

KEY POINTS

- Since women are the primary users and managers of household water, they have a major stake in water matters and must be involved in decisions about water issues.
- Projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that are not.
- At the national level, there is a correlation between the number of women in elected positions and the formulation of policies and legislation related to women's issues, including water and agriculture services, day care, and street lighting.
- Within local government, women's participation and leadership have led to greater investment in women's issues, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, child care services, drainage, and street and village lighting.
- Within communities, women's leadership has led to improved water security and greater efficiency.
- Corporate companies with greater gender diversity in their leadership teams outperform those with lesser diversity—often by as much as 30%.
- Women leaders are needed at all levels of society, in water utilities, government water agencies, and international and regional water institutions to reduce the democratic gender deficit in water leadership.

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WOMEN, WATER, AND LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

There is a gender gap in water management leadership at all levels of government—national, municipal, and local—and it encompasses water utilities, and water supply and irrigation community governance groups. Women are rarely involved in decisions relating to water policies and strategies, water resource management, or tariff setting and technology choices. They are missing in key areas of water-related decision making. To narrow the gender gap in leadership at all levels of the water sector, and to ensure water security¹ for all, there needs to be more equity, and women need to have greater involvement in decision making.

A workshop, jointly sponsored by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Water Management Institute (IWMI),² brought together 80 academics; researchers; industry practitioners; and members of the public and private sectors, civil society, and development organizations to study the current situation, discuss the gaps in women's leadership, and learn from good practices. This brief synthesizes the key findings from the workshop.³

¹ In his keynote address, President Takehiko Nakao of ADB stated that "Societies enjoy water security when they successfully manage their water resources to satisfy household water and sanitation needs; support agriculture, industry and energy; sustain livable cities; maintain healthy rivers; and protect communities from floods and droughts." 14th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. Taj Palace, New Delhi, India. 6 February 2014.

² From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. ADB headquarters, Manila. 13–14 February 2014.

³ Copies of all presentations from the workshop can be found at: <https://www.scribd.com/collections/4449811/Women-Water-and-Leadership-Workshop>

WHY WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WATER SECTOR MATTERS

Women and water are inseparable. In most developing countries, water is “women’s business.” Women and girls fetch, carry, store, and manage household water. They have intimate knowledge of water sources, water quality, and daily household water requirements. Hence, women have a major stake in water matters and must be part of any decision about water issues.

Women and girls spend an estimated 152–200 million hours a day collecting water, yet they are frequently shut out of decisions relating to water.⁴ In Asia, women and children walk an average of 6 kilometers for water.⁵ Surveys from 45 developing countries show that women and children bear the primary responsibility for water collection in most households (76%).

In some places, women can spend up to 5 hours a day collecting fuel for energy and water, and up to 4 hours preparing food.⁶ The resulting time poverty can deprive them of an income-generating job, the ability to care for family members, or time to attend school.⁷ The economic cost of women’s unpaid work as water collectors is enormous, with the figure for India alone equivalent to a national loss of income of about \$160 million.⁸

Women are the primary promoters of home and community-based sanitation. They influence decisions in the home, manage household budgets to accommodate sanitation needs, and educate the community on the value of proper sanitation, and yet they are inadequately represented in high-level planning and decision making about sanitation. Likewise, women farmers and cultivators need to be involved in irrigation decision making, especially with the increasing out-migration of males and the resulting feminization of agriculture. Women are often left out of key irrigation management decisions since they are not landowners—a prerequisite for membership of irrigation water user groups.⁹

Water projects designed and implemented with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those without. For example, a study by the World Bank and the International Red Cross (IRC) International Water and Sanitation Centre, of community water and sanitation projects in 88 communities, found that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable.¹⁰

A further study by the Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water shows that when women are trained to contribute to asset management there is greater sustainability of assets due to improved operation and maintenance.¹¹ Similarly, some ADB-supported projects designed to increase women’s decision making in community-based organizations (CBOs), such as water user associations, farmer groups, self-help groups, and sanitation committees, have led to improvements in community water infrastructure, water supply, and sanitation.¹² Many studies also demonstrate that reducing the water-collecting burdens of girls and women can lead, for example, to a 20% increase in school attendance within 4 years, and a 50%–90% reduction in women’s time poverty.¹³

