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**REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON WATER
USE AND CONSERVATION**

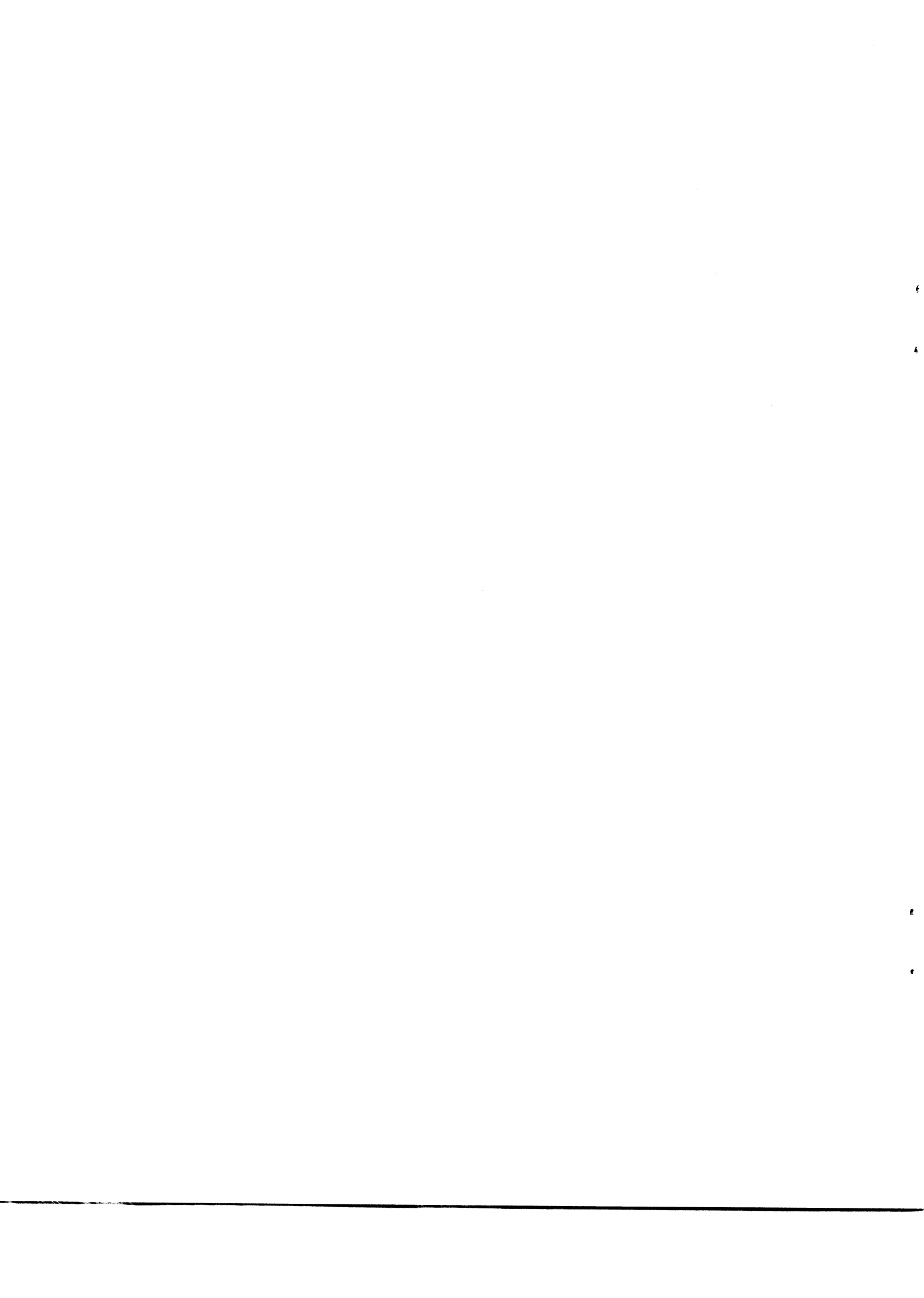
28 November - 2 December 1993
Amman - Jordan

**WOMEN AND THE
WATER SUPPLY: A BACKGROUND DOCUMENT**

by

**UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH
AND TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
(INSTRAW)**

- Issued without formal editing.



**REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON WATER
USE AND CONSERVATION**

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Organized by the
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (**ESCWA**)

and the

World Health Organization/Regional Center for Environmental
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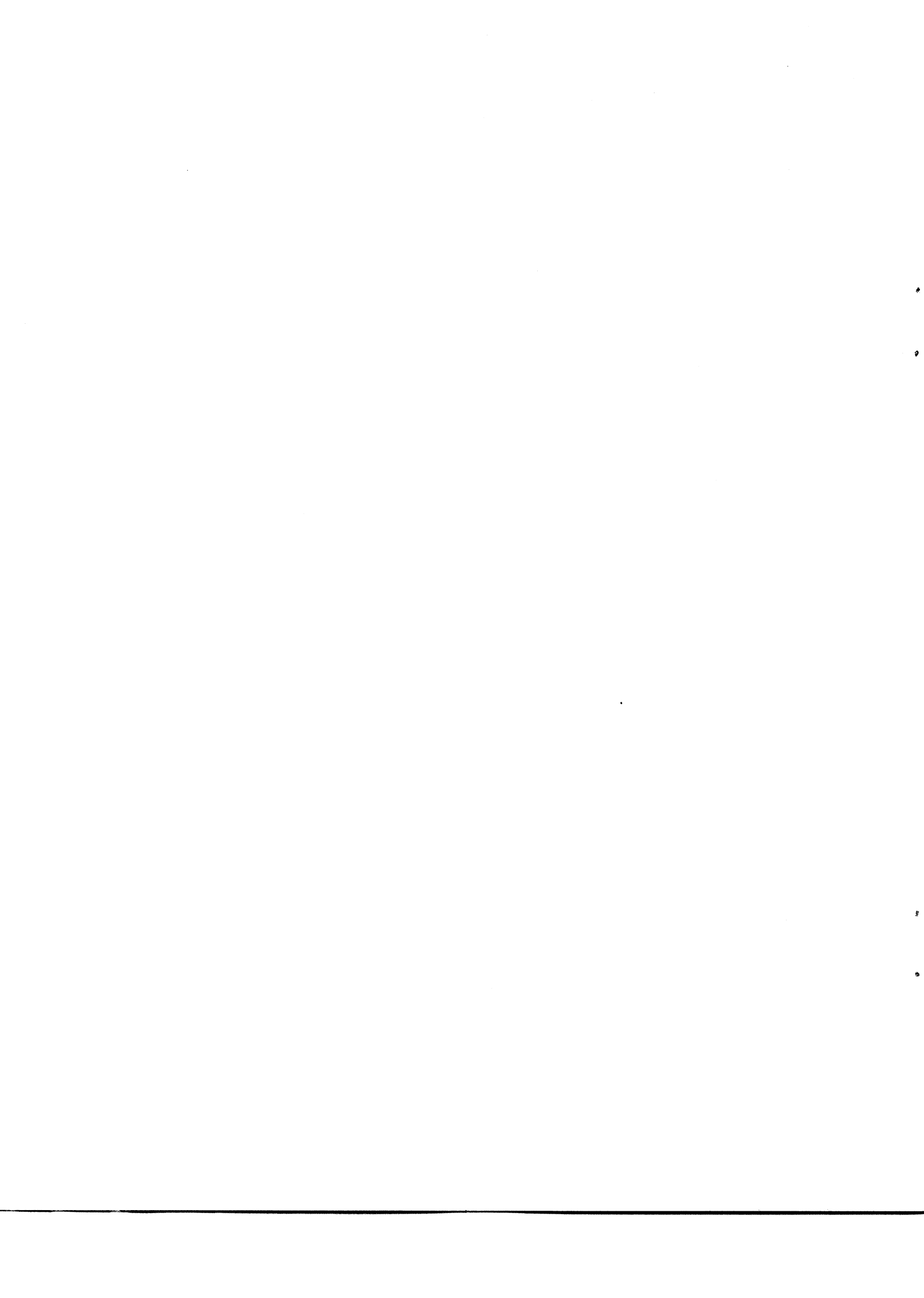
in cooperation with the
Government of Jordan (Ministry of Water and Irrigation
and Ministry of Health)

and

United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**)

and

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization/
Regional Office for Science and Technology for the Arab States
(**UNESCO/ROSTAS**)



