Gender Mainstreaming in Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Mzimba, Malawi

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Abstract

Gender mainstreaming in the water sector in Malawi was analyzed using the Mzimba Integrated Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (IRWSS) project as a case in point. Information required for the study was obtained through interviews, administering a set of questionnaires and data collecting from existing documents. The results show that women in decision-making positions at head office of the Ministry responsible for water affairs only constitute about 11.1%. Assessment of the budget allocations has revealed that previously no budgetary allocations were made for gender issues, and that since the 2006/07 fiscal year about US$14,286 was allocated for gender mainstreaming. Women's involvement in local governance institutions and project activities in Mzimba is generally high. Most local water committees have 60% women and 40% men, whereas participation in project activities is highly rated at 97.2%. To improve gender balance, the Ministry responsible for water has to work with stakeholders in the education sector. Besides, great disparities still exist between men's and women's participation in water projects at a local level (97.2% for women) and a person's socioeconomic position greatly affects their inclusion in the local governance structures. Addressing these issues would, therefore, result in better gender integration in the water sector.