



# Gender Mainstreaming in Water Governance in Central Asia

—  
A guidance document  
for water practitioners





This publication has been prepared within the context of the project, “Women, Water Management and Conflict Prevention – Phase II”, with financial support of the Government of Finland.

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The project is managed by the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities in collaboration with the Gender Section of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General.

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A preliminary version was presented to the participants of the Training-of-Trainers (November 2019, Uzbekistan), where the experience and insights of Central Asian participants informed this final report. We are grateful to the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan for hosting this event.

We would like to extend our gratitude to colleagues who contributed to the development of this publication from the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, the Gender Section and the Communication and Media Relations Section of the Office of the OSCE Secretary General, the Central Asia Desk at the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre, the Office of the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Uzbekistan and the Delegation of Finland to the OSCE.

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# Introduction

The five countries of Central Asia — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan — and the region as a whole face immense water resources management challenges.

The populations and economies are growing, and with them so is the demand for water, not just for drinking and sanitation, but also for the sectoral consumer demands of industry, irrigated agriculture and hydropower. On the supply side, climate change is raising temperatures, disrupting precipitation patterns and melting glaciers, all of which can reduce water supplies or the timing of water availability. Storms, droughts and other extreme weather events can both interfere with water supplies and create more demand for water resources.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) advances good water governance through training courses in Integrated Water Resources Management, support for water user associations and river basin councils, and promotion of civil society participation. Working in partnership with international organizations, national governments and civil society, the OSCE tackles environmental and security issues in many different areas. It supports projects and activities to ensure sustainable management of natural resources, particularly water, within and between countries, to reduce the risk of disasters, to address the challenges of climate change and to manage hazardous waste safely.

The OSCE mainstreams gender throughout its programmes as well as in its technical assistance to governments of participating States. The OSCE has developed this guide to gender mainstreaming in water governance in Central Asia for the benefit of water practitioners in the region. Gender mainstreaming in water governance contributes to stability and security as it can lead to policies that are more effective and can work to reduce social imbalances and tension. When women and men equally decide on how to use water, decisions are better targeted and more representative of the needs of the entire population.

## Gender and human rights

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): “Gender equality is at the very heart of human rights and United Nations values. A fundamental principle of the United Nations Charter adopted by world leaders in 1945 is ‘equal rights of men and women’, and protecting and promoting women’s human rights is the responsibility of all States.”<sup>1</sup> The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations regards gender mainstreaming as a strategy for integrating men’s and women’s concerns and experiences into political, economic and social policies and programmes for the equal benefit of women and men, and with the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality.<sup>2</sup>

UN Women, a United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, picks up on this idea and explains the implications:

As such, gender equality is the overarching and long-term development goal, while gender mainstreaming is a set of specific, strategic approaches as well as technical and institutional processes adopted to achieve that goal. Gender mainstreaming integrates gender equality in national public and private organizations, in central or local policies, and in services and sectoral programmes. In the long run, it aims to transform discriminatory social institutions, laws, cultural norms and community practices, such as those limiting women’s access to property rights or restricting their access to public space.<sup>3</sup>

Gender mainstreaming is the chosen approach of the United Nations system and international community toward implementation of the rights of women and girls as a subset of human rights to which the United Nations dedicates itself. Gender equality is the goal, and gender mainstreaming is the process.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> OHCHR, Women’s Human Rights and Gender Equality

<sup>2</sup> UN Women, Guidance Note: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming (New York, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts. (UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, 2017), p. 4



Tajikistan.  
Woman by an irrigation canal.  
© Peter van Agtmael/Magnum Photos



## The rationale for gender mainstreaming

As a practical matter, gender mainstreaming improves policy-making and project management by providing for the needs of all those affected and by ensuring that inequalities are not perpetuated. Gender mainstreaming also implies an analysis of existing situations in order to identify inequalities, followed by policy development that redresses the inequalities and undoes the mechanisms that caused them.<sup>5</sup> In addition, international donors and others are likely to support organizations that apply gender mainstreaming in their routine business.

**Gender Blindness** is a failure to recognize the roles and responsibilities ascribed to or imposed on women/girls and men/boys in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts.<sup>6</sup>

**Gender Neutral** policies, programmes or situations have no differential positive or negative impact in terms of gender relations or equality between women and men.<sup>7</sup>

**Gender-sensitive** programmes and policies consider gender norms, roles and inequalities, and raise awareness of these issues, although appropriate actions may not necessarily be taken.<sup>8</sup>

**Gender-responsive** programmes and policies consider gender norms, roles and inequalities, and take measures to actively address them. Such programmes go beyond raising sensitivity and awareness and actually do something about gender inequalities.<sup>9</sup>

## Gender and the environment

In its 2016 *Global Gender and Environment Outlook*, the United Nations Environment Programme spells out how gender roles can influence how women and men experience the environment differently:

Socially constructed gender roles create differences in the ways women and men behave in relation to the environment, and in the ways they are enabled to act (or prevented from acting) as agents of environmental change. Even relatively simple gender-based divisions of labour can affect how they experience the environment. If only men fish in the open sea and only women fish in coastal mangroves, they will inevitably have different sets of environmental knowledge and experiences. Or if most men drive to work in a car while most women use public transportation, they will see the environment and changes in it from different vantage points.

Their different environmental positioning may mean women and men have exposures to very different environmental problems and risks, and have very different ideas about the seriousness of environmental problems and appropriate interventions, adaptations and solutions. Further, because of the social construction of gender roles, they may have different – usually unequal – capacities and approaches with respect to environmental interpretation and change.<sup>10</sup>

## Water resources management and gender considerations

Competition for any scarce resource can create tensions that lead to conflict, and water is a strategic resource crucial to local, national and regional security and peace. The OSCE views gender mainstreaming in water governance as contributing to stability and security by leading to more effective policies and reducing social imbalances and tension. An inclusive approach to water management issues also increases transparency and can reduce corruption.<sup>11</sup>

According to UN Water: “Gender considerations are at the heart of providing, managing and conserving the world’s water resources as well as for safeguarding public health and private dignity through proper provision of sanitation and hygiene. The central role of women in water resource management and sanitation, especially in developing countries, is increasingly recognized at all levels of development activity.”<sup>12</sup>

## Central Asia water resource management and gender considerations

The situation with respect to water resources management in Central Asia remains challenging. The demand for water rises with population and economic growth, and the supply of water fluctuates by season and use. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more intense. Historical patterns are no longer holding and the disruptions in the water cycle undermine water planning and management. Against this set of evolving circumstances, the disproportionate effects of water governance in each competing use for water resources calls for gender mainstreaming.

