IWRM Action Hub

CASE STUDY

GESI-Analysis of water and climate policies in Latin America

Summary

Identifying and mapping country-level responses to gender-related questions, showcasing the range of mechanisms, practices, and tools implemented to mainstream gender in WRM. Research revealed common gaps in gender policies and practice, and gender mainstreaming as about fully integrating all gender perspectives in a cross-cutting manner, aligning water and climate-related issues with other relevant policy areas.

Background

Water scarcity disproportionately affects poor communities and the most marginalized individuals in society. Access to water is also relevant for women's empowerment as it further affects women's access to education, health (in relation to pregnancy, childbirth, and water-borne diseases), as well as their income and safety (i.e., gender-based violence). Mainstreaming gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) in WRM, holds the potential to help countries address other national and global challenges (poverty, inequalities, social justice, climate change, etc.) and thus should be integrated into crosscutting national policies which contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Many gender and inclusion policies and strategies within WRM have been developed by non-governmental organisations, governments, regional bodies, partnership organisations, multilateral development banks, and bilateral aid agencies, yet evidence has revealed that there is a clear gap between these policies and practice. In practice, gender mainstreaming is not often prioritised, or even acknowledged, at various levels of policymaking, and in some cases treated as an ad-hoc topic. Reasons for this relate to inadequate funding, incomplete implementation, and disaggregation of data collection, monitoring and evaluation processes, which have resulted in the true gender and inclusion

power dynamics occurring within WRM to remain unclear. Thus, there is need to better understand and account for a broader range of factors that can lead to exclusion and marginalisation, such as age, disability, ethnicity, caste, and sexuality, to ensure that no one is left out.

Within Central and Southern American countries, there is little known data, monitoring or evaluation undertaken in relation to the implementation of GESI in WRM. This poor level of mapping warranted research to highlight some of the common gaps, challenges and constraints experienced by these countries, and the key enabling factors which facilitate gender mainstreaming in WRM. The concept of gender in WRM has since been included in the criteria monitored through the SDG indicator 6.5.1 on the “degree of implementation of IWRM” to integrate gender considerations more fully into WRM and enhancing women's participation.

Actions taken

As water-related activities and climate change issues are highly interlinked, a joint research project was undertaken by GWP-SAM and GWP-CAM to report the inclusion of GESI in WRM (under SDG indicator 6.5.1). Research involved conducting a comparative analysis of South American and Central American countries (including Bolivia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru) to identify the degree of gender mainstreaming in national water and climate change policies/strategies. The analysis of gender in WRM was analysed from 3 different levels: strategic (i.e., regulations, agendas, plans, policies, perspectives etc.), capacity (e.g., information management, institutional, budgets, indicators etc.), and operational (i.e., specific projects/activities for climate finance with links to water). Research comprised of two stages, consisting of a data review and interviews. Interviews were conducted with those working at ministries of environment, institutions for woman, water and climate offices, and experts in the field of water and climate. During these interviews, a survey was applied to identify country-specific responses to SDG indicator 6.5.1. on "Gender included in laws/plans or similar within water resources management". Here, questions were divided into categories for 'woman and girls', 'vulnerable people', and 'men and boys'. Questions included those relating to access to water (and other resources), participation, education, welfare, employment and income generation, poverty, & climate change.

For each country, data collected from the review of data and interviews together were analysed through application of the gender ladder approach. For this research an adapted gender ladder framework was applied (as so applicable to WRM). Each countries' position on the ladder was determined by the review of data (e.g., reports, laws, plans etc.) and self-assigned survey score (on a 0-100 scale) for each question asked during the interview. For every question answered, interviewees were strongly advised to provide justification (i.e., quoting form reports, data, plans etc.). Each countries' score was calculated based on an average of the scores given for all questions within that section (or analyses level), and the average of that score across all sections (or analyses levels). If the question was deemed not applicable, that question was marked as "n/a" and not included in the overall calculation. Thresholds were defined for an evaluation (or score) card, which enabled a countries' progress in gender mainstreaming to be ranked and compared. Categories ranged from gender sensitive i.e., "weak" or "good" (0-60 score); to gender responsible i.e., "very good" (61-80 score); to gender transformative i.e., "excellent" (81-100 score).

