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# Involving Women in Sanitation Projects

by Heli E. Perrett, Technology Advisory Group (TAG)

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TAG Discussion Paper Number 3

# Involving Women in Sanitation Projects

by Heli E. Perrett, Technology Advisory Group (TAG)

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A joint United Nations Development Programme  
and World Bank contribution to the International  
Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade

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PREFACE

This paper, **Involving Women in Sanitation Project Planning and Implementation**, by Heli E. Perrett, has been prepared with support from and in cooperation with the UNDP Project INT/83/003: **Promotion and Support of Women's Participation in the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade** <sup>1/</sup>. It outlines how the needs and capabilities of women can be taken into account in the normal steps involved in sanitation project planning.

This document is being given a limited distribution as a discussion paper. Comments and suggestions are invited from readers, especially information on the design and cost of improved latrines, the delivery and support systems needed to make sanitation programs effective and on experience in sanitation program design, implementation and replication. TAG is not going to be able to reply to individual correspondents but plans to revise this discussion paper in due course to reflect, as appropriate, the comments and contributions received from readers.

The distribution of the Discussion Papers does not imply endorsement by the sector agencies, government, or donor agencies concerned with programs, nor by The World Bank or the United Nations Development Programme.

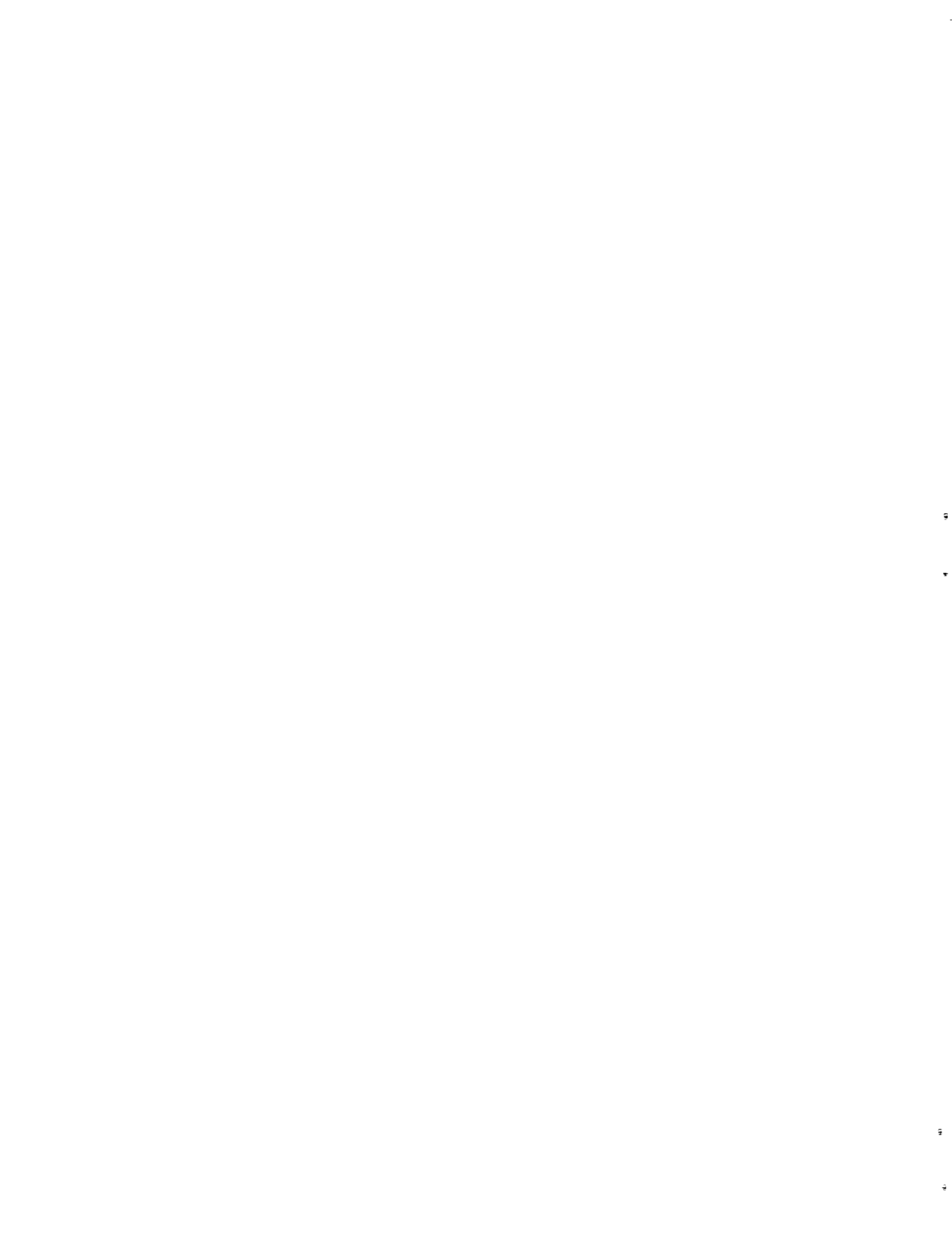
Enquiries about the TAG<sup>2/</sup> program and the publications available, and comments on this and other TAG papers, should be addressed to the Project Manager, UNP Project INT/81/047, Water Supply and Urban Development Department, The World Bank, 1818 H Street, NW, Washington, DC 20433.

Richard N. Middleton  
Project Manager

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<sup>1/</sup> INT/83/003 is a project established by the UNDP Division of Inter-regional and Global Projects with financing from the Government of Norway. It collaborates with water supply and sanitation projects executed by United Nations system agencies, non-governmental organizations and bilateral assistance programs to demonstrate how active involvement of women can enhance the effectiveness of the projects and increase the well-being of the women and their families.

<sup>2/</sup> TAG: Technology Advisory Group, established under the United Nations Development Programme UNDP Interregional Project INT/81/047: **Development and Implementation of Low-cost Sanitation Investment Projects** (formerly Global Project GLO/78/006), executed by the World Bank.



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## **SUMMARY**

In many developing countries, women and young children make more use of sanitation in the home than other household members; their needs therefore should be suitably accommodated. To achieve this, women ought to be able to participate in the selection of technology and in design decisions being made at both community and household levels. In many cases, this concept may come about naturally, but there are still instances and places where the contributions of women need to be more fully accepted and recognized in the selection process. Women in most societies are the principal educators and socializers of children, and if the women are fully involved in the decision to improve household sanitation they will be better placed to educate their families (particularly the young children) in practices which will improve health and hygiene. Women may also be able to instil in the male adults in the family and community the fact that the contributions they make towards essential sanitary improvements, by giving time, labor and resources, will be of benefit to all.

This note outlines how the needs and capabilities of the women in the project area can be taken into account during the normal steps involved in sanitation project planning; the potential roles of women at various stages in the project cycle are shown on Diagram 3 (page 25).

Data collection lays the basis for considering women during the identification, pre-feasibility and feasibility stages of project work. Information on women can be incorporated with other kinds of information obtained and used by planners, and women themselves can take an active part in establishing the data base for the project.

Social, institutional and financial feasibility analyses, particularly the first, need to take women into account. Where there are large numbers of households headed by women in the project population, attention to women is particularly important.

Actual decisions on how women will participate in low-cost sanitation activities should be based on an understanding of:

- the socially and culturally acceptable sanitation-related roles for women;
- an understanding of the kinds of social situations and organizational mechanisms which are most conducive to women's active involvement; and
- the extent of participation which can realistically be expected in a given situation.

Women require attention during the design of project communication support activities<sup>3/</sup>. While their most important role in sanitation projects is likely to lie in education of their own children and others in the community, it can at times include project-related promotion or instruction. In any case, all project communication activities have to be planned with women in mind, both as communicators and as members of the audience.

Monitoring and evaluation of women's participation needs to look at the process of participation and assess its impact on the project, and, where resources permit, measure impact on women themselves.

Finally, among the institutional and managerial questions that arise when planning to involve women fully in low-cost sanitation projects are: the role of demonstration or pilot projects in testing and promotion of such approaches; the difficult questions of selecting the right institutional arrangements for implementing "women's components"; and how to persuade sanitation agencies to take the women's element seriously.

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<sup>3/</sup> Communication support is assumed here to include the complementary activities of promotion, instruction and education.

## **Introduction**

1. Who are the main users of home sanitation units? In the majority of cases, the answer would be women and young children. For that reason, above all, women merit special attention during planning of sanitation projects. They should play an active role during community and household level decision-making, so that the facilities are planned with full awareness of their perceptions and needs. Women hold the key to the continued sanitary operation of these units and to their benefits to the family's health. As motivators within the family and the community, women may be helpful in convincing men to undertake the construction of latrines and other sanitary improvements. Women's informal groups and communication networks can serve to create community awareness of the need to maintain clean facilities and a hygienic environment.