An inclusive and co-operative water governance approach can facilitate the mainstreaming of gender at the sectoral level while taking into account the interrelated needs of multiple users. Involving both women and men in leadership and on decision-making bodies at all levels will improve water management and project performance and increase the likelihood of environmental, social and economic sustainability.



### Case in point: Water User Associations

Zhyldyz Ysmanova is a gender expert at the Central Asian Alliance on Water. She shared experiences from Kyrgyzstan, where more than half of the country’s 633 water associations have gender-balanced boards:

*We observed that when women are board members of these associations they are more efficient because women are the main water users. For example, when men only are board members, they decide on water supply for four consecutive hours a day and do not take into account the needs of the household. Overall, I can say that women are much more informed on water needs and they know exactly where the next pipe should be built to ease the burden on them.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>5</sup> EIGE, What is gender mainstreaming

<sup>6</sup> EIGE, Gender Blindness

<sup>7</sup> EIGE, Gender Neutral

<sup>8</sup> WHO, Integrating gender into HIV/AIDS programmes in the health sector: Tool to improve responsiveness to women’s needs. (WHO press 2009)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> UNEP, Global gender and Environment Outlook. (UN Environment, 2016), p. 22

<sup>11</sup> OSCE, Women, water and security. (Environmental activities, Gender equality, 2015)

<sup>12</sup> UN Water, Gender-disaggregated Data on Water and Sanitation: Expert Group Meeting Report. (UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development, 2009), p. 4

<sup>13</sup> OSCE, Women, water and security. (Environmental activities, Gender equality, 2015)



# Water governance in Central Asia



Kazakhstan. Zhetisay.  
The irrigated fields of Zhetisay are Kazakhstan's leading producer of cotton.  
© Carolyn Drake/Magnum Photos

Shared water resources and a history of common water governance connect the countries of Central Asia. The challenge now facing the countries and the region is how to find a balance among the competing users in a period of increasing demand for water.

### Principles of good water governance

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) lays out 12 principles for enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency and trust and engagement in water governance:

1. Clearly allocate and distinguish roles and responsibilities for water policy-making, policy implementation, operational management and regulation, and foster co-ordination across these responsible authorities.
2. Manage water at the appropriate scale(s) within integrated basin governance systems to reflect local conditions, and foster co-ordination between the different scales.
3. Encourage policy coherence through effective cross-sectoral co-ordination, especially between policies for water and the environment, health, energy, agriculture, industry, spatial planning and land use.
4. Adapt the level of capacity of responsible authorities to the complexity of water challenges to be met, and to the set of competencies required to carry out their duties.
5. Produce, update, and share timely, consistent, comparable and policy-relevant water and water-related data and information, and use it to guide, assess and improve water policy.
6. Ensure that governance arrangements help mobilize water finance and allocate financial resources in an efficient, transparent and timely manner.
7. Ensure that sound water management regulatory frameworks are effectively implemented and enforced in pursuit of the public interest.
8. Promote the adoption and implementation of innovative water governance practices across responsible authorities, levels of government and relevant stakeholders.
9. Mainstream integrity and transparency practices across water policies, water institutions and water governance frameworks for greater accountability and trust in decision-making.
10. Promote stakeholder engagement for informed and outcome-oriented contributions to water policy design and implementation.
11. Encourage water governance frameworks that help manage trade-offs across water users, rural and urban areas, and generations.
12. Promote regular monitoring and evaluation of water policy and governance where appropriate, share the results with the public and make adjustments when needed.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> OECD, OECD Principles on Water Governance. (Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, 2015), p.12



The principles of good water governance are derived from those of good governance in general and are formulated around the concepts of equity, efficiency, decentralization, integration, transparency and accountability. These principles are also the building blocks of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) – a crosscutting concept of good water governance.

According to the Global Water Partnership (GWP), IWRM is a process that promotes the “co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources by maximising economic and social welfare without compromising the sustainability of vital environmental systems.”<sup>15</sup>

The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, which was prepared in advance of the Rio summit in 1992, lays out principles to guide water governance. The GWP summarizes the principles this way: “Integrated water resources management is based on the equitable and efficient management and sustainable use of water and recognizes that water is an integral part of the ecosystem, a natural resource, and a social and economic good, whose quantity and quality determine the nature of its utilization.”

### Case in point: The Ferghana Valley

Competition for scarce water resources has been recognized as a potential source of international conflict. Individual nations and the international system have nevertheless learned to manage this threat.<sup>16</sup>

In the Ferghana Valley, IWRM is one of the approaches that contributes to reducing such threats and to improving the effectiveness of water resources management. It has been successfully adopted at the lower levels (main canal, water user associations and farmers) and has established relations between the levels outlined below. The increased participation of water users in decision-making has helped reduce water losses, controlled water delivery and improved water distribution among all end users.

The Ferghana Valley IWRM adopted a multi-level approach that covers several levels of water management hierarchy, starting with the end water users and former on-farm network of collective farms and State farms up to main canal management and beyond into small transboundary river basins. The water management institutions were set up according to hydrographic principles at various levels that enable water delivery systems to be managed within hydrological units rather than within administrative boundaries.<sup>17</sup>

### Other uses and climate change

The management of water resources in Central Asia entails balancing the requirements of economic sectors such as energy, agriculture, industry, tourism and others against each other and against the municipal and household needs for drinking water and sanitation. Some needs are more or less constant throughout the year, and some are seasonal. Demand for water continues to increase across the range of users, and water managers must now also contend with the disruptions caused by climate change. The increasing temperatures, changing patterns of precipitation and the melting of glaciers are all exacerbating the pressure on water resources, and adding another consideration in the day-to-day and year-to-year planning in the water sector.

co-operation in the joint management of transboundary water resources in the Aral Sea Basin. Subsequent agreements consolidated provisions that would ensure the effectiveness of this interstate mechanism and enable the conditions for the implementation of joint commitments with the goal of a sustainable water supply for national and sectoral interests.<sup>18</sup>

International donors working in the region have spearheaded interstate negotiation processes, and continue facilitating the process of water reforms in each country. The OSCE promotes best practices and co-operative transboundary water management in Central Asia through several activities at the field level as well as through the Aarhus Centres. Well-governed water resources are crucial for sustainable development and conflict prevention. Aarhus Centres work to facilitate dialogue, decision-making and public participation in sustainable and equitable water management at the local, national and transboundary levels.<sup>19</sup>

In promoting IWRM, the OSCE and field operations focus on capacity-building of national authorities and other relevant stakeholders and promote the participation of water user associations (WUAs) in decision-making.

