



# **Intertwined: Women and Water**

*Towards a policy at the New Development Bank*

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**POLICY BRIEF**

Water is a human lifeline! Water has also been recognised as a human right and the right to water includes rights to receive safe, affordable, and clean accessible water and sanitation services<sup>1</sup>. It is a critical natural resource which underpins all social and economic activities by sustaining livelihoods, and is seen as the basis for social and economic development, including the achievement of many of the SDGs. Conversely, water insecurity presents an immense hindrance to poverty reduction and sustainable development in the coming decades.

*One third of the world's population is currently experiencing some kind of physical or economic water scarcity. A growing competition for water from different sectors, including industry, agriculture, power generation, domestic use, and the environment, is making it difficult for poor people to access this scarce resource for productive, consumptive and social uses.*<sup>3</sup> This particularly affects poor rural people, especially women. Managing disparities in access and availability of water effectively and fairly constitutes one of the great imperatives of governance and water resource management. Everyone, including the private sector, agrees in principle with people's needs and claims for adequate water. However, making this a reality for all continues to be a challenge.

The decline in water security has started to attract the attention of the global community, with cities like Cape Town running out of water. Security of water has been described as 'the availability of an acceptable quantity and quality of water for health, livelihoods, ecosystems and production, coupled with an acceptable level of water-related risks to people, environments and economies'<sup>4</sup>

In recent years, several countries have made investments in large scale water infrastructure. India, for example, has made a commitment to build, repair and maintain water infrastructures, prioritising water-scarce areas such as the desert state of Rajasthan. Moreover, globally ideas around water management have changed: While initial policies concentrated on planning and designing for the physical provision of water, the emphasis has shifted to a more integrated water resource management (IWRM) system which factors in a coordinated management process that includes land and water and also includes socio-economic gains that would accrue from projects as well as concerns of equity and sustainability.<sup>5</sup> IWRM key principles also recognise that women's role is central to

the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

Several International Financial Institutions (IFIs) including the New Development Bank (NDB) have prioritised funding large infrastructure projects and have identified water as a key component of their strategy.<sup>6</sup> The scarcity of water, like that of any other resource, poses the inevitable questions: who gets how much and at what cost? But there are deeper questions that also need to be addressed: who decides and how? This policy brief is developed from PWESCR's work in gender monitoring of the NDB-funded water resource management project in Rajasthan, India – Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project for Desert Area (RWSRPD). A gender analysis of NDB policy documents including Economic Social Framework (ESF) and of RWSRPD project documents and key observations from field visits to Rajasthan's project sites have provided valuable insights.

**Most of the world's 1.2 billion poor people, two thirds of whom are women, live in water-scarce countries and do not have access to safe and reliable supplies of water for productive and domestic uses.<sup>2</sup>**

## **Women and Water**

Within the international development arena the need to improve the management of water resources including health concerns around quality of water, the damage caused by water-related disasters, the effects of water on economic performance and concerns about protecting water-dependent environments has been receiving substantial attention. The role of women in this has also begun to be acknowledged and factored into programmes.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of involving both women and men in the management of water and sanitation has been recognized at the global level. One of the first mentions was way back in 1977 at the United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata; this was followed by the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade (1981-90). It was at the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin (January 1992) that the role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water was unequivocally recognised. Agenda 21, which emerged from the Rio Conference and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, also referred to the role of women. The International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' (2005-2015, which overlapped with the

**For women, the water crisis is personal. Women around the world spend over 200 million hours every day collecting water.<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> The human right to safe drinking water was first recognized by the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council as part of binding international law in 2010 [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/292](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/292)

<sup>2</sup> International Fund for Agricultural Development. (2012). Gender and water Securing water for improved rural livelihoods: The multiple-uses system approach p 2. Retrieved from [https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40706239/Gender+and+Water+++Security+w+ater+for+rural+livelihoods\\_the+multiple-uses+system+approach/0b3d7bac-c073-4e8f-8424-2d0473b7d226](https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/40706239/Gender+and+Water+++Security+w+ater+for+rural+livelihoods_the+multiple-uses+system+approach/0b3d7bac-c073-4e8f-8424-2d0473b7d226)

<sup>3</sup> Women And Water - A Woman's Crisis. (n.d.). Retrieved November 3, 2019, from <https://water.org/our-impact/water-crisis/womens-crisis/>