2. Therefore, without the cooperation of women, successful sanitation projects cannot take place.

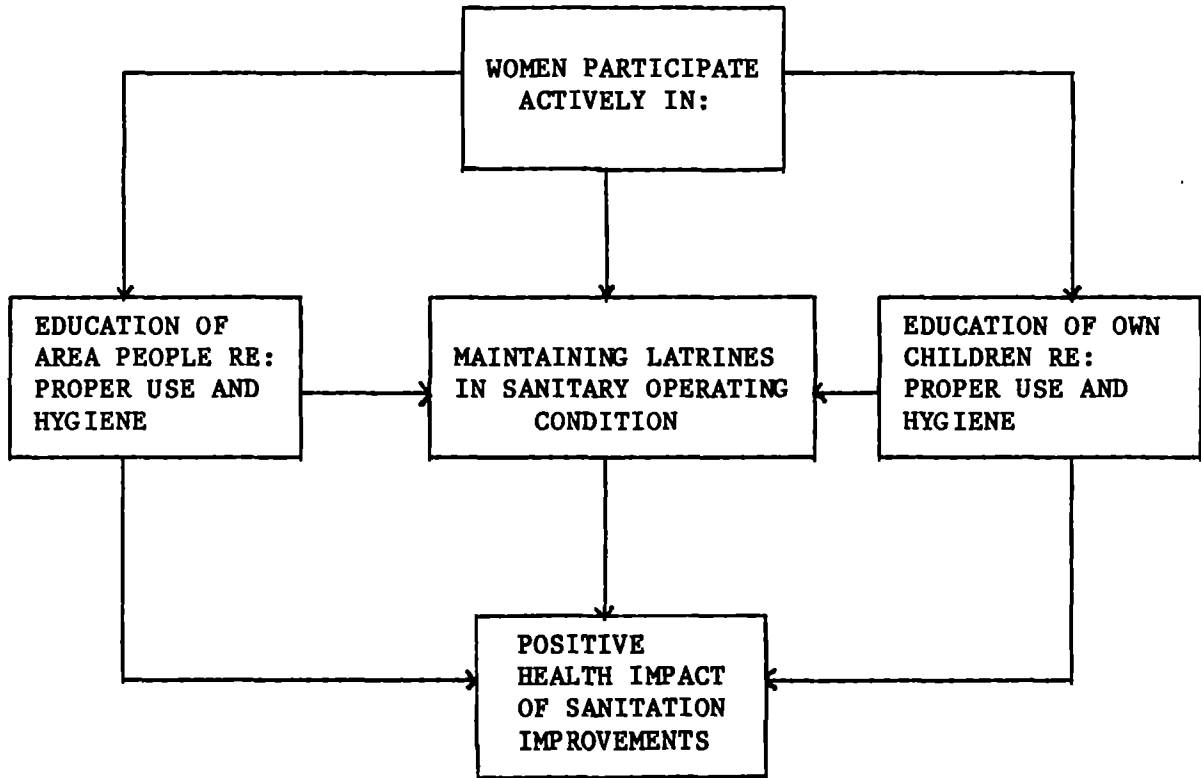
3. This note is addressed to planners of sanitation projects who are either specifically charged with recognizing women's participation in such activities or are simply concerned enough about the impact of sanitation on people's health to want to consider women's needs and fully utilize their ideas and resources in project activities at both community and household levels.

4. No argument is made in the note for planning separate women's components or for separating out women's activities from those of men, although there are special situations where such approaches may be indicated. However, the ideal approach is to integrate attention to women in normal project planning activities involving the local communities. While the paper outlines how the project planning process could help women to participate more effectively, most procedures could be applied to general community participation as well.

5. A subsequent note in this series will deal with the question of women and water supply. Much of the present discussion is applicable to drinking water projects, but there are some differences as well as similarities between women's roles in water supply and sanitation. For instance, usually women are more interested in water than in sanitation. Sanitation tends to be viewed as an urgent need only after the water supply is satisfactory. Water supply projects also tend to allow more collective, or community level, action and decision-making than does sanitation when household facilities are being provided. These differences will be elaborated further in the technical note on women and water supply project planning, but they should be borne in mind here.

6. **Why pay attention to women?** Because women's potential contribution to sanitation projects is so little recognized compared, for instance, to women's role in water supply, it warrants a little more elaboration. As already noted, usually women are the most frequent users of household units.

**ROLE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION  
IN ENSURING HEALTH IMPACT OF SANITATION PROJECTS**



**Diagram #1**

Normally, it is women who encourage (or discourage), teach and supervise young children's use of the units. Therefore, to make sure that the facilities will suit women and be usable by their children, women should participate with men at household and community levels in making decisions between technology options and on such design features as height of pedestals and type of seat, type and size of the enclosure, lighting, doors, location and orientation, and other details. Experience in many countries is showing that seemingly small aspects of design can make all the difference between use or non-use of latrines by women and children.

In Nicaragua, women did not like to use new latrines because the design of the superstructure allowed their feet to be seen. In other countries latrines remained unused because the enclosure was too dark, the design or materials used encouraged bats or snakes to nest inside, and children defecated outside because they were afraid of falling down the large opening or because it was too dark inside<sup>4/</sup>.

7. Normally, also, women are the ones who clean the sanitation units, making sure that all the materials needed by household members (such as water for flushing and washing) are present. But it is not at all unusual for sanitation project staff to give women no instructions for these tasks. Or, if instructions are available, they are often geared to an audience that is more literate than many women in the project area or demand a higher level of technical understanding than the women possess.

8. From the viewpoint of the project and its implementers and funders, women are therefore critical to the health impact of the project, since this impact depends on regular use of fully operating and clean units. (See Diagram #1.) And, as frequent users, and household food preparers, it is essential that women themselves pay attention to basic hygiene habits such as handwashing after defecation and before they handle food. It is, however, important to avoid the impression that the responsibility for family habits and for the proper use and care of sanitary improvements belongs exclusively to women, or that the promotion of women's participation is a separate effort, parallel to men's participation. All adults in a given community need to have an integral vision of their responsibility for ensuring hygienic conditions for their families and the community at large. Therefore, any attempts to encourage participation among women or men should take place within the context of their complementary roles.

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<sup>4/</sup> Mary L. Elmendorf and Raymond B. Isely, **The Role of Women as Participants and Beneficiaries in Water Supply and Sanitation Programs**, WASH Technical Report No. 11, USAID: Washington, December 1981, pp. 4-5.

9. Women are the best educators of other women on personal and domestic hygiene and on use of sanitary facilities. In addition, there have been instances where women have played a strong role in promoting sanitation at the community level, operating through the structure of women's organizations or groups. Again, it is not at all unusual for women, particularly women from poorer families, to produce some of the materials used in latrine construction and to take part in actual construction work, frequently alongside their husbands.

10. Finally, if we take a longer-term view of the impact of sanitation projects on people's living environment and health, women's input is critical, both in the family and the community context. Not only can they routinely teach and enforce good use and hygiene practices in the family and the community, but they can play a major role in making low-cost sanitation and good hygiene a permanent part of the culture.

11. **How to pay attention to women:** There are then two main ways for sanitation projects to consider women:

- (a) by including information on women in the project area in the data to be collected, and using it in planning; and
- (b) by assisting women to play an active role in the project, particularly in decision-making about the technology and design aspects and in accompanying education activities.

12. Such attention to women during project planning is even more vital where there are large numbers of female-headed households in the project area, either on a temporary or permanent basis (as occurs in Lesotho, rural Zimbabwe, Jamaica, and other countries). In such instances, women will take over many of men's roles; if this is not recognized during planning, it will lead to unworkable assumptions (for instance, about area people's ability to contribute labor for construction).

13. This paper takes an integrated approach to planning of the women's aspect of sanitation projects. Therefore, it outlines what can be done at key points in the normal planning process; integration of the women's contribution should occur in: data collection activities; feasibility analysis; detailed design of low-cost sanitation activities; design of communication support activities; and elaboration of the monitoring and evaluation system. The paper discusses each in turn.

#### **The Women's Dimension in Data Collection Activities**

14. This section suggests the types of data on women that would normally be useful at different stages of the sanitation project cycle<sup>5/</sup>

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<sup>5/</sup> These are in line with the stages outlined and definitions used in: Brian Grover: **Water Supply and Sanitation Project Preparation Handbook, Volume I**, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1983.



(although not every project would need to consider all the information listed).

15. **Data requirements at the identification stage.** The project identification report is often based on a desk study. Usually only limited existing data on women in the project areas will be accessible, and often the data may be qualitative or outdated. It will need to be rechecked later during pre-feasibility or feasibility work.

16. At this stage a minimum of two types of information should be sought on women:

- (a) information on any major women's organizations or groups active in the project area which are, or could be, involved in water supply, sanitation, health or community development, and the relationship of these organizations with the agencies responsible for low-cost sanitation;
- (b) noting of an unusually high percentage of women **de jure** or **de facto** heads of households in the project area (more precise data can be collected later in the project cycle).