Water is a prerequisite for the survival of human beings and their sustainable development. It is one of the main pillars of environment. Water is a renewable but finite natural resource. Current and projected problems with freshwater arise from the pressure to meet the agricultural, human settlement, food and industrial needs of a fast-growing global population. Reasons for the growing shortage of water are manifold: the continuing population growth, the rapid concentration of population in urban areas, the increasing water demand especially for irrigation and industrial use, the inefficient use of produced water further exacerbated by liberal pricing policies, and the detrimental effects of environmental degradation and contamination of both groundwater and surface water sources on quality and replenishment of the existing water resources.

The multi-sectoral nature of water requires appropriate coordination among the international and national institutions and authorities concerned with water, agriculture, industry, health, rural development, environment as well as among agencies in charge of education and training, and international organizations. The inter-relationship between water, development and environment are complex when dealing with water use, consumption, conservation, cost and management. Water policies, infrastructure and technologies are largely non-existent in the rural and peri-urban areas of developing countries. The rural poor, mostly women, rely directly on rivers, lakes and unprotected shallow wells for their water needs and are the least able to bear the cost of simple preventive measures such as boiling water to make it safe for drinking. In many cities, in peri-urban areas, poor households buy water from private vendors which is far more expensive.

We are all aware that the health of hundreds of millions of people is threatened by contaminated drinking water and insufficient sanitation facilities. In this decade, over 1 billion people in the developing world lack safe and adequate drinking water, while those lacking sanitation number almost 2 billion. The lack of a healthy environment and safe drinking water are the cause of 900 million diarrhoeal diseases every year, which cause the deaths of more than 3 million children; 2 million of these deaths could be prevented if adequate sanitation and clean water were available. At any time, 200 million people are suffering from schistosomiasis or bilharzia and 900 million more from hookworm, cholera, typhoid or paratyphoid. By virtue of their domestic functions, women are in constant touch with polluted water and are therefore the group most vulnerable to water-related diseases.

Ever increasing water scarcity and environmental degradation continue to have serious impact on primary water carriers, managers, end-users and family health educators: women. The average proportion of time spent by women on water collection in East Africa varies from about 12 per cent in humid areas to 27 per cent or more in dry or mountainous areas. In areas with a high withdrawal rate of groundwater, such as the Middle East and some parts of India, poorwomen are hit hardest as their shallow wells dry up much quicker than before. Since women are responsible for the domestic use of water as well as for the provision of household fuels and for the production of food crops, they are the ones most affected by changes in land use. In projects concerned with water resources development, river basin development projects and environmental protection, women are rarely included in the planning. For example, projects related to soil conservation, agricultural extension, and credit for water conservation activities seldom consult women and women's groups, and do not extend their activities to women. In most irrigation projects, lands and water rights are vested in the male head of the household, leaving women no land and water to grow the staple food and vegetables for family health. Irrigation schemes and river basin development projects have also increased the daily workload of women and given rise to water related diseases as women spend long hours weeding in stagnant water. In many parts of the world women play a central part in household and rural water resource management and conservation and yet they are most vulnerable to changes because they are rarely consulted by policy-makers. As a result they have less access to education/training, credit, extension services and technologies than do men.

Many women in developing countries are also engaged in a number of income-generating activities, frequently related to the informal sector of the economy, which require the utilization of water sources. Such operations are often run by women in what has come to be called the informal sector, on a full, part-time or seasonal basis, added to their household activities. For this reason they are often ignored and their water needs are undervalued by policy and decision-makers, and left out of research and development objectives. Water-related tasks should be clearly identified by time spent on water use and conservation and performer gender (i.e. gender of the person who performs the task) to match appropriate technology to specific end-uses, thus obtaining the best results. Incentives by financial institutions should be provided to women in rural areas for increased access to credit in order to obtain and maintain relevant water technologies. Education and training programmes on new techniques of water conservation should also be provided to women while taking into account socio-economic and cultural traditions.