WHY WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP MATTERS

Women’s leadership in the water sector matters since, as noted above, water is “women’s business” and critical to the performance of their productive and reproductive roles. The form that their leadership takes, however, is critical and it can only be effective if women are empowered to shape and influence change. Leadership is not about appointing women to token positions, but truly enabling them to influence decision making for the benefit of women, as well as men. The overall purpose of leadership is to influence others, and to ensure that the allocation of resources benefit people and advance development. Yet at present women often lack social and political power, and are systematically excluded and marginalized from decision-making processes.¹⁴

⁴ World Health Organization and United Nations Children’s Fund (WHO & UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation. 2010. Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water, 2010 Update. Geneva: WHO & UNICEF; G. Hutton and L. Haller. 2004. Evaluation of the Costs and Benefits of Water and Sanitation Improvements at the Global Level. Geneva: WHO; Water.org. Water Facts: Women. <http://water.org/water-crisis/water-facts/women/>

⁵ Water for the Ages. 10 Facts on Women and Water. <http://waterfortheages.org/2009/12/02/10-facts-on-women-and-water/>

⁶ Network “GWANET – Gender and Water in Central Asia.” Facts about Women and Water. http://www.gender.cawater-info.net/what_is/facts_e.htm

⁷ WHO/UNICEF (JMP). 2010. Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water.

⁸ Footnote 7.

⁹ F. Sugden. 2014. Feminization of Agriculture, Out-Migration and New Gender Roles: An Imperative to Change Conventional Engagements with Women Water Users. Presentation for Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Water Management Institute (IWMI) workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February.

¹⁰ B. Gross, C. van Wijk, and N. Mukherjee. 2000. *Linking Sustainability with Demand, Gender and Poverty: A Study in Community-Managed Water Supply Projects in 15 Countries*. Delft: Water and Sanitation Program.

¹¹ Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water. 2006. *Gender, Water and Sanitation: A Policy Brief*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA).

¹² ADB. 2014. *ADB Experiences: Women’s Participation and Voice in Community-Based Organizations*. Manila.

¹³ World Bank. 2003. *Morocco – Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project*. Washington, DC.

¹⁴ A. Raina and D. Wichelns. 2014. Gender, Water and Food Security: The Road to Leadership Passes Through Access and Empowerment. Presentation for the ADB and IWMI workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208313041/Gender-Water-and-Food-Security>

At the national level, there is a high correlation between the number of women in elected positions and the formulation of policies and legislation related to women's issues, including water and agriculture services, day care, and street lighting for security. A global survey by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that woman legislators tend to emphasize social issues, such as child care, equal pay, parental leave, and pensions; physical concerns, including reproductive rights, physical safety, and gender-based violence; and human development issues, such as poverty reduction and delivery of basic services. This partly demonstrates the principle that leadership by women, for women, can be an effective catalyst for moving the gender inequality agenda forward. Closing the “democratic gender leadership deficit,” means equal representation of men and women in all aspects of leadership, including water leadership.¹⁵

At local government level, there is growing evidence that women's participation and leadership has transformed social norms and led to greater investment in public services by local councils. In India, one-third of seats on *gram panchayat* (village councils) are reserved for women. This has led to more investments in drinking water infrastructure and better availability of public goods.¹⁶

At a corporate level, recent studies by McKinsey & Company, and Catalyst, reveal that companies with greater gender diversity in their leadership teams outperform those with less—often by as much as 30%. The Catalyst Report revealed that Fortune 500¹⁷ companies with three or more women on the Board gained a significant performance advantage over those with fewer—73%

return on sales, 83% return on equity, and 112% return on invested capital. McKinsey & Company found that companies with the highest percentage of women in executive committees delivered better performance than those with all-male executives. (They exceeded all-male executives by 41% in a return on equity and by 56% in operating results.)¹⁸

Similar results have been demonstrated in Asia. A study of nine Indian companies run by women managers shows that they had outperformed the 30 leading firms listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange in year-on-year growth rates from 2004 to 2008. In this period, they had a compounded annual growth rate of around 35% in pretax income, compared to 21% for the Bombay Stock Exchange-30 firms.¹⁹

A study of companies in Viet Nam shows similar results: companies run by women do better than those run by men. To mid-January 2009, Mekong Capital found that shares of publicly traded companies with female chief executive officers fell by just over 17%, compared with the almost 39% drop experienced by companies with male chief executives.²⁰

At the community level, women's leadership has also led to improved water security and greater efficiency. Two case studies from water CBOs in Sri Lanka demonstrate both the positive impact of women's leadership in community water supply and sanitation projects, and the difficulties of challenging deeply held social norms relating to women's leadership capacities. (Boxes 1 and 3).