17. **Data requirements at pre-feasibility and feasibility stages:** The pre-feasibility stage screens and ranks different project possibilities. Project planning relies at this stage on country level data on women's needs and capabilities. Any primary data collected would usually be qualitative or roughly quantitative and acquired through rapid assessment procedures<sup>6/</sup>. The feasibility stage checks, quantifies and collects additional data on women as needed for feasibility analysis (see paragraphs 21 to 39)<sup>7/</sup>.

18. More detailed information on the kinds of data to be collected is provided in Annex I.

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<sup>6/</sup> For a discussion of rapid assessment procedures, see, for example, Heli Perrett: **Social Feasibility Analysis in Low-cost Sanitation Projects**, TAG Technical Note No. 5, Washington, DC: UNDP/World Bank, 1983.

<sup>7/</sup> This should be reflected in the Terms of Reference for feasibility work. Where time and budgetary constraints are particularly serious, or other factors preclude thorough feasibility analysis, then certain data collection may have to be postponed until the early implementation stage. Or where the situation is changing rapidly, and there is a long gap between project preparation and implementation, data may need to be rechecked later, during early implementation.

19. **Sources of information.** The sources identified in this section are primarily formal and institutional. However, much can be learned through informal dialogue with typical men and women in the community; such a dialogue should, therefore, begin as early as possible. Since women in traditional societies are often hesitant to speak up in open meetings, special efforts may need to be made to get their views in smaller group meetings.

20. More formal data sources include the following: at the **identification stage**, which is normally concerned largely with desk studies, information on women can be obtained from centralized institutional sources of the kind mentioned in Annex II.

21. At the **pre-feasibility stage** existing studies on women, or which discuss women, should be sought at the country level. Sources will vary and the chances are that often there will be minimal existing information of direct relevance to the low-cost sanitation project. However, the types of institutional sources worth checking are: Women's Bureaux or other coordinating bodies for women's activities in the country or region; local offices of national or international women's organizations; local offices of national or international voluntary organizations; government bodies in charge of demographic data and census data (such as the Ministries of Planning) and of family planning (for example, Ministries of Health or Population Bureaux); Social Science research institutes or departments of national universities; and the local offices of international and bilateral donors. If primary data has to be collected at this stage, it usually has to be done very quickly and inexpensively. The best sources of information are informants or experts, such as field workers in the project area (particularly females who could be quickly assembled for a workshop, for instance), sometimes complemented by group interviews with local residents (with care always taken not to promise them too much, as there will be a long time-gap between this early stage of preparation and actual project implementation). Group interviews of this kind are particularly useful for helping planners understand the reasons why women can or cannot become involved or change their existing practices.

22. The **feasibility stage** will focus more (but not exclusively) on collection of primary data usually from three kinds of sources: informants, local women themselves and representative local men. Informants include local health workers (such as nurses, family welfare workers and village health workers); teachers; leaders or active members of local women's groups or organizations; women political activists in the area; other male or female community leaders; traditional midwives or other traditional informal women leaders; wives of headmen or council members, and so on. Men should not be discounted as informants, particularly when they are in constant contact with women (for example, doctors and missionaries). It is also necessary to interview typical local men to establish their attitudes to women's participation in various aspects. Usually it is important to obtain clearances or approval from area male officials, chiefs, elders, husbands, heads of households, and sometimes others, prior to interviewing women. As always, whenever possible, information obtained from informants should be

cross-checked with that from similar sources and with data from observation and direct interviews with local people. Points to watch when interviewing local women are summarized in Annex III.

### **Women in Social Feasibility Analysis**

23. Women's needs and capabilities must be taken into account during social feasibility analysis. A general discussion of this technique can be found in **Social Feasibility Analysis in Low-cost Sanitation Projects**<sup>8/</sup>; in this section the focus is solely on the women's dimension.

24. **Women's interest in sanitation improvements:** As mentioned in paragraph 5, it is important to recognize that sanitation does not usually have highest priority for women, if their water supply is not adequate from the point of view of quantity, reliability or convenience (quality is generally less important). Therefore, it will often not be feasible to get women actively involved in sanitation activities unless their water supply needs have first been met.

25. It cannot be assumed that women's and men's interests in sanitation are necessarily alike. There is some evidence to suggest that in many situations women are more interested than men in improving sanitation, at least in part, because of better privacy offered.

In Nepal and Bangladesh, TAG consultants found that the promise of privacy for women was a strong reason for interest in better latrines (SOURCE: TAG reports). Experiences reported in other countries have indicated that women have been known to severely restrict food intake in order to eliminate bowel movements during the day. Such practices have led to reported gastric ulcers, insufficient growth of fetuses, and other complications resulting from poor nutrition practices.

Where women are using open spaces for defecation, they sometimes do not want to give up associated "social" advantages. Such male/female differences can help to explain subsequent failures and even predict constraints to use of latrines.

26. **Women's views about the technology options and design features offered:** Both pre-feasibility and feasibility stages should check how women feel about the types of latrines to be provided by the project. Women's views should be probed with respect to the suitability of technology and design features for their young children, particularly from the perspective of safety and avoidance of falling. It will be largely up to them whether children are encouraged to use the latrines or not.

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<sup>8/</sup> Heli Perrett, **Social Feasibility Analysis in Low-cost Sanitation Projects**, TAG Technical Note No. 5, Washington, DC: UNDP and the World Bank.

**In Zimbabwe**, a TAG consultant found that some women were indeed actively discouraging their children from using latrines because of fears for their safety. Similar findings are reported elsewhere.

27. What women think and feel will not only affect their and their children's responses to the project, but their subsequent use and maintenance of facilities.

**In Botswana**, under an experimental phase of a program, one type of latrine was found not to be regularly used because women found the units too hard to keep clean. Such latrines can also become sources of infection<sup>9/</sup>.

Women often place a different value than men on such positive features of latrines as: privacy offered by the superstructure, comfort, attractiveness, convenience, prestige and status value, reliability and safety.

**In Botswana** it has been reported that women did not like even to be seen carrying water to the latrine because of the loss of the traditional privacy of defecation<sup>10/</sup>.

They may appreciate time and energy demands more, particularly if they have to do the work, or women may have different views on space requirements, siting, or windows for public latrines, among other things.

28. **Women's willingness and ability to contribute labor or materials:** Some on-site sanitation activities tend to assume too readily that women will

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<sup>9/</sup> A comprehensive Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review on Women's Participation in Community Water Supply and Sanitation is currently under preparation by Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma for the WHO-affiliated International Reference Centre for Community Water Supply and Sanitation (IRC) in the Hague. As in the case of the present note, it has been supported by the UNDP project entitled "Promotion and Support of Women's Participation in the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade" (INT/83/003). Wherever possible case study references have quoted this as a source to save space in the note. In future such references are given as "IRC Bibliography".

<sup>10/</sup> Christine van Wijk-Sijbesma, **Participation and Education in Community Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes: A Literature Review**, Technical Paper No. 12, The Hague: IRC, 1981. All future references to this paper as a source of information on case studies are noted as "IRC #12".

lend a hand in building latrines, while other similar programs ignore their possible contribution.

29. The most obvious example of the first type of situation occurs where many able-bodied men are absent. Any assumptions about self-help inputs of the community towards pit-digging, superstructure construction or similar tasks have to be carefully made in such circumstances. Women may be fully occupied in managing households and farms, and, although theoretically they would be willing to contribute, they may have to give higher priority to other obligations.

**In Lesotho**, under one rural sanitation program, the community was expected to contribute labor towards the school sanitation project, but able-bodied men were often absent and the women in many villages could not cope with digging of the planned large pits in the rocky soil, nor did they have the time.  
**SOURCE: TAG report.**

Also, some cultures prescribe fairly rigidly which tasks are appropriate for women and which are not; although the social situation may change, such cultural restrictions can still remain in effect.

30. On the other hand, the project planners may be unaware of labor or material contributions that women could and would naturally make, and consequently fail to adjust the design or plan accordingly, or give women instruction they need to do the job. For instance, often lower-income women in developing countries work alongside men in construction work - although they may have only certain specific responsibilities such as carrying water and sand, sorting stones, making bricks or thatching the roof.

31. Without women's acceptance of daily tasks, it is unlikely that any project will achieve its health objectives. Questions about women's willingness and ability to contribute labor should therefore be raised again in regard to cleaning and maintenance, the former in particular often being the responsibility of women. It is often the women who have to ensure that there is water available for flushing pour-flush latrines when there are no house connections, as in some towns in Bangladesh under the TAG-assisted demonstration project. If it is assumed that the community will take responsibility for pit emptying (as may be the case where twin alternating pits are provided), then the willingness (or not) of the community as a whole and of any women gardeners to handle and to use the resulting humus may also be an issue.

32. **Women's existing defecation practices and related habits:**

Differences may exist in the defecation practices of women and men as well as in related habits such as body-washing or cleansing materials used. Taboos may affect women's (or men's) use of latrines during specific times. There may also be marked differences in the male/female preferences for squatting over sitting positions (or vice versa) - if, for instance, the men have adopted new practices while working as migrant laborers or serving in the army. Such factors have relevance for technology selection and latrine design.

