



UNIFEM CONCEPT PAPER PROMOTING AND PROTECTING WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WATER IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION AND FEMINIZED POVERTY

A. BACKGROUND & JUSTIFICATION

A.1. CONTEXT

Water is a basic element essential to all forms of life. Women are most often responsible for domestic and community water management in developing societies. On average women and children travel 10-15 kilometers¹, spending 8 or more hours per day collecting water, carrying up to 20 kilos or 15 liters per trip.² It was recently cited that in South Africa alone, women collectively walk the equivalent distance of 16 times to the moon and back per day gathering water for families.³ In this role, women are responsible for determining sources of water to collect, quantity of water to be taken and the water's hygienic quality. However, in this era of globalization, women's decisions in regard to water management are often dictated by their social position, geographic location and increasingly by market forces.

Water is critical for household care and nutritional health. Water is not only needed for drinking, it is necessary for food sanitation, preparation and cooking, all activities primarily undertaken by women. Linked to this, women provide water for their care of domestic livestock and poultry, crop irrigation and shelter, buildings and repairs. Water is used for environmental sanitation purposes including personal hygiene – given women's reproductive capacity they have different personal hygiene needs than men – care of the sick, cleaning, washing and waste disposal.⁴ Women, particularly poor women, also use water for productive purposes, including for small-scale industries and micro-businesses, often household based.⁵

While it is generally agreed that a minimum of 20-40 liters of freshwater is required per person per day to meet minimum drinking and sanitation needs, other estimates range from 50-100 liters of freshwater per day per person for drinking, cooking, bathing and sanitation.⁶ Even these higher estimates of 50 to 100 liters increase when a full spectrum of women's water needs are taken into account. Consider for a moment that 1000 liters of water is required to grow one kilogram of grain and 24 buckets of water is needed per day to care for a person living with AIDS.⁷

What are the consequences for poor women when access to water is restricted?

The overwhelmingly unpaid, undervalued and unaccounted essential services women provide to their families and society are directly linked to women's ability to access water. When women's access to water is compromised a number of negative health, safety and empowerment impacts result. Women and children, often girl children, travel greater distances from home in search of water sources, increasing restrictions on women's already overburdened schedules and limiting time available for other activities,

¹ <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/152-497b/h2o/water/gwater/wfacts.htm>

² Bulajic Borjana, Women's roles – a policy overview, *Waterline*, Vol.17 No.1, July 1998, p7

³ Maude Barlow and Tony Clark, Water Apartheid, *The Nation*, Aug, 15 2002.



including growing and preparing food and income generating work. In India it is estimated that the national cost of women fetching water is 150 million women work days per year, equivalent to a national loss of income of 10 billion Rupees.⁸

Alternatively, low income women facing time constraints are obliged to accept lower quality water - contaminated ground water normally not used for consumption - threatening family health and wellness. This is a particularly frightening alternative given that 80% of all illnesses are transmitted by contaminated water.⁹ Water related illnesses drain limited household budgets as funds are diverted for medical expenses and/or for the purchase of water at high costs. Girls may be forced to drop out of school to assist in collecting water or as a result of reduced availability of water supplies for sanitation and personal hygiene.¹⁰

When AIDS enters the household, the situation becomes far more complex and dire. A family member with full blown AIDS requires far more water than a healthy member. As a result of recurring episodes of diarrhea throughout the day and night, it is necessary to wash sheets and bedclothes a few times every day, to bathe the patient regularly, and to ensure enough drinking water is on hand to combat dehydration. It is important that this water is sanitary as the patient's immune system is already compromised. The collection of water is part of the many household tasks that a woman has to undertake each day. The addition of many more trips to the water source – often an hour or more trek in impoverished rural areas – means that other household tasks are left not done and life itself is threatened. And when women themselves are sick and dying, they cannot walk long distances and death takes away family members, leaving children and elderly destitute. The absence of clean accessible water in these circumstances means that already burdensome household responsibilities become untenable and unsustainable and the impact of the disease is felt more and more acutely.

