

Issue 2, December 2003

December Focus - Women and Water

Women who know water - This issue of *Water for All News* focuses on gender in South Asia and offers case studies that demonstrate women's initiatives to improve conditions in even the most difficult circumstances of poverty and scarcity of water supply. The Asian Development Bank encourages community-based activities that promote gender empowerment and gender equity in decisions regarding water.

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Pakistan leads the way in Commitment to Gender Mainstreaming

Nasreer Gillani, Chief of the Environment Planning Commission of the Government of Pakistan, has enthusiastically supported the training sessions that teach gender issues for government officials. Mr. Gillani, among other committed government employees, staunchly supports extensive government involvement in water issues, especially through the **Pakistan Water Partnership**, a multisectoral network of civil society, government, and private sector that includes the Women and Water Network. Mr. Gillani is convinced of the importance of a gender-sensitive approach and has become an advocate of gender mainstreaming. After initial resistance, those senior officials who attended the first training session called for gender training for all levels of government. In this way, the gender training is linked to strategic actions at local, regional and national levels, such as the water partnership.

The SEWA Signature - combining water and microenterprise training in India

The success of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the model women's organization in Gujarat, India, is well chronicled. SEWA is a model of hope and

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What's New

Gender in Water Partnership

Viet Nam: Water for the Poor - Partnerships for Action

Water Voices - Video Clips

Waibulabula - Living Waters



Restoring Paradise in the Fiji Islands

The Connection



Transforming a water utility in Phnom Penh

Success Stories

Country water actions

Case studies and lessons learned

Previous Events

1st Southeast Asia Water Forum

Launching of Network of Asian River Basin Organizations - NARBO

ADB National Water Media Workshops

[Viet Nam](#) | [Thailand](#)

Coming Events

ADB Water Week 2004

(26-30 January 2004)

human determination in a region devastated by drought and earthquakes where women have banded together, recognizing that water and livelihood go hand-in-hand. A case study from Banaskantha District tells the story of how women of the local SEWA revived the deteriorated piped water supply system as well as the traditional water sources through a microenterprise program for women entrepreneurs. SEWA has proved often that providing access to water unlocks the human potential because of both time and energy saved. SEWA has organized entrepreneurs to manage the maintenance of the water supply, recognizing that when the piped supply breaks down women must spend long periods of their productive hours fetching water. The water project is linked to a microenterprise program that organizes and trains women, provides market research, marketing, quality control, and microcredit.



"If we are going to eradicate poverty in Pakistan, how can we ignore our women, who make up [so much] of our resources?"

Nasreer Gillani
Chief of the Environment
Planning Commission of
the Government of
Pakistan at the 3rd World
Water Forum

Walking for Water. [View video clip](#) 



Nepal builds gender-responsive water users associations

A pilot project proved its success by improving the participation of women in water users associations in Nepal, where poverty is widespread and affects 42% of the population. Women's roles vary among the poor in Nepal, depending on the crops they grow, their ethnic origin and caste, and their geographical location. The project involved an irrigation canal and 17 settlements. The project was designed to test and document ways in which women could better contribute to irrigation management and improved agricultural production. The pilot discovered that women were interested in learning to manage the technical aspects of irrigation canal maintenance and operation as well as water distribution and management. Through a Women's Facilitator Group, the skills of women were improved and the pilot was successful in involving women in decision-making.

Voices of the invisible - understanding gender equity in Gujarat

After years of drought, water quality and quantity in many Gujarati towns used to be dismal, with freshwater sources turning saline and many wells gone completely dry. There was not enough water to keep the grazing lands growing, and conflicts were known to



erupt over a pitcher of water. The NGO Utthan works to organize communities and raise awareness to lobby for a decentralized system of rainwater harvesting structures. They were particularly successful in Bhavnagar district, where the women overturned a village council's decision to use machines to dig pipelines, and successfully advocated for using manual labor, which created employment and fostered a stronger sense of ownership of the project. [Read more](#) about how this case study links to the Water and Poverty Initiative framework.



[Ladies First: Water for entrepreneurial women in Pakistan](#)

It is sometimes said that poverty in Pakistan has a woman's face. Chronic malnutrition is higher in female members of poor families, the same women and girls who walk for many kilometers carrying heavy water pots on their heads. An ADB-funded project that brought water to 325 poor and remote rural villages has transformed the lives of 800,000 people, mainly benefiting women and children who no longer have to carry the water long distances. This project involved women and men in all aspects of the planning, design and implementation. Women who previously spent 2 to 6 hours a day gathering water suddenly found themselves with both extra time and extra energy, which translated into livelihood activities such as embroidery. Water related diseases have been reduced by 90%, household income increased by 24% and school enrolment up by 80%. [Read more](#) about the community-based approach that maintains the distribution systems, drains and oxidation ponds, and promote social development. The responsible agency and a community organization received the first [ADB Water Prize](#) during Water Week 2002, recognized for its attention to gender and community.



Water for All News is produced monthly by the Asian Development Bank's Water Awareness Program to provide current information to developing member governments, professionals, researchers, private sector, civil society, academe, and their counterparts in the donor community who are interested in water sector issues that affect the pace of development.

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Related Links - Gender and Water Issues

- [ADB Gender Newsletter - focus on Women and Water](#) [PDF]
- [Addressing Water and Poverty at the Grassroots - A Case Study of Area Water Partnerships and Women and Water Networks in South Asia](#) [PDF]

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