33. **Acceptability of siting arrangements to women:** Women should take part in such household-level decisions as: whether the latrine is situated inside or outside the house; its location vis-a-vis the main dwelling (back, side, front); its orientation; distance from the house, distance from water source, and other arrangements.

In one **East African** country, households were ordered to build latrines along the road (so they would be easier to inspect) but women did not use them because they did not like to be seen entering or leaving. **SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.**

In some projects women's preferences will be made known, if community participation is encouraged (for example, as occurred in Kirtipur, Nepal, where women reportedly participated in the siting of latrines). In other situations the project will have to take special measures to encourage it. Rural and urban women of different cultural groups are likely to have differing preferences. While siting is a feasibility question, it may sometimes become more relevant at the implementation stage of the project. However, it will have to be raised earlier if the plot is very small or women's preference for an indoor or attached latrine may be technically infeasible.

34. **Acceptability of sharing arrangements to women:** By now, culturally-defined sharing constraints ("avoidance relationships"), such as those between fathers and daughters and fathers and sons' wives, have been well documented.

In **Bangladesh, South Korea, Tanzania, Malawi and Swaziland** the sharing of household latrines by males and females (either in general or in a particular family relationship has been reported as a constraint to use. (**SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.**) Sharing constraints may also have been the cause of parallel use of old unsanitary latrines and new pour-flush ones under one program in Bangladesh (**SOURCE: TAG report**). In **Kenya**, in some communities separate latrines must be provided for "in-laws". (**SOURCE: TAG field staff**).

There may be other kinds of sharing problems, such as those between householders and their tenants (roomers or people living in separate shacks in the yard). Women may object to cleaning latrines if such sharing occurs. Either way, women may be the best sources of information on such likely sharing constraints. The most effective interviewers in such cases are female.

35. **Women's role in determining the acceptance rate:** It is probably true that project area men are more likely to determine the acceptance rate than the women. However, in most cases, male decisions are undoubtedly influenced by pressures from women in the family, if sufficiently motivated. The role of women in determining acceptance rates is more easily seen where there are a number of female-headed households. These households may slow down the acceptance rate because they have more serious financial constraints, tend to be more conservative, be unable to make the labor contribution required by the program.

**In India, Tanzania, the Philippines and Tonga, the poor access that women had to information resulted in their non-acceptance of water and sanitation facilities. Women, and especially poorer women, often have less access to information than men.**  
**SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.**

If the social feasibility analysis can recognize such potential problems, remedial measures can be adopted. Where there are a large number of women **de facto** household heads, they may have easier access to cash, that is, if husbands are sending money back home. However, the sanitation program will also need to find out whether these women are allowed to make a purchase decision, or whether they have to wait for their husband's or some male relative's approval, which may take a long time and cause program delays. This would call for a different promotion strategy.

#### **Women in Institutional Feasibility Analysis**

36. This section discusses briefly three ways of considering women during institutional feasibility analysis:

- (a) when considering overall project institutional arrangements;
- (b) when reviewing the suitability of women's organizations for assuming administrative responsibility of one or other aspects of the project; and
- (c) when reviewing the feasibility of using community level organizations or groups (such as health or water supply committees, mothers' clubs, owners' associations, and so on) in project promotion, education, implementation or operation and maintenance activities.

37. **General institutional review:** Institutional structure, processes, culture and staffing patterns can effectively preclude any attention to women in sanitation activities. It is not unusual to find water and sanitation agencies to be male-dominated and heavily bureaucratized, with limited willingness to embrace such new ideas and approaches as those which stress the social side of sanitation work in general, or attention to women specifically. Recognition of such constraints is therefore important at an early stage in the planning process. The **Water Supply and Sanitation Project Preparation Handbook** (see footnote 5/) notes the main points to raise when reviewing organizational arrangements for the management of the project, and these general points will not be repeated here. During this review, some idea should also be obtained of: whether agencies are interested in or sensitive to women's needs and wants; whether the staffing pattern is such that it permits women to be reached when necessary (paying particular attention to field staff); and whether an institution is ready to collaborate, or delegate "women's activities" to other agencies more qualified in this area.

38. **Review of women's organizations:** In cases where projects have allocated a major administrative role to women's organizations, special questions will need to be asked about these organizations, particularly if the selection of such arrangements has been proposed by consultants or other outsiders to the country or government. Among such questions are those listed in Annex IV. Finally, it is important to review how the active involvement of women's organizations would or would not affect the cooperation of men in the project area. In some cases women's organizations have found it very important to work through and be legitimized by existing male leadership to ensure men's cooperation.

39. **Review of community organizations or groups:** In considering local organizations or groups for a role in a project, both those with female membership only and general ones, questions similar to those in Annex IV should be raised. Stress should be placed on reviewing criteria for membership and the extent to which the ideas or opinions expressed by members would reflect those of the general project population of women (or women and men), and on assessing whether benefits would spread beyond the immediate members either in the short term, or as a second phase, due to a demonstration effect. When considering village development committees, water or sanitation councils or similar activities as major vehicles for local participation, attention should be given to whether there are any female members and, if so, whether or not they play an active role.

**In Colombia**, representation of women on the nearly 3,500 community development committees in two regions was 8% and 17%. Absence of women in village bodies is also reported for **Northern Ghana, Thailand, India, and Kenya**. It also occurs in many other countries. (SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.)



## **Women in Financial and Economic Feasibility Analysis**

40. Examination of the project financing plan should ensure that it takes women into account. When there are a number of women **de facto** heads of households (perhaps with husbands away working in mines or in oil-rich countries) they may have difficulty paying for sanitation improvements until their husbands return or send money for the purpose. The reverse may occur: **women de facto** heads may have better access to cash and be more open to change than heads of other families. As noted in paragraph 35, women **de jure** household heads may on average be worse off financially than the rest of the area population. They may have difficulty in getting access to credit programs, which often discriminate against women. But, in some cultures (for example, in West and Central Africa) women retain control of a certain amount of money that they generate through such activities as home gardens, sale of eggs or poultry, home baking or crafts.

**In Nigeria (Igwe) and some villages in Kenya**, women have been known to finance water or sanitation facilities independently. (SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.) This has also occurred elsewhere. But the project should make sure that such financing would not place a burden on women.

## **Detailed Design of Women's Participation in Low-cost Sanitation**

41. As already stated, this note does not assume that women's participation in sanitation planning has to take place separately from that of men, nor that a separate "women's component" needs to be planned. Instead, the emphasis and preference is for an integrated approach. This should be kept in mind while reading the present section, although women's participation is being stressed for purposes of discussion.

42. Planning of women's active participation, whether alone or together with men, should be based on understanding of: the socially and culturally accepted sanitation-related roles for women; the kinds of social situations and organizational arrangements through which women can best play an active role; and the extent of women's participation which can realistically be expected in a given situation.

43. **Types of activities in which women can participate:** Potentially, women could participate in any of the low-cost sanitation activities in which people in the project area can take part. But it is often different in practice: the area culture will prescribe which kinds of activities are appropriate for women and which are not (determined by social class, caste, age, or other criteria). Skill limitations, and competing demands on women's

**In Kirtipur, Nepal**, women in lower-income families were found by TAG to help men in latrine construction more often than in higher-income families in the same area. SOURCE: TAG report.

time and energy, will impose further constraints. Furthermore, women alone may not always be successful project promoters where men make the decisions and disregard women's views. However, the situation can change if women are able to assert their combined influence through organizational structures.

44. For the reasons noted above, the list in Table 1 should be viewed as a possible range of activities for women's participation, from which the society and the project will "select" those suitable.

45. **The social context of women's participation:** In some societies, the social rules governing women's public and private roles are fairly rigid. For instance, while they may not prohibit women participating in sanitation decisions, they may permit them to do so only in certain situations. They may be allowed to have a say about what they want and like in the privacy of their home, or in the context of a women's club or informal gathering of female relatives and neighbors, but not in a public meeting or even in their own homes when men are present. Again, women may be able to take a part in the construction of the latrine superstructure as helpers to their husbands, but be unwilling to do the same task in the company of women or alone, for fear of social criticism. Or the rules may be even more complicated.

46. In order to avoid making unworkable assumptions about women's participation, the social rules and constraints must be known during planning. The experience reviewed argues that, while slight modifications can be made if there is time and women are motivated enough, it may be safest for a sanitation project (because of scarce resources normally available for this aspect) to assume initially that women can participate best in traditionally approved ways and situations. However, these restrictions are likely to change once the community begins to see the value of women's contributions within the total community effort. The project can help to build such awareness gradually, by treating women's activities as an integral and critical component of local development rather than as a separate specialized activity. Especially where women's decision-making is involved, the project may then need to find ways to make such decisions known and respected by male community leaders, that is, to create bridges between women's groups or women's views expressed in their homes, or in the company of other women, and the public forum.

