

Transboundary Water Management and Gender: an inductive journey

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Initial Thoughts

- My research investigating TWM beyond a state-centric approach,
- Looking at the role of basin organisations, local (municipal) governments, stakeholder organisations and the private sector,
- Why is my work gender blind?

Gender and Water Management

The Global
Partnership
conclude
play a lo

for water management



Policies & Declarations

- The Dublin Principles (1992): “women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water”,
- Principle 20 of the Rio Declaration: “Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development”,
- The UN International Decade for Action, ‘Water for Life’, and called for a focus on implementation of water-related programmes and projects, ‘whilst striving to ensure women’s participation and involvement in water-related development efforts’
- And many others.....

Impacts on TWM

- Many agreements on international watercourses been formed over the past 20 years – basin organisations established
- Cooperation has not always delivered tangible results:
 - Well-planned development not happening
 - Ecosystems not being protected
 - Local communities not benefitting.

TWM Institutions analysed

International framework agreements & studies	Regional framework agreements	Basin agreements and organisations
UN Watercourses Convention (1997) – 35 countries party from Aug 2014	UNECE TB Watercourses Convention (1992) – legally binding on 35 countries in region	Orange-Senqu River Basin Commission (2000) – Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana & Namibia
WWF-DFID International Architecture for TWM study	SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses (2000) legally binding on 12 countries in region	Okavango River Basin Commission (1994) – Angola, Namibia & Botswana
GEF International Waters studies – over 200 in 20 years	SADC Regional Water Policy (2005) – not legally binding, an encouragement document	

Analysis

- Documents analysed for terms possibly indicating a gendered approach e.g.:
 - Gender
 - Woman
 - Female
 - Men
 - Male
 - Stakeholder
 - Participation
 - Social

Findings

- Virtually no mention of terms indicating a gendered perspective in any of the documents,
- Stakeholder (public) participation mentioned in *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Convention* (mainly linked to right to access information) & SADC Policy (more substantive inclusion – but policy is not legally binding)
- *UN Watercourse Convention*: speaks of “population dependent on watercourse” and “social and economic needs of the watercourse states” – nothing else on stakeholders or gender
- *Global Environmental Fund Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis methodology*: strives to provide a comprehensive overview of current situation in basins – but has no indicators on gender issues in is 200+ projects to-date.

Why?

- Despite the large number of international declarations and policies recognising the need for gender aspects in water management there is nothing showing up in TWM institutions,
- At local and national level there is evidence of a recognition of adopting a gender approach in water management (not always implemented),
- Why the omission at the international transboundary level?

TWM is gender blind because(?):

- Result of two masculinised and male-dominated fields:
 - Engineering/hydrology (military honours bestowed to men who erected large-scale water infrastructure) – see Zwarteveen (2008),
 - International Relations/Political Science/ Security Studies (language and culture being masculinised with military overtones) – see Tetreault (2008)
- This masculinised approach is evident in the composition of government negotiation representatives (and members of Basin Organisations) as well as replicated in the research field.

Organisations

- United States Army Corps of Engineers' stated mission is to “provide vital public engineering services in peace and war to strengthen security....”,
- Assessing the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) finds social sciences under-represented & under-funded,
- TWM deals with issues of state sovereignty, diplomacy and international relations – male-dominated fields.

Conclusions

- Gender is notable by its absence in international TWM institutions,
- Historical development of the field may explain some of the situation, but what about other factors?
- In organisations it is more than just the representation of women – need to look at the structural issues – difficult to change,
- Heroic-engineer approaches still dominate, highlighting the portrayal of women in reproductive & distributive roles; while men are placed in productive roles
- A gendered approach goes beyond female representation – could aid the shift to a post state-centric approach to TWM
- Important to consider as basins move towards infrastructure development.

Thank You

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