Ensuring Gender Equity

A Policy Statement
Mission statement

As part of its mandate, UNU-INWEH strives to achieve equitable development of women and men by focusing on productivity, equality of opportunity, sustainability and empowerment in all aspects of its functioning. To this effect, UNU-INWEH promotes:

- women’s equal participation with men as decision-makers in shaping sustainable development of their societies, and strives to reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over resources and benefits of development;
- equitable and fair consideration of the aspirations of women and men in its strategic planning;
- equal opportunities in UNU-INWEH’s work place in terms of recruitment, promotion, training opportunities, work environment, safe travel arrangements, and gender issues such as child care and parental leave; and
- equitable influence of women and men in the decision-making processes at the institutional level.

The Significance of Gender Equity

Attention to gender equity is essential to sound development practice and lies at the heart of economic and social progress. Development impacts in general, and those related to water, sanitation and health in particular, cannot be maximized and sustained without explicit attention to the different needs and interests of women and men.

As part of UNU-INWEH’s mission to contribute to efforts to resolve pressing global water problems, it is essential to examine the significant role gender plays in water projects. It is proven, for example, that women are typically the managers of water in most societies and are responsible for provision of water to fulfill fundamental human needs. In many places women are typically responsible for preparing food, washing, cleaning, and maintaining family hygiene. Additionally, in poor households and in rural areas, water is needed to raise livestock and grow vegetables, particularly during the dry season. While men typically look after the larger livestock, women are still responsible for milk cattle and young animals. As
women are therefore the largest users of water, they must be involved in making decisions about water projects. This, in turn, can lead to empowerment of women, economic benefits and benefits to children (which include allowing them to attend school rather than collecting water).

In a broader sense, poverty reduction and achieving gender equity are distinct but interrelated issues. Poverty reduction involves a cross-cutting approach to empower, reduce ill health, and provide access to services, education and income to avoid or limit deprivation. Gender inequities intensify poverty, perpetuating it from one generation to the next and weakening women’s and girls’ ability to overcome it. Inequalities prevent women and girls from seeking opportunities that will make them less vulnerable to poverty, particularly in situations of crisis. In order for poverty reduction to be achieved, the constraints that women and girls face in many places must be eliminated; these, inter alia, include: lack of mobility; low self-esteem; exclusion from decision-making; lack of access to: resources, basic social services, training opportunities, information, and technology.

**Operationalizing Gender Equity**

UNU-INWEH believes that the promotion of water security for both women and men plays an integral part in the efficient implementation of water resource management initiatives and services. UNU-INWEH therefore takes special measures in its operations to tackle gender inequities, as follows:

1. Identification of entry points and opportunities within UNU-INWEH’s work for introducing and implementing gender mainstreaming. These opportunities encompass all phases of activity, from planning programmes and projects to policy development and decision-making. These entry points should be well-understood and accepted within the organization in order for them to be fully used by UNU-INWEH staff and management.
2. Reduction in gender inequalities in access to and control over the resources and in flow of benefits of development, specifically related to UNU-INWEH’s mandate to resolve pressing global water problems.

3. Identification of links between gender equity and policies to overcome the global water challenges, with particular attention on linkages between gender roles and responsibilities within the area of water usage/availability/technology introduced. Outlining gender-related linkages will strengthen the understanding of the importance of promoting gender equity.

4. Strategic promotion and advocacy of gender balance in research and capacity development activities.

5. Provision of equal opportunities to both women and men at all levels of employment at UNU-INWEH.

6. Support towards both women and men in the work place in fulfillment of their personal and family obligations.

7. Willingness to continue to develop sensitivity to gender-related issues and develop institutional capacity and knowledge to enable gender mainstreaming.

**Gender equity** is a set of actions, attitudes, and assumptions that provide opportunities and create expectations about individuals. There is a marked distinction between equity and equality. "Equality" emphasizes treating people the same while "equity" recognizes differences (between women and men) and accommodates them in order to prevent the continuation of inequitable status quo. Equity emphasizes fairness in process and outcome, and does not presume a hypothetical ideal and undifferentiated individual.

**Gender mainstreaming** requires that attention is given to gender perspectives as an integral part of all activities across all programmes. This involves making gender perspectives – what women and men do and the resources and decision-making processes they have access to – more central to all policy development, research, advocacy, development, implementation and monitoring of norms and standards, and planning, implementation and monitoring of projects. Gender mainstreaming does not entail developing separate women’s projects within work programmes, or even women’s components within existing activities in the work programmes.
UNU-INWEH recognizes that gender issues vary both between cultures and over time and will address issues of gender equity with sensitivity in different cultural contexts. To ensure gender equity in its operations, UNU-INWEH plans to implement the following actions:

**Action Plan for UNU-INWEH**

At the strategic planning level:
- Support and promote the development and implementation of gender sensitive water policies framework at international as well as national levels.
- Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress established within UNU-INWEH, such as:
  - Strategic planning and project design processes;
  - Development of key institutional indicators, in line with the institutional results-based management (RBM) approach, and regular monitoring of them.
- Initial identification of issues and problems across the four sub-programmes in order to diagnose gender differences and disparities.
- Clear commitment from the senior management through competent leadership and allocation of necessary resources in order to allow for the translation of gender mainstreaming into practice.

At the project level:
- Incorporate gender analysis at the project planning stage (please see the box below for an example); this information can act as a baseline data against which to measure gender equity results achieved over a period of time.
- Provide assistance to project partners to help generate understanding on gender sensitivity, and build their capacities to incorporate gender perspectives into joint activities by:
  - Encouraging water projects which actively promote gender equity;
  - Supporting projects and programmes that empower women and discouraging funding for new activities that are unfavourable to gender balance;
  - Facilitating new and existing partner organizations to analyze gender relations within their organizations and within their network of communities.
At the personnel policy level:
  o Effectively promulgate gender-related aspects included in the UNU Personnel Policy.
  o Provide equal professional opportunities to both women and men at all levels of UNU-INWEH.
  o Provide equal opportunities in the hiring processes.
  o Offer support for both women and men staff members and colleagues in the fulfillment of their personal and family obligations.

Ensuring Gender Sensitivity in Water & Sanitation Projects

The following is an example of a gender-sensitive check-list for projects, for a safe drinking water and sanitation project. Similar questions can be formulated for projects in other sub-programmes:

1. Have the different needs, interests and priorities of women, men, girls, and boys been taken into account in designing the program? Including the young and old, rich and poor?
2. Was a gender perspective used to gather information? Do the data specify gender? For example, an informal setting with a female interviewer may be more conducive to open dialogue with women.
3. Were the gender issues related to water and sanitation provision and use investigated?
   o What are the gender gaps?
   o What are their immediate and underlying causes?
   o What are the barriers to reducing the gender gaps?
   o How might the barriers be overcome?
4. Do the UNU-INWEH program objectives work towards improving gender balance? How will they likely impact community engagement and behaviours?
5. Have the physical and cultural aspects of gender in sanitation services and hygiene promotion projects been included?
   o Do the sanitation services provide privacy and convenience for women and girls?
   o Is the whole family trained in hygiene promotion?
6. Is there gender balance in decision-making? Are women involved in the decision-making process to plan and manage services, in terms of their quality and location?