47. **Mechanisms for women's participation:** Grass-roots organizations and groups can facilitate and legitimize women's participation. These mechanisms need not be limited to organizations with only women members. Women can participate through organizations which have members of both sexes, as long as women attend the meetings and the presence of men does not relegate them to an essentially silent and powerless role (for example, just taking notes in a "secretarial" capacity during village committee meetings).

In three projects the responsible agency specified that there should also be female community representatives on committees. In two of the cases the males did not inform female members about the meetings and in a third case all meetings were held at a place which was difficult for women to reach. (SOURCE: IRC Bibliography) In other situations such encouragement of women's participation by the responsible agency has proved more successful.

Observance of even one meeting of an organization, or of public meetings of local people, can check on women's attendance and participation; where women sit (all at the back, for instance), and if and how they have a say in the proceedings. Where it is obvious that women are being excluded from general committees, the project may be able to request the establishment of a special women's entity (for example, a women's sanitation committee, or a women's education committee or task force). To make sure that the best possible vehicle is chosen for grass-roots participation, women themselves should be consulted.

48. Among the most potentially promising women's organizational structures which might be mobilized for supporting sanitation activities are mothers' clubs and women's cooperatives. Mothers' clubs now exist in a number of countries and in urban as well as rural areas. In some countries they have a good hierarchical structure and hold regular meetings of regional and even national representatives, and are fairly influential. Such structures can ensure two-way flows of information with spread and institutionalization of successful activities. Women's cooperatives, particularly if they have a strong traditional basis, have been known to expand their functions to include such new concerns as water supply and, occasionally, sanitation.

49. At present we have very little information on the role of such organizational mechanisms in encouraging the building, use and maintenance of better latrines. However, limited experience in related areas suggests that whenever local women's groups play a major role in a project, they still have to operate through and with the explicit approval of project area leadership, which is usually male, in order to ensure that local men cooperate (for example, in providing funds or labor as needed for harder tasks) and do not oppose the women's activities.

50. In general, if a good organizational mechanism can be found, a sanitation project would do better to graft its activities on to an existing group or organization (preferably one having links to the implementing agency and grassroots structures and political support). This approach would be more efficient and probably more effective than setting up completely new structures because of savings in time and money. There is also a greater likelihood that anything it does will prove useful and enduring. The types of questions listed in Annex IV may prove helpful for review of such organizational arrangements, particularly at the local level (see also paragraph 37).

51. Setting up completely new organizational mechanisms for women's participation would usually not work well under a sanitation project for at least three reasons: the often limited time-span available to do the organizational task properly; the difficulty sanitation often has in becoming a strong binding force and motivation for women (unlike, for instance, water supply); and the fact that sanitation agencies, and hence sanitation projects, can rarely count on having enough appropriately trained staff to implement and supervise this type of task well. However, while it might be difficult to set up completely new women's organizations for sanitation work, it might be possible to set up women's sanitation or health education sub-committees or task forces of existing local level organizations or groups, as suggested above (see paragraph 46).

52. **The extent of participation that can be expected:** Women expressing an opinion on minor questions of siting (for example, on where they want the leach pits for pour-flush latrines located in their yard, so that the concrete slab is convenient for a workslab) is not equivalent to members of mothers' clubs assuming full responsibility for promoting the program in their community and educating their neighbors on how to use the latrines once these have been constructed. Lack of attention to the extent of participation can result in failure to make optimum use of women's time, skills and capabilities, either expecting too much from them or too little.

53. One way of looking at the extent to which women's participation can occur is to define it in terms of three indicators:

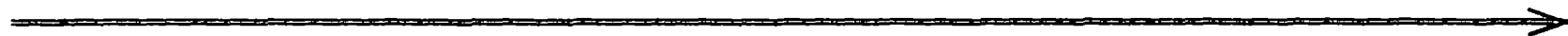
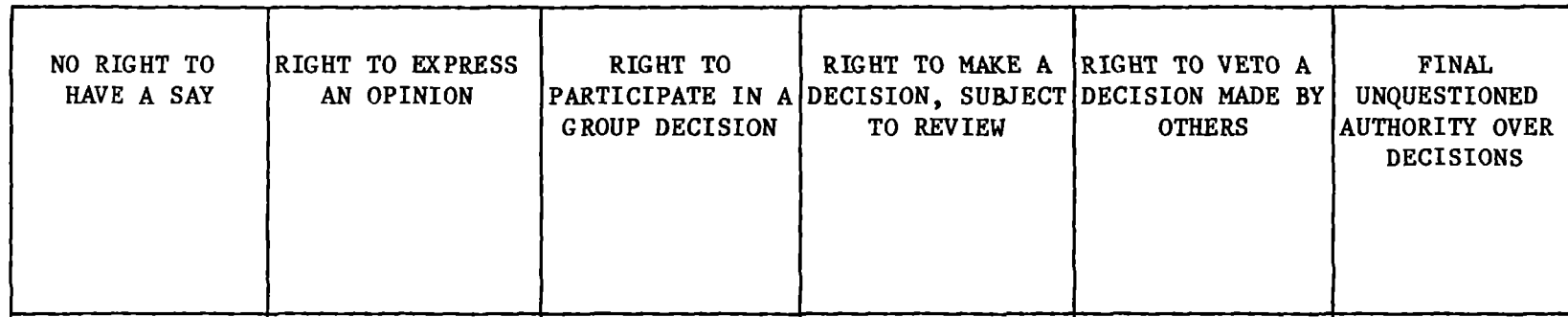
**duration of participation:** refers to the amount of time contributed over a specified period; that is, whether it is a limited one-shot type of involvement or whether it demands days, weeks or months of effort over a long period of time;

**level of representation:** refers to whether the women who take part are representing themselves only (as when they express personal design preferences), their families (as when women decide on siting of household latrines), other women (as when some women decide on what the local women's contribution will be), or the community as a whole (when they are members of community committees);

**associated power:** is a more complex concept representing a range from no power at all to extensive (or authoritarian) power.

**INFLUENCE ON THE PROJECT OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING**

WOMEN PARTICIPANTS IN SANITATION DECISIONS HAVE:



INCREASING LEVEL OF INFLUENCE ON THE PROJECT

Diagram #2

54. **Greatest potential for women's participation:** From the perspective of the project and society, women can usually make their greatest contribution in improving or ensuring the health impact of low-cost sanitation projects. They can contribute to health in two basic ways:

- (a) through playing an active role in complementary education activities; and
- (b) through ensuring the cleanliness and proper operation of their own household latrines and cleanliness of the surrounding area.

While these contributions are undeniably important, they may result in other benefits to the family and the society. Women's involvement may lead to greater self-esteem or (in the case of a public education role) an improved social standing. In general, these kinds of sanitation roles for women are fairly well recognized by now, although they are not always facilitated by the project: hygiene education activities are often neglected or poorly planned and implemented, and project staff frequently do not give women adequate instruction for any cleaning and operational roles.

55. A second promising way for women to participate in low-cost sanitation projects is through involvement in decision-making both at community and household levels, particularly for selection of the technology options, and for detailed design, to ensure that they and their children can and will use the units.

**In one Eskimo community** the formal participation of women in planning led to the introduction of composting instead of pit latrines, and in **Nepal** even just informal comments from women onlookers at an urban sanitation project site made staff realize that women objected to separate cubicles. (SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.)

An important but somewhat neglected point of entry for women's decision-making is the demonstration or pilot stage of low-cost sanitation project work (see paragraphs 71-72).

56. Evidence suggests that planning for women's involvement in construction is not as important. Where women do construction work traditionally, they are likely to do it on a sanitation project (unless the project gives all needed instruction to the men); where they do not do it customarily, the project would simply encounter social constraints which could cause delays and even failures if the women are expected to contribute labor. The exception to this rule would occur if and when women are underemployed or unemployed and can be trained for paid employment on the project (roof thatching is one suggestion).

57. Evidence so far does not encourage relying on either men or women alone for promotion of the acceptance of latrines, except in unusual

situations (where women are very strong in leadership and where they control the purse strings at household level), but this is an aspect which requires more study. It is discussed below.

### **Design of Communication Support Activities to Reach and Influence Women**

58. **Women as communicators:** It is useful to distinguish between three types of communication roles in which women might become officially involved on behalf of the project: promotion; instruction (or information); and education. Whether women become involved in formal **promotional** activities will depend largely on who at the household level makes the decision to improve sanitation, and the local people (such as father-in-law, village elder, health worker) who are likely to influence that decision. Very little information is currently available on this aspect, but the consensus so far seems to be that, in most male-headed families in developing countries, such major decisions are made by men. If this is true, then available knowledge dictates that the "change agent" or promotor should also be male, in order to be as similar to his "client" as possible. However, given women's informal role as "influencers" of male decisions within the family (and, indirectly, within the community), the project needs to acknowledge and appropriately reinforce the capacity of women to facilitate change "from within". Where there are large numbers of female-headed households the situation changes. However, even if actual promotors are primarily male, women's organizations - such as mothers' clubs - can play a major role in encouraging latrine building through persuading village men to provide labor and cash, or making donations themselves.

