

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONSULTATION MEETING ON THE

Gender Resource Group in the Upper Indus Basin Network



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Water-energy-food nexus through a gender lens

The Pakistan perspective

Water productivity in Pakistan is considered one of the lowest in the world, with the annual per capita availability of water only at 1,329 cubic metre to feed an estimated population of 207.9 million (2017 census of Pakistan). In addition, unequal regional availability of water is evident, with the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh receiving lesser precipitation compared to others (Siegmann and Shezad 2006). Moreover, the mountain communities remain highly at risk of reduced water availability because of changes in rainfall and run-off patterns induced by increased temperatures and precipitation in the Indus River Basin.

With water becoming an increasingly scarce resource, its usage and management may vary across different community groups. In this regard, the particular aspect of gender relations and women's role around water has not been addressed adequately in research, practice, and policymaking. There exists a research and knowledge gap in the field of gender studies on the access and usage of different water sources for agriculture, household consumption, and energy production. At the grassroots, although women are the major contributors in farm-related activities as well as in livestock and poultry management, decision-making in small-farmer households is dominated by men (FAO report on Women in Agriculture in Pakistan, 2015).

There's also the fact that in Pakistan, water rights are primarily tied with land rights, which becomes a further hindrance for women to exercise equal rights over accessing water. Moreover, both formal and customary laws of land inheritance discriminate against women – thereby only 2.8 per cent of women own plots in the country (Hamid and Afzal 2013).

Meanwhile, women are primarily responsible for the collection, transportation, and management of water at the household level. Yet, they have no, or very limited role in the decision-making and management processes at the community and higher levels. Moreover, when it comes to the energy sector and services, women have even less

authority. Lack of access to modern energy services and improved technologies further hampers women from contributing to the vital sector of energy. It is also to be noted that the employment of women professionals in the energy sphere is minimal. Women occupy less than 10 per cent of the allocated employment quota in Pakistan's Ministry of Water and Power and its National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), which is one of the largest employers in the country (Asian Development Bank, Pakistan country gender assessment report, 2015).

Furthermore, the governmental policies on water, food, and energy neglect the role of women as essential stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving. Even the national statistics do not account for women's unpaid work in the areas of livestock and vegetable farming. And only a few women are part of task forces or committees on water, food, and energy security at the governmental level.

Gender Resource Group

Bridging the gender gaps in science and policy

Such minimal role and participation of women in decision-making bodies on issues surrounding the water-food-energy nexus calls for a gender-focused platform and higher female inclusion in the fraternity of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. One such network, consisting of key stakeholders working on the enhancement of knowledge and practice on the key issues of water, food, and energy in the face of climate change, is the Upper Indus Basin Network (UIBN). The activities of the UIBN in coordination with its country chapters in Afghanistan, China, India, and Pakistan range from framework for data collection and understanding climate risks and hazards to planning adaptation measures against climate-change issues.

In that regard, integration of gender-inclusive knowledge, experiences, and policy inputs are important in finding gender-friendly solutions and policy outcomes that can have a transformative impact not only in terms of gender but overall. Therefore, the Gender Resource Group (GRG) was

envisioned with an aim to work closely with the UIBN in connecting grassroots bodies with the network, expanding gender perspectives on key issues concerning women, and in facilitating a gender-transformative change in climate action.

Consultation meeting on Gender Resource Group

On 29 January 2020, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) conducted a consultation meeting on the GRG in the UIBN, in Islamabad, Pakistan. As many as 25 gender experts from 23 governmental, international, and civil society organizations from Pakistan attended the meeting. The objective of the meeting was to develop an understanding on the formation of a GRG and identify roles and responsibilities among the members. Kosar Bano, Gender and Adaptation Specialist at ICIMOD, stated that the meeting was aimed at discussing possible ways of integration of gender perspective into the UIBN and the larger Indus network for achieving gender-inclusive change. The group would also focus on disseminating the experiences and knowledge of its women professionals and increase awareness on gender-differential vulnerabilities among the practitioners, planners, and decision makers associated with different thematic working groups of the UIBN.

Key Discussion Points

1) WHAT DOES THE TERM “GENDER” ENCOMPASS?

The members emphasized that the term “gender” should be inclusive of the marginalized and vulnerable, and that women should be accorded key priority group within the GRG.

2) WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES SURROUNDING WOMEN?

The members shed light on the neglected issues surrounding women’s rights, their access to and control over water, land, and energy sources as well as on services related to these resources. They also underlined on the need for such issues

to be included in policy-level negotiations. As emphasized by Sosan Aziz, member of Pakistan Commission on Status of Women, land rights for women – especially those widowed or divorced – ought to be a crucial part of the discussions. Another key concern, raised by representatives from Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), was related to subsidies for women farmers.

In her remarks, Riffat Sardar, Chairperson of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW), pointed out the need for creating better capacity building opportunities for women. Describing her work with women in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), she explained how trainings in agriculture and poultry farming not only helped women in developing their skills but also ensured their financial independence and self-reliance. Sardar’s observations were supported by Mehnaz Parveen, CEO of Karakoram Area Development Organization (KADO), who drew attention to the need for creating marketing and entrepreneurship opportunities for women; she also stated that it was time for the society to rethink and give space for women beyond their traditional roles in household activities.