<sup>4</sup> Grey, D., & Sadoff, C. W. (2007). Sink or Swim? Water security for growth and development. *Water Policy*, 9(6), 545–571. <https://doi.org/10.2166/wp.2007.021>. 545 Accessed on 07/12/2019

<sup>5</sup> What is IWRM? (n.d.). Retrieved November 11, 2019, from <https://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-CEE/about/why/what-is-iwrm/>

<sup>6</sup> New Development Bank. (2017). NDB's General Strategy: 2017 – 2021. Retrieved January 2, 2018 from <https://www.ndb.int/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/NDB-Strategy-Final.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> SIWI, Stockholm. (2014). Mainstreaming Gender in Water Governance Programmes: From Design to Results (WGF Report No. 4.). Retrieved from [https://www.wateregovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014\\_No\\_4\\_Gender.pdf](https://www.wateregovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/2014_No_4_Gender.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Women And Water - A Woman's Crisis. (n.d.-a). Retrieved November 3, 2019, from <https://water.org/our-impact/water-crisis/womens-crisis/>

timeframe set to achieve the Millennium Development Goals or MDGs) clearly underlined the need for women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is expected to strongly influence future policies and strategies and to ensure that water pollution control comes higher on the list of international and national priorities. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs offer unique guidance both on women's empowerment (SDG5) and the importance of "water and sanitation" (SDG 6) and the connection between the two. Recent reports including the one by the High Level Panel on Water (HLPW), the UN Water synthesis report, and the UN Women and Global Water Partnership Action Piece all make this link between women's equality and water issues.<sup>9</sup> Many international and national policy statements have included the component of supporting the 'mainstreaming of gender' in the water sector.

Gender-defined roles around water are premised on the divide between the public and the "private"; activities focussed on the formal economy and those that are not. Women are seen as the 'natural' collectors of water for household use, and disposers of waste water where sanitation is inadequate. Girl children are often pulled out of school to help with carrying water. Women stand in long lines, walk long distances, or pay exorbitant amounts to secure water. Lack of easy access to clean potable water affects her and her family's health.<sup>10</sup> Water scarcity directly impacts the time spent by women to fetch water and prevents them from engaging in paid work and other productive activities. Therefore, women as water managers will always prioritise water for domestic and other uses besides irrigation.

A gender analysis of investments by IFI in water and sanitation in Haiti revealed that it did little to change gendered responsibilities around procuring water for domestic use, or around the subsequent caring for household members rendered sick from dysentery and cholera caused by poor sanitation. The link between poor sanitation and higher maternal mortality rates was also uncovered in this research.<sup>11</sup>

Water as a productive resource also supports livelihoods for women, especially for rural women. This includes farming, livestock-raising, gardening, food processing, and small enterprises. Women are generally involved in rain fed agriculture and small backyard/kitchen gardens. In many countries, women are the main producers of staple foods. They work on their family farm and also as paid workers on other's farms. Men, however, are seen managing land and water commodities – storage tanks, pumps etc.

Women's and girls' requirements from a water programme – whether for sanitation and hygiene,

domestic consumption or for sustenance and livelihood activities – are often different from men's. Women and men may also have different water use priorities. For example, men prefer to use water for cash crops and livestock whereas women prioritise water for staple crops, vegetables, and domestic use. Gender roles are also defined by local migration patterns and production cycles. Male migration to urban areas leaves women to be responsible for agriculture.

Without taking into account the diverse needs and practices of a community it may not be possible to reduce existing inequalities, enhance cost-benefit ratios, and actually deliver the intended and sustainable food security for all.<sup>12</sup>

Most water projects prior to IWRM focused on a single dimension – domestic supply or water for irrigation. Recognition of women as key water user, provider and conserver has brought a multi-use approach (for agriculture, fishing, livestock, small enterprises etc) to IWRM. Providing water for multi-use has reduced drudgery for women and provided them time to engage in other productive livelihood activities. Studies demonstrate that the single use approach to water supply does result in women's lower participation in decision-making processes. Due to their gendered role, women also may have different preferences for operating irrigation systems. For example, they tend to desist from suggesting a night time schedule of water delivery because they fear for their safety.

After years of critique of poorly performing irrigation systems, the decision to involve water users in the management of irrigation schemes was adopted and Water User Associations (WUA) were created globally. WUA certainly reduced government expenditure and gave the responsibility of maintenance and operation to water users on the ground. It did increase ownership, participation of local farmers through democratic processes and improved governance of water management with increased accountability. However, WUA only accepted landowners as its members and hence excluded women and landless people. WUA very much reflect existing local social, economic and political power structures which continue to play a role in the distribution of resources including water. For the most part WUA represents the elite, affluent and powerful men of the communities.