**In the Philippines, under the Surigao City project, women's organizations encouraged sanitation and general beautification through arranging competitions between different neighbourhoods. (SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.)**

59. The **instruction** role in communication support activities of sanitation programs has two main aspects: teaching owners of new latrines how to build or improve their own latrines (or help in the process), and teaching them to look after the finished unit (cleaning, repair, pit change over, emptying, or other necessary functions). Normally, some of this instruction would need to be directed to women and particularly poorer women. Where adult males are absent from their households for long periods of time, then women would of course need to learn everything.

60. As suggested earlier (paragraph 54), one of women's most promising contributions lies in **education**, both of their own families (especially children) and of other people in their neighborhood and, sometimes, outside it. Women can be the local sanitation auxiliaries or health educators, and in village sanitation committees or similar groups they can be responsible for the education aspects. Traditionally, domestic and personal hygiene tends to be an approved area of women's expertise and responsibility, so an active educational role would be culturally appropriate. Traditional beliefs

and practices which women hold can seriously threaten the health of their families. An example of a common problem practice which can threaten the family's health is the failure to wash hands before handling food.

**In parts of rural India, Lesotho and other areas of Africa and Asia, the belief exists that children's feces are harmless. This can result in women not cleaning up after children or washing their hands after handling children's stools. (SOURCE: IRC Bibliography.)**

61. On the other hand, it is often the women who make better hygiene possible for their families, by bringing water to the house, placing containers near the latrine, buying or making cleaning materials, and other similar tasks. Women must be fully convinced of the value of these activities, so that they may make the special effort required.

**In Tonga, the request of male family heads not to involve the women led to an initial failure of a sanitation education project since, although men were nominally family heads, the women had considerable control over domestic hygiene and how the family decided and acted. (SOURCE: IRC #12.)**

62. A most neglected area of focus at the household level has been the teaching and motivation of women to train their children to use the improved latrines where these are different to what they had before, or where it is a tradition that toilet training of children is left until long past babyhood. However, where children are known to be problem users of latrines, a two-pronged approach is needed to change the situation: mothers have to be involved in reviewing the latrine technology and design to make sure it is deemed suitable for children's use (paragraph 56 above), while at the same time mothers need to be strongly encouraged to promote and supervise proper use by their children.

**In Botswana, under a pilot phase of a sanitation program, a special toilet seat was designed for children, but, in spite of it, the use of latrines by children under nine years of age remained a problem. Education was needed as well. (SOURCE: TAG report.)**

Participation of mothers in monitoring children's use, with meetings of mothers' clubs or similar groups providing an opportunity to discuss achievements, would provide additional reinforcement. In some instances, women may also be able to be taught to make simple adaptations or supportive improvements (such as footstools, holding harnesses, or removable seats) to ensure that children use the toilet willingly.



63. **Women as members of the communication audience:** Where communication activities are attempting to reach and influence women, whether through other people or through media, they need to consider women as audience members and the ways in which female audiences might differ from male audiences. Such differences can lie in literacy levels, general knowledge, interest, motivation, self-esteem, use of or access to the media (for instance, they may rarely read newspapers but listen to the radio more than men), and different personal communication patterns (with whom they talk, when, where and on what subjects). To the professional communication planner, such differences translate into specific decisions in the design of the communication activities. However, some past programs show that women's special characteristics can be neglected, as in the case where instructions on cleaning latrines are in complicated printed form, with no illustrations, while less than 10% of area women are literate. Or where education activities directed to women assume a greater understanding and belief in the germ theory of disease than exists in practice.

64. **Segmentation of the female audience:** Thinking of women as a homogeneous mass can be as potentially dangerous to on-site sanitation project success as not recognizing sex differences in the audience. In many project-related communication activities, it is important to appreciate whether it is really the young wife who is responsible for household chores or the oldest daughter, for many lower-income women may work away from home (as domestic servants as in many Latin American slum areas or in agriculture in rural areas). Equally, communication activities need to take into account whether it is really the mother who looks after the young children all day, and therefore plays the major role in toilet training them and supervising them, or again the oldest girl, or the grandmother. Similarly, the influential role of any mothers-in-law, mothers, or informal village or community leaders may need recognition (both male leaders and female ones, such as traditional women leaders or midwives). If leaders do not approve, change in normal practices may not be possible. Such precise definition and in-depth understanding of the audience permits better tailoring of messages to suit the women to be reached and makes sure that the women who should be influenced in effect are.

65. **Designing communication strategies to reach and influence women:** the design of a communication strategy is more than just a question of selecting an audience and communication channels to reach them. Other aspects have to be considered including: timing of communications; frequency; intensity; duration and content. These aspects are discussed elsewhere<sup>11/</sup> and will not be reiterated here. Suffice it to say that if women are the main audience members then all these considerations have to take women's needs and characteristics into account.

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<sup>11/</sup> Heli Perrett, **Planning of Communication Support (Information, Motivation and Education) in Sanitation Projects and Programs**, TAG Technical Note No. 2, Washington, DC: UNDP and the World Bank, 1983.

## Monitoring and Evaluation of Women's Participation

66. Little is known as yet about effective planning and organization of women's participation in sanitation activities. Monitoring of the process is therefore essential, with rapid feedback to management. Evaluation can also be useful for checking on the commonly made assumptions that: (a) women participants will benefit from their efforts; and (b) that the project will benefit from women's participation.

67. Self-evaluation has worked well in some notable projects, and could be applied more frequently. A recent INSTRAW report makes this argument:

"Self-evaluation [is] an effective tool in [community] education. Therefore, women and the community should be encouraged to evaluate their own progress in water supply and sanitation activities in order to improve their role in this field<sup>12/</sup>."

68. At the present time, good monitoring and evaluation methodologies for application to women's participation in low-cost sanitation (or water supply) are unavailable. Work is currently under way in UNDP<sup>13/</sup> and the World Bank<sup>14/</sup> which will add to existing knowledge.

69. Diagram 3 presents one framework for such monitoring and evaluation. This should be considered a preliminary one, given the more extensive UNDP and World Bank ongoing efforts mentioned above. The framework includes three dimensions: monitoring the process of women's participation; evaluating its impact on the project; and evaluating impact on women. If resources are limited, sanitation projects could restrict the evaluation effort to looking at the impact of women's participation on the project itself (that is, not evaluate to any extent the effects on women), since this is most likely to be of central concern to engineers and to the types of agencies carrying out sanitation programs. Sources of data and data collection techniques would be varied and include review of project records, analysis of existing background data, observation, interviews with informants, and interviews with women participants themselves. Such data collection techniques are adequately discussed in a variety of publications and the discussion will not be repeated here<sup>15/</sup>.

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<sup>12/</sup> **Women and The International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade**, United Nations Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). Undated. p.30.

<sup>13/</sup> The UNDP-administered project, entitled **Promotion and Support for Women's Participation in the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade**, is developing and testing methodologies for monitoring and evaluation of women's participation in drinking water supply and sanitation programs.

<sup>14/</sup> Some work currently under way in the office of the World Bank's Adviser on Women in Development's office will contribute to this aspect.

<sup>15/</sup> See, for instance, Mayling Simpson-Hebert, **Methods for Gathering Socio-cultural Data for Water Supply and Sanitation Projects**, TAG Technical Note No. 1, Washington, DC: UNDP and the World Bank, 1983.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

