

The Federal Foreign Office

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Human Rights and Gender Issues OR06

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Subject: Questionnaire of the Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe water and sanitation - German position on Gender Equality and Development Cooperation in Realizing the HRWS

Regarding your letter of November 16th 2015 the German Government would like to transmit the following answers to your questionnaire.

The Special Rapporteur intends to address gender equality in the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation. Despite that gender issues are less relevant in Germany's water and sanitation sector than in other countries, we would like to transmit you the questions answered by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety as well as Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development as follows:

## **I. Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB)/Ref WR I 4**

In general terms can be said that gender issues are not very relevant in Germany's water and sanitation sectors. There are no known reports or surveys with regard to gender issues in the water and sanitation sector in Germany. 100 % of the population in Germany has access to improved drinking water supply. 100 % of the German population is connected to collective sanitation systems or other means of sanitation.

However Germany participates in several activities on European level which also include Gender issues and which might be of interest to the Special Rapporteur. For example Germany participates in the discussions on WASH in schools in the WHO European Region under the Protocol on Water and Health of the UNECE Water Convention. An Expert Group on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools has been established.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore Germany's activity under the Protocol on Water and Health is the development of a policy guidance document on small-scale water supplies and sanitation. The guidance document will be adopted at the fourth Meeting of the Parties of the Protocol in November 2016 in Bern. The paper will take some gender aspects into account. Also Germany refers to the activities on equitable access to water and sanitation under the Protocol on Water and Health.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)/ Ref. 312**

### **1. What are the particular issues to be addressed to achieve gender equality with respect to water, sanitation and hygiene, and what measures are being taken to address these?**

In many cases women and girls are suffering disproportionately from an insufficient access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. As they are mainly responsible for supplying their households with water, they have to walk long distances to the next water sources. Consequently, they spend a large part of their time to meet their household's water needs.<sup>3</sup> As a result, women have less time available for other social and economic activities; educational opportunities are reduced especially for girls. Unsafe water sources, furthermore, pose the threat of infection with waterborne diseases<sup>4</sup> when contaminated. Additional fetching water from water sources located far away from the household premises, especially in the dark, can lead to injuries or gender-based violence.

Gender equality with regard to sanitation requires the provision of gender-sensitive toilets in the public, in schools, and at work places, i. e. separated facilities for women and for men, toilet cabins with a light source, which can be locked from the inside, and if household facilities are not available public toilets

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2015): Introduction. About the Protocol on Water and Health. Available from [http://www.unece.org/env/water/pwh\\_text/text\\_protocol.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/pwh_text/text_protocol.html), last accessed 27 January 2016.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2015). Equitable access to water and sanitation. Available from [http://www.unece.org/env/water/pwh\\_work/equitable\\_access.html](http://www.unece.org/env/water/pwh_work/equitable_access.html), last accessed 27 January 2016.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank (2010): Mainstreaming Gender in Water and Sanitation. Working Paper. Available from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2010/11/13715856/mainstreaming-gender-water-sanitation>, last accessed 27 January 2016.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/diseases/en/](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/diseases/en/), last accessed 27 January 2016.

which are close to their homes and protected by guards to avert assaults and sexual harassment. Many girls have to leave school once they start menstruating as they don't have access to hygiene products<sup>5</sup>. Hygiene and sex education hence is an important component of raising awareness for gender issues and the different needs of women and girls and men and boys regarding water, sanitation, and hygiene.

It thus is necessary not only to improve WASH access but to do so under particular consideration of gender issues. This can be approached top down through policy making, the development of gender strategies and action plans, or the establishment of women quotas in political bodies and water and wastewater companies as well as bottom up by raising awareness for gender equality in households and communities and by the participation of women in decision making.

