

# 5 Social Inclusion





## Social Inclusion



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### **INCLUDING WOMEN AND THE POOR IN WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**

**Providing everyone with access to water—whether male, female, wealthy or poor—is vital to achieving the SDGs on health, livelihoods and economic growth. This is especially important in rural and urban fringe areas. Once such people have water access, they need to be able to manage the benefits for both domestic and productive use.**

Countries need to implement economic and social policies at a national scale that include, protect and promote the specific needs and livelihoods of women and minority groups. Water technologies and programs will increase access to water for sustainable productive use, and change to societal structures can eliminate discrimination and increase access to water.

Governments, development agencies and the private sector may assume their interventions are gender- or class-neutral, but in fact they can widen the gender gap.

A series of strategic solutions and policies need to promote social inclusion to achieve the SDGs:

1. Train policy makers, water planners and those in water organizations to actively understand and consider women's and poor farmers' needs for water
2. Train and build the capacity of women and marginalized socioeconomic groups so that they have more active decision-making and leadership roles in water management systems, at both the household and community levels
3. Develop specific technologies and inclusive institutions and policies so women and poor farmers can participate in water use and management systems in the context of prevailing gender norms and local realities
4. Improve women's access and rights to water, through informal channels (e.g. strengthening women-owned and -operated management committees for water resources) and legal mechanisms (e.g. advocating for equal rights of women to land ownership).

## DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT GENDER-INCLUSIVE POLICIES TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY

It is well recognized that women need access to water for reliable and safe domestic use (drinking, childcare, cooking, cleaning and washing). However, it is important to move beyond the stereotype that women's water needs are limited to domestic uses, especially if water management is to contribute to achieving SDGs.

Proactively including women in water management decisions and supporting female farmers increases agricultural productivity. It also helps reduce gender-based discrimination and provides opportunities for women to gain confidence and control over their lives, which enhances their general productive potential.

Our research shows that:

- agricultural production increases when both male and female producers directly control production factors—labor, land, water, irrigation technologies, inputs, credits and markets—and reap the benefits of their efforts
- women are as efficient agricultural irrigators as men, provided women have equal access to resources and human capital
- water management projects can completely fail if women are not included
- alternative income opportunities reduce the vulnerability of women to exploitation
- women can contribute to more sustainable agriculture by integrating their knowledge and experiences on resource management and agriculture.

## TARGET THE INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR NEEDS IN WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Governments and water agencies need to know who the farm decision makers are and what they need to improve their livelihoods and wellbeing. Only then can governments ensure buy-in of the end users and of women in particular, who are ultimately the keys to success of the interventions.

Water management interventions typically target a region or a community, rather than a household or an individual in a household. If they do, there is a tendency to target men, who are often not from the poorest households. Water managers, planners and policy makers—and often technical staff, such as hydrologists and engineers—see their interventions as gender neutral or class neutral.

However, the number of households where women are the main decision makers on agriculture water issues can be considerable and is increasing, due to out-migration of men and/or the AIDS epidemic (e.g., in areas of southern African countries, the proportion of female-headed rural households and women-led farms may go up to 50–90%). As a result, women have new responsibilities for farming, including managing water for increased production. Yet gender or equity concerns are not considered an important element of planning and implementation.

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It cannot, however, be assumed that women want and should play a more important role in managing productive water use. It may increase women's work burden, so governments, communities and development agencies need to develop policies reflecting these considerations.

### Practical Solutions for Targeting and Including Individuals

- Assess the needs, constraints and values of men and women farmers from different socio-economic groups prior to designing or recommending interventions.
- Increase consultation with the men and women affected by water management, especially those most marginalized but likely to benefit.
- Recruit more female workers and social and technical experts in public irrigation agencies.
- Provide targeted training on inclusivity and gender mainstreaming for members of irrigation bureaucracies.
- Develop closer links and capacity of water managers to react to the changing dynamics and demands for water in agriculture and gender roles.







#### **CASE STUDY: Water discrimination against women**

In Peru, female farmers had to irrigate at night, in spite of a rule that night turns should be equally distributed among irrigators. However, men were often more successful in negotiating day turns because they had better relations with the irrigators' committee.

In the Chhatis Mauja irrigation scheme in Nepal, IWMI researchers found that the male-dominated irrigation committee excluded women from the formal decision-making process over water use and therefore prevented their access to water. This led to women 'stealing' water and avoiding being involved in the committee which might further reduce their ability to access water.