Box 1: Lalitha's Story—Making Water Connections for Women

Lalitha Nanamearchchi is the manager of the Bisowela community-run water project in Kegalle District, Sri Lanka. Prior to the establishment of the project, women in her community had been walking significant distances to fetch water for domestic use, and this “women's work” gave them little time for anything other than domestic duties. As part of an Asian Development Bank (ADB) water project, Lalitha took part in technical training and capacity building and become a leader of a community-based organization set up to improve access to water. Since the women desperately needed water, and a household water supply was critical to them, they took the main role in leadership and shouldered the chief burden in project activities. They took a keener interest in pipe-laying than the men, even working through the night to complete the project. The women leaders also initiated tree-planting programs to protect water sources and to preserve the environment. They ensured that the views of women were taken into account when identifying water resources and in assessing water needs. In all these activities women's participation was relatively high compared to that of the men. Indeed, many men in the villages opposed the project, saying, “These are not things women can do. They should stay at home.” The success of the project, however, helped women become respected leaders in their communities. Lalitha's influence as a water leader led to improvements in the lives of 719 families. Lalitha says, “I must tell you how getting water empowered women not only by releasing them from the burden of water carrying, but the project also showed women that they are able to create something [that] is of so much value to society. It also gave them a feeling of achievement and self-worth.”

Source: L. Nanamearchchi. 2014. Women, Power and Disempowerment: Community Women Mobilizing. Presentation for ADB and the International International Water Management Institute workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208316250/Women-Power-and-Disempowerment>

¹⁵ Inter-Parliamentary Union. 2008. Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments. *Reports and Documents 54*. Geneva.

¹⁶ J. Klugman et al. 2014. *Voice and Agency: Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

¹⁷ Fortune 500 is an annual list of the 500 largest companies in the United States, as compiled by *Fortune* magazine

¹⁸ Catalyst. 2007. *The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards (2004–2008)*. <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/bottom-line-corporate-performance-and-womens-representation-boards>; McKinsey & Company. 2013. Gender Diversity in Top Management: Moving Corporate Culture, Moving Boundaries. Women Matter 2013. Paris. http://www.mckinsey.com/features/women_matter

¹⁹ A. Rawani. 2009. Women Promoters Beat Big Daddies. *The Economic Times*. 8 March. http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-03-08/news/28488646_1_growth-rate-biocon-promoters

²⁰ Viet Nam Business Forum. 2009. Outperformance of Listed Companies with Female CEOs in Vietnam. February 10. http://vccinews.com/news_detail.asp?news_id=15399

Box 2: ADB—Building Women’s Leadership in the Water Sector in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic

The majority of recent water sector projects of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have included targets and quotas for supporting women’s leadership, especially in community-based water projects. Training includes building women’s capacity to lead and manage water user groups and management committees. ADB has designed such projects in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Georgia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

The project in the Lao PDR builds women’s leadership skills in the water sector; provides scholarships to female high school graduates to train as water engineers, technicians, and civil and environmental engineers; and offers a mentoring program. To help increase the visibility of women in key management roles across the sector, a gender mentoring network has been established comprising qualified female experts from both private and public sectors.

Source: P. Veoravanh. 2014. Women Empowerment in the Water Sanitation Sector. Presentation for ADB and the International Water Management Institute workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. [m/doc/208318899/Women-Empowerment-in-the-Water-Sanitation-Sector](https://www.adb.org/docs/208318899/Women-Empowerment-in-the-Water-Sanitation-Sector). For further information, see ADB. 2014. *Tomorrow’s Women Water Leaders in Lao PDR*. Manila.

The benefits of women’s participation and involvement in water sector projects are now well recognized. Participation, however, is only the first step. The next, and more critical step to close the gap in water leadership and outcomes, is women’s leadership in the sector.