Trekking distances to access water or sanitation facilities places women in danger of being the victims of physical violence.¹¹ Women also suffer structural or indirect violence when unjust political and economic factors result in reduced quality of life or life expectancy through lack of access to basic needs, particularly water. For example, lack of clean freshwater can lead to political instability, conflict and migration. As a result of gender biases, women and men will experience and be affected differently by each of these negative scenarios.¹²

When the right to water is not fulfilled a wide range of women's other rights are threatened. Because of their close connection to the right to water the right to food, the right to adequate housing, and the right to health are placed in severe jeopardy when the

⁴ Borjana, p7

⁵ Gender and Water Listserve message 10

⁶ Water Availability and Use, *Population Reports*, Series M, Number 14

⁷ According to UN Economic and Social Council Report and UNIFEM respectively.

⁸ As reported in: Jal Swaraj Abhiyan (Campaign for Water Liberation), NAVDANYA/Research Foundation for Science, Technology & Ecology – equivalency US\$1 = 48.1 rupee

⁹ Population Report No.14

¹⁰ Nicole Itano "For Many Women, Clean Water Means Safety, Freedom" todaynews@womensenews.org email listserv and UNIFEM project document World Water Vision.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sabine Kunst and Tanja Kruse, "Integrating Gender Perspectives: Realizing New Options For Improved Water Management" Cross-cutting thematic background paper for the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn, 2001.



right to water is not protected.¹³ As the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water explains “the right to water, together with the right to food, is the very essence of the right to life.”¹⁴

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Committee has underlined that the health of rural women often crucially depends on adequate and non-discriminatory access to water. As well, the State’s failure to uphold the right to water for all – including providing for the increased needs for ill people in particular those suffering from HIV/AIDS – violates the rights of women caretakers. Other rights that are impacted by – and that themselves impact – the right to water include communal rights such as the right to peace (many conflicts begin over access to water), the right to development (the right of all to participate in development projects needed to secure safe water for all), and the right to a healthy environment (drinking water is often threatened by pollution or contamination).

Crucial rights that are less obviously connected to the right to water, such as the rights of women and girls to equal education and equal participation in political and public life, may also be endangered when the right to water is not fulfilled. Girls who spend hours fetching water may not be able to attend school on an equal basis as their brothers. Women who spend their time searching water for family needs have little time to participate in the public life of their community. It is important to note that such marginalization can result in broader patterns of exclusion; without women at the table to negotiate community resources, their needs and interests may not be served or protected, leading to further deterioration of their rights and continuing exclusion.¹⁵

Given evidence of (i) women’s unique role in water management in developing societies; (ii) the importance of women’s role (i.e. their unpaid work) in promoting the health and well being of families and communities through the provision of water and the benefits this provision generates for society at large; (iii) The critical role water plays as productive input in women’s businesses and home based work; and (iv) the multiple ways in which rights to food, safety, adequate housing, education and economic development are infringed upon when access to clean water is restricted, women’s entitlements to water must be protected and greater understanding built on the extent to which privatization of water resources and management impacts the **actual availability** of clean water for poor women in rural and urban settings.

The Costs of Privatization

Privatization refers to a process whereby state owned and/or operated enterprises managed and administered by Government or public authorities are sold to national or international corporations. Privatization policies are part and parcel of larger supply response reforms that call upon governments to deregulate and liberalize trade and investment. Privatization, in which the ownership of state enterprises are transferred to international private corporations constitute a key policy instrument of structural

¹³ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Draft General Comment No. 15: The Right to Water*, UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11 (2002), para. 2.

¹⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/10 (2002), para. 11.

