

GENDER MAIN STREAMING IN WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROJECTS

Simona FRONE¹, Dumitru Florin FRONE²

¹Institute of National Economy, at the Romanian Academy, 13 Calea 13 Septembrie, District 5, 050711, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +4021/318.24.67, Fax: +4021/318.24.71, Email: frone.simona@gmail.com

²University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Bucharest, 59 Marasti, District 1, 011464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40 21 318 25 64/232, Fax: + 40 21 318 28 88, E-mail: ffrone@hotmail.com

Corresponding author: ffrone@hotmail.com

Abstract

As we have stated in the previous year conference paper, the human right to water and sanitation entitles everyone to water and sanitation services which are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and safe. Development programs for water and sanitation services, as many other socio-economic development programs have often been assumed to be neutral in terms of gender. However, sometimes there can be failures in the implementation and harnessing of such projects because of errors arising from lack of adequate integration of gender equality. In this paper are highlighted some aspects and issues of gender mainstreaming in water supply and sanitation development projects, including conclusions from a case study conducted by an NGO in a commune of Romania and own recommendations.

Key words: *development projects, gender analysis, gender mainstreaming, public utilities, water supply and sanitation*

INTRODUCTION

The equal visibility, opportunities and participation of women and men in all spheres of public and private life is often guided by a vision of human rights, which incorporates acceptance of equal and inalienable rights of women and men. Gender equality is not only crucial for the wellbeing and development of individuals, but also for the evolution of societies and the development of countries.

As we have stated in the previous year conference paper (Frone Simona, Frone D.F., 2013) the human right to water and sanitation entitles everyone to water and sanitation services which are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and safe.

Access to water and sanitation is one of the vital and stringent issues of sustainable socio-economic and human development, in most of the world, so there is a strong need to state and promote this issue as much as possible. Therefore, the relationship between access to water and sanitation and gender equality has been more approached, since there are some

specific international instruments that are relevant for ensuring a gender perspective in this area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Since usually 'gender' denotes the socially constructed ideas a man or woman in society and includes the social relationships between women and men, we shall first try to find out a practical definition of gender mainstreaming.

Then we shall point out some of the main dimensions of gender mainstreaming in water supply and sanitation (WSS), by recommending gender analysis of these projects. The benefits of gender analysis in development projects depend on some careful and useful baselines.

As well, the concept of sustainable sanitation is introduced and analysed, also from the viewpoint of gender mainstreaming. As based on the case study from a Romanian village, some conclusions and recommendations may be drawn.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The process to thoroughly integrate a gender perspective in institutions and operations is called gender mainstreaming.

According to the ECOSOC definition gender mainstreaming is: “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.” (ECOSOC, 1997)

As we shall try to further emphasize, adequate gender mainstreaming in water supply and sanitation projects should have significant implications also for socio-economic and rural development. This is now defined at the international level, and obliges Governments to take concrete steps towards ensuring access to safe water and sanitation for all, without discrimination.

The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women CEDAW 1979* is the most important legally-binding international instrument for the protection of women’s rights. While addressing the living conditions of women in rural areas, CEDAW mentions in its article 14(2) (h), that States parties shall ensure women “the right to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communication.”

The *Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3*, calls for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Four main indicators – relating to education, literacy, wage employment and political representation are commonly used to monitor progress.

The European Union (EU) also supports proactively the goal of gender equality. The Lisbon Reform Treaty considers ‘equality between women and men’ among its values

and objectives (European Union, 2007: article 1a and 2) and, since 1996, the EU has committed itself to mainstreaming gender considerations into all aspects of its operations and policies.

„This involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situations of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them: thus, development policies, the organisation of work etc. may have significant differential impacts on the situation of women and men which must therefore be duly taken into consideration in order to further promote equality between women and men.” (COM, 1996).

The strategy of gender mainstreaming seeks to ensure that all measures and actions affecting the general society take into account openly and actively - during planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation - different effects they can have on women and men.

In society women and men do not have the same roles, resources, needs and interests and do not participate equally in decision making. The values assigned to "women's work" and "men's work" are not the same, these differences vary from one society to another, from one culture to another and are called "gender differences".

Many policies and programs do not take into account these differences (are "gender-blind"). The result is that today the public and private services and facilities, and areas such as employment, training, business and political environment are not always created taking into account the specific needs of women and men (most often taken into account the male standard).

Gender mainstreaming leads to benefits that go beyond good water and sanitation performance, including, economic benefits,

empowerment of women, more gender equality. Therefore, there is an urgent need to bring a gender perspective into the sanitation and hygiene sector, to involve and address both women and men in these efforts.