In most countries in the South, access to productive resources including water is intrinsically linked to access to land or land ownership. Although women work closely on the land, women globally are not landowners, and therefore do not access credit or gain membership to agricultural groups or WUA, which leaves them out of decision-making processes that decide site selection, beneficiaries, land allocation or water delivery systems.

<sup>9</sup> Are Women meaningfully involved in implementing SDG6+ in National Plans?.. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. (2018, July 12). Retrieved November 11, 2019, from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=20000&nr=4361&menu=2993>

<sup>10</sup> Watts, S. (2004). Women, Water Management, and Health1. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 10(11), 2025–2026. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1011.040237>

<sup>11</sup> Zuckerman, E. (2018). *A Guide to Women's Rights and Environmental Justice Advocacy on International Financial Institutions*. Retrieved from [https://www.bothends.org/uploaded\\_files/document/V4\\_Guide\\_IFI\\_Gender\\_drukbestand.pdf](https://www.bothends.org/uploaded_files/document/V4_Guide_IFI_Gender_drukbestand.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Grant, M (2017). *Global Water Partnership Gender Equality and Inclusion in Water Resources Management*. Retrieved from <https://www.gwp.org/globalassets/global/about-gwp/publications/gender/gender-action-piece.pdf>

Planning meetings of WUA become the start of a long inclusion and exclusion process that does result in economic and social benefits.

There are also examples where several development projects for irrigation have had a negative impact on women. Women for example may gain access to water through these projects but lose their control over the

resources. The establishment of WUA with all male membership in Rajasthan to manage the Indira Gandhi Canal distributaries and sub-distributaries has alienated women from water resource management and can make them totally dependent on men (husbands) for water. This is not empowerment.

### Women are excluded from WUA for several reasons:

- Women are not landowners and most of the social and legal rights to land rest with men.
- Women, for various reasons, do not handle irrigation which includes opening and closing of floodgates.
- It is believed that women find it daunting to handle water related conflicts as it requires a certain 'toughness' and they do not have negotiating skills.
- Women themselves opt out of organizations whose membership is predominately male.
- Women have inadequate information about the workings and advantages of being a member of WUA.
- Existing cultural and social norms also limit women's participation in public spaces. It is even harder for women from marginalized communities such as Dalits to be part of these bodies.
- Historically women have played a key role in issues of water management and they possess knowledge and skills for doing this effectively. However, their knowledge is devalued and ignored.
- Women in general are less educated and low literacy also prevents them from engaging in WUA.
- The introduction of technology has further eroded women's control over water. For example, when diesel pumps were introduced to extract water only men were trained to operate the pumps, although women were the main water users. Women, as a result, became dependent on male pump operators.
- Staff and officials of government irrigation departments often have an inadequate understanding of gender and no will to promote women's participation.

For both men and women to play an active role in WUA, these associations need to recognise multi uses of water other than for irrigation. Proactive steps, including affirmative action or quotas, are essential to ensure that there is a critical mass of women representatives in the WUAs. This has to be coupled with capacity building of women leaders who can play a key role in the functioning of WUA.

A study by the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) of community water and sanitation projects in 88 communities in 15 countries found that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that are not.<sup>13</sup> This supports an earlier World Bank study that found that women's participation was strongly associated with the effectiveness of water and sanitation projects. Women's involvement has led to improved management of the resource and greater transparency in the projects.<sup>14</sup>

Yet women make up less than 17 percent of the water, sanitation, and hygiene labour force and a fraction of the policymakers, regulators, management, and technical experts.<sup>15</sup> The observations of the PWESCR research team

on a recent field visit to Rajasthan, India to monitor an NDB funded water resource management project reflect the fact that in this project, women are not in decision making bodies or spaces.

