Improved Water Supply

In more recent times in North Eastern Brazil, the Rural Women Workers' Movement mobilized women to revitalize a small local river in a water scarce area, which is the main source of water for drinking and other uses. This initiative was taken without donor or government funding. The aim was to prevent river pollution and strengthen the river course through community education and community action. The actions included teaching local men, women and children not to dump their sewage into the river and planting native species of trees along the riverbanks. This is an example of informal action through women's participation that has resulted in improved water supply for both men and women (Branco A M & Almeida V, Women, *Mobilization and the Revitalization of Water Resources: the Case of Northeastern Brazil*, paper presented at the Water in the Americas in the 21st Century Forum, Mexico City, October, 2002).



Citizens' Movement and Correct Leadership towards Improved Irrigation

According to Ecuador: *An Action Research Programme Supports Indigenous Water Rights*, Bulletin, 2004 covering the Andean region of Ecuador, where water is considered to be a public good, some indigenous people had to fight for more than 30 years before water reached their communities. With women taking the vanguard of political agitation and movement, changes began to happen. An Ecuadorian Indian woman has become a respected irrigation organiser and peasant leader. She headed the design, the construction and the organisation of the irrigation system that secured and strengthened the main canal and constructed secondary and tertiary canals.

Drinking Water Campaign led by Women towards Policy Change

In another example by Khosla P, the *Drinking Water Campaign* in the Ukraine, *Women's Network for Sustainability*, Toronto, for GWA, 2002, an environmental organization MAMA-86 headed by women, was formed in Kiev in 1990 following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster of 1986. The terrible health and environmental consequences of the disaster prompted young, educated, and concerned mothers to organize in defense of their children and families. Since 1990, MAMA-86 has expanded to numerous towns and communities in the Ukraine and has become the foremost environmental, women's and social justice organization in the country. It has developed women's leadership in policy making, implemented projects of participatory governance in water provision, successfully carried out a drinking water campaign, contributed to the development of a law on drinking water.

Following the "water revolts" in Odessa in the fall of 2001 where the poorer residents were paying up to 15% of their income on water; and due to leakages in the system the bills of some of the low-income residents reached 30-50% of their income (against astronomical water bills) led to social mobilization in the Ukraine and the Drinking Water Campaign was initiated.

The short-term goals of the Drinking Water Campaign:

- Monitor drinking water quality and survey public opinion on quality
- Raise public awareness about related water issues
- Stimulate cooperation and debates between different water sectors and the development sectors
- Exchange already existing good practices from the Ukraine and overseas
- Conduct pilot projects aimed at improving drinking water quality and rational water use
- Use international events to promote participation, consultation and partnership.

Long-term goals of the Drinking Water Campaign:

- Build public pressure for changes in water policy
- Activate public and local governments to take action
- Promote ideas of sustainable water uses
- Involve the public in the decision-making process
- Build a public platform to lobby the national and local governments

These short and long term goals of the Drinking Water Campaign of Ukraine show the maturity and foresight of the women of the movement and **demonstrate that public pressure,**

women's participation and leadership and citizens' action can lead to IWRM approaches.

Women's Involvement in Decision Making towards Improved Water Management

In **Nigeria**, the construction of a tourist resort on the Obudu plateau led to deforestation and exacerbated pre-existing pressures on water resources and the environment, such as overgrazing and unsustainable agricultural practices. The local Becheve women complained about wasted time in collecting water, poor water quality and poor family health. Consequently, the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) started a Watershed Management Project on the Obudu plateau in 1999, and encouraged women to get involved in the project's decision making process. Women leaders were elected on the management committee, which gave them a source of pride, and became involved in the construction and maintenance of a water reservoir. The reduced time spent collecting water allowed women more time for generating income through farming and marketing. A conflict between the Becheve women and the Fulani tribesmen over access to water was resolved through negotiation, and the women were ensured timely access to water. Moreover the women's healthcare burden was reduced, with a 45 per cent reduction in cases of diarrhoea in 2004.

Source: A.A. Majekodunmi, A. A., 2006. Nigeria: Using Gender Mainstreaming Processes to Help Protect Drinking Water Sources of the Obudu Plateau Communities in Northern Cross River State. In: Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Gender, water and sanitation: case studies on best practices. New York, United Nations (in press).

NATIONAL EXAMPLES

Non Existent Citizen's Groups

Political pressure here refers to the potential of citizens' groups lobbying for change in favour of gender equality. Many measures of women's empowerment (that have reduced the gender gaps in developed countries), plans of action for the advancement of women (that seek to address the disadvantages faced by women in developing countries), and increased participation of women in formal political structures have come about largely as a result of consistent and hard hitting lobbying by groups of men and women (sometimes working in tandem). However, in relation to the water sector in Pakistan, there is a great divide in the upper and lower Indus Basin in terms of the political pressures being exerted and these do not always represent the mass of citizens.

The debate is mostly about the Kalabagh dam, instead of the whole host of water problems, with the result that issues of women and water get sidelined. However, some active citizen groups in lower Indus Basin have attempted to bring some gender and water issues to public notice, by default rather than focus. At the moment the political pressure of citizens' groups on engendering the water sector simply does not exist.

Lack of Citizen Action on Women and Water

Citizen Action	Status
Public hearings	No known case on women and water
Engagement in national policy and planning process such as PRSPs, sectoral planning	To a small extent
Open advocacy: intermediate groups supporting rights claims	For women's empowerment, but not for women and water
Interactions with water officials	To a small extent, more at grassroots level
Informal advocacy through contacts, e.g. interactions with sympathetic officials	To an extent
Engagement in local governance planning in water sector, e.g. on public services priorities	To an extent, usually at local level
Negotiation over entitlement to water resources	For water as a whole sometimes, but not on women and water issues
Meetings between water users	Very rare
Use of media and campaigning	Under utilized
Street protests	Street protests by women quite common in cities during water shortages