

ASSESSMENT OF GENDER EQUITY IN WATER USER ASSOCIATIONS

Report to the
WATER RESEARCH COMMISSION

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and motivation

The South African national water policy and legislative framework is under-pinned by the principle of equity with reference to racial and gender equity. This puts an obligation on government to ensure that the past imbalances to the access and control of water resources are redressed as a priority. It recognizes the importance of women's voices in water management structures. To put this to effect, the National Water Act of 1998 makes provision for the establishment of Water User Associations (WUAs) as vehicles for achieving poverty reduction and gender equity. It is believed that the participation of women in water management could improve their status by giving them a voice in decisions on use and allocation of water resources. To fulfil the legislative requirement for equitable gender participation, the Minister of Water Affairs & Forestry has set a 50% quota for women's representation in Management Committees (MANCO) of WUAs.

This study was initiated to investigate practical steps that have been taken by the government to create an enabling environment for women's participation in MANCO of WUAs. This should be demonstrated by enhancing women's access to land and water rights since these natural resources are essential for productive use of water and improvement in livelihoods of the poor men and women. The voting power within the WUAs was determined by the ownership of water rights, therefore, members who did not own any water rights could not influence decisions on water use and allocation and most women belong to this category. The study hypothesized that gender quotas alone were not adequate to redress the past gender imbalances. The study hence assessed the level of women's representation in Management Committees of WUAs, their contribution to decision-making and benefits that accrue to women that are members of WUAs.

Objective

The overall objective of the study is to assess gender equity within the management committees of Water User Associations (WUAs) and to make recommendations for ensuring that participation of women in WUAs contributes to their social and economic empowerment.

Scope of the study

The study has assessed gender equity in 6 WUAs in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. It was not possible to include more WUAs because the research was

conducted concurrently with a DWAF project on the development of Business Plans for WUAs and interviews of members of the WUAs were linked to DWAF funded workshops.

Limitations

The study was limited to two provinces; therefore, it does not reflect a national picture of the challenges faced by female members of WUAs. However, the experiences of poor rural women that are members of Water Associations are expected to be similar nationally.

Methodology

A literature review of international and national experience on gender equity within the water resources management sector was conducted and the focus of the review was on the status of women in the irrigation sector. A gender analysis of a selection of WUAs in South Africa was undertaken to assess the level of female representation in MANCOs of these WUAs.

The following WUAs participated in the study: Mutale, Mutshimbwe, Nzhelele, Middle Letaba (Limpopo), Bushmans River and Imfunda YoPhongola (KZN).

The following research instruments were used to collect data:

- A survey questionnaire was used to assess women's perceptions of their contribution to decision-making and benefits enjoyed by female members of WUAs. Obstacles and challenges they face were also assessed.
- A semi-structured interview schedule was used to assess how the chairpersons of MANCOs of WUAs perceived the contribution of women to the decision-making processes of the MANCOs of WUAs and their views on special interventions that were required to empower women within the WUAs.
- A semi-structured interview schedule was used to assess the perceptions of DWAF officials on the contribution of women to decision-making processes of MANCOs of WUAs and their views on interventions that were needed to achieve gender equity.
- Semi-structured questions were used to interview gender practitioners to elicit their views on the approaches that must be adopted to ensure that women's participation in MANCOs of WUAs contribute to their social and economic empowerment.

Face-to-face interviews were used in most cases and where this was not possible telephonic and electronic interviews were used.

Main conclusions

The findings of the study supported the hypothesis that gender quotas alone were not enough to bring about gender equity and poverty reduction in WUAs because the required enabling environment for the empowerment of rural women was not created. Although the water and gender equality policy and legislative framework clearly outlined steps that must be taken to redress past gender imbalances, the decision-makers have focussed on increasing the representation of women in management structures without implementing the necessary programmes for empowerment of women. The study showed that women were not getting any benefits from their involvement in WUAs because they did not own land and water rights in their individual capacity. Men who owned land and water rights had the power to influence the decisions on the allocation of water resources. Women interviewed for the study indicated that their participation in MANCO of WUAs had provided them with an opportunity to learn about the water resources management and they also learned from the experience of other members of MANCO.

The following specific conclusions were drawn from the research findings:

Policy and legislative framework for gender equality

- The study showed that the democratic government of South Africa had put in place very well thought out policies and legislation for creating a gender equitable society but there was a problem in the understanding and translating of these policies into practice.
- The top-down approach of establishing WUAs for poor black farmers was not in line with the vision of the National Water Act which envisaged a bottom-up process driven by water users.
- There was a general lack of understanding of the concept of gender equality and gender mainstreaming within government departments which led to a narrow focus on gender quotas without creating the enabling environment for women to succeed.
- The lack of a coordinated gender strategy and specific budgets allocated for the implementation of gender equity in WUAs demonstrated a lack of commitment to gender mainstreaming at the highest levels of government.

Literature review

- International experience showed that women and men had different perceptions of poverty. Men perceived poverty as a lack of assets and ability to generate income, while women's indicators of poverty were food insecurity and poor health. This demonstrated the importance of designing poverty reduction programmes that cater for these gender differences.
- Women lacked capacity and skills needed to influence decisions on water resources management because of the historical exclusion of women from ownership and control of water and land resources.

Gender representation in MANCOs of WUAs

A gender analysis of selected WUAs showed that none had achieved the 50% gender quota required by the Minister. The new WUAs for poor black farmers had made an effort to increase the number of women because gender equity was a condition for them to access subsidies for poor farmers while transformed irrigation boards which were self-sustaining had no incentive to include women in their management structures.

Patriarchy as an obstacle to gender equity

Contrary to the literature and perceptions of DWAF coordinators and gender practitioners, patriarchy did not seem to be a major problem anymore for the female members of WUAs in Limpopo province. However, in KZN, patriarchy was cited as a constraint to effective participation of women in MANCO of WUAs. Land rights under the communal land tenure system were still linked to husbands, fathers, brothers or sons, therefore, women as individuals were not entitled to these rights.

Weak institutional arrangements

The top-down approach followed in the establishment of the new WUAs for poor black farmers was not aligned with the vision of the NWA which envisaged a user driven process whereby water users would define the organizational structure based on their needs. The CMAs were supposed to provide support to WUAs but currently there were no functional CMAs that could provide guidance to the WUAs and DWAF did not have the capacity to provide the support to fill this institutional gap. The new WUAs were not functional because of a lack of institutional support and there were no support programmes for poor women and men so that they could access resources necessary to participate in productive use of water. Unlike the transformed

irrigation boards, these new WUAs could not be self-sustaining without government funding because of poor resourcing.

Poor cooperative governance

The vision of new WUAs as vehicles for poverty reduction required effective cooperative governance at all levels of the government system but this was currently not in place. The lack of formal structures for collaboration and coordination of relevant national government departments at the local level and through the vertical spheres of government – local, regional, provincial and national – in the support for the poor black farmers continued to perpetuate the marginalization of the poor rural men and women. There were also no clear processes to ensure accountability of government officials.

Lack of enabling environment for gender mainstreaming

The gender policies were not supported with strategies and guidelines for mainstreaming gender in water management institutions. There were no special budgets allocated to the support of the meaningful participation of women in management structures of WUAs, for example, all women interviewed for this study cited lack of money for transport to attend the meetings of WUAs as a constraint.

No special capacity building and training programmes were initiated to prepare women for their new leadership roles. The Land Reform Programme did not have any special programmes for targeting women as beneficiaries either and the Department of Land Affairs did not have statistics on land transferred to women. The Commission for Gender Equality and Office of the Status of Women did not have adequate capacity to support government departments in the implementation of their progressive gender equality policies. The lack of an enabling environment for empowerment of women could raise a question on the government's commitment to gender equality.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There were no performance indicators for gender equity in MANCOs of WUAs and DWAF. There was a need for gender equality indicators that were not limited to gender quotas but also measured tangible impacts of the national water policy and legislation on the improvement in the quality of life for poor women who were members of WUAs.

Recommendations

Water policy and legislative framework

There was a need to promote a bottom-up process in the establishment of WUAs for poor black farmers so that the members could take ownership of these institutions. DWAF and its partners should facilitate the process and provide resources necessary to make these institutions viable.

Empowerment of women

- The gender quotas must be coupled with specific capacity building programmes that address leadership and technical skills necessary to empower women to fulfil their roles in MANCO of WUAs.
- Government departments should fast-track women's access to land and water rights in their respective mandates so that women could become independent farmers.
- A coordinated strategy for gender equity in Water User Associations must be developed and adequate resources must be allocated for implementing the strategy and suitable performance indicators should be developed for monitoring progress in the achievement of a gender equitable society.
- Processes must be put in place to provide poor women and other marginalized groups with information on their rights and channels to be followed to report violation of these rights.

Weak institutional arrangements

- There was a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the different government departments in the provision of support to WUAs whilst the CMAs remain non-functional.
- The successful partnerships between WUAs and municipalities demonstrated in some WUAs in assisting the poor black farmers to get access to land and water, should be encouraged.
- Implementation of effective cooperative governance processes at all levels of government should be enforced to support the operation of WUAs as vehicles of poverty reduction according the water policy vision.
- The water allocation reform programme should be linked to the land reform programme and resources should be provided to support poor men and women in the use of water for agricultural production.

Poor understanding and interpretation of gender policy

The poor understanding and interpretation of gender policy by senior management in government departments and MANCOs of WUAs must be addressed in a two-pronged approach through the provision of gender awareness training for senior managers in government and members of MANCO and the supporting of specific programmes for empowering women to demand their right to gender equality as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa.

Further research

The following research must be conducted:

- Development of co-operative governance models for effective use of WUAs as vehicles for poverty reduction for poor rural women and men.
- Investigation of alternative models for improving the socio-economic status of poor rural women other than through becoming members of WUAs.

Concluding remarks

The study has concluded that the primary focus of gender mainstreaming should be on changing the mindset of both men and women so that they could recognize that women have an important role to play in addressing the poverty challenge faced by poor rural communities in South Africa. The historical racial and gender inequalities have led to a situation where poor rural black women were the most disadvantaged group in our society. Their low education levels, poor access to information and lack of knowledge prevented them from participating meaningfully in democratic processes. Therefore any initiative that aims to promote gender equality must ensure that these constraints were removed, otherwise the poor rural women would continue to be passive members of committees recruited to meet gender quotas.

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

The findings of this study will be shared with DWAF-National and DWAF-Regional in the two participating provinces so that they can take the necessary action to address some of the obstacles that are hindering meaningful participation of women in MANCOs of WUAs. A paper on this research will be prepared and submitted for publication in an appropriate journal. The accompanying full research report will be published to facilitate dissemination of the research findings.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
CMAs	Catchment Management Agencies
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern African
DWAF	Department of Water Affairs and Forestry
GWA	Gender and Water Alliance
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HDIs	Historically Disadvantage Individuals
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IBs	Irrigation Boards
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LM	Local Municipality
LRP	Land Reform Programme
MANCOs	Management Committees
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NWA	National Water Act
OSW	Office on Status of Women
O&M	Operation & Maintenance
PTO	Permission To Occupy
PSC	Public Service Commission
PWAL	Promotion of Women's Access to Land
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
WUAs	Water User Associations

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Water User Associations (WUAs) are statutory bodies that are established in terms of the South African National Water Act of 1998. They are co-operative associations of individual water users who wish to undertake water-related activities for their mutual benefit, and water management is not their primary function. The purpose of WUAs is to provide an organizational structure for its members to pool their resources to enable them to carry out water-related activities more efficiently. The Catchment Management Agency (CMA) can delegate certain water resource management functions to the WUAs, and they must be compensated for the costs incurred in the performance of the delegated functions. The WUAs provide a local institution through which the catchment management strategy can be implemented at a local catchment level. WUAs may be represented in the CMA Board and Catchment Management Committee, to ensure that the interests of their members are taken into consideration in the decision-making processes. The WUAs are envisaged as suitable vehicles for achieving poverty reduction and food security for the poor black men and women.