However, the recent increase in the number of women appointed as water and environment ministers is heartening, and this may provide an impetus to greater integration of gender concerns in water programmes.<sup>16</sup> There has also been growing awareness that water programmes will be effective only if all sections of a community are included in water resources management and sectoral water use (including water, sanitation, and hygiene [WASH]) programmes. The World Bank has published a report titled, 'The Rising Tide: A New Look at Water and Gender,' which characterizes water as "an asset, a service and a space" and illustrates how water can "reflect and even reinforce" gender inequality.<sup>17</sup>

Women's rights over resources including water, and especially the rights of women from marginalized backgrounds, are denied, particularly during times of scarcity. Given the divide between the domestic and the public, women's role in household water supply finds

<sup>13</sup> Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water (GWTF). (2005). Gender, Water and Sanitation: A Policy Brief. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un\\_water\\_policy\\_brief\\_2\\_gender.pdf](https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un_water_policy_brief_2_gender.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Trivedi, A. (2019, September 13). Women Are the Secret Weapon for Better Water Management. Retrieved December 31, 2019, from <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/women-are-secret-weapon-better-water-management>

<sup>16</sup> Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water (GWTF). (2005). Gender, Water and Sanitation: A Policy Brief. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un\\_water\\_policy\\_brief\\_2\\_gender.pdf](https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/pdf/un_water_policy_brief_2_gender.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Narayan, D World Bank . (1995). Contribution of People's Participation: Evidence from 121 Rural Water Supply Projects. Retrieved from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/274861468767096877/The-contribution-of-peoples-participation-evidence-from-121-rural-water-supply-projects>

some acknowledgment but her role vis-a-vis water use in farming and irrigation and small enterprises is generally ignored. She is viewed as the provider of water while her role in conserving and managing the resource is seldom acknowledged.

## **The New Development Bank (NDB) and Water**

The NDB was established in July 2015 by the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The Bank emerged as a response to financial crises and as a result of the growing power of emerging economies. These countries were also frustrated with the pace of “voice” reform within the Bretton Woods institutions. “In this sense, the bank is a physical expression of the desire of emerging markets to play a bigger role in global governance.”<sup>18</sup> The demand in these countries for rapid expansion of infrastructure (seen as essential for economic growth) was significant, and hence the urgent need for investment in this sector. Therefore, the bank was set up to bridge the gap between the demand and supply of infrastructure and to promote sustainable development. NDB’s current portfolio has 49 projects with loans aggregating to USD 13.7 billion<sup>19</sup>

NDB has clearly spelt out its priority: “to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects.” Eighty percent of the bank’s loans have been directed towards transport, clean energy, water and sanitation. NDB has declared that the “commitment to sustainable infrastructure is a standout feature to the NDB”. In its general strategy paper, water figures as one of its five key areas of operation

*“Irrigation, water resource management and sanitation: A modernized agricultural sector is critical for a country’s development path, and requires advanced and efficient irrigation systems and sound management of a country’s scarce water resources. Supplying adequate drinking water and improved sanitation is important to health outcomes, living standards and economic growth, especially in underserved rural and peri-urban areas. With respect to irrigation, water resource and sanitation, priority areas would include: i) irrigation infrastructure, ii) clean drinking water supply and sanitation, and iii) technology to enable efficient management of water resources.*

The issue of sustenance farming that most women, especially in BRICS countries, are engaged in finds no

mention. There is also no commitment to ensure that the technology adopted does not result in a loss of livelihood, or that if local technology is adopted it would be the appropriate kind. It is essential to address the gender aspects of the water policy upfront because in conventional irrigation policy, women are almost non-existent and their concerns are seen as irrelevant since farming and irrigation are seen as linked to “production”.<sup>20</sup>

The touchstone for these projects is the Environment and Sustainability Framework. Water finds two mentions in the document. In the first, the document broadly talks about the idea of conservation of natural resources where it says “The NDB promotes the conservation of natural resources, including energy and water, and it supports sustainable land use management and urban development.” The second mention is about using water (along with energy, and other resources and material) effectively. Given that women are central to ensuring sustainable development, projects that address their needs such as water systems that cater to “multiple use” (meaning that they provide water for drinking, small plots and some livestock) may address a range of basic needs of rural women.<sup>21</sup>

NDB is one of the most opaque and gender neutral IFI that does not disclose any project-related information publicly. Neither has it demonstrated any commitment towards gender equality. Since 2017, BRICS Feminist Watch (BFW) has consistently urged NDB to set up an external gender advisory, develop a gender policy and recruit senior level gender experts to support the bank to ensure that a gender analysis of all its structures and operations are carried out in a timely and systematic manner. NDB has taken none of these measures and it continues to function in a “gender-neutral” manner such that its

projects have a negative impact on women’s lives and contribute directly or indirectly to increasing gender gaps.<sup>22</sup>

The NDB funded water resource management project in Rajasthan,

India – Rajasthan Water Sector Restructuring Project for Desert Areas (RWSRPD) – is aimed at rehabilitating the Indira Gandhi Nahar Project (IGNP) canal system built 60 years ago, to prevent seepage, conserve water and enhance water use efficiency and productivity.

