

Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water (GWTF) Report of activities, 2005-2006

**Task Manager: Sustainable Development Division,
United Nations Dept of Economic and Social Affairs**

The Interagency Gender and Water Task Force (GWTF), established by the Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) in 2003, has been requested by UN-Water to take responsibility for the gender component of the 'Water-for-Life' Decade, 2005-2015. The Task Force activities bring the gender focus into Decade programmes and the gender and water perspective to the forefront of the global agenda. Emphasis is on mainstreaming gender into national and international programmes for the Decade, and linking the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for gender equality with the water and sanitation goals.

Activities and Outputs:

1. The Task Manager Marcia Brewster convened an informal meeting of members of the Task Force with women ministers of water and of the environment on 23 August 2005, during the World Water Week in Stockholm. The meeting confirmed the support and commitment of the women ministers to the efforts to mainstream gender in water management, as part of the International 'Water for Life' Decade. Ministers from Lesotho, Kenya, Uganda, Sweden and South Africa joined GWTF members from UN agencies, the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) and other partners to discuss proposals concerning the establishment of a network of women ministers and a joint effort to promote gender concerns at the Fourth Water Forum (WWF4) to be held in Mexico in March 2006.
2. The GWTF has provided inputs, materials and planning in preparation for WWF4. As part of the Women's Coalition that was created for the WWF4, the GWTF has been working closely with the GWA, the World Conservation Union (IUCN), Women for Water Partnership and the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) to ensure the inclusion of a gender perspective into each theme of the WWF4. The GWTF is co-convenor with the Beacon Team for the session on gender, water and sanitation (FT3.12) on 19 March 2006.
3. The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC), with partners GWA and UNICEF, is publishing a new evidence report entitled: "For Her: It's the Big Issue - putting women at the centre of water supply, sanitation and hygiene". Supported by the Government of Norway, the WSSCC report coincides with the designated theme of this year's "Sanitation and Hygiene Week" (15-21 March), which was mandated by the first Global WASH Forum in Dakar, Senegal in 2004.
4. The GWTF has assisted to finalize a manuscript of 15 case studies, entitled "Gender, Water and Sanitation Case Studies and Best Practices" contributed by the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI). Case studies have been used in an updated Policy Brief on Gender, Water and Sanitation, which is being released in March 2006.
5. The case studies are also being used for the second edition of the Resource Guide on Mainstreaming Gender in Water Management, which is a collaborative effort of the GWTF, the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA), UNDP, the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC), CapNet, and the Global Water Partnership (GWP). Task Manager Marcia Brewster served as the chief editor. The Resource Guide is a compilation of newer resources – documents, papers, books, case studies, tools and toolkits - on gender mainstreaming in Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). To be launched at WWF4, the Guide can be used as a reference to assist water and gender practitioners and professionals in the water sector.
6. The background paper "A Gender Perspective on Water and Sanitation", was presented to the Commission on Sustainable Development during its 13th session (CSD-13) in April 2005, and is being published in *Wagadu*, a Journal of Transnational Women's and Gender Studies (Feb 06).

7. The recommendations in the paper are being discussed by the Women Leaders for WASH initiative of the WSSCC. In September 2005, WSSCC and UNICEF organized a WASH Roundtable on Gender and Achieving the MDGs on water and sanitation in Africa, with co-conveners: Minister Hilde F. Johnson of Norway, Minister Maria Mutagamba of Uganda and UNICEF Executive Director, Ann M. Veneman.
8. The Task Manager Marcia Brewster attended the joint meeting of the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE) and the Network on Gender Equality of the OECD-DAC from 30-31 January 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya. This meeting examined the challenges and opportunities of the new aid modalities for the achievement of gender equality goals. Ms. Brewster shared information on GWTF activities and issues of gender and water with the participants who were particularly interested in these issues.

Proposals and Plans:

1. The 2006 Human Development Report will focus on water. This is an opportunity to get involved by contributing innovative and controversial examples, case studies, names of possible authors, and background documents.
2. Working closely with the women ministers of water and/or environment will be important for advancing the gender and water perspective at the global and national levels during the 'Water for Life' Decade. The GWTF will make an effort to engage the women ministers in a policy dialogue through the "Women Leaders for WASH" initiative that will be highlighted in Mexico.
3. The GWTF can provide content on gender and water to websites, such as MDGs, UN-Water, or other portals of water, sanitation and gender, with information and "best practices", thus giving a more substantive perspective to the successes achieved as a result of encouraging gender equality in water management.
4. The integration of gender in national/regional development projects that support water and gender issues should be promoted. An outcome would be the establishment of a platform for advocating the importance of gender mainstreaming in water management schemes. To address gender equality on the societal level, members of the GWTF will assist in providing information on gender sensitive budgeting at national levels. The GWTF will also promote the collection and use of data disaggregated by sex by the Joint Monitoring Programme to contribute to gender sensitive policy formulation.

Website: http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/water/Interagency_activities.htm#taskforce_water

Contact information:

Marcia Brewster
Task Manager, Interagency Gender & Water Task Force
Sustainable Development Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations, Rm DC2-2024
New York, NY 10017
Tel. (212) 963-8590; Fax (212)963-4340
brewster@un.org