Gender mainstreaming works best through an adaptive approach, that is participatory and responsive to the needs of the rural poor. Often, specific institutional arrangements are necessary to ensure that gender is considered an integral part of efficient and effective planning and implementation. This encompasses, for example, the development of gender policies and procedures, commitment at all organisational levels, the availability of – internal or external - gender expertise. Gender must be addressed in policy formulation and by-laws. (GWA, 2006)

A gender analysis helps in understanding the socioeconomic and cultural concerns in a project area. Gender analysis builds understanding of the demands and needs of women and men, their respective knowledge and expertise, attitudes and practices, and it draws light on the constraints for women's and men's participation in activities.

In order to make such an analysis, gender disaggregated data and involvement of women and men in sanitation planning, construction and maintenance are needed. An example will be presented in the case-study below.

It is also important to assess the impact of policies and programmes on women and men, of different social and age groups. There the question should be raised who benefits and who bears the burdens/face drawbacks of these policies and programmes. (Asia Water Watch 2015, 2006)

Project development teams in the field of water supply and sanitation should take care for a gender balance and be sensitive to gender and related cultural concerns. This can be enhanced by selecting field team members with gender awareness, local knowledge, cultural understanding and willingness to listen. (ADB, 1998)

Gender analysis is an essential tool for understanding the local context in which the program. It is especially useful in planning

projects, since it helps planners to identify local constraints and structure projects so that objectives can be achieved and measured properly.

Using gender analysis throughout the entire life cycle of the project provides information about:

- the different perspectives, roles, needs and interests of women and men from the project area, country, region or institution, including practical needs and strategic interests of women and men;

- relations between men and women on which depends the access to and control over resources, benefits and decision-making processes;

- the potential impact of different interventions program / project on women and men, on girls and boys;

- the social and cultural constraints and opportunities for promoting relations of equality between women and men;

- the institutions capacity to program actions for gender equality.

In developing a program / project of public investment, it is important to apply a gender analysis to enable for a further integrated strategic approach.

Gender mainstreaming for water supply and sanitation services

Experience shows that if water supply projects can be considered truly neutral in terms of gender, the physiological needs for potable water consumption being similar for both women and men, in terms of access to proper and private toilets, the need of women are much bigger and more important due to their sensitivity and their physiological and socio-cultural features.

Often, the design, location and construction of toilets or latrines, does not pay sufficient attention to the specific needs of women and men, girls and boys. Development programs for sanitation services, as well as many other social and economic development programs have often been assumed to be neutral in terms of gender.

Therefore, sometimes there can be failures in the implementation and adequate harnessing of such projects because of errors arising from a lack of adequate gender analysis (absence

of facilities for hygiene and safety of women, heavy duty access for girls, or even too small boys, etc.).

The chosen solution in most rural areas of the world is pit latrines. They do not comply with the criteria for sustainable sanitation (see below). Pit latrines tend to be bad smelling and lead to unhygienic conditions, and pose additional gender problems. In general, women use the pit latrines several times a day whereas men are not similarly dependent on them as they can easily relieve themselves outside. Therefore, men might be less interested in changing the toilet situation.

There are many important factors such as discrimination, lack of political will or gender concerns, and the lack of appropriate legal structures which combined result in: - neglecting the specific needs of women, on the one hand;

-Absence of women in planning and implementation of water supply and sanitation on the other hand.

The vast majority of people globally (one billion) living in poverty are women, and the overall trend is the enhancement of a feminisation of poverty, especially for the households headed by women. At the World Water Forum (2006 World Water Forum Mexico City) were presented some initiatives, actions and local projects that address gender analysis in developing countries including our country (Armenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine and Mexico).

They have demonstrated that a stronger involvement of civil society groups, particularly women and minority groups in decision-making on sanitation and wastewater management is often necessary to truly achieve progress in this sector.

Apart from the gender-specific issues mentioned, the gender perspectives of sustainable sanitation projects, have to be better explored. This is an interesting issue, since women are actively involved in food crop production and food security in many parts of the world, and would be directly affected by increased soil nutrients provided through ecological sanitation, for their rural and urban agriculture.

Therefore, sustainable sanitation is a most interesting issue of sustainable rural development. The main objective of a sanitation system is to protect and promote human health by providing a clean environment and breaking the cycle of diseases. Basic principles when planning and implementing a sanitation system were endorsed by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and Sandec, (2000) in the Bellagio Principles for Sustainable Sanitation:

-Human dignity, quality of life and environmental security at household level should be at the centre of any sanitation approach.

-In line with good governance principles, decision making should involve participation of all stakeholders, especially the consumers and providers of services.

-Waste should be considered a resource, and its management should be holistic and form part of integrated water resources, nutrient flow and waste management processes.

-The domain in which environmental sanitation problems are resolved should be kept to the minimum practicable size (household, neighbourhood, community, town, district, catchments, and city).