Lastly, outcomes of the data review and surveys were shared during a dissemination workshop with all interviewees and others included in the analyses. The purpose of this workshop was to confirm the accuracy of the data through consultation with the interviewees before it could be further analysed.

Outcomes

Results revealed variation in the degree of GESI mainstreaming between countries, with Honduras scoring lowest (21.67%), and Costa Rica highest (66.33%). El Salvador also scored relatively low (31.67%), with the remaining countries (Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, & Peru) scoring 48.00-56.33%. This variation in score reflected the large differences in the technical knowledge, maturity and understanding of WRM identified between nations, institutions, actors etc. This highlighted the importance considering the social, political, and environmental context when designing national gender mainstreaming strategies. Despite these contextual differences, the following core interpretations of gender mainstreaming were identified:

1. Fair representation of all gender groups and individuals in management, executive and decision-making bodies.
2. Equity in opportunities of raising voices and participating in the decision-making process at all levels.
3. Full integration of all gender perspectives (differences in needs, uses and practices, employment and entrepreneurship, access to resources, vulnerabilities and impacts, adaptation

& mitigation capacity) in water planning, management and decision-making.

Results revealed that, comparatively, gender was less frequently included in national water-related policies/strategies than for climate change. This was due mostly to greater funding, and political push for instruments which address gender for climate-change-related issues. The creation of specialised gender units within WRM bodies was identified as a key enabler to designing and implementing GESI strategies. Interviews revealed that woman and other vulnerable groups do not have a great impact/ability to influence national water policies, or how funding is allocated to national water-related management policies. The engagement of women and other vulnerable groups in the whole water value chain was thus identified as key to promoting normative changes and stereotypes relating to women's participation in WRM. Embedded cultural issues however cannot be changed, so, gender-related issues within other spheres of society i.e., non-water- or non-climate-related spheres, should be consulted. The analysis revealed that no one-size-fits-all approach to gender mainstreaming existed for any given sector. However, some common practices, mechanisms, and tools adopted were identified:

- Advocacy, high-level commitment of executive leadership, & prevailing norms and stereotypes
- Egalitarian legislative and policy framework, & governance promoted in the country's Constitution
- Ear marketed funding, human capital, financial resource, institutions, & support organisations (i.e., gender budgeting)
- Provisions for supporting woman’s participation and parity as active members
- Centralised monitoring systems and activities (e.g., application of gender-related indicators) to track and assess progress towards target
- Multi-stakeholder partnerships and consultation processes, & inter-sectoral coordination for awareness raising, capacity development, and education

Lessons Learned

Data collection. The methods of research – desk review, interviews – allowed for the data collected to be validated.

Comparative analysis. Compared to single-study approaches, undertaking a comparative analysis allowed for intra-regional and intra-country data comparisons. This cross-examination of countries provided the ability to draw parallels, achieve better insights, and facilitate peer-on-peer communication on gender mainstreaming in WRM.

Dissemination workshop. Dissemination workshops allowed for data validation which ensured replicability of the assessment process. This research can thus be used as a starting point for assessing building capacities and undertaking intra-comparisons of policies within a given country/region.

Adaptability. As there is no one-size-fits all solution, the gender ladder approach should be designed (i.e., adaptable scale and thresholds) to allow for a more appropriate country responses (e.g., developed vs developing countries).

Local mentality. This research focused its analyses at a country-level; however, additional local or group-level analyses would be useful in providing further explanations for the status of countries.

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Organisation
Global Water Partnership - GWP

Year
2021

Country
Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru

Region
Americas

Keywords
Gender Mainstreaming , Gender Gap

Thematic Tagging
Gender
Language English

Related IWRM Tools
Human Rights Based Approach, Gender Analysis , Gender Indicators

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Source URL: https://iwrmactionhub.org/case-study/gesi-analysis-water-and-climate-policies-latin-america