WHY ARE THERE SO FEW WOMEN LEADERS IN THE WATER SECTOR?

“Missing women” in water sector leadership is largely due to the scarcity of women water professionals, entrenched cultural and traditional attitudes, gender stereotyping, and perceptions that women lack managerial and technical skills. No individual factor can adequately explain the absence of women in water governance, policy making, and water agencies. Rather, it is the confluence of the multiple elements that work in tandem to keep women at the margins of water leadership.

Undoubtedly, there are a limited numbers of women water professionals—engineers, water technicians, environment specialists, and scientists—who are qualified and ready to fill professional positions in the water sector. Gender streaming and stereotyping in secondary education functions to steer girls away from science, technology, engineering, and medicine subjects at university. Hence, few women emerge from university with qualifications in engineering and the sciences, limiting their future employment opportunities as water professionals. Even technical and vocational education programs that train water technicians are highly gender-segregated. Box 2 profiles an innovative water supply project in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) that includes scholarships for female school leavers to train as water and environment engineers, and water technicians to increase the number of professional women in the water sector. More projects such as this, which provide incentives to young women to take up nontraditional courses, are required to open up future employment and leadership opportunities for women.

The lack of female water professionals is compounded by cultural attitudes, social norms, and historical and systemic gender

discrimination. Sociocultural factors may include an unconscious bias toward “male preference” for leadership, together with social norms and cultural beliefs that women make inflexible and inadequate leaders or managers. Additionally, in many technical positions, the required field activities undertaken with male colleagues, such as travel to different locations and overnight stays, may deter women, given prevailing social norms and sociocultural attitudes. These factors, combined with the absence of inspiring female role models, limited mentoring opportunities, and the challenges of maintaining a work–life balance, are just some of the reasons that explain the dearth of women in water leadership positions.

Presenters at the *Women, Water and Leadership* workshop pointed out that in the sphere of irrigation and water resources management, women are often excluded from water decision making because they are not landowners. Land ownership is a primary criterion for membership in irrigation water management committees that make key decisions about water distribution and irrigation charges. Likewise, in water resources management, decisions about how water will be allocated for crop production (cash crops versus food production), how it will be used for agriculture versus energy needs, and how watersheds will be managed, often remain in male hands.

It was also pointed out at the workshop that women frequently face institutional barriers. These may include actual or perceived deficiencies in their technical skills and experience, the absence of a clear career path, actual or perceived factors that limit their career opportunities, and a lack of transparency in promotions and appointments. Exclusion from informal male networks can also act as a barrier to women’s career progression in the water sector.

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Within communities, women who take up leadership positions are sometimes stigmatized and ostracized by powerful members of the community, as Yaso's story in Box 3 shows. Potential female leaders may be discouraged from stepping into the roles because the price to pay is too high. Yaso's experience shows that even when women succeed in making water user groups financially successful, they may face open hostility and the threat that their organization will be taken over by powerful male members of the community.

The participation and leadership of women requires significant input from them in terms of time, labor, skills, and resources. Women already have less free time than men. Without the full support of their household, women's participation in leadership costs them valuable leisure time and significantly increases their workload.²¹

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN LEADERS IN THE WATER SECTOR?

There is limited sex-disaggregated data showing how women compare with men in leadership at various levels and subsectors of the water industry, although some institutional data was presented at the workshop. It revealed that women are significantly underrepresented at every level, and in every subsector. They are also notably absent at the level of international water policy decision making. Since international policy decisions often have an impact on national water policies, women's exclusion at the top level can have serious consequences.

In the United Water Supply Company of Georgia LLC, women comprise 605 (24%) of 2,543 employees, and hold 16% of



management positions. Of the company's 15 departments and 24 divisions, there are two female heads of department and three female heads of divisions. There are no female managers at the service centers. The company's gender policy states that it will increase women's representation to 30% of all employees, and 30% of management. Policy measures to achieve this include encouraging female job seekers to work for the company, and creating a special bonus system for female employees.²²

In the Philippine water utility agency, Maynilad Water Services, Inc., women constitute 23% of staff, 30% of the executive, and 38% of managers and supervisors.²³

Box 3: Yaso's Story—"Building a Wall of Support" for Community-Based Water Projects

