

# Policy Brief

May 2019

## Gender Mainstreaming



### Key Messages

Perspectives at the societal level on gender and the importance of gender mainstreaming need to be challenged through sensitization and awareness generation activities. The gathering of gender-disaggregated data is a priority when implementing any development policy or project. Women should be included in decision-making when planning the use of natural resources, at both national and local levels. This greatly increases the knowledge base and provides additional understanding of possible negative consequences. Incorporating gender into federal policy and budgetary allocations for the sustainability and longevity of gender mainstreaming. An enabling policy environment also creates space for other cross-cutting issues to be addressed. Ministries and different governmental units need to increase their understanding and collaboration on gender-related issues and should create linkages with non-governmental organizations to coordinate efforts and improve the impact of planned programmes. Gender equity can be assured by including women in local governance and community level associations for water, agriculture and energy. Research and development programmes must be cognisant of social and gender constructs, as well as power relations that affect water usage. Addressing root causes can offset the economic burden of healthcare, freeing up resources for other developmental challenges.

### Opportunities

Below are some of the existing opportunities for gender mainstreaming in the riparian countries that already exist:

- The National Development Plans of both Iraq and Turkey make provisions for closing gender gaps and achieving gender equity.
- In Syria, the proportion of women in formal institutions at various levels of decision-making for use of natural resources is 62%, and in Iraq, over 30%.
- In Syria, local and regional healthcare clinics and centres provide families with information on water-borne diseases and women are active participants in local-level water user associations.

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING

### INTRODUCTION

The Collaborative Programme Euphrates and Tigris (CPET) is an initiative that provides a platform for riparian countries to foster cooperation in water management through increased access to information and knowledge transfer. To achieve this, CPET has created Taskforces for six main programme areas - Hydrology and Climate Change; Hydropower; Water Quality; Agricultural Water Productivity; Marshlands; and Socioeconomics. Mindful that its policy and programmatic recommendations must be gender-sensitive and encompassing of vulnerable groups, the programme has also committed to addressing the cross-cutting issues of transparency, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, gender equity, democratic principles, human rights and participation.

Gender mainstreaming aims to strengthen gender equity by addressing known gender disparities and gaps in areas such as the division of labour and access to, and control over, resources. Ultimately any water management initiative will have a broad impact on all members of the society in which it operates. By addressing gender and other crosscutting areas within its programming, CPET is ensuring that its interventions are as equitable and inclusive as possible.

#### Global Discussions Around Gender Mainstreaming in Water Management

1977 United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata

1981-1990 International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade

1992 International Conference on Water and the Environment at Dublin

1992 Agenda 21, United Nations

2015 Sustainable Development Goals

### STUDY FINDINGS

To realize its gender and other crosscutting goals, CPET draws from the OECD framework (OECD 2014) on mainstreaming crosscutting issues; focusing on policy and political dialogue through engaging key national actors, using formal and informal opportunities and identifying relevant entry points. To date, the programme has undertaken

several measures to build the capacity of its partners on the importance of gender and crosscutting issues and the collection and analysis of relevant data.

The examination of country-specific information gathered by CPET Taskforces has found that while the challenges related to water management affect everyone, there is a disparity in the understanding of how and to what extent these challenges affect different groups. This corroborates the view that there is a pressing need to mainstream gender and crosscutting issues in water management. The findings show that while gender norms, and the availability of, and willingness to share data differ somewhat from one country to another, poor water quality and disparities in access to water disproportionately affect women and girls across the whole region. These challenges are compounded by poverty, low levels of education, rural living and environmental risks. In addition to gender, the data also sheds light on human rights issues. Information presented by the Taskforces shows that inequalities, not only between males and females, but also among other segments of society - the poor and underprivileged for example - exacerbate the challenges in meeting the basic human right of access to potable water.

#### CPET's main findings related to gender and crosscutting issues were as follows

**Hydrology and Climate Change:** Climate change has a highly gender-differentiated impact. The impact on the availability of water primarily affects vulnerable groups, including women, girls, boys and the poorer segment of the population. The effects will be felt in many areas, including agriculture and food security; biodiversity and ecosystems; water resources; human health; human settlements and migration patterns; and energy, transport and industry.

**Hydropower:** Fuel collection and cooking with biomass fuels, roles primarily carried out by women or girls, carry with them significant, sometimes life-threatening, health risks. Women in traditional settings are usually found to have a far smaller share in the planning of energy resources compared to the large, informal role they play in biomass-dependent economic systems. This leads to gender-insensitive energy project execution with inequity further entrenched.

**Water Management:** Women carry much of the responsibility for daily household chores and notably for the management of water at the household level. In rural areas this usually includes the fetching of water, an activity that can be difficult and strenuous, with serious consequences for health. Even when education is accessible, girls often drop out of school to collect water and work in fields.

**Water Quality:** The use of untreated water or of water that has been poorly treated enhances the spread of water-borne diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, infectious hepatitis, bacillary and amoebic dysenteries and many varieties of gastrointestinal diseases. Flaccid paralysis, diarrhoea, and typhoid are particularly prevalent in CPET-participating countries. While water-borne diseases are a threat to men and women alike, women are more vulnerable as a result of their domestic responsibilities and economic activities. Women experience a disproportionate burden of health incidences as they are impacted not only by their own health, but by that of care for other affected family members. Women bear a higher emotional and socioeconomic toll during epidemics. Poor health, and the need to provide care to others, reduces the time available to invest in productive activities, with a detrimental impact on income, particularly in cases where the woman is the head of the household.

**Agricultural Water Productivity:** Though women play a major role in agricultural production to support their families, their role in decision-making regarding purchasing inputs, planting crops or planning the budget is relatively small. Women have less access to information, technology, inputs and credit than men.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

---

The work of the CPET Task Forces has demonstrated that women carry much of the burden resulting from poor water quantity and quality. Women carry a very significant share of the responsibility and risk for the use of the resource, yet often have little say in planning and decision-making, which could be much improved if this knowledge was incorporated.

Improvements in water management and quality have a significant impact on women through direct and indirect consequential effects. Reducing the burden on women and girls improves their health and allows

more time for education, work and leisure. Understanding the way that water access and usage affects women, men, boys and girls differently allows decision-makers to design interventions that fully meet the priorities and needs of their target populations, ensuring that all segments of society are equally able to benefit and to progress. Without accounting for gender differences, policies and projects will inevitably be far more limited in their potential impact.

The key recommendations are that the basin countries recognise and make provision for gender equity at all levels of policy, planning, decision-making, project implementation, and in ensuring the benefits of project outcomes. Gender needs to be recognised in all aspects of life and work as being vital to equity and successful development. CPET has raised these concerns across the Euphrates-Tigris Basin and this has had significant impact in shaping the thinking of the Country Partners towards a transition to full gender-equity.