¹⁵ CESCR, *Draft General Comment on the Right to Water*, para. 13(a): “States parties should take steps to ensure that women are not excluded from decision-making processes concerning water resources and entitlements, and alleviate the disproportionate burden women bear in the collection of water.”



economic reforms that foster globalization by promoting foreign direct investment. The denationalization of goods and services from public to private ownership¹⁶ can have serious implications for society, particularly in the developing world, as privatized industries become subject to the dictates of the global market and are guided solely by the goals of global competition, efficiency and profit maximization.

While the extent of government ownership and operation of state enterprises varies from country to country - and has certainly varied over time – most typically, governments administer public goods enterprises that are necessary goods that benefit all or most of the populace like health, water, housing and education services. When a public good is privatized it is subject to distribution under market rules and government social responsibilities and accountability are taken out of the spectrum. Those who can afford to purchase the good/service have access, while those without sufficient resources do not.¹⁷ When privatization involves products essential to human livelihoods, the outcome of a market distribution model can result in unacceptable social costs.

The increasing trend in much of the developing world to transfer ownership and operation of national water resource management and distribution from the state to foreign owned private sector, causes serious concern, given that market forces alone fail to prioritize human development and gender equality objectives. By extension, privatization of water is a critical gender issue because processes of privatization impact the nature in which water supply and delivery is available to women and men. As the primary managers of household water supply in developing societies, women are deeply affected by changes in water availability and policy.

While human rights commitments and human development targets provide a firm foundation for challenging the rationale behind water privatization processes, the economic soundness of these policies also require serious scrutiny. Advocates of privatization claim the private sector can manage industries more efficiently than governments. However, the history of the water market shows two possible types of privatization mainly occur: monopolistic and subsidized privatization.

With monopolistic privatization, companies do not face competitive pressures that make them safeguard the quality of services provided, or provide water at low price. Under subsidized privatization, risk is minimized, often through a minimum guaranteed profit level, which allows private enterprises to raise prices when agreed profit levels are not met. Such favorable contractual agreements benefit corporations and create situations in which companies allow themselves to operate in very inefficient conditions knowing that their profit goals will be met in any case. For example, in Cochambamba Bolivia [case study Box 1] water privatization came with a 16% average guaranteed profit return per year.¹⁸ In South Africa, a cost recovery programme made availability of water dependant on a company's ability to make a profit (recover costs plus profit). This resulted in a situation where over 10 million residents had their water supply cut off.¹⁹ Privatization results in Government loss of revenues overtime as financial gains made from the sale of public enterprises are quickly offset by Government reduction of

¹⁶ C. Pass, B. Lowes, L.Davies and S.J. Kronish, *Economics*, 1991, p.415

¹⁷ Robert Heilbroner and Lester Thurow, *Economics Explained*, Revised, 1998, p.161-162

¹⁸ Jal Swaraj Abhiyan, campaign for Water Liberation "Water Privatization in India".

¹⁹ The Nation, "Water Apartheid", August 15.



corporate and profit taxes. Whatever its anticipated benefits are, privatization has failed to deliver positive results up to now. On the contrary, the same criticisms made to public enterprises apply, including lack of competition, little efficiency and poor quality of service.²⁰ Further, privatization not only does not improve access or wellbeing for poor women, it has led to situations where women have left expensive pipe water and returned to unsafe water from precarious wells.

Box 1: Impact of Privatization in Cochambamba, Bolivia

Privatization of the water system in Cochambamba, Bolivia led to massive public outcry as access to water – particularly for urban poor – was seriously compromised in what the World Bank identified as an example of “unsuccessful privatization”.