Two approaches are followed in the establishment of WUAs. The former Irrigation Boards are required to transform to WUAs that reflect the racial and gender representation, and the costs associated with this transformation should be covered by these institutions. The establishment of WUAs for resource to poor black farmers is initiated and driven by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry. Due to poverty, these WUAs are not in a position to fund their activities. Therefore, they rely entirely on DWAF funding to become fully functional organisations.

The South African national water policy (DWAF, 1997) is under-pinned by the principle of equity, and in terms of this policy, water management institutions are obliged to make sure that their structures reflect equitable representation of race and gender. WUAs are required by law to include women in decision-making structures, so that women's needs could be taken into consideration. It is expected that access to water resources could contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic status of women. The Minister of Water Affairs & Forestry has set a target of 50% for women representation in management committees (MANCOs) of WUAs in order to achieve gender equity.

It was therefore important to assess the level of women's participation in Management Committees of WUAs, their contribution to decision-making processes and benefits that accrued to women that were members of WUAs. The specific issues addressed by the research included women's access to land, water use entitlements and availability of special programmes for fast-tracking the training and capacity building for women. This assessment was necessary to get a better understanding of how WUAs were contributing to the social and economic empowerment of women.

Our hypothesis was that gender quotas alone were not enough to bring about gender equity and poverty reduction. We believed that the increase in the representation of women within the management structures of Water User Associations (WUAs) should be supported with special programmes for fast-tracking the capacity building of poor women, so that they could acquire the necessary knowledge and expertise they needed to make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making processes within WUAs. They should also be assisted to improve their access to land and water and other inputs necessary to achieve food security and poverty reduction. This requires a closer cooperation between Departments of Water Affairs and Forestry, Land Affairs, Agriculture and Local Government.

Box 1: Definition of terms

Gender¹ refers to the different roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women and the relations between them. It refers to qualities, behaviours and identities of men and women that are determined through a process of socialization.

Gender mainstreaming can be defined as a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes.

It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequalities are not perpetuated. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experiences, knowledge and interests of women and men to bear on the water development agenda (Both ENDS, 2006)²

¹ GWA 2006 Resource Guide – mainstreaming gender in water management

² Both ENDS 2006 Effective gender mainstreaming in water management for sustainable livelihoods: From guidelines to practice, Working Paper Series

Equity refers to the just and fair distribution of resources; in a South African context the need for equity arises from a history of past inequalities and injustices based on race or gender.

1.2 Objective

The overall objective of the study was to assess gender equity in the management committees of Water User Associations (WUAs) and to make recommendations for ensuring that participation of women in WUAs contributes to their social and economic development.

1.3 Scope and purpose of the report

The report is based on a survey of six WUAs from Limpopo and KZN provinces; all the surveyed WUAs have a large number of poor black emerging farmers. The report highlights issues and challenges faced by female members of the WUAs, with a special focus on poor interpretation of the policy framework and the weak institutional support for gender equality.

1.4 Limitations

The report is limited to surveys conducted in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. However, the challenges faced by women in these two provinces are not unique. They are generic challenges common to poor rural women.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desktop review of relevant policies and literature

An extensive literature review was conducted on international and national experience of gender equity within water sector institutions, with special reference to water user associations. A brief overview of the South African policy and legislative framework for water and gender equality was also undertaken.

2.2 Analysis of gender representation in selected WUAs

An analysis of gender representation in Management Committees of 27 selected WUAs from different Water Management Areas across South Africa was conducted, in order to assess the level of women representation in these committees.

2.3 Key questions addressed by the study

The following key questions were addressed by the study:

- What benefits could women expect from participating in management committees if they did not own land or water rights?
- Were women expected to bring new insights into these management committees?
- Were there any obstacles to meaningful participation of women in the management of WUAs?
- Were women provided with training to prepare them for the new roles in the management committees;
- As non-voting members, how could women influence the decision-making processes within the WUAs so that these institutions could become more gender sensitive?
- What could be done to make sure that women's participation in Management Committees (MANCOs) of WUAs brings about tangible benefits for women such as improvement in their socio-economic status, access to land and water rights?

2.4 Development of research instruments

The following research instruments were developed to solicit responses to the questions raised above:

- i) A survey questionnaire for female members of MANCOs of WUAs to assess their perceptions of their contribution to the decision-making processes of MANCOs, challenges they face and recommendations for addressing these challenges.

- ii) A semi-structured interview schedule for the chairpersons of MANCOs of WUAs to assess their perceptions of the contribution of women to the functioning of the MANCOs of WUAs.
- iii) A semi-structured interview schedule for DWAF Coordinators to assess their perceptions of the contribution of women to the decision-making processes of MANCOs of WUAs, and their views on special interventions that were required to empower women.
- iv) A semi-structured interview schedule for gender practitioners to seek their views on the approaches that should be used to ensure that women's participation in MANCOs of WUAs contributes to their social and economic empowerment.

2.5 Criteria for the selection of participating WUAs

The study was conducted concurrently with a DWAF project on the development of business plans for WUAs; therefore the selection of WUAs was aligned with the DWAF study. The focus was on WUAs for resource for poor farmers. Women and chairpersons of the MANCOs of WUAs were targeted. DWAF officials working with the WUAs were interviewed to get their perspective on gender equity within WUAs. Gender practitioners were selected based on their knowledge and experience in gender and development, with special reference to the water sector.

2.6 Brief description of participating WUAs

The following table provides a brief description of the participating WUAs:

Table 1: Brief description of the participating WUAs

Name of WUA	Category	No of members	Defining features
Mutale, Limpopo	Resource poor farmers	1319	Members belong to the irrigation schemes
Mutshimbwe, Limpopo	Resource poor farmers	464	Poor black emerging farmers belonging to irrigation schemes
Nzhelele, Limpopo	Resource poor black farmers and a few white commercial farmers	788	Black farmers belong to 13 irrigation schemes and white commercial farmers are served by a government water scheme
Middle Letaba, Limpopo	Resource poor farmers	594	Poor black emerging farmers are members of irrigation schemes
Bushmans River WUA, KZN	White commercial farmers and poor black emerging farmers	704	White farmers supplied with irrigation water from canals owned by Umtshezi Local Municipality and poor black farmers practising agriculture on land provided by the municipality
Imfunda YoPhongola, KZN	Dominated by poor emerging farmers	Not available	Members rely on irrigation schemes managed by Dept of Agriculture; others get water from the flood plain release from Pongolapoort Dam

2.7 Methods used to collect data

Surveys of female members of WUAs and interviews of chairpersons

The survey questionnaire was administered during Business Plan (BP) workshops wherever possible. However, it was also necessary to go to villages in Limpopo province to conduct the surveys because most women did not have telephones, and due to low literacy levels it was necessary to conduct interviews in local languages. The chairpersons of MANCOs of WUAs were interviewed during the BP workshops.

Stakeholder interviews

A semi-structured interview schedule for DWAF coordinators of WUAs was used to assess their perceptions of the contribution of women to the decision-making processes of MANCOs of WUAs, and interventions necessary to ensure that women achieve social and economic empowerment through their participation in WUAs. The participants were selected from three provinces where the project team was conducting Business Plan workshops for the WUAs, and these were KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces.

A semi-structured interview schedule targeted gender practitioners to assess their perceptions of the implementation of gender equity within water management institutions, and to seek their suggestions on the approaches that must be taken to ensure that women's participation in MANCOs of WUAs contributes to their economic empowerment. Please refer to the Annexure1 & 2 for the research instruments and lists of participants.

3. CURRENT STATE OF GENDER EQUITY IN THE WATER SECTOR

3.1 Policy and legislative framework

The South African democratic government has put in place the necessary policy, legislative and strategic framework to support the creation of a gender equitable society. The following section provides an overview of some of the relevant policies, legislation and policy instruments.

The *Constitution* of SA states that ‘the state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, etc’. Section 25 of the Constitution of SA puts an obligation on government to redress inequalities in access to land.

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 – This Act aims to prevent unfair discrimination as contemplated in the Constitution of SA and promotion of equality. Section 8 specifically addresses gender discrimination. It prohibits the traditional culture of preventing women from inheriting family property, any practices that unfairly violate the dignity of women and undermine equality between women and men, and any policy that unfairly restricts access to land, finance and other resources.

Office on the status of women was established to monitor implementation of gender sensitive policies and the improvement of women representation at all levels of our society.

The *Commission for Gender Equality* is dedicated to the promotion and protection of gender equality in South Africa.

SA government quota system for women – The South African government has set quotas for women representation at national, provincial and local government levels.

DWAF Gender Policy of 1996 – The DWAF Gender Policy of 1996 addresses the current conditions that prevent women from taking their full role in society on an equal basis with men. The policy makes provision for ensuring adequate participation of women in planning water services delivery and water resources management at a local level. It makes provision for technical training of women and men, to enable them to participate meaningfully in the planning and implementation of community projects.

National Water Policy of 1997 is underpinned by the principle of equity, and it stresses the need for special considerations in addressing the needs of the majority of South Africans who were denied access to water for productive use under the apartheid government. This policy recognizes the importance of ensuring that access to water for productive use is linked to land ownership, in order to improve the livelihoods of the historically disadvantaged groups. This policy mentions the importance of women's voices in water committees, and water management institutions are obliged to make sure that their structures reflect equitable representation of gender. It is assumed that women's participation in water management could improve their status, by giving them a voice in decisions on use and allocation of water resources.

National Water Act (NWA) of 1998 makes provision for the establishment of WUAs as vehicles for poverty reduction, and the important role to be played by women is recognized. The NWA provides guidance on the establishment of CMAs and WUAs that are gender representative.

DWAF Policy on financial assistance to resource poor irrigation farmers (2004) – This policy provides guidance for the provision and regulation of financial assistance by the Minister to poor farmers as stated in the NWA Sections 61 and 62. The financial assistance can be considered for achieving equity and redressing past racial and gender imbalances. The policy framework aims to promote access to irrigated agriculture, and to enhance sustainable irrigation development for resource poor farmers through the use of the following grants or subsidies:

- Grants for capital costs for construction and/or upgrading of irrigation schemes for resource poor farmers who are members of the WUAs;
- Grants or subsidies for operation and maintenance of waterworks, water resource management and depreciation charges, to be phased out over a six year period;
- Grants for the acquisition of water use entitlements for irrigation;
- Grants for preliminary or remedial socio-economic viability studies and investigations on irrigation schemes;
- Grants for training of management committees of WUAs;
- Grants for rainwater tanks for family food production and other productive uses.

Some of the grants listed above are subject to gender equitable representation in management committees of WUAs.

*Water Allocation Reform in South Africa*³

The primary focus of water allocation reform (WAR) programme is to redress past imbalances in water allocations to Historically Disadvantaged Individuals (HDIs). The Department of Water Affairs & Forestry is obliged by the Constitution of SA to develop and implement actions for redressing the racial and gender inequalities in access to water rights. The water allocation process must be supported with capacity development programmes and resources to ensure that HDIs can use the water to improve their livelihoods. DWAF must pay special attention to the needs of women and ensure their participation in the water allocation process. Partnerships involving DWAF, Departments of Agriculture, Land Affairs, Provincial and Local Government are necessary to provide comprehensive support to poor farmers in the productive use of water.

The water allocation reform position paper states that DWAF and other agencies must use the water allocation processes to contribute to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and women-owned enterprises. The compulsory licensing process must be used to make water available to these women-owned enterprises. The monitoring of equity in water use, efficient and productive water use as well as sustainable use water must be undertaken to assess the progress in the implementation of the WAR programme.