#### Example: Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools, Jordan

*In the project of the German Development Cooperation "Decentralised Waste Water Management in Host Communities" in Jordan, for example, both approaches are combined. A top down strategy for improving the sanitary conditions in schools is being developed in cooperation with the responsible authorities under particular consideration of gender aspects and the ongoing refugee crisis. At the same time, Syrian and Jordanian girls and boys in schools are participating separately in gender-specific health and hygiene trainings. Together with the gender-sensitive improvement of sanitary facilities in schools, this integrative approach improves the health of school children, especially girls.*

## 2. What measures can be taken to accommodate and embrace biological differences (such as menstruation)? What measures can be taken to accommodate (assumed) different priorities in the use of water, sanitation and hygiene services?

A first step must be to create an understanding for the different needs of women and men with regard to WASH within households and communities. Especially as it is often men who are in charge of financial and other resources, it is crucial to raise awareness for women's requirements and make sure that their voices are heard. This would push the allocation of budget for the provision of gender-sensitive sanitation facilities and hygiene products. This process should be supported by hygiene and sex education as well as through the provision of information materials demonstrating the benefits for families and the communities as a whole.

With respect to accommodating different priorities, the participation of the affected groups – women and girls – in decision-making is vital. Providing them with information regarding the advantages and disadvantages of different facilities and hygiene products and supporting them in expressing their opinion can help women to make their choice as to the type of WASH best fit for their needs.

#### Example: Support gender sensitive administration and policy-making, India

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.wsp.org/Hygiene-Sanitation-Water-Toolkit/BasicPrinciples/GenderRoles.html>, last accessed 27 January 2016.

***The German project “Support to the National Urban Sanitation Policy II” in India strives to support the improvement of sanitary conditions, especially for women, on several levels. The provision of information materials and advisory services to the responsible administrative and policy-making actors helps to raise awareness for gender-specific sanitation and hygiene issues. Moreover, the project includes the funding for the construction of several public sanitation facilities particularly adapted to women’s needs.***

**3. What measures can be taken to combat stereotypes, change harmful practices and challenge socio-cultural norms and prescriptions that disadvantage women and girls with respect to access to sanitation and water?**

The conduction of a baseline study analysing the initial situation and identifying named stereotypes and harmful practices allows for a better understanding of the cultural context in the particular region or country. Only by doing so, the measures to be taken can successfully be adapted and adjusted according to the specific requirements.

Possible means for tackling these issues are participatory meetings at community level that address the prevailing problems and let both men and women express their opinions. Additional meetings, for women and girls only, enable them to talk freely about their experience and concerns. School education is another key component for combatting stereotypes and stimulating change.

**Integrating hygiene & sanitation in education, Jordan, Philippines, Tanzania**

***The aforementioned project “Decentralised Waste Water Management in Host Communities” in Jordan integrates hygiene and sanitation in school education in order to teach girls and boys about the issue bottom-up. The provision of information on gender, sanitation and hygiene and the discussion of the topics help to combat gender stereotypes and discrimination from an early age on. The “Fit for School” approach which is implemented with UNICEF in the Philippines and Tanzania using existing structures in the education sector to improve school washing and sanitary facilities. It also implements evidence-based preventative measures such as hand washing with soap, promoting them as group activities and integrating them into the daily routine of state-run primary schools.***

**4. What role can men and boys play in ensuring gender equality in the context of sanitation and water?**

Typically in many societies, men are the political and religious leaders and the heads of households and communities. As a result, they also are in control of the access to different kinds of resources – among them financial resources but also transportation, educational services and health care. As men thus have significant influence on many aspects of women’s lives, they also need to be held accountable for their

actions with respect to gender issues. It is crucial for men to acknowledge women's needs with regard to WASH and for women and men to take joint responsibility for achieving gender equality. By providing support to men in leading positions, they thus can become agents of change and set a positive example for promoting gender equality within their families, communities and organisations.

#### **5. What measures can be taken to combat gender-based violence in the context of sanitation and water?**

Water points not located on household premises involve special risks for women, especially in the dark, including sexual harassment, rape and assault. As a result, many women are experiencing fear and stress when fetching water or using public toilets. This situation can be addressed by improving the security of water sources and public sanitary facilities. They should be located in a short walking distance from the residential areas if location on the household is not possible<sup>6</sup>. By providing electric lights in all toilet cabins as well as outside and keeping them under surveillance by guards, the risk of violence can be reduced significantly. The provision of individual and lockable toilet cabins creates further safety.