### Transboundary resources

Transboundary water management can lead to improved relations among countries and communities, and enhance regional security, prosperity and the protection of the environment.

Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asian countries established the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination with executive bodies to co-ordinate and strengthen

### Case in point: Chu-Talas Basin Commission

The Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic on the Use of Water Management Facilities of Intergovernmental Status on the Chu and Talas Rivers is an example of successful water co-operation in Central Asia. Established in 2006 with the support of the international community, including the United Nations and the OSCE, the Chu-Talas Water Commission has been successfully operating and maintaining facilities in accordance with their water-sharing schedule.<sup>20</sup>

According to Indira Akbozova, the head of the Kazakh team on the commission:

*“Women are more diplomatic in expressing their opinions, especially in transboundary water diplomacy. Officials from different countries most often have very opposing opinions and women can smooth out suggestions.”<sup>21</sup>*

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> OSCE, Aarhus Centres: Water resource management

<sup>20</sup> UNECE & OSCE, Project Report: Development off cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers (Chu – Talas II, 2011), p. 2

<sup>21</sup> OSCE, Women, water and security. (Environmental activities, Gender equality, 2015)

<sup>15</sup> GWP, Integrated water resources management in Central Asia: The challenges of managing large transboundary rivers. (Global Water Partnership, 2014), p.2

<sup>16</sup> UNEP, UNDP, OSCE, NATO, Environment and Security: Transforming risks into cooperation. (UNEP, UNDP, OSCE, NATO, 2005), p. 11

<sup>17</sup> GWP, Integrated water resources management in Central Asia: The challenges of managing large transboundary rivers. (Global Water Partnership, 2014), p. 17



**Inclusive and negotiated water governance**

According to the OSCE report “Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Water Governance”, inclusive and consultative policy processes are no panacea for addressing all of the challenges facing the water sector, but they can contribute to more effective decision-making and implementation processes and to better water governance at large. Stakeholders that compose the water sector play a crucial role in determining the outcome of a given policy or project. They can initiate and support it, but they can also oppose efforts, attempt to block them or divert them to serve their own aims. Stakeholder engagement provides opportunities to share objectives, experiences and responsibilities, and to be more supportive of solutions that will be reached while voicing and addressing concerns and interests. As such, stakeholder engagement is a means for groups and individuals to share tasks and

responsibilities in a sector where they often contribute to challenges as well as solutions.

Stakeholder engagement on water has expanded into diverse forms and multiple purposes. It has enabled more and more actors and practitioners to get involved, but it also faces some obstacles and raises some costs that hinder its contribution to, and impact on, the effectiveness of water projects and policies’ objectives. For engagement processes to be relevant, a careful balance between what they try to achieve, the resources they require and whether they succeed in reaching the intended objectives is needed. Framework conditions have been identified, and can provide the foundation for setting up the enabling environment towards impactful and meaningful engagement in water governance.<sup>22</sup>



Tajikistan. Shaartuz.  
Uzbek women work on cotton fields in southern Tajikistan.  
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<sup>22</sup> OECD, Stakeholder Engagement for Inclusive Water Governance. (OECD Studies on Water, 2015), p.168



# Organizational considerations



Uzbekistan. Dosluk.  
A girl collects water from an irrigation canal.  
© Carolyn Drake/Magnum Photos

Effective gender mainstreaming and implementation of a coherent water governance policy calls for staff capacity development to increase knowledge, abilities and skills; gender budgeting to enable the inclusion of gender in the organizational culture and projects; and gender-sensitive staffing. Effective gender mainstreaming in water governance also relies, to some extent, on the willingness of male and female water practitioners to accept gender mainstreaming across organizational policies and culture.<sup>23</sup>

## Capacity development

In its article, “Monitoring Organizational Capacity Development Efforts”, the United States Agency for International Development says: “Organizational capacity is the ability of an organization to perform and sustain itself over time in line with its mission and objectives. Organizational capacity development is an intentional, collaborative effort to strengthen an organization’s processes, knowledge, relationships, assets, or behaviors to improve its performance.”<sup>24</sup>

Capacity development on gender equality refers to building and/or enhancing the knowledge, skills and ability of individuals, institutions, groups and organizations to mainstream gender and achieve gender equality objectives in a sustainable and transformative manner.

<sup>23</sup> OSCE, Gender mainstreaming in Aarhus Activities: A guideline for practitioners (OSCE Secretariat, OSG/Gender Section, 2012), p. 15

<sup>24</sup> USAID, Monitoring Organizational Capacity Development Efforts. (Learning Lab, 2018)



### Case in point: Aarhus Centres

In an effort to support the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and provide members of the public with practical resources for exercising their environmental rights under the Convention, the OSCE – through its field operations and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities – has supported the establishment and operation of Aarhus Centres since 2002.

These Centres play a crucial role in promoting all three pillars of the Aarhus Convention – access to information, public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. They improve awareness among the public and governmental authorities by disseminating environmental information and by carrying out numerous educational and training projects relevant to the implementation of the Convention. By providing a venue where members of the public can meet to discuss environmental concerns, the Aarhus Centres strengthen environmental governance. They assist the public in participating in environmental decision-making and they facilitate access to justice on environmental matters, sensitizing the public and governments to their shared responsibility for their natural surroundings. These centres also provide guidance and contribute to capacity-building and training.

