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International Water Management Institute

Integrating Gender Equality and Social Inclusion for Integrated Water Resources Management

A Cheat Sheet for Practitioners

Background

Integrated water resources management (IWRM) approach

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is a process that advocates for the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources. The main goal is to maximise economic and social welfare while safeguarding the sustainability of vital ecosystems. IWRM focuses on integrating various water uses (i.e., water for food, water for people and water for the environment) in relation to each other instead of separately. IWRM has the potential to reduce current disparities, increase programme sustainability, improve water productivity and contribute to achieving various sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Key principles of IWRM

- ✓ ***Equitable access:*** Ensures that water resources are allocated fairly among all users, including marginalised groups.
- ✓ ***Economic efficiency:*** Prioritises efficient use of water to attain the highest welfare levels possible.
- ✓ ***Ecological sustainability:*** Considers the necessity of maintaining the health of aquatic ecosystems for long-term water availability (Cap-Net 2021).

Evidence from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Bank and the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) on various water projects across Asia and Africa shows that when men and women are both engaged in shaping water policies and institutions, communities use water services more frequently and sustain them for longer periods of time (UNDP and GWA 2006). Research also shows that women share water more equitably than men, especially in times of scarcity (Lecoutere et al. 2015). Further, projects that are designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that do not (Van Wijk-Sijbesma 1998).

Water governance and resource management can never be 'gender neutral' because social identities, norms, and opportunities surrounding access to and control over water resources remain deeply gendered. Thus, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) transformation is crucial for successful water governance and resource management to take place.

What is Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)?

Gender equality: Gender equality is a concept that all individuals, regardless of their gender, should have equal rights, opportunities and treatment in all aspects of life, including in social, economic and political domains.

Social inclusion: Social inclusion is the process of improving the ability, access, dignity and opportunity for people who are disadvantaged based on their social identities, to take part in society. These identities can be based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, citizenship status, education level and more (THET n.d.).

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Why do we need GESI in IWRM?

Women as end users	• Women around the world spend a collective 200 million hours (8.3 million days or over 22,831 years!) collecting water, leaving less time for work, school and other recreational activities (Water.org n.d.). • When water is not piped to the home, the burden of fetching it falls disproportionately on women and children, especially girls. • Access to safe water is crucial for women's health and their children's health. • More than 300,000 children under 5 years of age die annually from diarrheal diseases due to poor sanitation, poor hygiene or unsafe drinking water – over 800 per day (UNICEF 2016).
IWRM principle	• Women are water users in all sectors – agriculture, livestock, industry and domestic – yet they are often excluded from water governance and decision-making in these domains. One of the key principles of IWRM is the recognition of women as central to the provision, management and safeguarding of water (as stated in the Dublin Principles [UN Documents n.d.]).
Empowerment	• Women have little to no decision-making power in the water sector. • Women's roles in Water User Associations (WUAs) are tokenistic and are nothing more than being silent observers. • Political empowerment is required for gender mainstreaming. • SDG 5 promotes gender equality and women's empowerment as a means for sustainable and prosperous nations.
Transformative social behaviours	• GESI in IWRM challenges traditional gender norms that restrict women's roles in water management and helps create space for women's meaningful participation in water governance. • Gender transformative approaches and social behaviour change is required at all levels to reimagine women as competent managers of water and recognise women's expertise and knowledge in water-related matters.
Resilience to Climate Change	• Vulnerability, to the impacts of climate change, vary among different social groups. GESI in IWRM allows for tailored and adaptive responses that address the specific challenges faced by marginalised and vulnerable populations.

Cheat sheet as a guiding tool

This cheat sheet for gender integration in IWRM is a quick reference guide that provides tips and guidelines for integrating GESI considerations into water policies, programmes and projects. This cheat sheet has been developed as a quick tool for practitioners to design and implement gender-inclusive water and agriculture-related initiatives.

Remember: Think of gender as a 'spice' that should be fully integrated throughout a programme rather than as a 'topping' that can be removed (Pyburn and van Eerdewijk 2021).