In response to World Bank conditionality for the 1997 two-year loan extension to Bolivia the country's government granted, through a non-participatory process, a 40-year lease of the city's water system to Aguas del Tunari, a subsidiary of the US based multinational Bechtel Corporation. The contract with Aguas del Tunari authorized the company to increase tariffs by an average 35 percent²¹ and guaranteed an average annual return of 16% on investment. While the World Bank opposed the contract with Aguas del Tunari in favor of an alternate proposal due to the high cost involved in the scheme, it advocated against public subsidies that would counteract tariff increases. The result was water price hikes of 200 percent or more. According to Tanya Paredes, a mother of five who supports her family as a clothes knitter:

“What we pay for water comes out of what we have to pay for food, clothes and the other things we need to buy for our children”

Ms. Paredes' water bill went up from \$5 per month to \$20; an increase equivalent to what it costs her to feed her family for a week and a half. Her water bill is higher than the average \$17 a month paid by (for example) a World Bank economist living in Washington DC. The public responded by taking to the streets, months of wide spread public protest, including a general strike and road closures led to the eventual declaration of marshal law by the Bolivian Government. Military and police action against protesters caused over 170 injuries and the death of a 17 year-old youth. In the face of rising conflict and controversy, Bechtel abandoned Cochambamba, leaving behind a \$90,000 unpaid electricity bill and a 25 million dollar lawsuit against Bolivia for loss of expected revenues.²² The case is currently before a World Bank/International Center for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) tribunal.²³

²⁰ William J. Weida “A General Economic Critique of Water Privatization”, 2001. Available through Global Resource Action Center for the Environment. <http://www.gracelinks.org/water.html>

²¹ World Bank Operations Evaluation Department, *Bolivia Water Management: A Tale of Three Cities*, Spring 2002, Number 222.

²² According to published reports of Jim Shultz, Executive Director of The Democracy Center, an NGO working to strengthen the advocacy work of community groups, based in Cochambamba Bolivia. Available at: <http://www.democracycctr.org/waterwar/index.htm>

²³ Mobglob-discuss Letter to the World Bank about Bolivia water conflict, Thursday 22 August 2002



Patterns of consumption under privatization can be a good indicator of the type of trade offs the poor must make when faced with rising water costs. When water provision shifted from a municipal to a private provider in La Paz and El Alto Bolivia, higher tariffs for users resulted in an average reduction in consumption of 23 liters per person (from 110 to 87 liters per day). According to a World Bank assessment, the scaling back of consumption undercut the anticipated income of the private provider in such a way that the concessionaire was considering marketing strategies to encourage greater water use.²⁴ While reduced consumption levels were not disaggregated by socio-economic status or gender it is likely that the poorest – who are hardest hit by rising water costs – will respond by regulating their consumption most stringently.

A Human Rights Perspective

At the twenty ninth session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in November 2002, the Committee adopted the General Comment No. 15, which recognized that the right to water is key to the achievement of the right to life, the right to housing, the right to adequate food, the right to health, and other rights. The comment stressed that states “should ensure that the allocation of water resources, and investments in water, facilitate access to water for all members of society”.²⁵ The comment explicitly refers to the obligation of the state to ensure that women are not excluded from decision-making processes concerning water resources and entitlements. This breakthrough came as a result of a long process of activism around the world and through major contributions by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water. For example, the 2002 preliminary report of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights challenged the commodification of water on the grounds that water is a natural resource essential to human survival. The report referred to the European Council on Environmental Law stating: “water is above all a social good, that is, a resource that forms part of the common heritage of humanity.”²⁶ Despite the fact that water has an economic value, it cannot be treated as a simple commodity to be bought and sold at market price. The UN Special Rapporteur therefore, strongly recommended that water management be subject to public regulation and supervision, and governments “take all necessary measures to enable the poorest people to enjoy this right, which is vital for all human beings. The right to drinking water must be considered a non-derogable right.”²⁷

From a human rights perspective, the duty to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to water rests squarely on each State. This does not necessarily mean that the State must directly provide safe, accessible drinking water to each household or person, but it does mean that the State bears ultimate responsibility for ensuring that each person has access to the amount of water required to sustain her life and fulfill her basic needs. Human rights standards are applicable to governments no matter how they decide to arrange water services. These standards include the requirement that drinking water be available and accessible for all without discrimination – rich and poor, urban and rural, male and female. As the Special Rapporteur on the right to water indicates, “States are generally obliged to take action to facilitate access to water and sanitation, and, as a

²⁴ World Bank Evaluation Department Spring 2002, Number 222.

