



ISSUE SHEET

Gender – a cross-cutting issue

SIWI envisions a world where water is shared and allocated sustainably, equitably and efficiently, making it universally available to meet everyone's basic needs. As women and girls are generally the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society, the consideration of gender in programme and project work ensures greater focus on the most vulnerable.

This focus enhances equity between men and women in respect to their rights, opportunities and values attributed to their roles in society, and contribute to more efficient and sustainable development assistance. Working with women's and men's attitudinal beliefs is important to ensure the longevity of equitable rebalancing.

What is gender?

Gender is defined as the roles ascribed to men and women based on cultural and social norms and values. Gender roles are dynamic; they change over time and vary based on location and cultural context. Gender equality means that all men and women, boys and girls, and transgender people have access to the same opportunities and resources. Gender is not the same thing as sex, which is defined biologically.

How does SIWI work to promote gender equality?

Gender inequality can result in participation in programme work being unrepresentative of all water users, managers and stakeholders. Hence, project objectives and activities may be created without the full needs of the target communities in mind, leading to insufficient and unsustainable impacts.

As such, SIWI encourages the integration of gender tools in projects and looks for opportunities to contribute to overcome gender inequality in relation to the water sector. SIWI is also involved in ongoing internal capacity building in this area.

Gender mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that women and men have equal access and control over resources, development benefits and decision-making, at all stages of the development process including projects, programmes and policy.

Examples of our work

The UNDP Water Governance Facility at SIWI supported 11 development programmes for increased economic and democratic governance in the water and sanitation sector through a knowledge management initiative. Based on this work, a study was carried out on the programmes' challenges and best practices from working with gender mainstreaming in water governance projects.

SIWI is collaborating with UNESCO on the promotion of gender-disaggregated indicators and gender sensitive methodology for the World Water Assessment Programme. The institution also supported the development of a toolkit on Gender, Violence and WASH.

SIWI supports the first Gender and Water conference, hosted by the Water Research Commission in South Africa in 2014. Actively contributing to the programme, SIWI sponsored delegates and sought new opportunities and partnerships through which to develop and extend gender work within water and environmental field.

SIWI's mission is to generate and promote knowledge, solutions and tools leading to water wise decisions for sustainable development. Alongside our specialised water thematic areas, SIWI works with five cross cutting issues that underpin our work: Integrity, Poverty reduction, Human rights and democracy, Gender and Environmental sustainability.

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