By paying greater attention to the integration of gender mainstreaming principles, Aarhus Centre staff, policymakers and other stakeholders can actively contribute to ensuring that activities are inclusive and do not perpetuate inequality. Additionally, integrating a gender perspective into Aarhus activities allows stakeholders to demonstrate their commitment to international good practice and principles. Gender mainstreaming in Aarhus activities<sup>25</sup> ensures that:

- The needs, knowledge and contributions of both men and women are equally reflected and inequality is not perpetuated
- Aarhus Centres represent all stakeholders equally, increasing transparency, accountability and public trust
- Women's participation in public life and decision-making processes increases
- The interests and rights of men and women taken into equal account result in a more balanced and representative provision of services

### Budgeting

In an article on how taking gender into account can be good for a country's economy, The Economist explains: "Gender budgeting is a way for governments to promote equality through fiscal policy. It involves analysing a budget's

differing impacts on men and women and allocating money accordingly, as well as setting targets – such as equal school enrolment for girls – and directing funds to meet them."<sup>26</sup>



### Case in point: Development in Tajikistan

Tajikistan is vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, and has a low capacity for adaptation. Agricultural production is especially vulnerable to changing weather conditions, natural disasters and water shortages.<sup>27</sup>

According to a recent guidance note from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development: "In Tajikistan several initiatives, investments and technical assistance activities were undertaken with the support of the Climate Investment Funds' Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (CIF PPCR), which aims to establish foundations for gender-responsive climate-resilient development supported by the private sector. In this case, specific vulnerabilities (of women) to climate shocks as a specific socio-economic group as well as potential opportunities for gender transformational change were taken into consideration. A number of private sector-focused climate resilience investments with associated technical assistance components were implemented under the Tajikistan PPCR. These efforts gave rise to a number of questions concerning both direct and indirect benefits for individual women and men, women and men-led businesses, and female and male-headed households."<sup>28</sup>

In its portfolio for 2015–2017, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has created gender budgeting for improving water supply and irrigation efficiency, and for building climate change resilience to natural disaster risks. Through a gender action plan conducted as part of a project to increase climate resilience in the Pyanj River basin, ADB ensures that women will benefit from flood protection activities and rehabilitated water supply infrastructure. The plan will provide basic information about women's role in agriculture, on the impacts of poor water infrastructure, and on climate change.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> OSCE, Gender mainstreaming in Aarhus Activities: A guideline for practitioners (OSCE Secretariat, OSG/Gender Section, 2012), p.13

<sup>26</sup> E.W., How taking gender into account can be good for a country's economy. (The Economist, 2017)

<sup>27</sup> Elisabeth Duban, Tajikistan: Country Gender Assessment (ADB, 2016)

<sup>28</sup> EBRD, How private sector investment can support gender-responsive, climate-resilient development in Tajikistan: Guidance Note. (Gender Guidance Note, 2019), p.13

<sup>29</sup> ADB, Women, Water and Leadership. (ADB Briefs, 2014)





Tajikistan. Shaartuz.  
Irrigation canal  
© Carolyn Drake/Magnum Photos

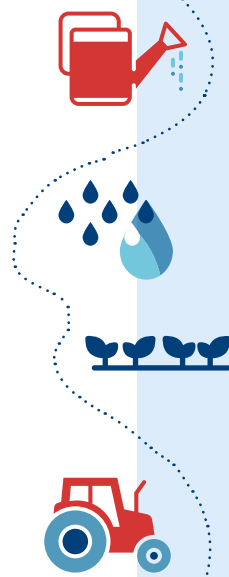
Staffing

The gender mainstreaming considerations related to staffing and organizational culture encompass the issues affecting female and male staff – recruitment, promotion and training opportunities for female and male staff and salaries. Staffing issues are embedded in capacity development

and budgeting, so what happens in those areas affects the staff. Gender mainstreaming related to staffing extends to the setting up of support structures such as child-care facilities and flexible working hours that enable women and men to work equally.

Case in point: Gender equity in irrigation

In a pilot project in Uzbekistan, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems tested its Gender in Irrigation Learning and Improvement Tool with staff and members of a Water Consumers Association (WCA). Although many women in Uzbekistan participate in agricultural production through kitchen gardens, very few are officially registered as farmers, and were institutionally excluded. This pilot was extended to include households and to consider the women water users. Almost all of the WCA participants were men, and almost all of the household participants were women. Through interviews and focus group discussions, the pilot found the following:



- Women were institutionally excluded from scheme planning and decision-making
- The main beneficiaries were large farms
- The standardized irrigation schemes ignored the local context
- Households lack formal representation on the WCA
- No formal mechanism requires the WCA to consider irrigation needs for household production
- The impact on women's ability to produce food for their families was significant and negative
- Separate planning for domestic use and irrigation increases the potential for conflict

For women to be included in the planning stages and have an opportunity to influence decision-making, they need to take on official roles as participants in institutions.<sup>30</sup>


<sup>30</sup> N. Lefore, E. Weight and N. Mukhamedova, Improving Gender Equity in Irrigation: Application of a Tool to Promote Learning and Performance in Malawi and Uzbekistan. (R4D Learning Series, 2017), p. 18-19



# Gender mainstreaming in organizations

This step-by-step process for gender mainstreaming is intended for managers and other staff in water organizations in Central Asia. The participants may include as wide a group as feasible – stakeholders and water users; donors and interested agencies; and staff and board members of any related organizations.

This manual can be helpful in various circumstances to ensure gender mainstreaming. Organizations can use the step-by-step process presented here in staff workshops and with stakeholders in planning sessions for new projects. The process may also serve as training-of-trainers guidance for professionals responsible for gender considerations in their organizations or as teaching material in courses on water governance. Typically, a professional trained in gender mainstreaming guides the process.