3.2 Literature review

The following issues relevant to gender equity within WUAs were identified from the literature review:

3.2.1 Gender dimension of poverty

According to Gender and Water Alliance (GWA)⁴ poverty was not only limited to material deprivation, it included a lack of a voice or power, vulnerabilities to adverse situations and inability to cope with such vulnerabilities. Shah (1998⁵) in studies conducted in Ghana showed that men and women had different perceptions of poverty. Men saw a lack of assets and inability to generate income as indicators of poverty, while women's indicators of poverty were the state of destitution, food insecurity and poor health. The perception of well-being was also different for the two genders. Women focused on

³ DWAF 2005 A Draft Position Paper for Water Allocation Reform in South Africa – Towards a framework for water allocation planning

⁴ Gender and Water Alliance Gender, water and poverty <http://www.genderandwater.org/page2801>

⁵ Shah MK 1998 Gendered perceptions of well-being in Darko, Ghana; In Guijt I and Shah MK (eds)- The myth of community: Gender issues in participatory development

factors relevant to the well-being of women and men identified issues that affected men. The household as a unit was not taken into consideration by both genders.

3.2.2 Gender equitable access to land and water rights

The UNDP Human Development Report of 2006⁶ recommended the adoption of the following pro-poor principles to achieve gender equity within irrigated agriculture:

- The land and water rights of the poor should be strengthened;
- Enhancement of the capacity of the poor to fight for their water and land rights through legal empowerment and accountable institutions;
- Putting gender rights at the centre of national development and implementing policies to increase the women's voices in water management decision-making processes;
- Promoting the development and adoption of pro-poor technologies.

According to GWA (2006)⁷ access to water for productive use contributed to the improvement in livelihoods and food security for women and the poor, and the participation in water management structures could enhance women's confidence.

The strong patriarchal attitudes which predominated in most cultures tended to prevent women from ever owning land or water rights, because these rights were inherited by male members of the family from generation to generation (Kweka, 1998⁸).

Peters and Ferguson (2002)⁹ proposed the following measures for addressing the gender inequalities in access to water and land rights:

- A legal framework that explicitly recognized women's right to land and water rather than being included in gender neutral language such as "households" was needed;
- Quotas for women representation in key institutions should be enforced;
- Wives should be listed on equal level with their 'husbands' names in title deeds, water leases and permits;

⁶ UNDP 2006 Human Development Report 2006 - Beyond scarcity and the global water crisis (Summary)

⁷ GWA 2006 Resource Guide – Mainstreaming Gender in Water Management
<http://www.genderandwater.org>

⁸ Kweka 1998 Women in small-holder irrigation in Tanzania, Proceedings of the Workshop on gender and water held in IWMI, Sri Lanka

⁹ Peters & Ferguson 2002 Gender and broadening access to land and water in Southern Africa
<http://www.basis.wisc.edu>

- Recognition of women as commercial users of water, i.e. producing crops for the market and their access to capital, credit and markets must be addressed.

The UN Water Policy Brief (2005)¹⁰ made the following recommendations for addressing gender inequalities within the water resources management sector:

- Recognition of women's important contribution to agricultural production and provision of support to assist them to improve their access to water for productive use;
- Creation of enabling legislation for women to have equal rights to land tenure;
- Provision of training to improve women's agricultural productivity and their access to information and markets for their produce;
- Setting of quotas for women participation in decision-making structures in water resources management sector, from the ministerial level down to the village level water committees;
- Governments should fund special programmes for fast-tracking capacity building for women, so that they could participate meaningfully in water management forums at all levels.

Cleaver (1998)¹¹ in her gender research conducted in Zimbabwe showed that the main obstacles to women's access to positions of power were the lack of power and influence in the community, lack of transport and cash to enable them to travel to meetings. She recommended that the following areas should be investigated to get a better understanding of gender issues in the collective management of water resources:

- *Gendered analysis of water use and management* – Techniques such as gendered resource mapping should be used to identify gender differences in the use of water resources.
- *Gendered analysis of institutions* – An analysis of formal and informal institutions involved in water management at the local level should be undertaken to identify areas of overlap and differences. To get a better understanding of the informal institutions, social networks, local forms of decision-making and conflict resolution methods should be examined. The

¹⁰ UN Water 2005 Gender, Water and Sanitation – A policy brief prepared by the Inter-agency Task Force on Gender and Water

¹¹ Cleaver F 1998 Incentives and informal institutions: Gender and management of water – Agriculture and human values Vol 15: 347-360, Kluwer Academic Publishers

household as the basic institutional unit should also be analysed to understand the dynamics between men and women at this level.

- *Complex incentives* – The changing priorities of men and women should be taken into consideration when planning interventions. These changes are likely to be influenced by economic incentives and social conditions.

3.2.3 Gender equity within Water User Associations

According to Mehra and Esim (1998)¹² women were usually poorly represented in WUAs because membership was based on ownership of land and water rights. Even the few women that owned land and water feared participation in a male-dominated public gathering and facing men's resistance to women's participation.

The devolution of irrigation management to the local level targeted landowners who were typically male household heads as members of the WUA, and they had the responsibility for making decisions on the distribution and management of water resources at the local level. Women were not seen as primary stakeholders but only as indirect ones through the husband's rights (GWA, 2006). Other uses of water by women such as domestic use, watering of cattle and vegetable gardens were usually not taken into consideration. Cultural stereotypes on accepted behaviour for women in the presence of males restricted active participation of women in public gatherings in Africa and Asia (Zwarteveen and Neupane 1996)¹³.

3.2.4 Use of quotas to promote gender equity

The successful use of quotas as a tool for promoting gender equity in water management institutions was variable. A study conducted by Stanbury (1984) in Indian villages showed that women were included as members of local councils without their consent; their names were included to meet the government set quotas for women. El-Awar (2003)¹⁴ recommended the implementation of capacity building programmes for poor women in order to improve their capacity to meet their development challenges in a sustainable manner.

¹² Mehra and Esim 1998 'What gender analysis can contribute to irrigation and practice in developing countries. IWMI workshop, Sri Lanka

¹³ Zwarteveen and Neupane 1996 'Free riders or victims' IWMI Research Report No.7

¹⁴ El-Awar 2003 Capacity development approaches and tools for water demand management, WDM II Consultative meeting, January 2004, Egypt

3.2.5 South African experience

3.2.5.1 Gender mainstreaming in the public service

A 2007 study conducted by the Public Service Commission to assess progress in gender mainstreaming within the public service showed that all government departments had achieved the 30% quota for women representation in management structures, but the organizational culture had not changed to accommodate the needs of women. It was found that senior managers did not understand the concept of gender equality beyond numbers. Gender Focal Persons appointed to drive gender mainstreaming were allocated responsibility for women's issues; youth, the disabled and HIV/AIDS, and they were responsible for organizing women's events such as National Women's Day and Sixteen days of activism. There were no budgets allocated to support special programmes for fast-tracking women's advancement, and there were also no formal mentorship programmes for women.

3.2.5.2 Evaluation of Water User Associations

Pegram and Mazibuko (2003) made the following recommendations based on their evaluation of WUAs:

- DWAF and Catchment Management Agency should provide support to the WUAs so that they could support the empowerment of the emerging farmers and other HDIs.
- WUAs should not be established if their primary activity could be performed by other institutions with a funded mandate to undertake such functions; for example, where their main activity was the provision of domestic water supply which was a function of the Water Service Authority.
- For the WUA to be viable, its objectives and functions should be based on the needs and aspiration of its members.
- Meaningful transformation of Irrigation Boards to WUAs depended on the reform of water use entitlement and access to land for the HDIs, so that they could benefit from the available water resources.
- In order for the WUAs to contribute to poverty reduction, support must be provided by DWAF in partnership with other government departments such as Agriculture and municipalities.
- Most MANCOs of WUAs needed capacity building and training so that they could perform their functions. Awareness programmes for members of the WUAs were necessary to improve their understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

3.2.5.3 Review of the transformation of Irrigation Boards into WUAs¹⁵

The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Department of Water Affairs & Forestry (Faysse and Gumbo, 2004) jointly undertook a review of the process of inclusion of small-scale water users in 8 transformed Irrigation Boards and made the following findings:

Irrigation water

Emerging farmers did not have any formal water rights because they irrigated less than 6 hectares and farm workers did not own land. In most case studies emerging farmers accounted for less than 15% of the total irrigated area. They faced several problems of access such as lack of legal access to water (entitlement to a specific quantity of water from the river or canal); access to technical resources such as equipment to transport water from the river to the field and access to financial resources to pay for the cost of water distribution.

Involvement of HDI water users in the Management Committee of the WUAs

DWAF policy required inclusion of HDI representatives in the MANCOs of WUAs. But this inclusion was not based on membership of the WUAs, which was limited to those who had a formal water entitlement and were members of the WUAs. Only emerging farmers had a formal water entitlement.

Faysse (2004) identified the following major factors that determine involvement of HDIs in WUAs, especially in the transformed Irrigation Boards:

Commercial farmer initiatives – In terms of the National Water Act, the Irrigation Boards had a responsibility of submitting the proposals for transformation; therefore, they could decide the extent of involvement of HDIs in the management committee. The case study analysis showed that where the HDIs had an impact on commercial irrigators, such as upstream water users, the IB was open to involving the HDIs. However, in cases where HDI water users were downstream from commercial irrigators, the IBs were not keen to pursue transformation to a WUA.

Paying and non-paying users – IB decision to involve HDIs also depended on ability to pay; emerging farmers were accepted because their fees were paid by the

¹⁵ IWMI Research Report No.84 2004 An Assessment of small-scale users' inclusion in large-scale water user associations of South Africa, N Faysse
IWMI Working Paper No.72 & No.73 (2004) The transformation of IBs into WUAs in South Africa,

Department of Land Affairs. This entitled them to the same rights and responsibilities as the commercial farms. Commercial farmers were not keen to include aspiring farmers because of water shortage and fear of competition for the available markets for their agricultural produce. DWAF policy required participation of non-paying water users in MANCOs, but their influence in decision making was limited because they did not have full voting powers.

Faysse (2004) identified the following factors that hinder meaningful participation of HDIs in the MANCO of WUAs:

- Lack of formal organized structures for HDI water users; therefore representatives for this category lacked a formal mandate;
- Lack of voting rights for the nominated members limited their ability to influence decision-making within the Association; these rights were applicable to elected rate paying members of the WUAs;
- Unequal power relations between the commercial irrigators and HDI water users and disparity in the knowledge of water issues limited the influence of HDIs in the functioning of the WUAs;
- Lack of monitoring and enforcement of meaningful participation of HDIs in MANCO of WUAs.

Participation of emerging farmers and other HDI groups in Water User Associations

Faysse (2004) conducted an analysis of five transformed Irrigation Boards to identify opportunities and constraints with regards to the empowerment of HDI groups within the WUAs.

He identified the following **positive impacts** of involvement of HDI groups in WUAs:

- Participation in the MANCOs of WUAs provided the HDIs with an opportunity to learn about water resources management issues; this improved their capacity to participate meaningfully in water allocation debates;
- Involvement of HDIs in the MANCOs of WUAs provided them with a platform for raising their water-related problems to other water users and other institutions such as DWAF.

Constraints

Faysse (2004) identified the following constraints to the meaningful participation of HDIs in MANCOs of WUAs within transformed Irrigation Boards:

- Commercial farmers in the case study areas tended to choose a voting system that ensured that they have the final decision-making powers;
- HDIs lacked funds for infrastructure to pump and use water for irrigation and in some cases access to land for farming was a problem;
- Commercial farmers were only keen to involve HDIs who were upstream users because of their potential impact on their access to water resources; however, they were not taking any initiative to involve HDI water users who were downstream because these did not impact on their access to water resources.

3.2.5.4 Contribution of agriculture to poverty reduction

Machethe (2004)¹⁶ conducted an analysis of income sources for 138 small holder irrigation farmers in Limpopo Province, and he showed that more than 40% of total household income was generated from farming activities, and non-farm income sources contributed 60% of total household income. The study concluded that farming contributed more to household income than all individual non-farm sources of income. It was estimated that rural women in Limpopo could earn significant income from agricultural production up to R8000 per annum per plot.

