

# Gender Research in Water, Land and Ecosystems



## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The status of gender within WLE is emergent, co-evolving with the WLE portfolio. WLE is advocating for a paradigm shift whereby ecosystem-based approaches with a strong human dimension are the foundation for attaining the UN Millennium Development Goals. This requires a strong focus on rights, access and equity.



## AREAS OF INNOVATION

### Gender Mapping

**Incorporating gender landscapes into physically-based models via community-based three-dimensional, watershed mapping.**

Men and women interact with water resources and landscapes differently, yet these differences are often not integrated in a functional way within physical and hydrological models. This often presents an incomplete picture of women's needs.

Linking biophysical and community methodologies will allow for an incorporation of gendered perceptions, identification and use of natural resources into biophysical assessments of water resource management. This is being done in Jeddah watershed within the Upper Blue Nile

### Gender In National Policy

In Ghana, most of the national agricultural, natural resources and poverty reduction policies include attention to gender mainstreaming and increasing participation of women, youth and marginalized members of communities. However, many of these policies have been developed by educated, urban elite and influenced by donor agendas.

While quite progressive in nature, the way in which gender and inequality is addressed can often be little more than box ticking and is embedded with pre-conceived ideas of which gender issues need to be addressed. Looking at how gender is not only integrated in policy but also how it is acted upon by implementers along a chain of institutions (government and non-government) from national to community level thus becomes very important for sustained change.

## THEORY OF CHANGE



## SUCCESS

WLE builds upon some of the seminal work that has been done by partners to better understand the impacts of rapid development on women's livelihoods and empower them to be part of decision-making processes.

### EQUITY

In Colombia, WLE partners are working through "conversatorio de acción ciudadana" (citizen call to action), that enables traditionally excluded groups to participate in the analysis of issues affecting them and also take part in decision-making.

"Citizenship actions have helped us to achieve goals that I never imagined. With the support of the Mayor's Office we now have 67 water filters for rural areas" - Ms. Blanca Nieve Martínez, 53 years old of Osera Community at Rovira municipality.



### REVITALIZING AGRICULTURE

WLE partners have reached over 100,000 women with nitrogen fixation technologies that can improve soil fertility and yields through the N2Africa Project.

## IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

### Defining the parameters and the entry points:

As WLE's mandate is extensive, setting clear parameters for the portfolio of work in order to obtain maximum impact on natural resources and on increasing equity is challenging, and requires a flexible and reactive structure. It requires clear and respectful working relationships with other scientists and various stakeholders, which takes time and resources to build.

WLE is investing significantly in finding entry points for constructive interactions, such as the emerging issue of feminization of agriculture in South Asia and its implication for irrigation.

### New areas of research:

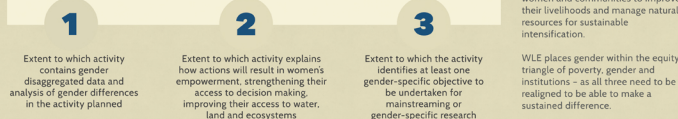
WLE's work on gender within the context of ecosystems is a relatively new area. It build upon work conducted by different groups including eco-feminist theories, but links closer to ongoing debates on agriculture. Within WLE's Gender Portfolio, research is conducted to understand the differentiated demands men and women place on water, land and ecosystems and how they verbalize these demands.

Another central area of WLE's gender work is the link between land and water - often they are seen independently, however access to one can be dependent on the other. WLE will explore what the implications are for gendered tenure rights to water and land.



## VISION

**OUR VISION:**  
Vibrant communities where women can actively engage in decision making over the use of water, land and ecosystems to support livelihoods for future generations



Decisions on agriculture and natural resources management should include an understanding of the impacts on men and women.

Likewise, we believe that improving gender equity in access to resources and in decision making will empower women and communities to improve their livelihoods and manage natural resources for sustainable intensification.

WLE places gender within the equity triangle of poverty, gender and institutions - as all three need to be realigned to be able to make a sustained difference.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND CAPACITIES

Partnerships within the WLE gender portfolio are mainly guided by the questions and issues worked on in each of the basins. Local partners are identified as the work in each basin develops.

**PARTNERSHIPS TO HIGHLIGHT:**

- In the Mekong region, CPWF and Oxfam work on gender and hydropower
- In the Nile basin, WLE is engaging with the Global Water Initiative implemented by CARE

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