Women are not a new dimension in the water resources management. It is clear that they have an important managerial role to play vis a vis water resources. In spite of the importance of women's participation in water related activities, their role and extent of participation in the process of planning and management of water resources are far from reaching desired levels. Their water related work has been taken for granted and its economic and social value unrecognized. This indicates an urgent need to reconsider development strategies and activities in order to benefit from the participation of women in the planning and development of water use, conservation and integrated resource management.

It is only recently that the crucial role of women in the field of water supply and sanitation has begun to be understood or acknowledged. During the International Conference on water and the Environment, held in Dublin, Ireland, from 26-31 January 1992, four guiding principles were adopted. Principle No.3 is devoted to women, and it states that "Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water". The linkage between women, environment and sustainable development in the context of water resources has been reiterated in Chapters 18 and 24 of Agenda 21- a dynamic, change oriented action programme for the 21st century, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development(UNCED) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 1992. It has been recognized that without the integration of environment and women's concerns into development decisions, sustainable development will not occur. The Earth Summit in Rio also acknowledged the close link between poverty and environment, and called for concerted action to reduce global poverty and improve global environment. Today, we are facing the feminization of poverty, as the poorest of poor are women.

What is needed is a structural and attitudinal change in institutions including new integrated management systems in human, financial and natural resources. One of the ways to achieve this is through human resources development which has been emphasized in the technical cooperation programmes and projects. At the heart of the human resource development is training/education and public information. These are the goals to which INSTRAW is committed.

INSTRAW is the major advocate for women, water supply and sanitation within the United Nations system. Since 1982 the Institute has given a priority to its programme on women, water supply and sanitation. To this end, INSTRAW has developed two multi-media training packages with the underlying message that women must be integrated at the earliest stage of development process to ensure their effective participation in design,

planning, technical operation, evaluation and monitoring of water projects and programmes. The Institute organized on the basis of the training packages eight national, regional and international training seminars from 1987 till 1992. (please see Annex I).

In the biennium 1994-1995 INSTRAW will up-date its training package with an additional modular unit on "Women and Waste Management". INSTRAW is planning to organize three sub-regional training seminars on "Women, Water Supply and Sanitation" in Barbados, Ecuador and Tanzania. The Institute will organize in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) a regional workshop on "Women and Environmental Health" in Santo Domingo in 1994. In collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) INSTRAW will conduct participatory research on the role of women in sustainable development and poverty alleviation in slum areas of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Training will be conducted on the management of slum environmental problems.

The structuring and implementation of policies to reach out and involve women in the water sector is a prerequisite for sustainable water programmes. Training in new management systems in human and natural resources, new methodologies in environmentally friendly water technologies and mechanisms for better operational activities are essential components for involving women in all phases of sustainable development. By training decision-makers on the need to involve women in the planning and policy issues as well as in the use and application of economically feasible and environmentally sustainable water technologies, the problems in the water sector can be greatly reduced.

In conclusion, we have entered an era where policies will have to be reformulated for all water activities to ensure sustainable development and utilization of water resources. The need for an integrated and holistic approach is essential for sustainable development which implies the development of human societies, economies and the protection of natural ecosystems on which the survival of humanity depends. This includes not only the need to look at the water cycle but also to intersectoral needs, ecological issues, alleviation of poverty and diseases, and sustainable rural and urban development. Women as users, consumers, managers and collectors of water have to become an integral part of all water related policies, programmes and projects.

Annex I

List of INSTRAW Training Materials

1. The training package on **Women, Water Supply and Sanitation**, was prepared by INSTRAW in cooperation with ILO-TURIN Centre, 1986. The training package synthesized five years of INSTRAW's research and training activities in the water sector. The training package consists of five modular units, namely: **Module I**- The United Nations International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade; **Module II** - The Role of Women in Planning Water Supply and Sanitation Projects; **Module III**- Women's Involvement in the Choice of Technology and Implementation of WSS projects; **Module IV**- Education and Training Activities for Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes; **Module V** - Evaluation of Water Supply and Sanitation Projects and Programmes. The training methodology based on modular approach, enabled participatory training and flexibility to adapt modular units to various target groups at community and national levels. On the basis of the training package five national training seminars were conducted by INSTRAW in cooperation with various United Nations agencies in Ethiopia, 1987; Kenya, 1987; Sudan 1987; Somalia, 1987; and Nigeria, 1988. An interregional training seminar was organized by INSTRAW in cooperation with ESCAP in Thailand, 1989. The training modules were evaluated as most useful and applicable by the participants.