3.2.5.5 Women's access to land for agricultural production

Mann (2000)¹⁷ argued that the gender equality enshrined in the Constitution of SA had not brought about any significant changes in land ownership by women in rural areas of the former homelands. Traditional leaders that were the custodians of tribal land continued to use the old patriarchal methods. Land was allocated to men as heads of households and single or divorced women continued to be excluded. This forced women to stay in abusive marital relationships to ensure their survival. Mann (2000) found that although the gender policy of the Department of Land Affairs recognised its imperative of furthering gender equality, it had no statistics on land ownership by women in rural areas. She argued that the lack of gender-disaggregated data on land ownership demonstrated a lack of commitment to gender equality, because without data it would not be possible to monitor progress in land ownership by women. Mann (2000) concluded that change in formal laws alone was not enough; it should be supported by changing attitudes at the

¹⁶ Machethe C L 2004 Agriculture and poverty in South Africa: can agriculture reduce poverty? A paper presented at UNDP, HSRC and DBSA Conference on Overcoming Under-development in South Africa's Second Economy, 29 October 2004, Pretoria

¹⁷ Mann MM 2000 Women's access to land in the former Bantustans – Constitutional conflict, Customary Law, Democratisation and the role of the State. On occasional paper series

local community levels. This required state support for community activism and education of women on their rights to equality.

Cross and Hornby (2002) identified the following obstacles to women's access to land:

- Women were often 'invisible' among beneficiary groups of the Land Reform Programme (LRP);
- No special efforts were made by the LRP to target women as beneficiaries;
- No interventions were in place to ensure that women had access to and control of land;
- Assessment of gender impacts were limited to the counting of the number of women beneficiaries; the extent of actual tangible benefits was not assessed;
- Lack of publicity and information about the Land Reform Programme (LRP);
- Land rights under the communal tenure system were linked to husbands, fathers or brothers, therefore divorced women and widows could not enjoy these rights.

3.2.5.6 Participation of women in irrigation in South Africa

Research conducted by Stimie and Chancellor (1999)¹⁸ in Limpopo Province showed that women contributed 70% to 90% of the total labour in the Agricultural sector, but they were usually not involved in the decision-making on the design and management of irrigation schemes. Women were also the major role-players in small-scale irrigation where they focused on vegetable gardens. The following conclusions were drawn from this study:

- Although women were responsible for most of the labour done on the irrigation schemes, only men were responsible for most of the management and decision-making;
- Women did not have any power and influence because they were generally poor, and power resided with the rich men;
- Women irrigators struggled with pump breakdown and maintenance because they lacked technical skills;
- Extension services and other advisory initiatives did not reach most women farmers because officials who were male did not recognize women as legitimate irrigators;

¹⁸ Stimie C and Chancellor F 1999 Smallholder irrigation – South African women's part in rehabilitation and design of irrigation projects, GRID Issue 13, February 1999

- Training opportunities also did not benefit women irrigators because their specific needs were not taken into consideration;
- Focus group meetings of women enabled them to discuss the problems that they faced within the irrigation schemes. The men in the community did not like these women only focus groups because they believed that they encouraged women to challenge their authority;
- Women working together as a group of irrigators were more successful in improving their socio-economic status.

3.3 Overview of the current state of gender representation in WUAs

DWAF is currently establishing WUAs nationwide as part of a process of devolving the responsibility for water resources management to the local level. In March 2006 there were 59 registered Water User Associations. This number was made up of 22 newly established WUAs and 37 transformed Irrigation Boards. The newly established Water User Associations varied in their complexity, ranging from multi-sectoral water users, groundwater users, Government Water Schemes and small WUAs that were dominated by emerging poor farmers and other HDI groups.

Challenges

The project team identified the following challenges with the process of establishing gender representative Water User Associations:

- *Representivity* – DWAF set a 50% quota for representation of blacks and women in the Management Committees of WUAs. This requirement encouraged the WUAs to co-opt blacks and women into Management Committees (MANCOs) to meet DWAF quotas without any meaningful benefits for them, since they lacked land ownership and water rights;
- *Local demographics* – Some groundwater based WUAs were in small communities of white commercial farmers where all blacks were farm workers, and there were no black emerging farmers that could be recruited to meet the racial and gender quotas;
- *Gender equity* – Most women did not own land and their water use was usually limited to domestic use. Their representation in MANCOs was of value to women where they relied on the shared water resources for their livelihoods. However, where they received their water supply from the local municipality or waterboard, they did not have any incentive to participate in the MANCO of the WUAs;

- *Lack of knowledge of water policy and water resources management issues* – The emerging black farmers and other HDI groups lacked an understanding of the national water policy with regards to their rights;
- *Lack of access to irrigation infrastructure* – Members of the former Irrigation Boards have shared irrigation infrastructure purchased with money collected from its members, and they were not willing to share this infrastructure with the new members from the HDI groups. Government subsidies were needed to support the emerging black farmers and women to acquire land and the necessary infrastructure to help them improve their livelihoods from the productive use of water.

Analysis of gender representation in MANCOs of Water User Associations

The following table presents a snapshot of the representation of women in MANCOs of a sample of 27 WUAs:

Table 2: Women representation in MANCOs of WUAs

Name of WUA	Category	No. of women	No. of members	% women
Upper Mlazi	Transformed IB	2	10	20
Mutale	New	3	14	21.4
Mutshimbwe	New	3	14	21.4
Nzhelele catchment	New	3	14	21.4
Upper Komati	New	8	24	33
Elands River	Transformed IB	5	17	29.4
uPhongola Dam	New	1	22	4.5
Bushmans River	New	3	16	18.75
Middle Letaba	New	6	17	35.3
Edikeni	New	7	17	41.2
Vaalharts	New	1	20	5
Kakamas	New	1	11	0.8
Boegoeberg	New	4	17	23.5
Worcester-East	Transformed IB	2	27	7.4
Citrusdal	Transformed IB	1	20	5
Lower Olifants River	Transformed IB	1	17	5.9
Sentraal Breede River	Transformed IB	1	24	4.2
Houdenbeks Rivier	New	3	10	30
Clanwilliam	Transformed IB	0	15	0
Groenland	Transformed IB	3	20	15
Kat river	Transformed IB	1	11	0.8
Great Fish Main	Transformed IB	0	16	0
Great Fish	Transformed IB	17	114	14.9
Mkuze falls	Transformed IB	0	7	0
Mnyamvubu	Transformed IB	1	6	16.7
Impala	Transformed IB	2	12	16.7
Van der Kloof	Govt Water Scheme	1	18	5.6

The analysis showed that women were generally under-represented in all WUAs, with transformed IBs having the least number of women. This showed that a lot of work should be done to promote gender equity in these institutions. This responsibility should not be left entirely to the MANCOs of WUAs. The national government has a responsibility to provide funding for interventions necessary to

empower black women and men, so that they could be able to enjoy economic benefits from their participation as members of WUAs.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are based on a total of 54 participants representing 32 members of the 6 WUAs, 9 DWAF officials and 13 gender practitioners.

4.1 Surveys of female members of WUAs

The following findings emanate from a survey of 26 women who were members of the WUAs in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

4.1.1 Women's access to land and water

The majority of respondents from Limpopo were members of irrigation schemes; therefore, they had access to the group water use entitlements which were held by the Department of Agriculture-Limpopo on behalf of the members of the schemes. The Department of Agriculture was paying for the water used by members of the schemes. 72% of women were using canals to irrigate their crops, 16% used sprinklers and 12% were abstracting water directly from the river. The women from Limpopo were benefiting from the government funded infrastructure.

Only 28% of women owned land in their individual capacity, while 60% had joint ownership with their husbands and 8% were using tribal land for crop production. 72% of women had access to more than 1.0 ha of land for agriculture and 28% had between 0.5-1.0 ha. However, most women expressed a desire to have access to more land with irrigation infrastructure, so that they could increase their agricultural production.

Most women indicated that there was no equity in the distribution of water. This situation was exacerbated by illegal water users who denied legitimate water users access to adequate water for irrigation. They recommended that the government should take the necessary steps to address the problem of illegal water users. They also suggested that water control officers should be employed to control the distribution of water to all registered water users. Most women were involved in the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the waterworks. No data was collected on the contribution of men to O&M.

4.1.2 Income generation from agricultural produce

96% of women sold their crops to their neighbours; however, they indicated that they would like to increase the size of the market for their produce if they could get a better price for their produce. 52% of women were earning between R3000-R5000 per year

from the sale of their crops. This showed that with adequate support women could increase the income earned from agricultural production to improve their livelihoods.

4.1.3 Contribution of women to decision-making

Women believed that they were making a contribution to decision-making although their representation in influential positions was still low. For example, there was only one female chairperson, one vice-chairperson, one secretary, one treasurer and the majority of women were additional members. However at the irrigation scheme level women were occupying positions of influence. Most women recognized that they needed capacity building and training in leadership and technical skills, so that they could acquire the knowledge necessary to occupy the positions of leadership.

4.1.4 Capacity building and training for women

A significant number of women indicated that they had benefited from training which was facilitated by the Department of Agriculture-Limpopo, and most of them were getting support from agricultural extension officers. They believed that their involvement in MANCOs of WUAs had contributed to an improvement in their understanding of water resources management. This also provided them with an opportunity to learn from the experiences of other members. Women wanted to be trained to use water efficient irrigation technologies so that they could save water and increase their crop production. DWAF had not provided women with training necessary to prepare them for their roles as members of MANCOs of WUAs.

4.1.5 Obstacles faced by women

Women from Limpopo province believed that they were contributing to the decision-making processes of MANCOs. They were free to express their opinions in public meetings. Most of them did not need husband's permission to attend meetings, and time was not a constraint to their participation in MANCO meetings. The sample from KZN province was too small to enable us to draw conclusions on the impact of patriarchy on women's involvement.

All women highlighted a problem of lack of money for transport to attend meetings of MANCOs, and they also indicated that meetings conducted far away from their homes were a problem. 52% of women indicated that a lack of knowledge about water resources management issues limited their meaningful participation in MANCOs. All problems highlighted by women required interventions by government, for example, the refurbishment of old irrigation infrastructure, allocation of more land with irrigation

infrastructure to female farmers, and the need for continued support from the Department of Agriculture with O&M of their irrigation infrastructure.

4.1.6 Perceptions of gender equity by the leadership of MANCOs of WUAs

The majority of male chairpersons of surveyed WUAs believed that women were making a meaningful contribution to the decision-making processes of MANCOs. They were willing to assist poor men and women to access water and land so that they could improve their livelihoods. Patriarchy was cited as a constraint for women from KZN WUAs. It was blamed for the poor representation of women in MANCOs

4.2 Perception of gender equity by DWAF officials

4.2.1 Contribution of women to decision-making

The DWAF coordinators believed that women were not influencing the decisions of the MANCOs because of their low representation in all meetings, and their lack of confidence and knowledge about the roles and functions of WUA. They believed that capacity building and training was necessary to improve women's understanding of the role of WUAs and also their knowledge of water resources management. However, there were instances where women were influencing decisions, and this was observed in some WUAs dominated by white commercial farmers, where white women were playing leading roles. For example, the chairperson of Bushmans River WUA was a white woman. The women from Middle Letaba WUA were actively trying to improve their understanding of the responsibilities of MANCOs, because they wanted to be effective in executing their roles in positions they held.

DWAF officials believed that women were not ready to occupy leadership positions within MANCOs, because they lacked knowledge of water resources management issues and they also lacked confidence. Women should first have access to land ownership and water use entitlement before they could participate meaningfully in MANCOs. They suggested that women should be trained in leadership skills and water resources management.

4.2.2 Obstacles to gender equity within MANCOs of WUAs

The following obstacles were identified by the DWAF officials:

- Although gender equality was enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa, the patriarchal society was still the norm in most rural areas and women were still treated as minors. This legacy continued to suppress women to such an extent

that they were not able to articulate their views freely in meetings dominated by men. This problem was more prevalent in the rural areas of KZN province.

