

## Preface

Knowledge and beliefs about water, hygiene, sanitation and water-related diseases are different everywhere, per country, in ethnic groups, and of women and men. In general women feel that hygiene, and therefore sanitation facilities, is very important for them and their children, but by lack of such facilities in many places an ideology has developed in which they believe that all is clean what flows in the river.

Rising awareness about health and hygiene has to go hand in hand with increasing access to clean water and sanitation. Mostly women are responsible for the hygiene of the family, and their increasing consciousness must not be detached from the decision making about expenditure of the household. Once they understand about causes of diseases, germs and contagiousness it is crucial that they can also choose to spend the household money for prevention of diseases and only later for a motorbike. From a gender perspective the aim is that women and men share responsibilities and also share decision making. The reality is different and for those who work for development of their countries, their cities, their rural areas, in short their people, it is important to understand how to attempt to achieve this aim, notwithstanding existing ideas.

This publication is a result of the Gender and WATSAN partnership programme of UN-Habitat and the Gender and Water Alliance in the Mekong countries and Nepal. Learning from previous experiences resulted in the methodology that has been successfully applied. It is often heard that capacity building efforts are not sustainable because it remains difficult to employ the new knowledge in practice. In some contexts this is particularly difficult for mainstreaming gender. The methodology of this programme is innovative because trainees were not left alone to utilise what they learnt. To expand the chances of success, periods of about one year have been allowed in which trainees were mentored and supported by gender experts. At the end of that time they showed each other their results. All workshops and power points were in the local languages. This way of working has resulted in real change in quite a few of the ministries, departments, NGOs and other working environments of the participants in Nepal, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

The Gender and Water Alliance is delighted about the collaboration in the region, with UN-Habitat and with the participants and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and also with the outcome of the project. Especially with this Gender and Water Resource e-Book that will be helpful in the region. The used methodology and this digital book need to be, and can be replicated in many other countries, to which we are looking forward, cooperating with the relevant stakeholders for mainstreaming gender for more and better water and sanitation for women and men everywhere.

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