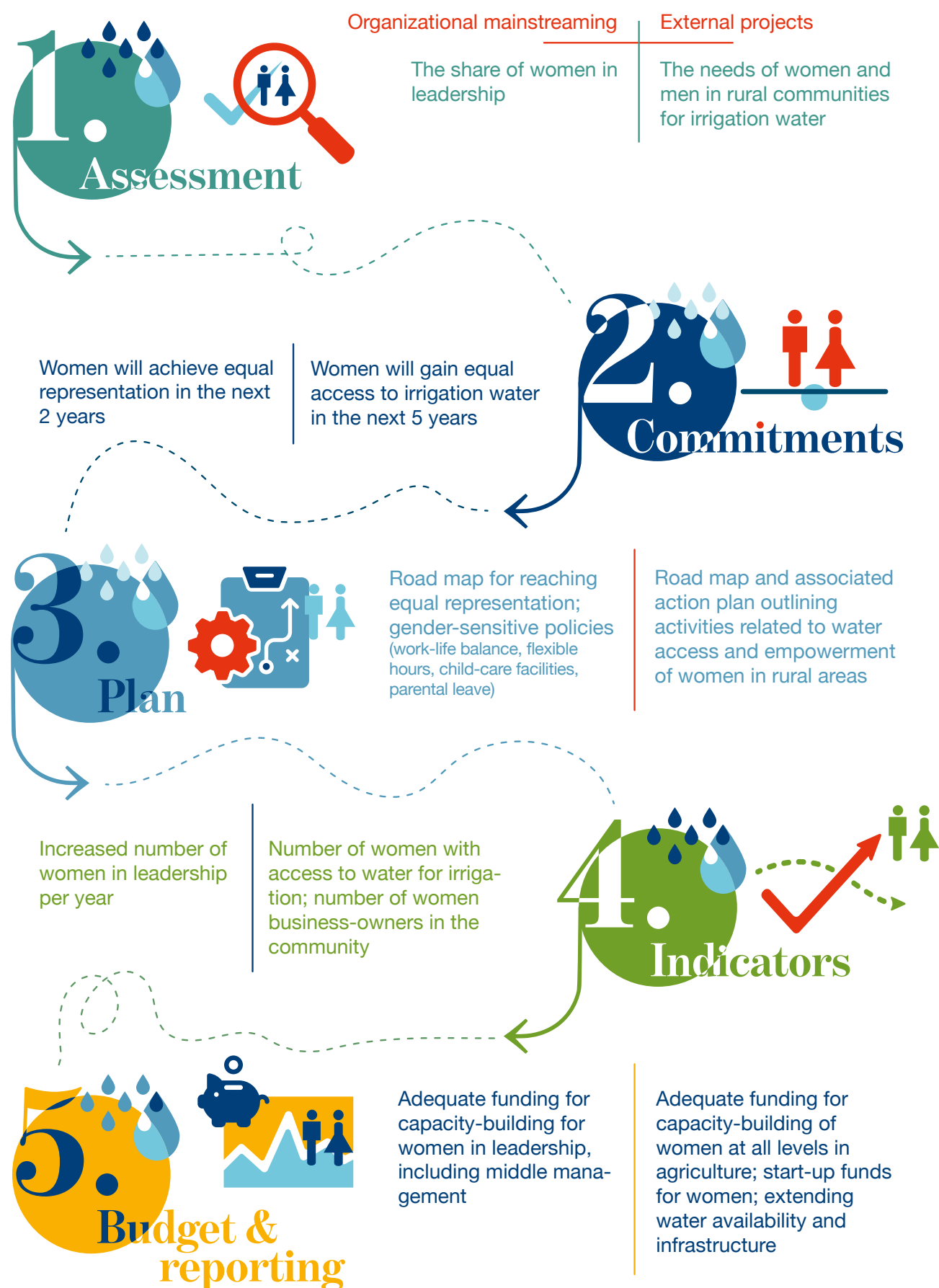


Damla, Turkmenistan.  
Collecting rainwater from the village pond in the Karakum desert.  
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## Overview

The figure below shows the five steps for gender mainstreaming and examples of how each step informs the next.



This guide to gender mainstreaming in water governance in Central Asia starts with an assessment tool designed as a means for identifying and understanding gender differences, gender roles and power relations in the context of an organization. The steps that follow build on this foundation, but as the graphic above depicts, Step 1 is a self-contained assessment that can raise sensitivity to gender issues in an organization — an important goal in itself.

For organizations that want to respond to the findings of their gender assessment, the guide offers a framework for developing a clear vision of the commitments it wants to make and a plan for implementing those commitments. The guide then shows how to establish targets based on the organization's plan, and indicators based on the targets — essential elements for an evaluation of the organization's progress. The guide concludes with the setting up of budgeting and reporting procedures that enable the organization to implement its plans.

## Step 1: Conduct a gender assessment



A comprehensive gender assessment examines the differences between men and women in terms of rights, unpaid domestic and care work, division of labour, access to resources and power. Such an assessment may also look for factors that shape gender relations — national laws and regulations, education, public health, culture and environmental factors, among others — and typically includes both quantitative and qualitative considerations. The main aim is to shed light on areas where commitment and action are needed, so that organizations can meet the different needs of different people.<sup>31</sup>

Gender assessment for an organization paves the way for including gender perspective in organizational activities, promoting gender equality, and raising awareness of and sensitivity to gender considerations. At a minimum, a gender assessment seeks outcomes that do no harm. The participants in an organizational gender assessment should bear in mind these questions:

- What are the different roles, resources, opportunities, needs and constraints for men and women in the organization?
- How do the organization's activities affect and benefit women and men differently?

Guided by the principle of doing no harm, a gender assessment should help organizations avoid gender blindness, which according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is: "the failure to recognize that the roles and responsibilities of women/girls and men/boys are ascribed to, or imposed upon, them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts." Because gender-blind projects, programmes, policies and attitudes do not take into account the different roles and diverse needs of women and girls and men and boys, the EIGE says, they maintain the status quo, doing nothing to help transform the unequal structure of gender relations.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, a gender-neutral project, programme or policy: "has no differential positive or negative impact in terms of gender relations or equality between women and men."<sup>33</sup>

The gender analysis matrix below is illustrative of the type of questions for the assessment to consider, and provides examples of how to answer the questions. The answers provide potential examples of how to answer the questions. These answers are intended to be suggestive rather than prescriptive.