²⁵ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No.15, E/C,12/2002/11, Geneva 26 November 2002

²⁶ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, para. 19

²⁷ Ibid., para. 48.



matter of priority, to implement the principle of some for all rather than more for some.²⁸ These basic obligations mean that the State must take a strong regulatory role if it decides to entrust the provision of water services to the private sector.²⁹ If user fees are imposed, for example, there must be a mechanism to allow those with inadequate means to obtain water without hindrance.³⁰ Infrastructure must be designed to allow water to reach all areas in the short term.

These human rights norms also require change when privatization arrangements are not allowing basic standards to be met. If a government engages a private water service provider, for example, and then discovers that service is not being provided equally to all, the government must step in – either by further regulating the industry – or by establishing government control over the sector. In some settings, it may be impossible for the population to support the tariffs or user’s fees that would be required to attract private enterprise – even with subsidies or other forms of support. In those settings, privatization is not appropriate, since it will clearly lead to inequality and lack of access to water. As the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing has explained concerning water, research shows that “higher costs to and service cut-offs of persons unable to pay higher rates have been more common [than equal access], especially in developing and transition countries. This review also vindicates the concern that privatizations, while relatively easy to initiate, are extremely difficult to implement where universal coverage and acceptable quality at affordable prices for all is the stated goal of the service.”³¹ Indeed, evidence shows that in settings like these, water services are reserved for those who can pay, and the right to water is effectively denied to entire populations. In such settings, the State may need to take responsibility for service provision, either entirely or concentrate its actions towards poor and marginalized sectors that are not receiving water.

Despite cautions against water privatization stemming from gender equality, human rights and economic standpoints, privatization processes are increasing, particularly in the developing world. This is because water resources are bound within larger global political and economic structures. Contemporary market oriented economic policies impact the range of scenarios and options developing countries have for managing public resources like water.³² Therefore, it is critical that careful attention is paid to the political economy and power relations governing decision-making processes on water privatization and the conditions under which privatization is occurring.

In recent years, human rights experts and scholars have been calling for scrutiny on agreements between States, international corporations and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) that adversely affect the human rights of individuals within those States. Advocates and experts point to three ways in which human rights norms apply. First, debtor States remain bound by their human rights duties even when they are

²⁸ Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, para. 33.

²⁹ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights has made clear that States may not privatize water services unless an effective regulatory system is in place that will ensure the right to water is being safeguarded. Even then, the Committee stresses that privatized services must be subject to independent monitoring and penalties in case of non-compliance CESCR, *Draft General Comment on the Right to Water*, para. 18.

³⁰ It is up to the government to determine the means of ensuring access for all. Many commentators have suggested that government grants and subsidies to poor households, the use of progressive tariffs, or cross-subsidization.

³¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, UN Doc. No. E/CN.4/2002/59, para. 56.

³² Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke “Who Owns Water” *The Nation*, September 2 2002



negotiating with these very powerful institutions. They must not enter into agreements that run counter to their obligations.³³ Since such States often have great difficulty upholding human rights norms in the context of heavy international economic and political pressure, attention has also been focused on the duties International Financial and Trade Institution (IFTIs) bear in the realm of human rights. While the law in this area is not yet clearly defined, experts assert that IFTIs themselves are bound by general norms of human rights law.³⁴ The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has called on IFTIs to “pay enhanced attention in their activities to respect for economic, social and cultural rights...Social safety nets should be defined by reference to these rights and enhanced attention should be accorded to such methods to protect the poor and vulnerable in the context of structural adjustment programs.”³⁵ Finally, individual States that contribute resources to IFIs have human rights obligations relevant to their activities within such institutions. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has called on States to “ensure their actions as members of international organizations take due account of the right to drinking water.”³⁶

A.2. JUSTIFICATION

In a world where 1.5 billion people lack access to clean water³⁷ governments, international financial institutions and powerful corporations increasingly make decisions about distribution and implementation of water without regard for human rights, security or wellbeing. This reality poses serious threats to women’s lives and livelihoods.