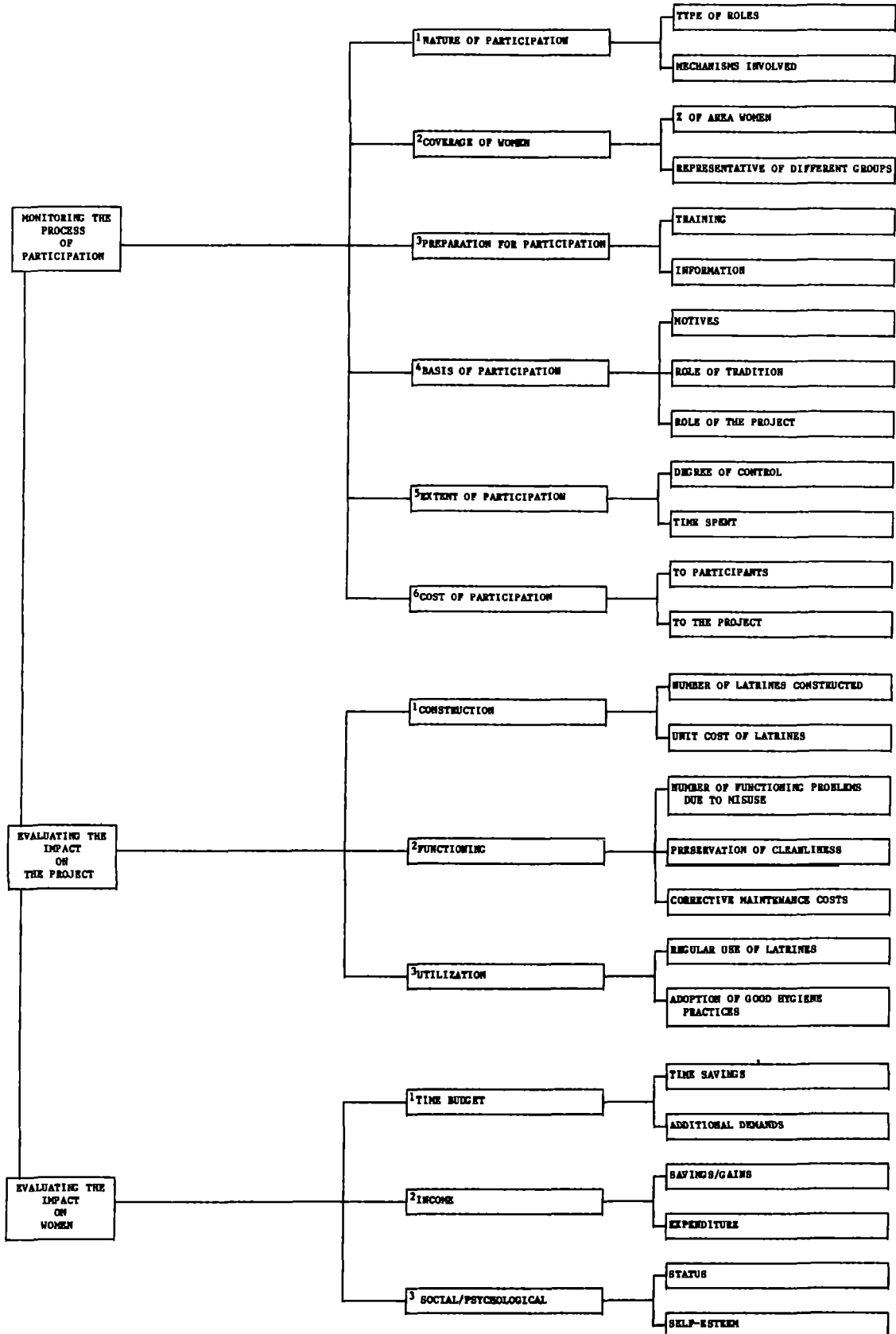


Diagram #3

## **Institutional Aspects**

70. **Differences between small and large investment projects:** Approaches which specifically consider women's needs and capabilities are largely experimental in low-cost sanitation project work, as well as in many other types of projects. Understandably, there is also a certain amount of reservation about them. Therefore, to minimize any associated risks, it is advisable to try out such approaches initially on a more limited scale or in pilot form in one or two project areas. Such smaller-scale projects tend to be less rigid and allow more intensive attention to these activities, which gives them a better chance of success.
71. **Planning pilot projects:** Pilot projects can therefore perform a useful role in testing and promoting the women's involvement. Obviously at the pilot stage certain aspects can be more easily tested than others. If the pilot phase is restricted to the construction of a fairly limited number of latrines in a short period of time, then it can at least serve for making an initial check on the extent to which the technology and design features match women's needs, preferences and habits. Such questions are difficult to answer in the abstract, particularly when the types of technologies involved are completely new to area women. But once a few units have been built and demonstrated it becomes much easier, even if, because of the small numbers of women and units involved, the data is only suggestive.
72. Any attention to women's involvement during the pilot phase would have to be designed in such a way as: (a) not to provide area people with a distorted image of what will ultimately happen under the full-scale project; (b) not interfere with any technical testing; and (c) keep a clear focus on the community context within which the women participate. Because of these considerations, women's participation would usually have to be planned as part of general community participation, or at least some similar kinds of involvement of men would have to take place as well, even if primary interest lies in studying or finding ways to enhance the participation of women.
73. **Coordination between agencies:** More often than not, the engineering agency in charge of the on-site sanitation project would not have previous experience or institutional structures and staff to carry out the kinds of activities that this note has discussed. It would then have two options: to collaborate with another agency or organization which could plan and manage both community participation and women's participation; or do some fairly rapid institution-building of its own. Frequently, time and budgetary constraints would argue for the former course if a suitable cooperating agency can be found. Also, the implementing agency in question may prefer the first option on the grounds that it may not need such institutional capability on a permanent basis - especially if it is not fully convinced of the value of the approach.

74. As a result, the responsible agency may enter into cooperative arrangements with such organizations as a local university, the Ministries of Health, of Education, of Local Government and Community Development, or women's or voluntary organizations. Coordinating arrangements would be worked out carefully, and a common timetable agreed on to ensure that the women's involvement will not get in the way of building activities and that the construction will not hinder community participation and women's involvement. Lack of coordination, in fact, will be the major risk of such approaches. Where possible, the lead agency in charge of a low-cost sanitation project should designate one of its staff to be responsible for liaison with the coordinating agency. A regular schedule of meetings should be set up and the coordination itself monitored continually.

75. **Selling the importance of women in project work:** Except for a few unusual countries and institutions, a major problem will lie in persuading those agencies responsible for low-cost sanitation to take women into account. There is no easy solution to this problem. However, two things will probably help: one is the preparation of analytic case studies and the other is the development of practical guidelines based on field experience. Careful documentation and analysis of project experience can effectively demonstrate that attention to women's participation will be rewarded by increased project efficiency or effectiveness.

**TABLE 1**

**HOW WOMEN ARE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN SANITATION PROJECTS**  
(The most likely forms of participation are shown thus: \*\*)

Project Stage	Activity	Potential Roles of Women in the Project Area
Planning Stage	Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Assisting in identifying priority data to be collected<sup>1/</sup>.</li><li>- Taking responsibility in data collection.</li><li>- Participating in data analysis and interpretation<sup>2/</sup>.</li></ul>
	Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Setting of priorities for women or the community as a whole.</li><li>** - Deciding on how women can best be involved in project activities.</li><li>- Deciding whether to stress purchase of new latrines or improvement of existing latrines.</li><li>** - Selecting between available alternative sanitation technologies or major options.</li><li>** - Making detailed design decisions (about type of enclosure, building materials, doors, locks, size or type of superstructure, lighting, siting, orientation, etc.).</li><li>- Making decisions on construction techniques to be employed (for example, whether to use small contractors or self-help labor for production of materials such as bricks, thatch, etc., or for building the superstructure).</li></ul>

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<sup>1/</sup> This can occur, for instance, through very open-ended discussions as a first step, helping to formulate more structured interviewing subsequently.

<sup>2/</sup> For instance, the implication of findings can be discussed with women leaders, or women's groups.

Project Stage	Activity	Potential Roles of Women in the Project Area
Implementation Stage	Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Making decisions on levels and systems for payment.</li> <li>- Deciding on the timing of the project.</li> <li>- Planning the selection, training and remuneration of field workers (primarily those from the area).</li> <li>- Deciding on the composition of community sanitation committees (for example, half men, half women, reserving three positions for women, etc.)</li> </ul>
	Construction and Related Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- General promotion of sanitation improvements at the community level, often through a women's organization.</li> <li>** - Household level promotion of improvements, to encourage acceptance, with women acting either as paid or voluntary project representatives.</li> <li>- Local level management of the construction activity (through the structure of a women's organization).</li> <li>- Training of field workers or agency staff, or briefing them on local needs and conditions.</li> <li>** - Latrine construction work (pit digging, pit lining, erecting walls, roofing, etc., usually as assistants to men, where self-help construction is involved).</li> <li>** - Manufacture of materials to be used in construction (for example, bricks, bamboo matting, jute sticks, tiles, etc.).</li> <li>- Housing, feeding of skilled craftsmen or laborers from outside the area, feeding community workers where communal efforts are involved (less likely with sanitation than with water supply).</li> </ul>

Project Stage	Activity	Potential Roles of Women in the Project Area
		- Providing instructions on how to use, clean and do routine repairs on latrines.
	Monitoring	** - Working as data collectors; acting as respondents in interviews.  - Helping to interpret data and apply the results of the monitoring.
Operation & Maintenance Stage	Use <sup>3/</sup>	** - Personal use of latrines on a regular basis.  ** - Facilitating hygienic family use by making paper, soap, water, etc., available.  ** - Supervising children's use.
	Education <sup>3/</sup>	** - Teaching of children and motivating other members of the family to use new or improved latrines with proper hygiene habits (family level role).  ** - As project voluntary or paid workers), educating and motivating other local people to use, care for and maintain latrines properly and use good hygiene habits.
	Operation	** - Carrying water for flushing pour-flush latrines and for general latrine cleaning.
	Maintenance	** - Cleaning and general routine care (such as unplugging).  - Some maintenance tasks (such as repairing the superstructure, requesting service when needed).

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<sup>3/</sup> Use and education obviously begin during what, for the project as a whole, is the implementation stage.