<sup>31</sup> WECF International, The gender impact assessment and monitoring tool. (Women2030, 2018), p. 51









<sup>32</sup> EIGE, Gender Blindness

<sup>33</sup> EIGE, Gender Neutral











Gender analysis matrix









Household

<b>Labour</b> Who does what?	 Household tasks, irrigation of the garden, cooking, ensuring water is stored properly  Planting of the garden and setting up irrigation canals for the garden
<b>Time</b> How much time is used to do what?	 7-8 hours daily spent on household tasks, 1-2 hours for irrigation and maintenance of canals and water tanks depending on season, washing and cooking 2-3 hours depending on availability of water  3-4 hours a week on household tasks depending on season
<b>Resources</b> Who has access and control over what?	 Limited control over financial assets, overall management of daily budget of the family  Bread winner and holder of all assets and bank accounts of the family
<b>Culture</b> How does culture influence the access and control over?	 Traditionally homemakers except in cases of labour migration of husband or to take part-time seasonal jobs  Traditionally sole bread winner of the family except in cases of labour migration

Community

<b>Labour</b> Who does what?	 Seasonal workers in agriculture  Factory or agricultural worker, some traders
<b>Time</b> How much time is used to do what?	 60-80 days a year spent working in agriculture mainly harvesting produce  Full-time workers, sometimes away for 5-6 months and sending remittances
<b>Resources</b> Who has access and control over what?	 Have limited control over the market through selling some produce from home gardens and income from seasonal work  Traditionally land owners and have main control over the market and trade
<b>Culture</b> How does culture influence the access and control over?	 Traditionally only present in certain positions – education, health care but more and more present in the markets and agricultural associations  Main representative of family in the community and the main decision makers in communities, be it formal or informal governing bodies

WUAs

<b>Labour</b> Who does what?	 Some limited input as seasonal workers  Managers and decision makers, sometimes absent or working in other countries
<b>Time</b> How much time is used to do what?	 1-2 hours a year in community meeting where seasonal workers are included  Full-time jobs at all levels of tasks
<b>Resources</b> Who has access and control over what?	 Close to no access or control  Main decision makers
<b>Culture</b> How does culture influence the access and control over?	 Not included traditionally  Main decision makers and policy influencers

Basin association

<b>Labour</b> Who does what?	 Close to no role  Managers, decision makers and experts
<b>Time</b> How much time is used to do what?	 Minimum input from local communities  Full-time jobs at all levels of tasks
<b>Resources</b> Who has access and control over what?	 Close to no access or control  Main decision makers and access to funds
<b>Culture</b> How does culture influence the access and control over?	 Not included traditionally  Main decision makers and policy influencers

Organizational responses can be gathered through workshops, interviews and meetings with staff, stakeholders and any other participants, or participants can complete questionnaires. Trainers make a record of the comments gathered, and prepare a report of findings. This report can then serve as the basis for further discussions to fine-tune the results and to reach broad agreement on what the process uncovered.

At the conclusion of the gender assessment, the organization should have a clear idea of the gender issues of concern. Simply by being part of the assessment process, participants are likely to have greater sensitivity to gender issues, and may have ideas for what the organization can do to respond effectively with the new knowledge at their disposal. In any case, the assessment should raise awareness of gender concerns and may give rise to feelings of empathy previously unknown or unacknowledged among the participants.



Step 2:  
Formulate a clear vision of gender commitments for the organization

This process relies on inputs from all level of staff, a common vision and a strong set of objectives set by the senior management and leadership of the organization to be successful. A clear vision related to gender commitments may include any of the following:

- Developing capacity-building activities for both women and men to improve their knowledge and skills related to parity of participation in democratic and transparent water governance;
- Setting gender quotas for leadership positions;
- Including women and girls in technical training – on efficient use of water, construction and maintenance of water infrastructure systems and monitoring of water quality;
- Developing and implementing training modules – on water and the environment, water and sustainable agriculture, water and transparency and accountability;

- Ensuring that women are actively involved in planning, data collection, monitoring and evaluation;
- Establishing alliances with local and international NGOs working on gender and water.

The determination of the gender commitments should flow naturally from the findings of the gender assessment and be in line with the organization's specific mandates and operations. Commitments should look at internal organizational matters and address gender aspects of activities and projects. Where women are underrepresented in leadership positions, for example, the organization could commit to increasing the number of women in those positions. Working from the report of the gender assessment, participants can choose their priority commitments, and the trainer can guide the participants through the process of laying out their vision for the organization's gender commitments.





Step 3:  
Develop a gender action plan

The vision created in Step 2 is essentially a gender policy — a public statement of commitment to take gender issues seriously. In the context of water governance, the policy covers both internal or organizational culture and programmes or projects. In addition, the gender policy includes a Gender Action Plan (GAP) that describes how a gender policy will be implemented. An inclusive process for developing a GAP establishes ownership. This guidance for developing a GAP is intended as advisory, and users are encouraged to adapt the material to suit their own purposes and circumstances.

Senior management commitment

Commitment and leadership from senior management is essential for developing a Gender Action Plan. Only senior management can call for participation throughout the organization, and ensure the co-ordination of the Gender Action Plan and the budget so that sufficient funds will be allocated to implement the Plan.

Working group

An internal working group — with an understanding of its tasks and a clear deadline — drafts the GAP and ensures the representation of all programmes and organizational levels.

Stakeholder consultations

After preparing an assessment of the current situation and the needs, the working group engages in consultative meetings with key stakeholders in government and civil society, and with any partners. If consultations with external partners

are not feasible, the working group can examine key national policy and strategy documents.

Outline

The working group develops an outline of the contents of the GAP to include:

- Work undertaken to address gender issues in the project or programme;
- Targets and design features included in the project or programme to address gender concerns and ensure tangible benefits to women and men, especially those from vulnerable communities;
- Mechanisms to ensure implementation of the gender design elements;
- Gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation indicators.

If external activities are planned, a communication strategy may be annexed to the GAP in order to maximize outreach.

Draft plan

The drafting of a Gender Action Plan is a working group effort that will take several rounds of meetings to discuss the draft, and that may require additional internal consultations to finalize. A professional trainer can provide expertise for organizing and facilitating such workshops.

The sample template for a Gender Action Plan follows.

Sample template for a Gender Action Plan

Note: Organizations are encouraged to modify this template to meet their specific needs

Organizational Commitment

Examples of organizational commitments in a water organization might include:

- Increasing the number of women in senior management
- Improving working conditions to accommodate the need of families
- Increasing participation of local communities, including women, in transboundary water management to prevent regional conflict
- Improving access to affordable, year-round water for irrigation and household use taking into account gender specific needs

Outcome/output statement example:

The plan will result in improved business opportunities for [an estimated number or percentage of] women-led or women-owned enterprises in agriculture through capacity-building activities tailored to women both in the organization and in projects and through the modification of the availability of irrigation water to meet the need of women and household gardens.

In many cases, organizations will have outputs related to organizational mainstreaming and to external projects. These cases call for separate output statements followed by associated activities, gender performance indicators, gender-disaggregated targets, timelines and responsibilities.