- In some traditional rural areas women were not allowed to attend meetings, especially those that included men. If they attended these meetings they were expected to sit behind the men and they were not allowed to voice their opinions in the meetings. It was important to address these cultural stereotypes in a sensitive manner in order to create an environment that was supportive to the involvement of women in public forums.
- The majority of men did not accept the new policy and legislative framework for gender equality, which expected women to play an active role in the management of the country's water resources.
- Men dominated the irrigation sector and women's involvement in irrigated agriculture as farmers was minimal. They played a role as farm workers.
- Women were subsistence farmers and could not register as water users in their individual capacity. They were constrained by the lack of access to the land and water rights, as they did not own the permission to occupy (PTO) land. Water use licenses were issued only to those with the PTO or title deeds.
- Gender equity in the WUAs was further constrained by a lack of proper gender mainstreaming strategy and guidelines for WUAs. This made it difficult for DWAF officials to implement gender mainstreaming within the WUAs.
- Government subsidies were benefiting the white farmers more than the emerging black farmers as the former were better informed about their rights.
- The DWAF process of verification and validation of the water rights was beginning to show that white farmers had taken more water rights than they needed to make sure that emerging black farmers were deprived of these rights.

4.2.3 Challenges faced by DWAF in implementing gender quotas

The National Water Act of 1998 provides an enabling legislative framework for the empowerment of women and other marginalized groups. However, the successful implementation of the NWA depended on availability of knowledgeable women that could participate meaningfully in the running of the affairs of the WUAs. DWAF should provide resources to train poor men and women so that they could benefit from their membership in MANCOs of WUAs, and manage water resources for the benefit of all water users.

The 50% quota for women representation in MANCOs of WUAs which was set by the Minister of Water Affairs & Forestry presented a challenge for WUAs, because there were not enough women that were interested in becoming members of the WUAs. Most women had nothing to gain by participating in MANCOs because they did not own land and water use entitlements.

Some DWAF regional offices were unwilling to comply with the Minister's quota for gender representation in MANCOs of WUAs. There was also resistance amongst some DWAF officials to implement policies that addressed the past racial and gender imbalances with regards to water allocation. DWAF also lacked capacity to monitor progress in the achievement of equity targets. This responsibility was left to MANCOs of WUAs. Another critical challenge was that women did not own land, whilst the NWA required people to own land in order to qualify for water use entitlement.

4.2.4 Are women benefiting from membership of MANCOs of WUAs?

All DWAF participants indicated that women were not benefiting from their participation in MANCOs of WUAs, because MANCOs were not functioning properly and this has led to poor attendance. Some WUA members did not have irrigation infrastructure in their areas; they joined the WUA because they believed that the DWAF would provide irrigation infrastructure. Unfortunately, there was no progress in this regard. In addition, no capacity building and training programmes were implemented to improve women's knowledge of water resources management.

4.2.5 Interventions required for achieving gender equity

DWAF officials suggested the following interventions for ensuring gender equity within WUAs:

- Workshops should be conducted for women to build their capacity in leadership skills, financial management, assertiveness, negotiation skills, advocacy skills and communication skills.
- DWAF must liaise with other government Departments such as Land Affairs to identify those women that had benefited from the land reform programme, so that these women could be prioritized in the water allocation reform process.
- Awareness campaigns were required to ensure that men and women fully understood the role of the WUAs and the benefits of joining the WUAs.

- Promotion of gender equity amongst men and women, with emphasis on the importance of women's contribution to poverty reduction, should be undertaken by DWAF.
- DWAF should regulate implementation of gender equity. For example, those WUAs that were not making efforts to achieve gender equity targets must have their water allocations withheld by government.
- DWAF must ensure that transformation was not perceived as an option but as a legal obligation which was not negotiable.
- Achievement of gender targets must be included in DWAF Performance Management System. DWAF should support transformation projects and ensure that WUAs contribute to poverty reduction for the poor rural communities, as envisaged in the National Water Act.
- There was a need to collect accurate gender disaggregated data on land transferred to the hands of the HDIs, and correct statistics on land ownership by women must be compiled. The allocation of the water use entitlements for women should be prioritized.
- The low literacy levels for women should be addressed, and DWAF should ensure that the information on national water policy and legislation was made accessible to illiterate people.
- There was good co-operation between black farmers and commercial farmers in some WUAs, and white farmers were willing to share their knowledge and technical skills with emerging black farmers. These models of good co-operation should be supported and replicated in other WUAs.

4. 3 Perceptions of gender practitioners

4.3.1 Progress made towards the achievement of a gender equitable society

The South African government has put in place the instruments necessary to achieve gender equity such as the prescriptions about gender quotas for Water User Associations. However, the enabling legal framework for the advancement of gender equality was not implemented at sector levels. This could be due to insufficient awareness of specific national obligations with regard to women's empowerment and gender equality. Some respondents were of the view that men were not willing to share power with women. They still believed that women should be at home looking after children or occupying administration positions.

There was a need to investigate the barriers to the achievement of gender equality, despite the availability of an enabling policy and legislative framework. The real measure of government's commitment to gender equality should be demonstrated by the allocation of adequate budgets to gender mainstreaming programmes.

4.3.2 Constraints faced by water management institutions in achieving gender equity

Historically women were not fully involved in the irrigation sector and water resources management. Furthermore, women often lacked the technical knowledge necessary to make meaningful inputs in the meetings on water resource management. Water User Associations were dominated by large-scale white male irrigators and small-scale black male farmers, and this made it difficult for women to “break into” these male dominated institutions.

Even where women constituted the majority in the WUAs, they shun the leadership and management roles in the MANCOs. The gender practitioners identified the following challenges that constrained women's involvement in leadership roles within MANCOs of WUAs:

- Traditionally, women were socialised to accept that men were the natural leaders who should be responsible for the management of public institutions.
- The prevailing mindset was that women could not lead in public if men were present, as the leadership roles were naturally reserved for the men. Women would only elect other women to leadership positions if there were no men available to take these positions.
- The reproductive roles of nurturing the family at the household level make it very difficult for women to find time to devote to the meetings of MANCOs. Men had wives that were responsible for nurturing their families, while women had the nurturing responsibilities in addition to serving as members of committees outside their homes.
- Lack of white female farmers amongst the white commercial farming community, where traditionally the men were farmers and the women stayed at home as housewives.
- Women did not own land as it was registered in the name of men. Women had no water use entitlements; these were to a large extent registered in the names of the men.

- Water use required money and investment in infrastructure and women usually lacked access to finance to invest in irrigation infrastructure.
- Gender was a thorny issue for the emerging black male farmers who struggled to understand why they were expected to include women in the MANCOs, when women did not own the land and had no water use entitlements.
- Education for women was needed to prepare them to demand their place in the management of water users' associations. Educated women would have the necessary knowledge and confidence to demand meaningful representation in MANCOs of WUAs.
- Poor women had no time to serve as members of the MANCOs of WUAs, because this would take them away from casual labour, which they needed to provide food for their families on a daily basis.

The gender practitioners warned that development projects that prioritised women's needs without taking men's needs into consideration often alienated the men. Women and men had responsibilities which varied according to their roles within different communities, and these different roles should be recognised. Women should be given opportunity to decide for themselves whether to participate or not in development projects and decision-making processes; they should not be pushed into positions to meet the gender quotas.

4.3.3 How to ensure that women's voices are effectively represented in the WUAs

This was a challenge even for the white dominated WUAs where commercial farmers had included their wives and farm labourers in MANCOs to meet DWAF quotas for gender and race. Women and blacks were there by name only and not as major decision-makers as far as the water use was concerned. This pattern of putting women in the MANCOs as tokens was also followed by the black emerging farmers. Powerful women were found in those WUAs where women had organised themselves into groups and demanded the establishment of their own WUA from DWAF. Women should develop self-confidence; acquire leadership and communication skills necessary to be on the same level as their male counterparts. There was a need for a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system for monitoring progress in women's active participation in MANCOs of WUAs.

4.3.4 How can women be empowered to become more effective in MANCOs of WUAs?

Mechanisms must be found to increase women's involvement in the productive use of water and in the technical aspects of water resource management. These mechanisms could include advocacy and raising awareness among women and girl children at school about technical careers in the water sector. Special programmes should be initiated to assist women, in their individual capacity, to gain access to land and water rights. Women nominated to MANCOs along with men that were unfamiliar with these structures, should be provided with the necessary training in competences such as leadership, water policy and legislative context for the WUAs' meeting procedures, budgeting aspects and the technical aspects related to water resource management. Members of the Management Committees of WUAs should be trained to become gender sensitive, so that they could learn to listen to women's voices and take them into consideration in their decision-making processes.

The empowerment of women could be monitored by tracking progress in the election of women to the decision-making positions, such as chairperson and secretary rather than additional members. Women should be encouraged to campaign for elections without being prompted by the government officials. Current enforcement measures put in place by DWAF, such as denying subsidies and other government grants to WUAs that failed to meet the gender quotas, could force the WUAs to include women as tokens in their MANCOs, and this would defeat the purpose of gender equity.

The management of gender relations, especially across race and cultural boundaries in South Africa, remained a sensitive and complex issue. A diversity management programme should be provided to MANCOs of WUAs. This programme should place a strong emphasis on concerns of all men and women within WUAs across race, gender and culture.

4.3.5 Viable approaches for removing gender biases

It was important to recognize that African tradition on the status of rural women was not aligned with a gender-equitable society. African feminist scholars have argued that a choice must be made between traditional African culture and gender equity. This would remove the power imbalances and pave a way to true equal opportunity where women were able to blossom, each according to their own aspirations and

capacity. Special methods were required to promote gender equity in a culture-sensitive manner, to avoid alienating rural women from their communities.

The gender practitioners suggested the following initiatives for removing the gender stereotypes and biases that compromise women in many respects and negatively affect their self-esteem:

- Initiation of programmes that targeted the change of mindset and education of women to realise the need to fight for their freedom from the shackles of patriarchy.
- Motivation of women to aspire to management and leadership positions without feeling guilty.
- Community exchange visits should be encouraged to provide women with opportunities to learn from other communities that had made a significant progress in the empowerment of women within WUAs. People learned better from each other rather than when they were taught in a top-down way.

The MANCOs of WUAs should learn to appreciate that leadership competency was not dependent on gender. It was necessary to promote an awareness of the benefits of gender equity to WUAs and all citizens. Development challenges faced by South Africa required the use of skills and creativity of all citizens irrespective of gender. Promotion of gender awareness was the first step for women and men to appreciate each others' values and to realise that various development project activities might work out differently for both genders. Women and men needed to be aware of their different positions and functions at all levels in society. The development of common values of respect, freedom and responsibility regarding gender and gender roles, was very important to the achievement of a gender equitable society.

A gender sensitive approach required a different attitude and improved support from all levels, from communities to policy implementing agents and regulators. These groups should be targeted for gender awareness training that would raise their awareness and change their attitudes and ways of thinking regarding gender issues.

Training and education of women would go a long way in building the confidence of women to believe that they were capable of making decisions and managing projects successfully. Literacy and communication skills should be included in the training programme, as these were the skills that women feel they lacked and which would

increase the potential for their empowerment in WUAs, as well as in other areas of their lives. Women were not automatically empowered by participating in projects, but projects created opportunities for women to begin the process of self-empowerment.

4.3.6 Are the WUAs the right institutions for meeting demands for water and poverty reduction?

The majority of participants believed that WUAs were the right institutions for meeting demands for water and poverty reduction. This question was considered to be fundamental because not many policy-makers had given sufficient thought to the practical steps necessary to ensure that WUAs contributed to poverty reduction as envisaged in the NWA. DWAF was expecting too much from the WUAs, without providing them with the necessary support and resources needed to enable them to manage water resources for the benefit of members at the local level. There were too many opportunities for power imbalances in these organizations because of skewed ownership of land and water rights. Consequently, the needs of the voiceless and powerless rural women were neglected. 50% representation of women in MANCOs without the institutional and financial support to ensure that these women could acquire skills and resources necessary to participate in irrigated agriculture, could not contribute to gender equity or poverty reduction. Government should provide the funding necessary to fund poverty reduction projects and build the capacity of poor rural women and men, so that they could improve their socio-economic status.

