

Joint Message from the Board Chair and Director General *Water and Womenomics*

IWMI's first work on water and gender, started well over ten years ago, was motivated by a desire to give men and women a fair share of the benefits of water resources development. Women's voices were not heard when water projects were designed. Women were left out when new land in irrigation systems was handed out—by men to men. And, women were not given a seat in water user associations or allowed active participation in irrigation management. IWMI's early water and gender work highlighted these issues and argued for gender balance in water resources development and management. The CGIAR's increasing focus on poverty alleviation further strengthens IWMI's motivation to look at water and gender issues, as the impacts of insufficient access to safe and affordable water are more severely felt by poor women and children.

between the sexes harms long-term growth. The single best investment in development is, in all probability, the education of girls.

What does this mean for IWMI's research agenda?

Firstly, a key research focus for IWMI is mapping water poverty and water productivity at different scales, from intra-household to household, from farm to irrigation scheme, from landscape to river basin. Not simply producing a map, but understanding the complex spatial and temporal dynamics that govern the relationship between poverty, access to productive land and water resources, and the potential to increase water productivity in a way that alleviates poverty and hunger sustainably. Mapping water poverty needs to be gender specific. Secondly, we analyse the potential of specific interventions or innovations towards alleviating poverty and hunger and this needs to be gender specific as well. Some of the innovations we analyse (or help develop) such as the concept of Multiple Use Systems—where water for domestic and productive purposes is analysed in an integrated manner—clearly focus on women as key decision makers and on men as co-providers for domestic water.



Womenomics is not only important for our research agenda, it affects IWMI as an organization as well.
Photo Credit Pierre Marchand

A powerful new perspective was coined recently in the Economist¹ as 'womenomics': the future of the world economy lies increasingly in female hands. Economic growth is driven by women. Over the last couple of decades, it concludes, women have contributed more to global GDP growth than have either new technology or the new giants, China and India. In the developing world, the under-utilisation of women stunts economic growth. Inequality



Women's contributions to household incomes is significant but often overlooked. *Photo Credit Sanjini de Silva*

¹Economist. 2006. A Guide to Womenomics. April 15th, pages 73-74.

diversity is a way of life at IWMI

Finally, we analyse the impact of scaling innovations up and out to larger scales, such as the basin or national level. At this scale we can analyse the overall contribution of water to development, to the economy, to alleviating poverty in general and the impact on different groups, such as women and girls, in particular.

What 'womenomics' tells us is that we should not only make sure that we involve women to ensure a fair distribution of benefits, but we should focus on increasing the involvement and participation of women because it increases the overall benefits available to all poor people. Involving women is not only fair, it makes economic sense. This follows not just from the Economist article but from IWMI's recent research as well. And a key impact of increasing water productivity for poor people and reducing domestic chores, may well be that it enables more girls to go to school rather than having to provide child labor to make ends meet.

IWMI looks at all ways in which improved water productivity can help poor women and men, certainly not only through irrigation, but also through improved rainfed agriculture, and not only by growing crops, but raising livestock or rearing fish as well. In this light, IWMI's strategic alliance with the WorldFish Center and increased collaboration with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) is expected to directly benefit the poor people we work for.

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All-male teams tend to ignore gender balance issues described above. Mixed teams are more creative, more productive and manage projects better, we believe. Diversity in the workplace in all shapes and forms is a key asset of IWMI. Therefore, we are pleased to have been recognized by the CGIAR Gender and Diversity Program for setting and achieving ambitious gender staffing goals. The share of female researchers at IWMI has gone from about 10 percent to well over 30 percent in the last six years. The majority of IWMI Board members, half the management team, and a third of all managers at IWMI are now female. Our aim is to reach a target of 40% female researchers by 2008.

As the Economist concluded:

"It used to be said that women must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily that is not so difficult."

Prof. Nobumasa Hatcho
Chair, IWMI Board



Prof. Frank Rijsberman
Director General



Prof. Nobumasa Hatcho,
New Board Chair
Photo Credit Pierre Marchand



Prof. Frank Rijsberman,
Director General
Photo Credit Dominique Perera