In this context, the Millennium Declaration and Goals (MDGs)³⁸, particularly those goals related to halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and halving the proportion of the world’s people living in absolute poverty by 2015, will underpin work in this area. Access to water will also be approached as a human rights issue. The right to water is clearly established under international human rights law: all people have the right of access to the amount of water required to sustain life and fulfill basic needs.³⁹ The right to water has been identified as a component of the right to housing⁴⁰, the right to the highest attainable standard of health⁴¹, the right to

³³ The CESCR has explained that “With regard to the conclusion and implementation of other international agreements, States parties should take steps to ensure that these instruments do not adversely impact upon the right to drinking water. Agreements concerning trade liberalization should not curtail or inhibit a country’s capacity to ensure the full realization of the right. *Draft General Comment on the Right to Water*, para. 26.

³⁴ Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, *Statement on Globalization* (May 1998), www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/6/cescrnote.htm.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ The Committee continues: “Accordingly, States parties that are members of international financial institutions, notably the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and regional development banks, should take steps to ensure that the right to drinking water is taken into account in their lending policies, credit agreements and other international measures of these institutions.” *Draft General Comment on the Right to Water*, para. 27.

³⁷ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, para 4.

³⁸ The Millennium Summit declaration and goals was approved by 189 member states in September 2000.

³⁹ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that “the right to drinking water entitles everyone to *safe, sufficient, affordable and accessible* drinking water that is adequate for daily individual requirements (drinking, household sanitation, food preparation, and hygiene.” *Draft General Comment on the Right to Water*, para. 7.

⁴⁰ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights affirmed that “all beneficiaries of the right to adequate housing should have sustainable access to . . . safe drinking water.” CESCR, General Comment No. 4, para. 8(b), UN Doc. No. E/1992/23.

⁴¹ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has found that the right to health includes rights “to the underlying determinants of health, such as access to safe and potable water.” CESCR, General Comment No. 14, para. 11, UN Doc. No. E/C.12/2000/4.



food,⁴² and the right to an adequate standard of living⁴³ under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the world's most important social and economic rights treaty.

The right to water has also been explicitly recognized as crucial to the protection of marginalized or vulnerable populations. CEDAW recognizes the right of rural women “to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to . . . water supply.”⁴⁴ The Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the right to water as a component of the right to health: “the provision of adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking water” is required of States Parties in their efforts to protect health.⁴⁵ In addition to these universal human rights treaties, all of the major regional human rights systems protect the right to water. The United Nations Commission and Sub-Commission on Human Rights have both affirmed the right to water, and they have appointed several Special Rapporteurs whose mandate includes the articulation and protection of the right to water.⁴⁶ The Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Water, Food, and Adequate Housing have all underlined the importance of the right to water as a crucial, yet increasingly threatened, human right.⁴⁷ Access to water is also a critical gender and development issue. Accordingly, the UNDP’s Human Development Report, which acts as a major reference for monitoring human development globally, includes access to water and overall water quality as an indicator or measure of human development and wellbeing.⁴⁸

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has long supported women’s empowerment as a key strategy to fight poverty. It defines economic empowerment as having access to and control over the means to make a living on a sustainable and long-term basis, and receiving the material benefits of this access and control. UNIFEM works in over 100 countries through its 15 Regional Offices and a growing network of affiliated gender advisors in Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.⁴⁹ Broadly stated, the work of the Fund focuses on programmes and strategies that promote women’s human rights, political participation, and economic security worldwide. UNIFEM works in partnership with UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to link women’s issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas. In an effort to strengthen women’s economic security and rights, a priority area of work has been engendering macroeconomic frameworks and building the capacity of countries to manage globalization and economic transitions from the perspective of poor women. UNIFEM has a strong capacity to initiate the work of the programme given the wide network of partners in civil society. UNIFEM field offices will provide strong support for the implementing and monitoring of the programme.