WUAs could play an important role in the fight against poverty and the creation of a better life for all, provided they were responsive to the needs of different groups of water users, especially the poor rural women and men. WUAs should recognize that water is not just for irrigation but it has other uses within the households, which could contribute to poverty reduction. Although the women were new in farming and were not yet sure of the amount of water demanded by their farming activities, they were very careful in utilising the resource as they were becoming more aware of the impacts of climate change on water availability. They were also keen to learn about water efficient irrigation technologies that would help them to increase agricultural production with the limited water resources available to them. WUAs provided a forum for raising the awareness of the rural communities on their rights to water and land resources. WUAs could also be used to promote the exchange of knowledge on water and land use between those with the knowledge and experience, and the members that were new to the irrigation sector.

There was a belief that the original vision of the national water policy was inspired by the need for an institution to support irrigation for women so that they could produce food for subsistence. The misinterpretation of this vision had led to the establishment of WUAs which were too complex and not designed to support subsistence food production, as originally envisaged. Poor rural women only needed water for subsistence farming and not for producing crops for the markets.

4.3.7 Institutional support needed to achieve gender equality

Tribal leaders had an important role to play in the rural areas, and their support was essential to the acceptance of gender equality in rural communities. Gender training for all the members of WUAs was needed so that they could learn to appreciate the contribution of women to development. NGOs that trained grassroots communities could be used as local training service providers. Land reform programmes should include training of beneficiaries to manage farms effectively so that they could benefit from land ownership. Funding should be provided to assist the poor women and men in securing the necessary farming equipments and other farming inputs.

Some participants argued that the gender policy had not been well informed by the situation at the grassroots level; it did not provide guidance on how to remove the traditional gender stereotypes in communities. There was a need to ensure that those responsible for policy development at the national level were informed by the practical challenges and realities faced by those responsible for implementing the policies. Rural communities must be consulted in order to make sure that government policies were responsive to their development needs. Government officials needed to have an understanding of the needs of the communities that they serve, so that they could develop policies that were compatible with challenges facing them. Too many unrealistic expectations were being raised by DWAF during the establishment of WUAs, and this could frustrate the poor men and women when the promised benefits of joining the WUAs failed to materialise.

In many instances, poverty reduction programmes were curtailed because of the lack of funds, therefore there was a need for a greater share of government funding to be devolved to the local level. At present, a very low percentage of government budgets actually reach the local level. There might also be room in certain instances for forging closer ties with NGOs and having them work with government to improve gender equity in WUAs.

A policy of gender equity could be enforced by withholding government subsidies to WUAs that failed to comply with the policy. However, this approach would not affect white commercial farmers because transformed IBs did not rely on government subsidies. There was a danger that this could encourage WUAs to include women as tokens, for example, most of WUAs that are dominated by white commercial farmers who were already bringing their farm workers as members of MANCOs in order to meet the gender and racial targets set by DWAF.

4.3.8 Interventions for achieving gender equity and poverty reduction

The gender practitioners recommended the following processes for achieving gender equity and poverty reduction:

Women's entitlement to land ownership and water resources – Ownership of land was essential for meaningful rights to water resources for agricultural production. Currently, rural women do not own the PTO. Women's ownership of land and water rights should not be to the disadvantage of the black men, as there was a lot of tension in the homes where there were perceptions that gender equity aimed to exclude men, especially where men had also been struggling without land ownership and water use entitlements under the apartheid government.

Access to credit - Women did not have the collateral required by financial institutions that advance credit. The start-up credit by Land Bank, which was provided to the vegetable and fruit vendors, had been stopped completely. Appropriate financial instruments were required to assist women to access credit they need to invest in agricultural production.

Irrigation infrastructure, knowledge and technology – Government was revitalising irrigation schemes that used to belong to former homeland governments. There was a need to couple this with the training of rural men and women in the use of appropriate technology, so that they could increase their crop production.

Gender mainstreaming – Given the feminization of poverty, it was important to prioritize the empowerment of women in order to begin to make progress in the reduction of poverty. It was important to avoid the current practice of viewing gender equity as a welfare-type intervention, and it was absolutely critical to avoid the lumping of gender issues in the same category with “youth” and “the disabled.”

Coordinated gender strategy

There was a need for a coordinated gender strategy for WUAs, which could be tracked and measured, otherwise it would be impossible to pronounce on progress or lack thereof. Adequate budgets must be allocated to support the implementation of this strategy. Men and women should realize that they are working for the same goal and share the same vision of a better life for all.

The gender strategy for WUAs should be guided by the following gender principles:

- Gender equity as a societal issue which affects men and women.
- Critical role of women – Women should be given the opportunity to participate on an equal basis in the water service delivery process, either as regulators (in government), as implementers (in the supply sector) or as users (in the demand sector).
- Diversity– Men and women have different needs and priorities, roles and responsibilities; these differences must be understood and accommodated by the WUAs in their policies and practices.
- Partnerships – A commitment to gender equity is not only the responsibility of the WUAs but also that of the broader water sector stakeholders. Regulators, implementers and water users should all work together towards achieving gender equity in their individual spheres of operation.
- Monitoring and evaluation – the only way for practitioners to better understand gender issues in the water sector is to monitor these as they occur. A carefully planned monitoring and evaluation regime is critical to mainstreaming gender in a meaningful way. This should involve the collection of a gender-disaggregated data, and gender differences in water use should be accommodated.
- Simplicity – a crucial element of the gender mainstreaming process is that it must be simple to implement. It must also not be so overwhelming as to encourage avoidance.

5. TRANSLATION OF POLICY INTO PRACTICE

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the study within the context of national water and gender equality policies and legislation. The focus is on how these policies were being translated into practice. It incorporates aspects that have emerged from the literature review, surveys of WUAs and perceptions of DWAF officials and gender practitioners.

5.1 Policy and legislative framework for gender equality

The policy and legislative framework for gender equality is very clear on steps that must be followed to achieve a gender equitable society as envisaged in the Constitution of SA (1996). The Commission of Gender Equality (CGE) and the Office on the Status of Women were established with a mandate of ensuring that gender equality becomes a reality in South Africa. However, the reality was that in spite of the existence of these institutions, very little has changed for the poor rural women who are the most disadvantaged group with respect to gender equality and poverty. Findings from this study showed that rural women still continued to suffer from the lack of water rights and land ownership in their individual capacity. The vision of a gender equitable society continued to elude the poor rural women. The problem areas highlighted by the study in the policy and legislative framework have been categorized under the following themes.

5.1.1 Customary laws out of step with gender equality

The right to gender equality enshrined in the Constitution of SA did not automatically translate to gender equality for poor rural women who were still subjected to customary laws that only recognized men as heads of households, and excluded women from owning land in their individual capacity. Single, divorced or widowed women were considered as minors, especially with regards to land ownership and water rights. The study found that only 28% of the women surveyed owned land in their individual capacity. Although the gender policy of the Department of Land Affairs recognized the imperative of ensuring gender equality in access to land ownership, it did not have any statistics on land ownership by women (Mann 2000), and this raised a question on government's commitment to gender equality.

5.1.2 Poor understanding of the concept of gender mainstreaming

A 2007 study conducted by the Public Service Commission (PSC) showed that the concept of gender mainstreaming and gender equality was poorly understood by

senior managers in government departments. Most of them thought that gender mainstreaming was about women's issues, they did not see gender as an integral component of the organisational culture. Their focus was on meeting the 30% quotas for employment of women in management structures as set by national government. This was not linked to the allocation of budgets for special programmes for fast-tracking advancement of women, through the provision of training and mentorship programmes. The findings of this study showed that the 50% quota for women representation in MANCOs of WUAs set by the Minister of Water Affairs & Forestry was also not linked to any budgets for supporting the capacity building and mentorship for these women, so that they could be empowered to make a meaningful contribution in the decision-making processes of the WUAs.

According to the PSC study of 2007 the Commission for Gender Equality and the Office on the Status of Women were not effective in supporting the government departments to mainstream gender, due to a lack of a clear mandate and capacity to deliver. In the absence of guidance from these two institutions, government departments at all levels have focused on counting numbers of women. This narrow focus on quotas for women participation required in WUAs was based on the assumption that if there was 50% representation of women in MANCOs, this would automatically give women more power to influence decision-making within WUAs. The reality was that women were being included in a male dominated agenda, which did not take into consideration their strengths and needs. Sithole et al. (undated) examined the participation of women in Integrated Development Planning projects in selected KwaZulu-Natal municipalities and found that even in cases where women were the majority of participants in meetings, they were passive, and the few participating men dominated the decision-making process. This confirmed that numbers alone were not enough to bring about a balance in power relations between men and women.

The PSC study of 2007 showed that most national government departments had a Gender Focal Person who was supposed to drive gender mainstreaming in department, but in reality this person was allocated responsibility for women, youth, HIV/AIDS and disabled people. This demonstrated that national government departments did not understand the concept of gender equality. Therefore, it was not surprising that DWAF was focusing on gender quotas as way of achieving gender equality and poverty reduction in the WUAs.

5.1.3 Lack of structures and processes

The study found that DWAF did not have any special capacity building programmes for preparing women to play a meaningful role as members of the MANCOs of WUAs. The WUAs for resource poor farmers required more resources to bring about change in the entrenched gender inequalities that were fostered by traditional beliefs and practices which expected women to be subordinate to men. Increasing the numbers of women without changing the perceptions on gender equality could not contribute to the empowerment of women. Resources should be allocated to support gender awareness programmes which should target male and female members of the WUAs. There were no processes for removing gender specific barriers; for example, it was found that women experienced a problem in attending MANCO meetings that were held far away from their homes because of their nurturing roles. This was not a problem for their male counterparts because they had wives to take care of their children while they attended meetings. All women surveyed did not have money to pay for transport to attend meetings of the WUA because of poverty. These were important issues that should be taken into consideration to create an enabling environment for women's participation in management committees of WUAs.

Several important questions could be raised on government's commitment to gender equality, for example:

- Were poor illiterate rural women made aware of their right to gender equality?
- Did they know what steps they could take if these rights were being violated in favour of customary laws that continued to treat women as minors?
- What support was in place to help the poor rural women to demand their constitutional right to gender equality?
- Where could these rural women obtain free legal advice and financial support to demand their right to gender equality when this right was being denied?

5.1.4 Water policy and legislative framework for gender equity

Although the National Water Policy of 1997 acknowledges the importance of ensuring that historically disadvantaged groups have access to water rights and land ownership so that they could improve their livelihoods, it does not address the specific constraints faced by rural women under the customary laws. This policy only emphasizes the importance of women's voice in water committees and water management institutions. The reality was that if women did not own land or water rights, their representation in committees could not contribute to the improvement in

their ability to influence decision-making within the WUAs, because voting powers were dependent on ownership of land and water rights, and the majority of women did not own these assets in their individual capacity.

In terms of the NWA, the establishment of the WUAs was supposed to be a bottom-up process, with water users driving the process based on their needs and priorities. This approach seemed to be working well for the former Irrigation Boards where members have played a central role in the establishment of WUAs that are based on the needs and priorities of their members. These institutions have an advantage, because they have many decades of experience in the local management of water resources for the mutual benefit of their members. The situation was different with the new WUAs for resource poor black farmers, because these were established by a top-down process driven by DWAF, and the poor black farmers participated because all the costs were covered by DWAF. They were hoping that this was the best way to benefit from DWAF funded infrastructure, as they needed to improve their agricultural production. Since the members did not initiate the process, they were unwilling to pay any membership fees because they perceived the WUA as a DWAF project. Most members of WUAs from Limpopo were also members of irrigation schemes which they have kept functional with the support of the Department of Agriculture, and the level of operational success of these schemes was variable.

The study found that women were not in a position to bring about major shifts in the manner in which the WUAs operated, because they lacked power which was linked to ownership of land and water rights, and most women did not occupy influential positions in the management committees, as the majority of them were additional members. From the analysis of the water policy and legislative framework, it could be concluded that there was a lot of work needed to create an enabling environment for gender equality, before women could participate on equal terms with their male counterparts in the management committees of WUAs.