**Outcomes** describe the intended changes in development conditions resulting from interventions. They can relate to changes in institutional performance.<sup>34</sup>

**Outputs** are specific goods and services produced by a programme. Outputs can also represent changes in skills or abilities or capacities of individuals or institutions, resulting from the completion of activities within a development intervention within the control of the organization.<sup>35</sup>

Activities – a list that says what the organization will do in practice, such as:

- Workshop on management skills for women in mid-management
- Installation of water access points inside rural areas or households
- Establishment of a network connecting women farmers and government representatives

Indicators and targets (See Step 4 below)

Timeline

The plan identifies when the organization intends to accomplish each target and indicator.

Responsibilities

The plan identifies who is responsible for accomplishing each target and indicator.

Budget (See Step 5 below)

The plan includes the approximate costs.

Modified from Green Climate Fund<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Angela Bester, Results-Based Management in the United Nations Development System (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2016), p. iii

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> GCF, Gender Analysis/Assessment and Gender and Social Inclusion Action Plan Templates. (GCF, 2018), p. 5-6





Step 4:  
Development of a set of indicators

The objectives or targets laid out in the Gender Action Plan provide the basis for the determination of indicators. The development of indicators that can be used to measure progress against the targets is an essential part of project evaluation, and a good set of indicators can inform managers, stakeholders, donors and the public on how a project is performing on gender issues.

The development of gender policy in water governance — like all good policy development — takes into account the demographics of the population to be served, but gender policy considers quantitative data differentiated by men

and women. Data disaggregated by gender, age and socio-economic status can provide insight into which groups are affected more by a specific problem and can help target activities, programmes and policies to specific needs. The use of disaggregated data may be especially useful for some indicators.

One popular approach to the development of indicators is to start with the criteria that indicators should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound, or SMART. These criteria are useful in developing new indicators or revising old ones.

SMART indicators	
Specific	The indicator should accurately describe what is intended to be measured, and should not include multiple measurements in one indicator
Measurable	Regardless of who uses the indicator, consistent results should be obtained and tracked under the same conditions
Achievable	Collecting data for the indicator should be simple, straightforward, and cost-effective
Relevant	The indicator should be closely connected with each respective input, output or outcome
Time-bound	The indicator should include a specific time frame

SMART indicators for gender mainstreaming in water projects could include:

- The proportions of women and men in leadership positions;
- The proportions of women and men participating in decision-making;

- The proportion of women and men with access to irrigation water.

These examples would serve as indicators for the underrepresentation found in an assessment leading to an organizational commitment to achieve equal representation and incorporated in the plan with a specific time frame.

The Asian Development Bank<sup>37</sup> incorporates GAPs into its project administration manuals, and its tool kit on gender equality indicators includes advice about what the indicators should measure:

- Differences in participation, benefits, outcomes, and impacts for women, men, boys, and girls
  - Percentage of women in leadership
  - Number of women with access to irrigation water
  - Percentage of the market controlled by women-led businesses
- Changes in gender relations (positive or negative), that is, changes toward equality, or changes toward inequality between men and women and between girls and boys
  - Increase in number of women involved in decision-making
  - Decrease in inequalities related to access to funds between genders
  - Increase in gender responsive budgeting in projects of a given organization
- How these changes impact on the achievement of development objectives, particularly economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development
  - Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex
  - Share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

The toolkit<sup>38</sup> also provides a set of questions to guide the selection of gender equality indicators:

- Do stakeholders understand why it is important to collect sex-disaggregated information, and to undertake social and gender analysis?

- Does the capacity of partners and implementers to collect and analyze sex-disaggregated information need to be strengthened?
- Whom is the information for? Do key stakeholders understand how it will be used, and is it relevant to their needs?
- Are the indicators easy to understand and use? Can the information be easily collected using existing local systems?
- Do the indicators impose new reporting burdens on partners, or are they aligned with existing reporting obligations?
- Will the information to be collected tell us whether development objectives have been achieved for both women and men, and whether there are any significant differences in the benefits for women and men, boys, and girls?
- Will the indicators help to measure gender equality results – such as women’s and men’s participation, benefits, outcomes, and impacts?
- Will the indicators help to measure changes and trends in gender relations over time, and the causes of those changes and trends?
- Will both quantitative and qualitative methods be used to collect information?
- Has gender and social analysis been used to help identify the indicators?
- Will the indicators provide information to improve the effectiveness of strategies to address gender inequalities and advance gender equality?

The annex includes a list of links to online sources of indicators that might be used with a Gender Action Plan.

<sup>37</sup> ADB, Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators. (Asian Development Bank, 2018), p. 6

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.





Step 5:  
Set up budgeting and reporting

Project budgets can be the instruments by which organizations can ensure that women and men can benefit equally from water programmes. Budgets are not inherently gender-neutral policy tools and can create inequalities in the distribution of financial resources among the different activities and eventually hinder the implementation of the gender mainstreaming commitments. The UN Women description of gender-responsive budgeting takes pains to explain that the idea is not to create separate budgets for women, or solely to increase spending on women's programmes:

Rather, gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It should be based on in-depth analysis that identifies effective interventions for implementing policies and laws that advance women's rights. It provides tools to assess the different needs and contributions of men and women, and boys and girls within the existing revenues, expenditures and allocations and calls for adjusting budget policies to benefit all groups.<sup>38</sup>

This approach to budgeting applies equally well at the organizational level.