Yasomanike Mapagedara from Kandy, Sri Lanka, is the manager of the local water community-based organization (CBO). When setting up and running the project, women leaders broke with tradition by trekking through forests to do manual work at the construction sites. They ran the CBO so well that it accumulated a lot of funds and aroused the interest of the men. Malicious rumors were spread in the community about Yaso and other women leaders, and as a result, many women left the CBO. The men believed that Yaso was blocking them from CBO funds and deliberately sabotaged the project, damaging water infrastructure, including the water lines, and burning CBO files. They also attempted to take over the leadership of the CBO. They failed, however, and Yaso continued as a CBO leader despite the difficulties. She received support from the local water board, NetWater, and the Sri Lanka Global Water Partnership. Her CBO started a catchment conservation program and made links with the Forest Department. "The qualities of a good leader include having to have a lot of patience to look for problem-solving mechanisms and to be safe and take precautions, e.g., never go to the forest alone," she says. "You have to have courage in challenging what is wrong, to build a wall of support with both men and women. There should be more programs for women leaders of CBOs, and more training workshops on management, and technical and information and communication technology skills. We also need to have a dialogue on vesting the management of catchment areas of the projects to the CBOs."

Source: Y. Mapagedara. 2014. Challenges Sri Lankan Women Face in Becoming and Being Community Leaders. Presentation for the ADB and the International Water Management Institute workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208316455/Challenges-Sri-Lankan-Women-Face-in-Becoming-Being-Community-Leaders>

²¹ B. Resurrección. 2014. The Role of Gender and Women's Leadership in Water Governance. Presentation for the ADB and IWMI workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208312673/The-role-of-gender-and-women-s-leadership-in-water-governance>

²² N. Abuladze. 2014. Gender Equality in Water Sector in Georgia: Challenges and Perspectives. Presentation for the ADB and IWMI workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208317700/Gender-Equality-in-Water-Sector-in-Georgia-Challenges-and-Perspectives>

²³ R. Gamboa. 2014. Women Water Utility Leadership: Constraints and Opportunities. Presentation for the ADB and IWMI workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208317192/Women-Water-Utility-Leadership>



In Ranhill Utilities in the State of Johor, Malaysia, women comprised 369 (almost 19%) of the 2,044 employees in 2013. Female managers constituted just over 18% of management overall and 9% of senior management, with the highest position held being that of head of information technology.²⁴ In contrast, at the Selangor Water Management Authority in the State of Selangor, Malaysia, women made up a relatively high percentage of employees (38%) and comprised 56% of the 18 heads divisions, sections, or units. Malaysia has a national gender policy mandating 30% women in decision-making positions in the corporate sector by the end of 2016. To date, the civil service has achieved 32% while progress in the private sector has been slower. Only 93 women have decision-making positions within board listed companies, which equates to only 8%.²⁵

Malaysia has a national gender policy mandating 30% of women in decision-making positions in the corporate sector by the end of 2016... *The Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014* cites Malaysia as the top performer out of six Asian countries in its representation of women in the total workforce and in its representation of women in middle-level positions

The relative success of Malaysia at promoting women in leadership across all sectors (water and nonwater) stands out as a good practice example. *The Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014* cites Malaysia as the top performer out of six Asian countries in its representation of women in the total workforce and in its representation of women in middle-level positions. It comes in second for its representation of women at senior levels. Over half of the companies in Malaysia (52%) have achieved or exceeded gender parity at middle-management levels, and over a third (35%) of companies have done the same at senior levels. In spite of this promising progress, the overall representation of women at middle and senior levels remains low across the six countries. The regional average for middle-level management is 39%, falling to just 24% for senior levels.²⁶

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Women leaders are needed not only in communities, utilities, and government agencies, but also at the level of international policy making, and in international nongovernment agencies so that gender-inclusive water policies can be translated to national levels.

General Recommendations

- Conduct robust research to evaluate the success of promoting women to leadership positions. Replicate good practices.
- Build the technical and managerial skills of women as professionals and technicians in the water sector by developing their competency and expertise.