IGNP already exists and it is the lifeline for the people of Rajasthan, a multi-use water system that provides water for irrigation, domestic use and industry including a thermal power plant. RWSRPD aims to address the

**NDB has 7 projects related to water**

**3 in India**

**2 in China**

**1 each in Russia and South Africa**

**These projects target sectors: water supply, sanitation, flood control and sustainable development.**

<sup>18</sup> Maasdorp, L. (2019, September 20). New Development Bank at four: BRICS countries celebrate a lean, green success story. Retrieved November 3, 2019, from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/brics-new-development-bank-four-sustainability/>

<sup>19</sup> New Development Bank. (2019, December 4). NDB Board of Directors meets in Shanghai, approves three projects with loans aggregating to USD 937 million. Retrieved December 17, 2019, from [https://www.ndb.int/press\\_release/ndb-board-directors-meets-shanghai-approves-three-projects-loans-aggregating-usd-937-million/](https://www.ndb.int/press_release/ndb-board-directors-meets-shanghai-approves-three-projects-loans-aggregating-usd-937-million/)

<sup>20</sup> Ray, I. (2007). Women, Water, and Development. Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 32(1), 421–449. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.energy.32.041806.143704>

<sup>21</sup> UN Women. (2018). Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda: Gender-Responsive Water and Sanitation Systems Retrieved from <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2018/issue-brief-gender-responsive-water-and-sanitation-systems-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3915>

<sup>22</sup> Please also refer to PWESCR and BFW’s report on key findings from NDB funding project in Madhya Pradesh on district roads. <http://pwescr.org/NDBIndiaprojectMPMajorDistrictRoadskeyfindings.pdf>

gender and other gaps in the existing project. Over the last 60 years there has been an explosion of new knowledge and experience on water resource management through community involvement and WUAs, including the recognition of the potential of community-led resource management systems as models for good governance by people. The Terms of Reference for Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and Environment and Social Management Plan (ESMP) under RWSRPD recognises this aspect:

*"The project would examine if the policies and decision making are more transparent and vulnerable groups have more voice. Opportunities to further improve*

*participation of such vulnerable groups, especially issues of gender, should be explored to ensure their upliftment and enhance their livelihood options. Of specific interest would be the proactive role women can play in planning, implementation and monitoring of various activities relating to the project such as in the WUAs."*

This is a welcome step. However, given the opaqueness of the bank it is uncertain if and how these were conducted. The website for example does not have any information on public hearings, which are at the heart of the ESIA. The fear is that local economic considerations would tend to take precedence over critical questioning during public hearing events.

### Some observations and learnings from the field visit to RWSRPD by the PWESCR team :<sup>23</sup>

- The Indira Gandhi canal, through its elaborate distribution network of canals, does provide drinking water to several villages as well as water for irrigation. The collection of water is mainly women's responsibility. The project has not focused enough on water for domestic purposes. Water in a particular canal is only provided for 15 days at a time and is then diverted to other canals and areas. The whole system is set up primarily for irrigation. For example, what are the challenges that women face without water for domestic use for 15 days? Such questions need to be asked and addressed.
- Although in documents the project is listed as a multi-use system, on the ground in the first tranche, the project is implemented by the Rajasthan state irrigation department and the focus is on providing water for irrigation. Water for domestic use is managed by the state Public Health Department. This single use focus overlooks women's water use needs and roles.
- The Government in Rajasthan has almost five years ago initiated WUA in the state to ensure ownership, maintenance and management of village level water canals by the people. Women are not members of WUA as they do not own land. Affluent men with large farm holdings lead WUA and dictate how water resources are managed locally. Women, landless farmers, and other marginalized groups don't have a say in this process.
- Landowners get more agricultural information through both formal and informal networks because usually landowners are recognized as famers and women are categorized as helpers by others and even by themselves. The project does not address such discriminatory practices.
- WUA activities are focused on construction works related to the canal system, rehabilitation or desilting, maintenance and repair. These are considered activities that women cannot handle and so it is predominantly men who participate in them. Such a mindset further perpetuates gender stereotypes.
- The state irrigation department does conduct frequent training sessions for both executive committee and regular members of WUA. Participation is largely confined to men and the number of women participants is dismally low. It is in these sessions that WUA members are elected. The training syllabus fails to include sessions on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- The project does propose to initiate a women's wing of WUA to ensure women's participation in decision making processes<sup>24</sup>. Setting up a women's wing in WUA would be a positive first step but it is yet to happen. The danger in creating a separate women's wing, though, is that women-only wings would become marginalized and limited in their scope. The major decisions would continue to remain the domain of men.
- The project team of RWSRPD is required to attend training on how to implement and monitor the economic and social framework. The training components around gender and labor have not been implemented on the ground.
- The ESIA has elaborate indicators to monitor environment – soil, water, silt etc.– but lacks any gender indicators.
- It's imperative that as and when the projects roll out, they adopt measures to ensure that the workspaces are gender sensitive. This includes establishing clear anti-sexual harassment policies and mechanisms, crèches services and other facilities. During their visit to Rajasthan, the researcher noticed that there were no crèches. Conversations with some of the women workers revealed that since many of them were migrants, their children were being cared for by other women in the family (unpaid care work) and that there was a increased risk of these children dropping out of school.