Abbreviations

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CGIAR</b>	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
<b>CIF</b>	Climate Investment Fund
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>GAP</b>	Gender Action Plan
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>IWRM</b>	Integrated Water Resource Management
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PPCR</b>	Pilot Program for Climate Resilience
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNECE</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WCA</b>	Water Consumers Association
<b>WECF</b>	Women Engage for a Common Future
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WUA</b>	Water User Association

<sup>38</sup> UN Women, Gender Responsive Budgeting



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# Annex: Gender assessment tools

## Gender analysis matrix

	Labour Who does what?		Time How much time is used to do what?		Resources Who has access to/ control over what?		Culture How does culture influence the access to/control over?	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Institutions								
Household								
Community								
WUAs								
Basin association								

Oxfam (1999) A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks.<sup>39</sup>

## Useful links to other gender assessment tools

World Bank Toolkit for Mainstreaming Gender in Water Operations (2016)  
[https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif\\_enc/files/genderinwater\\_07\\_040416\\_web.pdf](https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/genderinwater_07_040416_web.pdf)

OECD GENDERNET Practice Notes  
<https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/44843807.pdf>

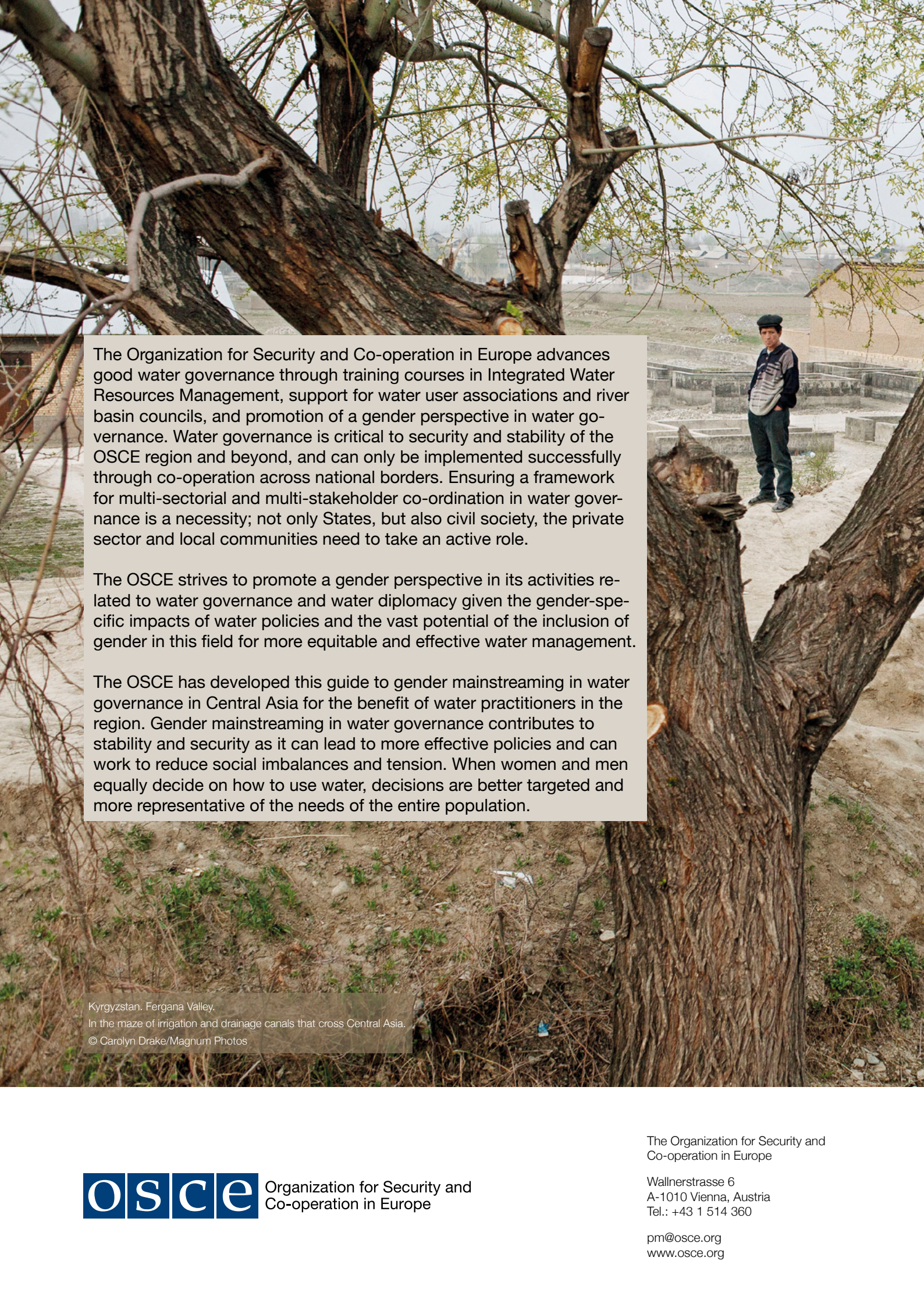
World Health Organization Gender Assessment Tool  
[https://www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/GMH\\_Participant\\_GenderAssessmentTool.pdf](https://www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/GMH_Participant_GenderAssessmentTool.pdf)

### Examples of indicators:

- UNESCO Overview of resources on gender-sensitive data related to water (2015)  
[http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Overview\\_of\\_resources\\_on\\_gender\\_sensitive\\_data\\_related\\_t\\_01.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SC/pdf/Overview_of_resources_on_gender_sensitive_data_related_t_01.pdf)
- UNESCO Sex-disaggregated indicators for water assessment, monitoring and reporting (2015)  
[https://unfccc.int/files/gender\\_and\\_climate\\_change/application/pdf/234082e.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/gender_and_climate_change/application/pdf/234082e.pdf)
- OECD Gender Indicators: What, Why and How?  
<http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/43041409.pdf>
- OSCE Project Management in the OSCE (2010)  
<https://www.osce.org/secretariat/70693?download=true>
- Compass  
<https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-indicators>

<sup>36</sup> C. March, I. Smyth and M. Mukhopadhyay, A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks. (Oxfam, 1999)





The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe advances good water governance through training courses in Integrated Water Resources Management, support for water user associations and river basin councils, and promotion of a gender perspective in water governance. Water governance is critical to security and stability of the OSCE region and beyond, and can only be implemented successfully through co-operation across national borders. Ensuring a framework for multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder co-ordination in water governance is a necessity; not only States, but also civil society, the private sector and local communities need to take an active role.

The OSCE strives to promote a gender perspective in its activities related to water governance and water diplomacy given the gender-specific impacts of water policies and the vast potential of the inclusion of gender in this field for more equitable and effective water management.

The OSCE has developed this guide to gender mainstreaming in water governance in Central Asia for the benefit of water practitioners in the region. Gender mainstreaming in water governance contributes to stability and security as it can lead to more effective policies and can work to reduce social imbalances and tension. When women and men equally decide on how to use water, decisions are better targeted and more representative of the needs of the entire population.

Kyrgyzstan. Fergana Valley.

In the maze of irrigation and drainage canals that cross Central Asia.

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