<sup>4/</sup> Obviously evaluation should begin as an activity prior to the operation and maintenance stage, if baseline data are being collected.



Project Stage	Activity	Potential Roles of Women in the Project Area
	Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Developing a workable program of regular personal savings, in cash or in kind, for use towards sanitation improvements.</li><li>- Collection of installments from others and enforcement of social sanctions against those who do not pay.</li></ul>
	Income generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Production and sale of materials to be used by latrine owners for purposes of income (for example, toilet brushes, paper or soap holders, water storage jugs, etc.).</li></ul>
	Evaluation	** - Helping to assess the extent to which, and why, the project has succeeded or not succeeded.

**DATA ON WOMEN FOR PRE-FEASIBILITY AND FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS****Sanitation Sector****Country background:**

- Official government policy on women's participation.
- Seasonal or more permanent predominance of males or females in urban or rural settings, due to migrant labor.

**Sector organization and development:**

- Government agency or ministry charged with women's affairs.
- Summary information on any major women's organizations which are involved in low-cost sanitation activities, or relevant health or community development activities.
- Representation of women on any National Action Committees for the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

**Present level of services and standards:**

- The use of existing adequate sanitation facilities by women (as well as by men and children), and reasons for any preferential use of other alternatives.

**Public education and staff training:**

- Past experiences in similar programs which argue for application of specific criteria in recruitment of new staff (particularly field staff) in order to reach and influence women.
- Experience and capabilities of voluntary women's organizations regarding education of the public or training of health workers, community educators, volunteers or other similar types of people.
- Experiences of past programs which have assured a notably active role for women in promotion, instruction and/or public education.

**Project Area and the Need for the Project****Project area population:**

- Existence and reasons for women's interest in low-cost sanitation improvements and how this does or does not compare to men's interest.

- Special features such as seasonal, or more permanent migratory patterns of men, women (or both).
- Major cultural or economic differences among area sub-groups.

**Economic and social conditions:**

- Women's status, social or economic participation, where these are unusual and have implications for project design, implementation or operation.
- Where large numbers of female-headed households exist, any significant differences between their incomes and those of the rest of the population.
- Unemployment among local women, if significant; employment of women as scavengers or in related occupations (who might lose their jobs as a result of the project).

**Sector institutions:**

- Women's organizations or groups active in project areas which are involved in low-cost sanitation or related activities, or which may be interested in expanding their activities into this sector.
- Voluntary organizations, or other organizations/groups in the area in which women are particularly active.
- Representation of women, and their role, on any existing area sanitation committees.
- Experience and attitude to the participation of women of principal area government agency representatives who are responsible for sanitation.
- Existing primary health care systems or community development structures in the area, and the roles of women in these.

**Existing sanitation system and sanitation attitudes/practices:**

- Women's (as well as men's) experience with and preferences for alternative technologies or sharing arrangements, and any evidence of rapid change in such preferences (for example, due to women working as domestic servants in higher income areas).
- Social, cultural (for example, taboos), religious or practical considerations (such as water carrying demands on available time) which affect women's sanitation preferences and practices, or affect sharing of sanitation facilities between men and women.

- Usage of latrines by women, noting day/night and seasonal patterns as well as differences among sub-groups (for example, the fact that women may avoid daylight defecation or not use latrines at night if it is raining).
- Attitudes of women towards children's feces (especially whether they are believed to be harmful or not).
- Home hygiene and practices which threaten family health (for example, custom of letting dogs lick plates in some parts of Nepal).

**Women's potential to participate in project decisions:**

- Role of women in community decision-making.
- Areas of influence of women in the home.
- Literacy level of women.
- Percentage or number of women *de jure* or *de facto* heads of households, where significant enough to have implications for the project.

**Women's potential to contribute cash, materials, labor:**

- Unused women's resources (such as time, skills, cooperative structures, etc.).
- Significant differences between income levels of female-headed and male-headed households in the project area.
- Extent of wives' decision-taking over disposable family income.
- Availability and source of women's separate disposable income (for example, from home gardens, poultry sales, crafts).
- Ways in which women may or may not be able to contribute labor, materials, towards the project (in line with traditional roles).
- Women's role in gardening (especially in relation to potential use of humus).

**Area disease patterns:**

- Excreta-related diseases, noting those which particularly affect women or, more likely, children.
- Behavioral dimensions of such diseases.

**CENTRALIZED SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON WOMEN  
FOR IDENTIFICATION STAGE DESK STUDIES**

**USA****New York**

United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Division of Global and  
Interregional Projects (Project INT/83/003)  
UNDP, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation Division  
UNDP, Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women  
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Women's Tribune Centre

**Washington:**

United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Office of Women  
in Development  
World Bank, Reference Center on Women  
Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH), Coordination and Information Center  
International Center for Research on Women  
Population Reference Center  
Equity Policy Center  
New Transcentury Foundation  
Organization of American States/CIM

**CANADA****Montreal**

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Simone de Beauvoir  
Institute

**EUROPE**

International Labour Office (ILO), World Employment Program (Geneva)  
The International Reference Centre (IRC) for Community Water Supply and  
Sanitation (The Hague, Netherlands)  
World Health Organization (WHO), Environmental Health Education (EHE) and  
Women, Health and Development (WHD)(Geneva)  
Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Agriculture, Land and Water Division  
(ALWD)(Rome)  
UN Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs (Vienna)

**AFRICA****Ethiopia**

Africa Training and Research Centre for Women (Addis Ababa)

**ASIA****Malaysia**

Asian Pacific Development Centre for Women (Kuala Lumpur)

**LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**  
**Haiti**

Centre Haitien de Recherche pour la Promotion Feminine (Port-au-Prince)

**Dominican Republic**

UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women  
(INSTRAW)

**INTERVIEWING WOMEN: POINTS TO WATCH**

1. When interviewing women beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries, it is wise to keep certain procedural guidelines in mind, some of which are well recognized. It is obvious that women interviewers are likely to obtain better access and more accurate information from women than would male interviewers. This is particularly the case where women have limited social contact with men outside their immediate family. The age, social class and cultural match of the interviewer have to be considered to make sure that the interviewer will be trusted and understood.
2. The interview situation is also important. Normally it is advisable to try to interview women when their husbands are not present, but in some cultures women may be unwilling to agree to this, even with a female interviewer. The possibility of group interviews wherever women gather (for instance, in mothers' clubs, literacy classes or other adult education classes for women, among mothers together at nutrition centers, and so on) should be taken advantage of, particularly where these people already have a fairly close relationship with each other and can enter into a lively discussion on the questions asked. This technique will be particularly useful at the pre-feasibility stage during rapid assessments (where there is not always an opportunity for proper sampling of the population nor for interviewing large numbers of people). However, people who belong to such groups may not be representative of the population as a whole; this needs to be kept in mind.
3. In some cultures it is important to interview the young wives away from their mothers-in-law or mothers, where the latter exert considerable influence over them and are likely to inhibit what they can say (for example, as in parts of rural India, in Java and other countries). However, it is equally vital to understand what these older women themselves think since the young wife may have to be guided by it such opinions when it comes to action.

**CHECKLIST FOR REVIEW OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS<sup>1/</sup>**

1. What are the major functions of the organization and how closely does it relate to the sanitation authority?
2. What has been its history and duration?
3. What is the size, type of membership, leadership? What overlap is there with area traditional leadership?
4. How widespread is this type of organization in the project areas, and what, if any, variations exist in the way it operates or how well it operates?
5. To what extent does the organization represent or bring together the different subgroupings or factions in the area (religious, caste, tribal, economic, etc.)?
6. To what extent is the organization tied to municipal, district, regional or a national hierarchy? How good are the information flows and what accountabilities exist between the different levels?
7. What accountability does the organization have to its members, to any other entity, or to the people it represents?
8. Do members participate actively in decision making, responsibilities, benefits? All? Some? Certain subgroups?
9. How motivated and dedicated are the leadership and members?
10. What has been the proven managerial experience of the organization; how transferable are experiences and skills to the particular water/wastes activity?
11. How capable has the organization shown itself for mobilizing internal and external resources in general (that is, mobilizing additional labor, collecting fees, dues, tariffs, etc.)?
12. What relationship, if any, does the organization have with government agencies or political parties or semi-autonomous organizations; how do these in turn relate to the water/wastes authority and the present political structure of the Borrower country?
13. To what extent is the organization overburdened already with present functions, or able to handle new ones?

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<sup>1/</sup> Based on: Heli Perrett, **Social and Behavioral Aspects of Project Work in Water Supply and Waste Disposal**, P.U.N. 52-T, Washington: The World Bank/Transportation, Water and Telecommunications Department, February, 1980. Annex 4, pp. 58-59.



14. What incentives, training (technical or managerial), or other forms of support would be required for the organization to play an active role in sanitation?
15. What structural changes might be called for in the organization?
16. What are its past experiences in dealing with government in infrastructure types of activities?
17. What has been the organizational track record in carrying out practical activities in poorest areas?