<sup>23</sup> In November 2019, PWESCR in partnership with GRAVIS visited several sites of RWSRPD in Rajasthan.

<sup>24</sup> Women and WUA document shared by Ms Meena Mathur, consultant with Irrigation Department, Rajasthan Government.

## Lessons learnt and way forward

In the absence of a clear gender policy and a gender expert, there is a glaring omission of women and women's lives and realities in NDB funded projects. They are reduced to a mere checklist exercise without clear gender indicators, and gender dimensions are added as an afterthought. In the absence of integrated gender analysis in all stages of the project including planning, design, implementation and monitoring, NDB will continue to run the risk of perpetuating gender inequalities and causing more

damage than good for women. Therefore, we reiterate BFW's three point gender approach for NDB<sup>25</sup>: 1. External gender advisory, 2. Gender policy and 3. Gender expert.

All IFIs including NDB in all their water resource management projects should have a strategy to mainstream gender by ensuring women's economic empowerment, their overall wellbeing and their equal and engaged participation in all decision-making processes.

### Recommendations:

- **Develop a robust and holistic water policy** which focuses on the management and not just the provision of water. The policy should include a strong regulatory framework to safeguard against depletion of this precious resource and have the principles of equity and justice knitted into them. Water resources should be managed at the lowest appropriate level. Both women and men should be recognized as central to the provision, management and safeguarding of water. It should recognize that access, control and management of productive resources such as water by women is key to women's livelihood security.
- Ensure that all water projects are based on a **multi-use approach** and invest in providing infrastructure for non-irrigation water too.
- Take **proactive steps** to ensure women's equal and engaged participation in WUA. Provide additional women-only training to build leadership and capacity of women to join WUA.
- All development projects including water resource management should invest in building productive assets and providing livelihood and income generating opportunities for women. The responsibility of planting and maintaining trees, for example, along the water canal should be given to women's collectives at the local level.
- Gender sensitive design doesn't translate into gender sensitive implementation. Steps should be taken to ensure full implementation of all gender approaches. All officers working on the project should go through regular gender training.
- **Outcomes:** The gendering process needs to focus more on potential outcomes (including considering if there are unintended ones – from a gender perspective). Participatory reviews are useful mechanisms to gain a more nuanced idea of success, along with gendered water-related indicators. Currently indicators fail to include measures specific to water access, such as "average walking distance to improved water source."<sup>26</sup>
- A number of challenges do crop up when trying to **build measurement tools** to monitor these changes. Assessment of impact is often based on data, and the need for **disaggregated data** is essential, given that currently there are few comprehensive assessments of the international water projects that focus on the third Dublin Principle.
- All IFIs including NDB should advocate for women's equal access to land and water. All water resource management projects should be based on multi-user systems to ensure livelihood security for women, especially for rural women.
- Development projects should be allocated an adequate budget to ensure gender integration.

We hope IFIs including NDB will find this policy brief useful and will adopt suggestions in their projects on water resource management to ensure women's equal engaged participation and empowerment.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://pwescr.org/BFW-Policy-Brief-Why-the-NDB-Should-Have-a-Gender-Policy.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Women, Water, and Development Isha Ray Annual Review of Environment and Resources 2007 32:1, 421-449



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