The Minister of Water Affairs & Forestry is required in terms of Section 61 and 62 of the NWA, to provide financial assistance for achieving racial and gender equity in the productive use of water for economic benefit. None of the WUAs for resource poor farmers surveyed for this study had benefited from the funding as outlined in DWAF Policy on Financial Assistance to Resource Poor Irrigation Farmers (DWAF, 2004). Although they had approved Constitutions, management committees and Business

Plans, they were not able to provide any services to the members of the WUAs because they were waiting for DWAF to provide them with seed funding. This raises a question on government's commitment to the improvement of the livelihoods of poor black farmers through improving their access to land and water for productive use. There were also no processes in place to make government officials accountable to the communities they serve.

The Water Allocation Reform programme in South Africa (DWAF, 2005) launched to redress past imbalances in water allocations to HDIs has so far not delivered any tangible benefits to resource poor black farmers in the surveyed WUAs. Although this programme recognizes the need to ensure that women participate in the water allocation process, there were no specific programmes for transferring water rights to women.

In terms of the Constitution of WUA, the voting power was determined by land ownership and water use entitlements; women had limited power because they did not own water or land rights in their individual capacity.

5.2 Weak institutional and regulatory framework for Water User Associations

The NWA is very clear on the definition and purpose of WUAs as co-operative associations established by members, to enable them to pool their resources in order to undertake water-related activities for the benefit of the members. Catchment Management Agencies could delegate certain water management functions to WUAs, but they should compensate them for costs incurred in the performance of the delegated functions. The slow progress in the establishment of functional CMAs has put a burden on WUAs that were forced to undertake water resources management, without a mandate and funding from the national government. Transformed Irrigation Boards were able to perform water resources functions that were important to their irrigation practice, while the WUAs for poor black farmers were not able to perform these functions because of lack of capacity and financial resources. The WUAs that were initiated by members were expected to be self-sustaining, and currently, transformed IBs were meeting this requirement. DWAF was responsible for providing funding necessary to support the participation of emerging black farmers in irrigated agriculture. Capacity building and training required by poor black men and women was also considered to be government's responsibility.

The establishment of WUAs for resource poor farmers was driven by DWAF, and without DWAF support beyond establishment phase, these WUAs remained non-functional. Although there was a DWAF policy for providing financial support to resource poor farmers, there were currently no mechanisms for helping these WUAs to access grants from government, to help them to become functional institutions that could provide services to their members. The gender quotas were compulsory for the new WUAs for resource poor black farmers, because access to DWAF grants was subject to meeting gender quotas while transformed IBs were not under pressure to meet the gender quotas, because they did not need DWAF grants to operate. Their members could afford to pay membership fees to sustain the activities of their WUAs. It could be argued that it was unfair for DWAF to expect new WUAs without resources to achieve a 50% gender representation, when DWAF and other government departments have only managed to achieve 30% gender representation at senior management levels (PSC, 2007).

The use of WUAs as vehicles of poverty reduction for poor men and women could not be achieved by DWAF alone. Co-operation with other government departments and local municipalities was necessary. The revitalization programme which was initiated in Limpopo province by the Provincial Department of Agriculture to refurbish or upgrade the irrigation scheme, was supposed to be part of support provided to poor emerging farmers, but unfortunately this programme has been slowed down due to a lack of leadership. There were a few examples of WUAs where municipalities were playing an important role in supporting the participation of poor black farmers, such as Tosca/Molopo WUA where Bophirima District Municipality bought a farm for poor black farmers, and the white farmers were assisting them to produce vegetables using tunnel irrigation. Umtshezi Local Municipality has also made land available to poor black men and women who are members of Bushmans River WUA, to enable them to produce their own crops. These successful partnerships should be considered for replication in other WUAs, and DWAF should facilitate the process, in order to maximize use of limited financial resources to improve the quality of life for the poor black farmers.

The lack of a regulatory framework for ensuring that WUAs were operating according to the legislative requirements was responsible for the lack of progress in the operation of these WUAs, and unfortunately poor farmers continued to struggle without any improvement in their poverty levels. There were also no indicators for regulating the impacts of WUAs on the lives of the poor men and women.

5.3 Monitoring and Evaluation of gender equity

The lack of a coordinated strategy for achieving gender equity and poverty reduction in WUAs raises a concern on government's commitment to gender equality and poverty reduction. Currently the focus of government is on monitoring gender quotas without paying any attention to the creation of an enabling environment for the empowerment of women and allocation of budgets for supporting special programmes that address women's specific needs and priorities. The lack of performance indicators for gender mainstreaming was also identified as a problem by the study the PSC conducted in 2007. It was found that most government departments did not include gender mainstreaming in their planning and budgeting processes, and there were no indicators other than gender quotas for monitoring successful implementation of gender equality within government departments.

5.4 Cooperative governance

Implementation of the national water policy and legislation requires good cooperative governance because water is a cross-sectoral natural resource. MacKay and Ashton (2004) argued that the successful implementation of the national water policy would depend on collaboration and coordination of government agencies responsible for sectoral policies that were affected by water. The findings of this study have confirmed that the establishment of WUAs driven by DWAF alone, could not address the issue of equitable access to water and land for poor black men and women, because the cooperation and coordination of the various departments was required to direct resources to the WUAs, so that poor men and women could benefit from improved access to land and water for productive use. Relevant government policies must be harmonized so that they could contribute to the creation of a better life for the poor emerging black farmers. Currently the institutional framework for cooperative governance for WUAs is weak, especially at the national level, due to a silo approach to the delivery of development projects to poor people followed by the different government departments.

5.5 Gender and poverty

The gender practitioners interviewed believed that WUAs were suitable vehicles for poverty reduction for poor rural men and women. However, their responses were informed by the national water policy vision, not by the practical experience on the ground. They were based on the assumption that the WUAs were operating as intended by the NWA, where local water users were supposed to pool resources in order to maximize their benefits from use of water for agricultural production. The

reality was that none of the new WUAs for poor black farmers were functioning according to the vision of the national water policy and legislation because of lack of resources. It was found that women were playing an important role in the management of their irrigation schemes at the local level. The study found that most women were earning income from the sale of their crops; however, they needed more land, water and other inputs so that they could increase their crop production. In the interest of addressing poverty for women, more resources should be directed to the irrigation scheme level, where women are actively involved in the management of water resources. The findings from the literature review also support the view that the focus of efforts to improve food security should target women, because they prioritized food security and health of their families, while men focus mainly on their individual needs.

5.6 Making government accountable to the people

South Africa is a democratic state where citizens have a right to hold government accountable for decisions and actions taken, especially if their decisions or actions violate fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of SA, or are unfair, unrepresentative and unresponsive to the needs of the citizens. Currently there are no processes for the poor black male and female farmers to make government officials accountable to them. The government has a responsibility to create forums that would enable the citizens to make government officials accountable, and an effective legal framework that is accessible to the poor rural women should be put in place, to provide them with channels for lodging complaints against those who violate their rights to racial and gender equality.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of main conclusions and recommendations for ensuring that WUAs can contribute to gender equity and poverty reduction for poor rural women.

6.1 Conclusions

The findings of the study supported the hypothesis that gender quotas alone were not enough to bring about gender equity and poverty reduction in WUAs, because the government had not created an enabling environment for the empowerment of rural women. Although the water and gender equality policy as well as the legislative framework clearly outline the steps that should be taken to redress past gender imbalances, the decision-makers have focussed on increasing the representation of women in management structures without implementing the necessary programmes for the empowerment of women. The study showed that women were not getting any tangible benefits from their involvement in WUAs because they did not own land and water rights in their individual capacity. The men who owned land and water rights had the power to influence the decisions on the allocation of water resources. However, it was found that the participation of women in MANCOs of WUAs had provided them with an opportunity to learn about the water resources management issues, and they also learned from the experience of other members of MANCOs. Steele (2004) also found that many water management institutions had made paper commitments to gender mainstreaming, but these commitments were not translated into tangible benefits for women.

The following specific conclusions were drawn from the research findings:

Policy and legislative framework for gender equity

The study showed that the democratic government of South Africa had put in place very good policies and legislation for creating a gender equitable society. However, there was a problem with the understanding and translation of the policies into practice. There was a lack of understanding of the concept of gender equality and gender mainstreaming within government departments, and this led to a narrow focus on gender quotas. The lack of a coordinated gender strategy and specific budgets for supporting the empowerment programmes for female members of the WUAs, demonstrated a general lack of commitment to gender mainstreaming at the highest levels of government.

Literature review

- International experience showed that women and men had different indicators of poverty. Men's indicators for poverty were a lack of assets and inability to generate income, while women's indicators of poverty were food insecurity and poor health. These differences emphasized the importance of designing poverty reduction programmes that take gender differences into consideration.
- The problem of lack of access to water and land rights for women limited their ability to influence decision-making within WUAs, because the voting rights depended on having water and land rights, and these rights were owned by men.
- Women lacked capacity and skills needed to influence decisions on water resources management because of historical exclusion of women from controlling water and land resources.
- Government should fund special programmes for fast-tracking capacity building for women, so that they could participate meaningfully in water management forums at all levels.

Gender representation in MANCOs of WUAs

A gender analysis of selected WUAs showed that none had achieved the 50% gender quota required by the Minister of Water Affairs & Forestry. The new WUAs for poor farmers had made an effort to increase the number of women because gender equity was a condition for accessing subsidies for poor farmers, while transformed irrigation boards which were self-sustaining had no incentive to include women in their management structures.

Patriarchy as an obstacle to gender equity

Contrary to the literature and perceptions of DWAF coordinators and gender practitioners, patriarchy did not seem to be a problem anymore for the female members of WUAs in Limpopo province. However, in KZN province patriarchy was cited as a constraint to effective participation of women in MANCOs of WUAs. Land rights under the communal land tenure system were linked to husbands, fathers, brothers or sons, therefore women, as individuals, were not entitled to these rights.

Weak institutional arrangements

The top down approach followed by DWAF in the establishment of the new WUAs for poor black farmers was not in line with the vision of the NWA which envisaged a user

driven process, whereby water users could define the organizational structure based on their needs. The CMAs were supposed to provide support to WUAs but currently there were no functional CMAs that could provide guidance to the WUAs, and DWAF did not have the capacity to provide the support to fill this institutional gap. The new WUAs were not functional because of a lack of institutional support from DWAF, and there were no special programmes for supporting poor women and men so that they could access resources necessary to participate in the productive use of water. Unlike the transformed Irrigation Boards, these new WUAs could not be self-sustaining without government funding because of poverty.

Poor cooperative governance

The vision of new WUAs as vehicles for poverty reduction required effective cooperative governance at all levels of the government system, but this was currently not in place. The lack of formal structures for collaboration and coordination of relevant government departments in the provision of support to the poor black farmers continues to perpetuate the marginalization of the poor rural men and women.

Lack of an enabling environment

The gender policies were not supported with strategies and guidelines for mainstreaming gender in water management institutions. There were no special budgets allocated to the support of meaningful participation of women in management structures of WUAs. No special capacity building and training programmes were initiated to prepare women for the new leadership roles. The Land Reform Programme did not have any special programmes for targeting women as beneficiaries. The Commission for Gender Equality and Office on the Status of Women did not have adequate capacity to support government departments in the implementation of gender equality policies.

Monitoring and evaluation

There were no performance indicators for gender equity in MANCOs of WUAs and government departments that were responsible for implementing gender policies. The gender equality indicators should go beyond the quotas, and measure tangible impacts and benefits for women in the MANCOs of WUAs.