⁴² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, UN Doc. E/CN.4/2001/53, paras. 17-21 (interpreting article 11 of the ICESCR).

⁴³ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, *Draft General Comment on the Right to Water*, para. 2.

⁴⁴ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), art. 14.2.

⁴⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), art. 14(c).

⁴⁶ UN Commission on Human Rights, Decision 1999/108 (acknowledges the “right of individuals to drinking water supply”); UN Sub-Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, Resolution 2001/2 (affirms the “right to drinking water supply . . . for every woman, man and child”).

⁴⁷ Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, *supra* note 1; Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, *First Report on the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food*, UN Doc. No. E/CN.4/2001/53, and Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing* UN Doc. No. E/CN.4/2001/51.

⁴⁸ UNDP Human Development Report 2001, p150-151.

⁴⁹ UNIFEM Regional Offices are located in: Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Afghanistan, Fiji, Jordan, India, Thailand, Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil, Barbados, Slovakia and Kazakhstan.



Over the years UNIFEM's focus has shifted from increasing women's access to income-generating activities toward promoting longer-term sustainable benefits through changes in power relationships at the household, community and market levels, and in policies and legislation that constrain women from participating and benefiting from economic development.⁵⁰ Key strategies in fostering change include building a knowledge base and the capacity of women's groups to understand and advocate around economic issues related to revenue collection and allocation, trade policies, markets and women's economic and social rights.

In recent years, increased attention has been paid to promoting understanding of gender and macroeconomics. Women's groups and national women's machineries have become aware of the importance of understanding macroeconomics and advocating for gender mainstreaming in macroeconomic policies. This awareness has translated into a number of women economists from the South organizing around UNIFEM to set up think tanks that would generate solid knowledge and strategies linking macroeconomic policies and processes with microeconomic manifestations of women's poverty. One of the key tools to achieve this has been applying gender analysis to budgets and fiscal policies under the global programme on gender responsive budgets implemented in 20 countries by UNIFEM. Through this work, UNIFEM has been developing a series of tools analyzing economic policies and government budgets. The initiative on women's rights and access to water will benefit from this work through applying the various analytical tools to the research and consequently the advocacy work carried out under the programme.

Work on the gender implications of privatization of water will provide a discrete and strategic entry point through which the intersections of women's experiences of poverty, macroeconomics and globalization can be explored.

UNIFEM's past and ongoing work has taken steps to address women's rights to water. In 2000, the Fund supported grassroots women's participation in regional World Water Vision (WWV) processes towards mainstreaming gender in the WWV outcome report. In South Asia, a forum for women practitioners and NGOs was created to bring regional and country experiences together, whereby each country and region prepared reports that were presented at the World Water Forum, which took place in the Netherlands in 2000. Accordingly, country reports from Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were developed. In follow up to the World Water Forum meeting, Women's Water Networks (WWN) were created in South Asia, which UNIFEM's India office is currently supporting national in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan to develop a South Asian perspective on women's role in the planning, development and management of water resources. UNIFEM in Zimbabwe is working with representatives from a Southern Africa Regional Platform on Land Rights to conduct research on women and water rights. Upcoming work will build on these initiatives through developing broad based strategies and tools for promoting women's access to water as a public good.

In addition, UNIFEM is working on related issues that will produce research and outcomes relevant to the work on water. UNIFEM's collaboration with the International

⁵⁰ UNIFEM, 1998, Report to the Consultative Committee.



Labor Organization (ILO) on “The Care Economy, HIV/AIDS and the World of Work” has direct bearing on the work on water as it includes research components on the impact of the unpaid care economy on the lives of women at the household, informal and formal economy levels. One of the two countries identified for the first phase of this collaborative programme is Lesotho. The Care Economy programme will take into account the implications of water access in its activities and outcomes.