Gender-inclusive water planning

	Key actions	Example
1	**Undertake a gender analysis through qualitative and quantitative methods**	☐ Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) – separate sessions with women and men (these discussions can be facilitated by a trained gender expert to ensure that the discussions are gender-sensitive). ☐ Interviews of key informants such as local leaders, government officials and representatives of civil society organisations, to get an insight of broader gender dynamics in the community. ☐ Surveys to collect gender-sensitive and disaggregated data on economic activities, income, education, decision-making power, access to water sources, water collection time and access to sanitation (adapt indicators for your specific context), to ensure that policies and projects address the needs of different groups. ☐ Analyse varying impacts of water projects on all gender groups.
2	**Gender-responsive policies**	☐ Review existing water policies and regulations to assess their gender responsiveness. ☐ Identify any GESI gaps and how the project/programme may overcome these gaps. ☐ Work with relevant stakeholders and policymakers to update gender-unaware policies and regulations to consider GESI.

3	**Stakeholder analysis and community engagement**	☐ Engage with local women and other vulnerable groups to understand their water-related needs and priorities as well as assess different roles and responsibilities of genders in relation to water access, management and use. ☐ This can be done through community meetings, surveys or FGDs. ☐ Ensure equal participation of women and men in the planning, implementation and evaluation of water projects. This can be done by establishing gender-balanced committees, providing training and capacity-building for women and involving them in decision-making processes. ☐ Address gender-specific constraints such as the burden of water collection on women and girls, inadequate sanitation facilities, and lack of access to credit and financial resources. ☐ Collaborate with local organisations and women's groups to promote gender equality in water management and ensure community buy-in.
4	**Allow sufficient budgets for gender-sensitive planning, capacity building institution building and programme management**	☐ Quarterly budget allocation for community consultations, data collection, capacity building, institutional strengthening, etc. ☐ Allocate budget for programme management, which can include gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation to track progress and ensure that the programme is meeting its objectives. ☐ This budget can also cover the costs of communication and outreach activities to ensure that women and children in the region are aware of the services available to them.
5	**Build capacity of project management and field staff for gender planning, implementation and monitoring**	☐ Provide gender-sensitive training to project management and field staff to increase their understanding of gender issues as well as their ability to identify and address gender-based challenges. The training should cover topics such as gender analysis, gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation. ☐ Designate gender focal points within the project team to ensure that gender issues are considered in all project activities. ☐ Hire and train women in key project roles, such as community mobilisers, gender advisors, extension workers, trainers and in project design and implementation.
6	**Monitoring and evaluation**	☐ Establish a baseline of gender-related data at the beginning of the project so that progress may be tracked during and after the project ends. This data could include information on women's participation, access to water resources, decision-making roles and more. ☐ Develop gender-responsive indicators (Miletto et al. 2019) as part of your project design, such as number of gender sensitive policies or regulations established, number of men/women in WUAs, number of women with access to safe sanitation and more. ☐ Involve women, marginalised groups and other stakeholders in the evaluation process. Include their perspectives to understand the project's impact on their lives.

GESI in IWRM Checklist

Use the following checklist to quickly assess how well your programme, policy, etc. have integrated GESI considerations. This checklist is only meant to act as a guide.

			Yes	No
1	**Gender analysis**	Have you collected gender-disaggregated data on water access, use and management? Have you considered the different impacts of the project on different gender and social groups?	☐	☐
2	**Gender-responsive policies**	Are water policies/regulations gender-responsive? Have you identified ways to address GESI gaps?	☐	☐
3	**Stakeholder analysis and community engagement**	Have you identified and analysed the different social groups and their roles in water management within the community? Have you considered the specific needs and concerns of marginalised and vulnerable groups in water-related decision-making? Have you partnered with local organisations or women's groups?	☐	☐
4	**Gender-responsive budgeting**	Have you allocated resources specifically for gender and social inclusion activities within the project? Have you considered the different financial needs and constraints of men and women in water management?	☐	☐
5	**Capacity building**	Have the staff been trained in gender-sensitive approaches in water management? Is there a gender-focal point in the project team? Have women been hired and trained in key project roles?	☐	☐
6	**Monitoring and avaluation**	Have you established gender-responsive indicators to monitor the impact of projects on different genders and social groups? Have you evaluated the effectiveness of GESI strategies on project goals? Are you involving all stakeholders in the evaluation process?	☐	☐

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Source

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Project

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