In the Bauraha irrigation system in Nepal, female-headed households preferred the rotation system of distributing water compared with an on-demand system during periods of relative water scarcity, as the former required much less negotiation with the water guard.

## **ADDRESS THE STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS TO WATER ACCESS**

Constraints to water access and control are often rooted in both institutional and social structures as well as political and legal issues about land water ownership and tenure arrangements such as norms, class, caste and cultural practices. Unequal land ownership or exploitative tenure arrangements are a primary reason why certain groups benefit more from public irrigation investments than others.

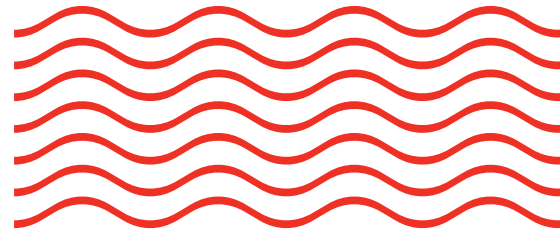
Social inclusion in water will require governments and policy makers to reform discriminatory institutional policies and practices through broader structural changes. Reforms will also need to take into account any informal rights that men and women have secured.

*Governments and policy makers need to design water schemes for multiple uses and ensure that trade-offs do not further marginalize particular social groups.*

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#### **Practical Solutions to Address Structural Constraints:**

- Challenge economic and political systems that exclude or restrict women and poor farmers from fair and affordable access to water, both as a resource and as an infrastructure service, through better understanding and data on how the systems work. At the same time, ensure that reforms do not marginalize them further.
- Create incentives for civil servants in water planning so they actively include and address gender and inclusivity issues.
- Increase awareness and understanding of institutional and legal aspects to rights to water.
- Experiment in the collective management of land and water resources, where women and poor farmers can work together to achieve economies of scale.
- Involve women at a higher level within water bureaucracies and water management committees, beyond solely being members.
- Ensure that training and resources underpin any social-inclusion measures—the decision-making and management ability of women and the poor depends on their ability to assert themselves in often unfamiliar roles and settings.



## INTEGRATE DOMESTIC AND PRODUCTIVE WATER USES

In the daily reality of poor rural communities, the same water source, whether called 'domestic' or 'productive' water, typically meets multiple needs. Both men and women need access to water for domestic use and income-generation.

Governments and policy makers need to design water schemes for multiple uses and ensure that trade-offs do not further marginalize particular social groups. For example, large-scale irrigation schemes or hydropower projects add to agricultural and energy production, but they can take water away from fisheries, which are often the domain of the poorest (often landless) socioeconomic groups and women.

Interventions can be designed to meet specific needs, or appropriate alternative livelihood options can be made available. For example, irrigation schemes that are well planned and designed for multiple uses save women and men time in collecting water for domestic use (bathing, washing and even sometimes drinking) and for livestock, fodder, fish and other income-generating activities.

**FIGURE 2. The domestic-plus water ladder**

SERVICE LEVEL	VOLUME (Litres per capita per day)	WATER NEEDS MET	DISTANCE OR TIME OF
High Level MUS	100-200	All domestic needs; combination of livestock, garden, trees and small enterprise	At homestead
Intermediate MUS	50-100	All domestic needs; livestock, garden, trees or small enterprise	< 150m or < 5min
Basic MUS	20-50	Most domestic needs; some livestock, small garden or trees	< 500m or < 15min
Basic domestic	5-20	Very few domestic needs, basic livestock	> 500m or > 15min

Source: *The multiple use services ladder* - Renwick et al., 2007; van Koppen et al., 2009.

### Practical Solutions for Integrating Water Uses

- Identify irrigation technologies that are appropriate for women and poor farmers and that are efficient and provide a high return per land unit.
- Identify technologies and associated cropping patterns suitable for smallholdings.
- Ensure information and training reach both female and male farmers, for example, by targeting different forums with the same information and training or identifying socially acceptable places and times for women to gather for meetings.
- Identify multiple uses of water while planning irrigation or other large-scale water management projects to account for different needs. This may include activities in the domain of women and/or marginal socioeconomic groups, such as fishing or aquatic plant collection.
- Encourage public agencies responsible for different water uses (e.g., drinking water, irrigation, livestock) to institutionalize multiple-use water services to enhance the benefits and sustainability of these systems, for example, by widening up the subsidies and technical support of changing single-use water systems to meet multiple needs.
- Design appropriate technologies and water access arrangements that specifically address intersections between gender and poverty and that target women, marginal farmers and traditionally excluded groups.