²⁴ Z. Shariff. 2014. Involvement of Women in Water Management in the State of Johore, Malaysia. Presentation for the ADB and IWMI workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208317386/Involvement-of-Women-in-Water-Management-in-the-State-of-Johore-Malaysia>

²⁵ H. Amer. 2014. The Role of Women Leaders in Water Resources Management for the State of Selangor, Malaysia. Presentation for the ADB and IWMI workshop. From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208316037/Role-of-Women-Leaders-in-Water-Resources-Management>

²⁶ Community Business. 2014. *Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014*. Hong Kong, China. <http://www.gdba2014.org/#!about/c1enr>. The six economies in the study are the People's Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; India; Japan; Malaysia; and Singapore.

- Build capacity for women through different modalities, such as traditional training, blended learning, coaching, mentoring, and exchange programs.
- Establish mechanisms for women to pursue technical careers in engineering, including through scholarships and “women leaders” programs for school-age girls, to expose them to the profession. Ensure that the academic curriculum contains relevant gender studies.
- Put women in leadership posts, but note that this will not automatically make them good leaders. Give them support in the form of technical knowledge of the water sector, management skills, and the confidence to make decisions. This requires short- and long-term investments from governments, utilities, and agencies.
- Continue gender mainstreaming and gender sensitization for all water-related institutions.
- Link governments and water agencies with universities and technical and vocational education and training institutions to encourage more women into the water sector.

Policy and Legislation

- Develop gender-inclusive policies and enact legislation to accelerate women’s advancement.
- Establish temporary special measures with targets, authorized by legislation to proactively increase the numbers of women in professional, technical, and managerial roles within the water industry.
- Enable more women to engage in international policy dialogues.

Education and Training

- Provide young university graduates with practical training, apprenticeships, internships, or short-term job placements in utilities or technical departments to give them practical experience and an overview of the sector.
- Provide women with scholarships for professional and technical education in the water sector and link them with utilities and water agencies (Box 2).

Utilities and Government Agencies

- Assess institutional gender capacity and build a pipeline for women professionals in the middle-management levels, not just at the top.
- Set targets for training women staff.



Community

- Train communities in gender equality so that they welcome and support women water leaders (Box 4).
- Strengthen CBOs, irrigation groups, water user associations, and women’s groups and increase the number of women leaders within them through the use of temporary special measures, quotas, and targets.

Establish temporary special measures, with targets authorized by legislation to proactively increase the number of women in professional, technical, and managerial roles within the water industry

Box 4: Shudha Rani Basak—Leadership Training in Action

Shudha Rani Basak was a typical tea picker, working from dawn to dusk at the Khadim Nagar Tea Garden in a remote area of Sylhet, Bangladesh. Like the other workers, she collected unsafe water from distant sources, and used the nearby spring water for bathing and other domestic purposes. Bushes were used for defecation. When Water Aid offered a training course in her area, Shudha eagerly accepted, receiving training that sharpened her communication and interpersonal skills. She already possessed leadership qualities and motivational skills, and the training helped to build her confidence and realize her potential. Labor unions within the tea industry are commonly controlled by men, and women have very little voice. Shudha, however, having been trained in her rights, started challenging tea garden authorities to provide water, sanitation, and hygiene services for tea pickers. She was also instrumental in negotiating with local government institutions for the provision of resources for very poor families. Through these activities, Shudha has established herself as a leader, and was eventually elected to the Khadim Nagar Union Council. As a result of her efforts, and the support she received from others, two tea gardens achieved the landmark designation of “100% open defecation free status” in March 2013. This represents a first for tea gardens in Bangladesh.

Source: H. Jahan. 2014. How Women Change the Vibe: Field Based WaSH Experience in Leadership Context. Presentation for the Asian Development Bank and the International Water Management Institute workshop, From the Shallows to the Deep: Who is Taking the Lead? Women, Water and Leadership: A Workshop for Asia and the Pacific. Manila. 13–14 February. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/208319892/How-Women-Change-the-Vibe>

- Develop women’s leadership and decision-making skills through training, mentoring, and skills building. It is not enough to simply increase the number of women in community water groups, although a critical mass of women is important. Both quantity and quality are essential components of leadership.
- Enable women to have greater ownership of land, and other fixed and immovable assets. Self-reliance and ownership are a good way to empower women.



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ADB’s vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region’s many successes, it remains home to approximately two-thirds of the world’s poor: 1.6 billion people who live on less than \$2 a day, with 733 million struggling on less than \$1.25 a day. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

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