Beyond providing safe sanitary facilities, it is necessary to formalise the need for analysing gender-based violence in policy making and to design WASH solutions accordingly. Supplementing this top down approach, communities must become aware of the issue. Both women and men should participate in finding solutions for the problem. Strengthening the self-esteem of women and girls, providing support to the victims of (sexual) violence and combatting their shaming are further core elements and condemn the offenders.

#### **Taking into account female concerns in water and sanitation provision, Zimbabwe**

*In the end, the gender-sensitive provision of water and sanitation is only as good as women themselves think it is. Thus it is crucial to survey and monitor women's satisfaction, as is done for example in the project of the German Development Cooperation "Municipal Water and Sewage Provision in Zimbabwe". In this project, one of the indicators measures if women perceive their needs to be reflected appropriately in the improvement of water and sanitation provision.*

#### **6. What measures can be taken to redress existing disadvantages based on entrenched discrimination in the context of sanitation and water?**

A necessary first step is analysing the type and degree of prevailing discrimination in the particular context. Only then is it possible to foster the transformation of cultural norms and to remove the roots of the problem. Important instruments for inducing such a change are educational measures to raise awareness for the problem, the provision of information materials, and community meetings.

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<sup>6</sup> Water and sanitation access on the household premises should be the objective as stipulated in the SDGs, if safety is to be guaranteed.

**7. What role does legislation play in ensuring gender equality in access to water, sanitation and hygiene? What can water, sanitation and hygiene policies and strategies achieve? What is the role of institutions in promoting better representation of women? How can financing and budgeting in the WASH-sector be gender-responsive?**

In order to mainstream gender equality, enshrining the concept in laws and policies is crucial as it sets the basic framework for all activities on lower levels. However, this is not sufficient – a successful implementation requires also the development and implementation of action plans that identify measures to be taken and allocate the required resources for their realisation.

Beyond that, all organisations in the water sector should strive for setting a positive example by integrating gender equality into their structures and activities – e. g. through a balanced ratio between women and men in their staff, the development of internal gender strategies and action plans and the establishment of gender focal points.

**Application of gender knowledge and formulation of Action Plans, Mali & Benin**

*Fostering the active participation of women in professional trainings helps to integrate them successfully into the water sector. One of the indicators in the German Development Cooperation project “Sustainable Water and Sanitary Supply in Mali”, for example, goes beyond that: It does not only ask for women’s participation in the trainings but also requires a certain percentage of them to confirm that they are applying the newly acquired knowledge in their work. The GIZ project “Support of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector in Benin”, on the other hand, promotes gender mainstreaming by supporting the development of detailed action plans for realising the sectoral goals on water, sanitation and hygiene under particular consideration of the different needs of women and men.*

**8. What measures can be taken to ensure meaningful and inclusive participatory processes at all levels of decision-making? How can an increased role for women and girls translate into actual influence in decision-making?**

It must be ensured that women’s participation and influence in decision making does not only exist on paper but is also realised in practice. Women need to have access to the necessary resources for fulfilling their mandates, financial and otherwise, e. g. information and data. Regular feedback surveys regarding their satisfaction with their impact and influence can help to better understand and solve remaining problems. At the same time, it is necessary to raise awareness among men, especially in leading positions, for the necessity and benefits of women’s participation.

**Effective Dialogue Processes, Jordan**

*The importance of participation is reflected already in the name of the GIZ project “Supporting Participatory Resource Management to Stabilize the Situation in Host Communities” in Jordan. The project focuses on an improved water supply in cities hosting a large number of refugees*

*from Syria and elsewhere while integrating women and men, Jordanians and refugees, into the process. In order to ensure not only the inclusion of women but additionally their actual influence and satisfaction with the process, the respective indicator measures if women and men confirm that the dialogue process significantly contributed to solving the existing problems.*