



**NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
Women-led Water Management:
Strategies towards water sustainability in rural India**

Nov 5-6, 2012

Venue: Auditorium, S.M. Sehgal Foundation, Sector 44, Gurgaon, Haryana, India

Water Management has a gender dimension that has been extensively researched in the past one decade. That women play a major role in provision of water at the household level as they are the primary collectors of water is well documented in India. However, what is observed is despite several policy recommendations, gender is hardly incorporated in official policy documents such as the Draft National Water Policy 2012.

Water, like any other sector, is also gendered. Women and men have different interests and derive different benefits from its availability, use and management. Natural processes apart, a social understanding of various dimensions of water, including crisis such as droughts, floods and pollution, a gender analysis of access, control, distribution and use is essential. In most rural communities across countries of the world, women and girls are responsible for provision of water for their households. Women manage and use water for different purposes such as cooking, bathing, cleaning, maintaining health and hygiene, raising live stock, growing food, livestock care and irrigation. While men only use water for irrigation other than personal use. Often, women's task is performed at the expense of their education, income earning opportunities, and cultural and political involvement (Grossman et al. 2003). The UN-CSD12 (Commission on Sustainable Development) has very aptly affirmed that 'water has a woman's face' (UN 2004). It is through women's hands that households, communities and entire economies are sustained.

Although women are major stakeholders of water, most of the strategies of community engagement around water management are men-centric, and women have been reduced to mere end users. Gender-differentiated needs are subsumed within the general category of "stakeholder participation" where 'consultation with communities' signifies consultation with men as head of households and/or community leaders.

Grossman, Anna, Johnson, Nadia and Sidhu, Gretchen. (eds) (2003) *Diverting the Flow: A Resource Guide to Gender, Rights and Water Privatisation*, Women's Environment and Development Organisation, New York, pp. 1–12.

United Nations (2004) 'United Nations Secretary General's Report on Failure of Water Privatisation, and Betchel's Failure to Provide Water in Iraq,' United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, Geneva.

According to the review of the report of the First National Commission on Water in India (1999) by one of its members, women have “little voice in water resource planning in this country”, yet

they are always depicted as the providers and managers of water at the household level (Iyer 2001). Studies from different parts of the country show that water management programmes are more effective if women are in decision making as they can play a more instrumental role in the same. Moreover, they seem to be less affected by village politics, which further justify the need for enhancing their role in water related decision making.

Keeping the above issues in mind, a conference is planned by IRRAD with the following objectives:

- Create a network and leverage for engaging the policy makers towards **Women-led water management**
- Highlight and document the **best practices** experimented in different parts
- Provide a platform to present different models on the theme, and identify **strategies for scaling up**
- Develop mechanisms to work with **cultural issues**
- Identify **innovative technologies** supporting women's leadership for taking the MDG goals forward

Themes for Papers

- Experience sharing
 - Success stories/best practices related to women leadership/role in decision making/participation in water management and sanitation.
 - Women's roles in Water Management and Sanitation: needs assessment, planning, decision making, implementation, monitoring and social audit
 - Innovative approaches to elevate women dignity and eliminate water related women drudgery
- Equity and inclusion
 - Gender equity and inclusion in all stages of water management and sanitation (planning, securing funds, implementing, monitoring and social audit)
 - Social, cultural, economic and political challenges for women leadership and way forward
- Capacity Building
 - Way to Strengthen women's capacity in water management and sanitation
- Policy and Governance
 - Policies, governance and institutional structures encouraging women's participation and decision making