3) HOW DO WE ENSURE GENDER-INCLUSIVENESS IN POLICYMAKING?

The members were unanimous in their opinion that the issues concerning women in the sectors of land, water, energy, and food, should be accorded top priority by the decision makers. They spoke in unison that women should be the ones at the forefront of advocating the issues that closely affect them and that women’s leadership role in policymaking would contribute substantially towards gender-inclusive policies. As pointed out by Simi Kamal of Hisaar Foundation, the consensus was that it was crucial for women to be equipped as leaders, and not as mere beneficiaries, in the vital sectors of water, food, and energy.

4) HOW DO WE PROMOTE GENDER-FOCUSED PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS?

The participants agreed that collaborations and partnerships were the key tools in the area of capacity building of women for decision-making roles at the policy level. They said that collaboration with networks such as the UIBN would not only foster knowledge and resource

sharing, but also build higher awareness on gender issues across the Indus basin.

In her remarks, Mehreen Nadeem of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)-Pakistan pointed out that the GRG could foster better cooperation by including men as partners and allies in the dialogues on water, food, and energy.

The participants also spoke of the need for collaboration and knowledge sharing within the GRG among members from diverse academic, ethnic, and professional backgrounds.

SUCCESS STORY: WOMEN STEPPING UP AS LEADERS IN COMMUNITY

Describing her experiences as the President of the Ghulkin Women Organization, Sitara Ali narrated how proactive petitioning by the women in Ghulkin resulted in the community granting the local women's organization ownership rights of the newly distributed land, which before the introduction of irrigation technologies had been barren. "As women, let's not refrain from raising our voices for our rights," she said emphatically.

This is an exemplary example of what gender activism can achieve, and how Pakistan can empower its women and create strong leaders among them. The Ghulkin women have shown the way; it's now for others to emulate.

Way forward

1) FORMALIZATION OF THE GRG

As part of the first steps, the group was formally named as the Gender Resource Group (GRG), and talks took place on developing its preamble. The group would be working closely with the UIBN-Pakistan Chapter, and the members discussed about finding common grounds of integration with this network through the technical working groups.

2) IDENTIFICATION OF KEY WORK AREAS

Brainstorming on the general role of the group, the members identified the following key areas: a) creation of evidence; b) building of capacity and awareness; c) influencing policy (by way of advocacy, pressure groups, etc.); and d) ensuring the institutionalization and visibility of the group. They also said that more such deliberations were required to address all the priority areas.

3) BUILDING DOCUMENTATION MECHANISMS TO INFLUENCE POLICY

The members also agreed to work towards establishing a strong documentation mechanism in terms of success stories, reports, and data synthesis. These, they felt, would work as some of the key evidence tools in order to influence policy.

4) SUSTAINABILITY OF THE GRG

The members also discussed ways to make the group sustainable over a long period of time. Jodah Bokhari from the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund suggested that members could make efforts to contribute from their respective institutional resources instead of relying on a single institution like ICIMOD. Such self-reliance would strengthen the capacity of the GRG to achieve its desired objectives.

Annex

Proposed list of potential individuals/institutions and network partners

List of invitees

Sr. No.	Name	Institution
1.	Nagina Khan	Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Pakistan
2.	Ayesha Khan	Hashoo Foundation, Pakistan
3.	Ayesha Qaisrani	Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan
4.	Fatima Anila	Women in Renewable Energy (WIRE), Pakistan
5.	Nomeena Anis	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
6.	Sadaf Dar	Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), Pakistan
7.	Sameena Nazir	Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy, Pakistan
8.	Mehnaz Khurshid	SAARC Energy Centre
9.	Rehana Kausar	National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC)
10.	Shaheen Ashraf Shah	World Food Programme (WFP)
11.	Simi Kamal	Hisaar Foundation
12.	Fiza Qureshi	Hashoo Foundation
13.	Jodah Bokhari	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
14.	Ihsan Marwat	SAARC Energy Centre
15.	Sara Ehsan	Technology Times
16.	Filza Rizvi	National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC)
17.	Masooma Hassan	National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC)
18.	Shakeela Masnoon	Public Works Department (PWD), Gilgit-Baltistan
19.	Riffat Sardar	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women
20.	Sana Javed	Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir
21.	Hajat Begum	Khyber Community Representative
22.	Sitara Ali	Ghulkin Community Representative
23.	Ammara Farooq Malik	SEPLAA Foundation
24.	Mehnaz Parveen	Karakoram Area Development Organization(KADO)
25.	Sosan Aziz	Economic Transformative Initiative(ETI), Gilgit Baltistan(GB)
26.	Mehreen Nadeem	World Wide Fund (WWF)-Pakistan
27.	Kosar Bano	ICIMOD
28.	Kanwal Waqar	ICIMOD
29.	Abdul Wahid Jasra	ICIMOD
30.	Farid Ahmed	ICIMOD
31.	Ajaz Ali	ICIMOD
32.	Haris Ayub	ICIMOD
33.	Muhammad Mudassar	ICIMOD
34.	Muhammad Usman Aslam	ICIMOD
35.	Muhammad Aslam	ICIMOD



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