In many cases, such as the village Gârla Mare in Romania (see case study), women accept sustainable sanitation by UDDT ecosan toilets while men prefer flush toilets with water. Therefore, women and children (through school programs) could play an important role in motivating, educating and convinced others to use ecosan projects UDDT.

Ecosan toilets that produce compost is an innovation or alternative eco-economic nature sewer service in order to ensure both manure and environmental sanitation, both water saving and obtaining natural compost fertilizer.

Moreover, a supporter of the technology is Lester Brown himself (Brown L, 2009), who argues that these toilets that produce compost "deserve attention for several reasons," the last being "the increase in capital costs for wastewater discharge systems".

Case Study - The village Gârla Mare, Romania

In Gârla Mare, a typical Romanian village of 3,500 citizens without a central water supply, ecosan school toilets UDDT (urine dry diverting) were introduced by Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), Medium et Sanitas and Hamburg University of Technology, replacing the old school pit latrines, which were in an unacceptable state.

The ecosan school toilets were built for demonstration and proved to be clean and cheap, and produced excellent fertilizer, that has been used to grow corn and peppers. Both men and women contributed to the development of the toilets in their traditional roles, men were the builders and women were those teaching their children about how to use the toilets and hygiene.

After a year of operation, a survey that was undertaken in the village among 40 respondents (21 women/19 men) showed the following results (WECF, 2006):

-Only 3% of women were willing to invest in a (new type of) toilet; for men this percentage was 20%.

-10% of women were willing if it would fit into their budget. This is understandable as the income level of most families is extremely low and they can hardly afford to buy enough food for themselves. But it also shows that more investigation is needed round the financial aspects, and the fact that men feel there are enough financial options, and women do not.

-74% of women as opposed to 58% of men want dry urine diverting toilets for the school; whereas 32% of the men and 17% of the women would prefer a water flush toilet. The arguments women mentioned were that the toilets are good for children's health, there is less bad odour, and children are happy with them.

-More schoolgirls, who were interviewed separately would like to have such toilets at home, then schoolboys. Apparently girls feel that they benefit more from clean toilets.

Also, the case study revealed that women would like to have the toilets in the house, as that would reduce walking distances also during bad weather conditions, but often there is not enough room in the house. They are

also more willing to use the fertilizer in their fields and gardens.

Women and children (via schools) could play an important role in motivating and educating others to use UDDT projects.

CONCLUSIONS

Using the variation coefficient for comparing the price volatility of vegetables, we can draw the conclusion that tomato price had the highest volatility in the period 2004-2010. Yet it is worth noticing that tomato price had a maximum level in June 2006 in the region N-E, which overall contributed to an extremely high volatility in the respective year. Onion lies at the opposite pole, with a lower and more constant variation coefficient, which reached 4% in 2009.

The prices of green peppers are also less volatile compared to the tomato and cabbage prices. However, it can be concluded that throughout the investigated period, the prices had an increasing trend.

This sector lacked a coherent strategy in the last two decades, being characterized by the diminution of the capacity to face the competition market. At the same time, as a result of Romania joining the EU, its competitors from the EU both in the production and processing sector are testing the Romanian market; in case the Romanian sector is not able to get reorganized and benefit from the established intervention measures, it will not be able to face the strong competition coming from the Single Market and not only.

The price volatility is reflected at all chain stages level and especially at the production stage and to a lesser degree at the marketing and processing levels.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was supported by the project "Post-Doctoral Studies in Economics: training program for elite researchers - SPODE" co-funded from the European Social Fund through the Development of Human Resources Operational Programme 2007-2013, Contract no. POSDRU/89/1.5/S/61755".

REFERENCES

- [1]Commodity Price Volatility: international and EU perspective; Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, L5. Agricultural trade policy; Brussels, 2010
- [2]Aksoy, M.A., Beghin, J.C., 2005, Global Agricultural Trade and Developing Countries (The World Bank, Washington D.C.)
- [3]Bielza Maria, Diaz-Caneja, Conte C., Dittmann, C., 2008, Agricultural Insurance Scheme, IPSC, JRC, European Union
- [4]Hertel,T.W., Brokmeier, M., Padma, V. Swaminathan, 1997, Sectorial and economy wide analysis of integrating Central and Eastern European Countries into the EU: Implication of alternative strategies, European Review of Agricultural Economics, 24:3-4
- [5] Swinnen, J.F.M., 2005, When the market comes to you - or not. The dynamics of vertical coordination in agro-food chains in Europe and Central Asia, World Bank: Washington, D.C.
- [6] Swinnen, J., Maertens, M., 2007, Globalization, Privatization, and Vertical Coordination in Food Value Chains in Developing and Transition Countries. Agricultural Economics, 37(2):89-102
- [7]National Institute for Statistics, Results and performance of industrial and trade companies, tome 2001