2. INSTRAW in cooperation with the Fondation de l'Eau prepared a training module on **Women, Water Supply and sanitation** aimed at an illiterate audience in 1989. This package complements the INSTRAW-ILO/TURIN Centre multi-media training package on the same subject, prepared in 1986. The training module available in English and French, uses the participatory approach and consists of a trainer's manual, a set of 10 modules for the trainers and a set of 80 large drawings with simple captions. The trainer's manual comprises a user's guide, guidelines for carrying out a training session and the outlines of each of the 10 modules, which are presented in a booklet format. The 10 modules cover the following areas: gathering water from deep wells and hand pumps; water from stand posts; village water supply: the well; water transport and shortage; hygiene and cleanliness; hydric diseases and contamination; hydric disease propagation; bilharziosis or schistosomiasis; interrelationship of water, sanitation, hygiene and health; sanitation by means of latrines; and village committees.

3. INSTRAW revised and expanded its multi-media training package on **Women, Water Supply and Sanitation** in cooperation with the former Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD) and ILO-TURIN Centre in 1991. The training package is aimed at three different target groups: senior officials of Ministries of Education, Health, Planning and Public Affairs; development planners and staff members from local authorities in charge of

water supply and sanitation technologies, and representatives of non-governmental and women's organizations.

The training package consists of the following five modular units: **Module I** - The International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and Beyond; **Module II** - Participation of Women in Planning, Choice of Technology and Implementation of Sustainable WSS Projects; **Module III** - The Role of Women in Hygiene Education and Training Activities for WSS Projects; **Module IV** - Involvement of Women in Management of Water Resources, Water Supply and Waste Disposal; and **Module V** - Evaluation and Monitoring of WSS Programmes, Projects and the Role of Women.

The package is accompanied by two sound-slide packages and 100 transparencies. Each modular unit consists of the user's guide, trainer's guide, text, additional reading, bibliography, key issue checklists for group work and two evaluation forms. The major aim of the training package is to contribute to a new approach to the organization and management of sustainable WSS programmes through the integration of women's needs, as well as their participation in planning, technical operations, maintenance, assessment and implementation of WSS projects. The training package was successfully applied during two interregional training seminars organized by INSTRAW and former DTCD in the Gambia, 1991 and organized by INSTRAW in cooperation with ESCAP and former DESD in Thailand, 1992. The training package is available in English and French and can be obtained for the price of US\$ 700 plus shipping charges.

List of Publications

- 1. Report of the Training Seminar on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation, held in Nairobi, Kenya, 9-13 November 1987. INSTRAW, 53 p. Santo Domingo, 1988. (E)**
- 2. Report of the Training Seminar on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 23-28 November 1987. INSTRAW, 89 p. Santo Domingo, 1988. (E)**
- 3. Report of the Training Seminar on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation, held in Kadugli, Sudan, 16-21 January 1988. INSTRAW, 56 p. Santo Domingo, 1988. (E)**
- 4. Report of the Training Seminar on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation, held in Mogadiscio, Somalia, 13-18 February 1988. INSTRAW, 105 p. Santo Domingo, 1988. (E)**
- 5. Report of the Regional Training Seminar on Women's Contribution to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, held in Bangkok, Thailand, 23-27 January 1989 and organized by INSTRAW in cooperation with ESCAP. 48 p. Santo Domingo, 1989. (E)**

6. **Report of the National Training Seminar on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation**, held in Lagos, Nigeria, 10-16 May 1989 and organized by INSTRAW in cooperation with ZONTA International. 47p. Santo Domingo, 1990(E).

7. **Report of the Interregional Workshop on testing of Training Modules on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation**, held in Banjul, the Gambia, 2-6 September 1991 and organized by INSTRAW in cooperation with UN/DESD. 82 p. New York, 1992.(E).

8. **Report of the Interregional Workshop on Women, Water Supply and Sanitation**, held in Bangkok, Thailand, 21-25 September, 1992 and organized in cooperation with ESCAP and UN/DESD. New York, 78 p. 1993(E)

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