6.2 Recommendations

Empowerment of women

- The gender quotas must be coupled with specific capacity building programmes that focus on leadership and technical skills necessary to empower women to fulfil their roles in MANCOs of WUAs.
- Government should fast track women's access to land and water rights in their individual capacity so that they could become independent farmers.
- A coordinated strategy for gender equity in Water User Associations must be developed, and adequate resources must be allocated for implementing the strategy. Suitable performance indicators for monitoring progress should be included in the strategy.
- The existing institutions for ensuring gender equality must be provided with adequate resources to deliver on their mandate, and they must be empowered to act against government institutions that disregard gender equality.
- Processes must be put in place to provide women and other marginalized groups with information on their rights as well as channels to be followed to report violation of these rights.

Weak institutional arrangements

- There is a need for the clarification of roles and responsibilities for the different government departments in the provision of support to WUAs until the CMAs become fully operational.
- The successful partnerships between WUAs and municipalities demonstrated in some WUAs in assisting the poor black farmers to get access to land and water, should be considered for replication in other WUAs.
- Implementation of effective cooperative governance processes should be enforced at all levels of government in order to support the operation of WUAs as vehicles of poverty reduction according to the national water policy vision.
- The water allocation reform programme must be linked to the land reform programme, and resources should be provided to support poor men and women in the use of water for agricultural production.

Poor understanding and interpretation of gender policy

The poor understanding and interpretation of gender policy by senior management in government departments and WUAs must be addressed in a two-pronged approach; this should include gender awareness training for senior managers in government and members of MANCOs, and specific programmes must be initiated to empower women to demand their right to gender equality as enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa.

Further research

Research must be conducted in the following areas:

- Development of cooperative governance models for effective use of WUAs as vehicles for poverty reduction for poor rural women and men;
- Investigation of alternative models for using access to water to improve the socio-economic status of poor rural women other than through becoming members of WUAs.

Concluding remarks

The study has concluded that the primary focus of gender mainstreaming should be on changing the mindset of both men and women, so that they could recognize that women have an important role to play in addressing the poverty challenge faced by poor rural communities in South Africa. The historical racial and gender inequalities have led to a situation where poor rural black women were the most disadvantaged group in our society. Their low education levels, poor access to information and lack of knowledge prevented them from participating meaningfully in democratic processes. Therefore any initiative that aims to promote gender equality must ensure that these constraints were removed, otherwise the poor rural women would continue to be passive members of committees recruited to meet gender quotas.

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8. ANNEXURES

Annexure 1: Participants

Female members of the WUA

Name	WUA	Position	Tel/Cell
Johannah Khorommbi	Nzhelele	Treasurer – Scheme committee	072 110 0296
Agnes Khakhu	Nzhelele	Additional member –scheme committee	None
Johannah Khavhakhavha	Nenzhelele	HR portfolio – scheme committee	073 237 7725
Kutama Mukatuni	Nenzhelele	Additional member – scheme committee	None
Sophie Mbambala	Nzhelele	Additional member - MANCO	076 133 0656
Reginah Mudau	Nzhelele	Scheme Secretary	079 275 1012
Emily Mandiwana	Nzhelele	Additional member-MANCO	None
Tiny Makale	Nzhelele	Technical portfolio-Scheme	None
Hendrinah Mukhadi	Nzhelele	HR portfolio – Scheme committee	078 764 5590
Lydia Luvhengo	Nzhelele	Scheme Secretary	072 579 7237
Elisa Khalusi	Nzhelele	Scheme co-ordinator	072 778 0774
Cecilia Ramutsheli	Nzhelele	Scheme Secretary	076 942 7733
Sannah Lidovho	Mutale	Additional member-Scheme committee	076 180 6070
Regina Mutwanamba	Mutale	Vice chair –farming area committee	079 151 6124
M Phaswana	Mutale	Treasurer – scheme committee	072 896 0546
Gloria Kwindi	Mutale	Secretary of scheme committee	072 072 7701
Dorah Mabasa	Middle Letaba	Additional member-MANCO	083 722 3891
T L Makhubela	Middle Letaba	Additional member-MANCO	073 181 7261
M E Khosa	Middle Letaba	Secretary - MANCO	072 909 1085
Selinah Muthambeni	Mutshimbwe	Additional member-Scheme committee	072 025 8772

Magret Tshifularo	Mutshimbwe	Vice-Chairperson-MANCO	072 491 8398
Maria Tshivhombela	Mutshimbwe	Additional member-scheme committee	071 307 6831
Meggy Mandavha	Mutshimbwe	Additional member-Scheme committee	082 546 6183
Melta Gumede	Imfunda YoPhongola	Additional member of MANCO	072 882 1900
Thandi Khanyile	Imfunda YoPhongola	Additional member of MANCO	082 717 9181
Maphilo Mabaso	Bushmans River	Additional member of MANCO	None

List of participating MANCO chairpersons of WUAs

Name	WUA	Tel/Cell
Mr N J Maluleka	Middle Letaba LP	082 427 7956
Mrs Elizabeth Laatz	Bushmans River KZN	082 560 5867
Mr Richard Nemaungani	Mutale LP	083 348 2821
Mr Edwin M Makungo	Mutshimbwe LP	082 744 6268
Mr Obert Mapande	Nzhelele LP	072 347 1576
Mr Jeremiah Mabuka	Imfunda YoPhongola - KZN	072 771 3556

List of DWAF participants

Name	Position	Tel	E-mail
Mr Konanani Khorommbi	Deputy Director –DWAF National	012 336 8872	QMC@dwaf.gov.za
Mr Nkosi Mkhize	WUA coordinator – DWAF, KZN	082 806 6086	mkhizen@dwaf.gov.za
Mr Sibusiso Sikhosana	DWAF, KZN	031 336 2820	sikhosanas@dwaf.gov.za
Ms Dudu Thwala	WUA coordinator-Inkomati CMA, Mpumalanga	082 338 1017	thwalav@inkomaticma.co.za
Mr Israel Raphalalani	WUA Coordinator, DWAF-Limpopo	015 290 1200	raphalalanii@dwaf.gov.za
Ms Busi Mwasi	WUA Coordinator – Limpopo	015 812 0090	mwasib@dwaf.gov.za

Ms Naledi Mlotshwa	WUA Coordinator, DWAF-KZN	082 8897924	mlotshwan@dwaf.gov.za
Mr Mashudu Tshiololi	WUA Coordinator, DWAF-Limpopo	015 960 1600	tshiololiE@dwaf.gov.za
Ms Nomzi Koyana	Former DWAF Official – Stakeholder empowerment: National	040 609 5262	Nomzi.Koyana@dhlgt.escape.gov.za

List of gender practitioners

Name and position	Organization	Telephone	E-mail
Ms Barbara Schreiner, Director (Ex- DDG of DWAF)	Pegasys Strategy & Development (Pty) Ltd	012 460 1161	Barbara@pegasys.co.za
Gugu Mazibuko, Director	Pegasys Strategy & Development (Pty) Ltd	012 460 1161	gugu@pegasys.co.za
Ms Susan Nkomo, Gender specialist (Ex-CEO of Office of the Status of Women)	Susan Nkomo Consulting	082 458 6360	snkomo@mweb.co.za
Ms Louiza Duncker	CSIR	012 841 4780	lduncker@csir.co.za
Ms Urszula Rust	Council for Geoscience		urust@geoscience.org.za
Ms Esper Ncube	Rand Water		encube@randwater.co.za
Dr Lynette Hlongwane	Gender specialist, UNISA	082 823 6282	cromlyn@telkomsa.net
Ms Rosetta Simelane	DWAF – Gender		obc@dwaf.gov.za
Ms Marna de Lange, Director	Social Technical Interfacing	082 807 6523	marna@global.co.za
Mr Derick Njoni	Dept of Agriculture- Limpopo	015 294 3000 082 880 6496	015 294 3000/ 082 880 6496
Ms Ethne Davey	Gender and Water Alliance	082 908 6967	
Ms Tshepo Khumbane	Water for food movement	012 735 1570	

Bhekisisa Ngubo	DWAF	012 336 7092 082 884 1847	
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Annexure 2: Research instruments

i) Survey questionnaire for female members of the WUAs

Access to water and land

Do you have a water use entitlement? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Type of waterworks ☐ canal ☐ river ☐ borehole

Are you a member of an irrigation scheme? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Land ownership ☐ Individual ☐ Joint ownership ☐ Tribal land

Land holding size ☐ <0.5ha ☐ 0.5-1.0ha ☐ >1.0ha

Equity in water distribution ☐ Poor ☐ Average ☐ Good

Conflicts in water allocation ☐ Severe ☐ Moderate ☐ None

Are you involved in O&M of waterworks ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you selling any of your crops? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the answer is yes, how much money do you make per year.....

Who is your target market? ☐ Neighbours ☐ Farmers' market

Comments

Participation of women in decision-making

How many meetings of the WUA have you attended this year?

Position held in the MANCO ☐ chairperson ☐ secretary ☐ treasurer ☐ other

Are you involved in decision-making on the following?

Election of the members of MANCO ☐ Yes ☐ No

Water allocation ☐ Yes ☐ No

Canal maintenance ☐ Yes ☐ No

Approval of budgets of the WUA ☐ Yes ☐ No

Membership fees ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments.....

Capacity building for women

Have you participated in any training of MANCO members?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If answer is yes, please provide details.....

Have received any credit to support your crop production? ☐ Yes

☐ No

If the answer is yes please provide details.....

Do you receive support from agricultural extension officers? ☐ Yes

☐ No

If your answer is yes, provide details.....

What are the benefits of becoming a member of MANCO?

.....

Major obstacles faced by women members of MANCO

Are you facing any of the following obstacles?

Men make all decisions in meetings

☐ Yes

☐ No

Only male heads of households can address public meetings ☐ Yes

☐ No

Tradition or culture prevents women from speaking in public meetings

☐ Yes

☐ No

Lack of time to attend meetings of the WUA

☐ Yes

☐ No

Lack of money or transport to attend meetings of the WUA

☐ Yes

☐ No

Meetings conducted far away from your home

☐ Yes

☐ No

Wives need permission of husbands to attend meetings of the WUA

☐ Yes

☐ No

Lack of knowledge about water management issues

☐ Yes

☐ No

Comments.....

.....

Recommendations for change

What changes are required to make sure that women play a significant role in the management committees of WUAs and also enjoy an improvement in their access to land and water?

ii) Questions for Chairpersons of WUAs

1. How many women are members of MANCO and what positions do they hold?
2. Do women have the voting power?
3. Do women attend MANCO meetings regularly?
4. Do you take women's multiple roles into consideration when you schedule times for meetings of MANCO?
5. Do you believe that women are making a meaningful contribution to the functioning of the MANCO of the WUA?
6. Do you think that it is possible to have a 50-50 representation of men and women in the MANCO of the WUA? If answer is no, please provide reasons.
7. How can the WUA help poor men and women to improve their livelihoods?
8. Any other comment.

iii) Questions for DWAF coordinators

1. Do you believe that women are influencing the decisions of MANCO of the WUAs?
Please explain
2. Are there any obstacles to gender equity within MANCOs of WUAs?
3. What are some of the challenges that you face in implementing the gender quotas set by DWAF for MANCOs of WUAs?
4. Do you believe that women are ready to become chairpersons of MANCOs of WUAs? If your answer is no, suggest steps that are necessary to prepare women for these leadership position.
5. What special interventions are needed to achieve gender equity within MANCOs of WUAs?
6. In your opinion do you believe that women are benefiting from their membership of MANCOs of WUAs? Please explain.
7. Any other comments on the gender equity within MANCOs of WUA.

iv) Questions for Gender practitioners

1. Do believe that South Africa has made significant progress towards a gender equitable society especially in the area of water resources management? Please explain.
2. What are some of the challenges that constrain the water management institutions from including women in their management structures?
3. How can women be empowered to ensure that their voices are effectively represented in the Management Committees of WUAs?
4. In your opinion what are the most viable ways of removing gender biases and perceptions in our society?
5. In your view are WUAs the right institutions for meeting the demands for water and poverty reduction, especially for rural women?
6. What interventions are required to ensure that WUAs can achieve gender equity?
7. Any other comments on gender equity within Water User Associations and other water management institutions.