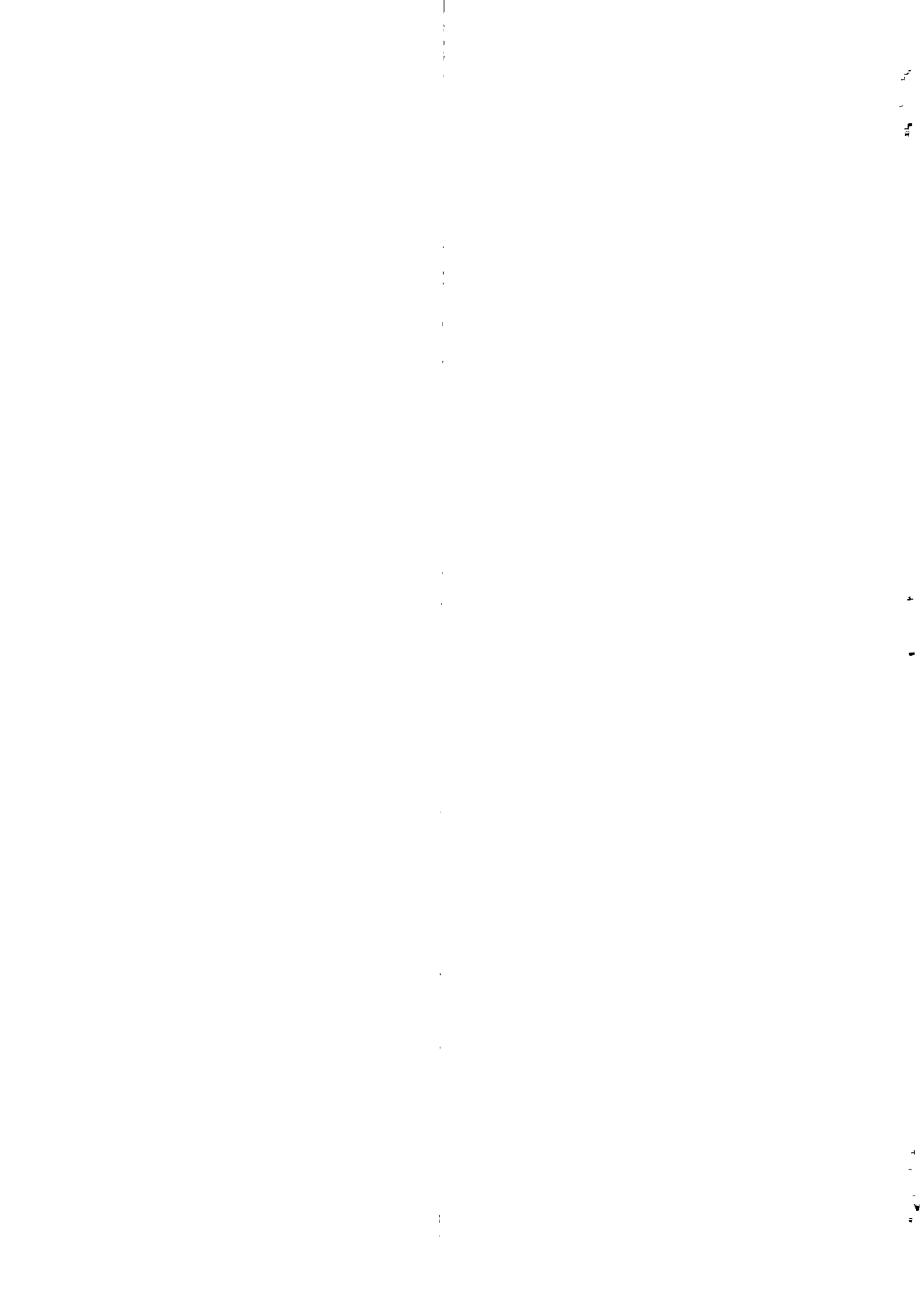


**[Paper on women's participation in water and sanitation
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List of Acronyms

CBHC	Community Based Health Care
CHW	Community Health Workers
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GFS	Gravity Flow Scheme
LC	Local Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PCCM	Problem Cause Coping Matrix
SWIP	South Western Integrated Project
TASO	The AIDS Support Organisation
WES	Water and Environmental Sanitation
WSC	Water and Sanitation Committee



Abstract

This paper examines the Ugandan experience in the area of women's participation in water and sanitation services and the policy environment that prevails in the country. The paper is divided into three parts. The first section gives a synopsis of the policies in Uganda on gender, water supply and sanitation services. The second section illustrates the translation of these policies by drawing from a case study that was carried out amongst water user committees and women's groups in two Sub Counties of Mbarara district, South Western Uganda. The last part provides a critique of policy implications on women's participation in water supply and sanitation services in Uganda and offers insights from the case study conducted.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Uganda after several decades of civil strife and economic decline has realized a faster economic growth rate in the last ten years. This has been a result of good macro economic stability strategies focusing on the restoration of fiscal and monetary discipline, investment friendly policy framework, liberalization of trade and privatization of government owned enterprises. While maintaining macro economic stability, Government has also been putting greater emphasis on addressing the underlying structural impediments to key economic and social sectors. One of the ways of addressing these impediments has been the promotion of a vibrant social services sector. This has been a cornerstone to this policy. In this paper we focus on the key policies in the area of water and sanitation services and those that have focused on the promotion of women's participation in key social sectors.

2.0 POLICIES IN WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION

Government's recognition that clean and safe water as well as proper sanitary conditions are essential for the health of the population and in improving the quality of life has been reflected in some of the earliest documents, like the NRM Ten Point Programme on social services. In part it states that:

It is our policy to ensure that within our means, essential social services are provided for everybody.

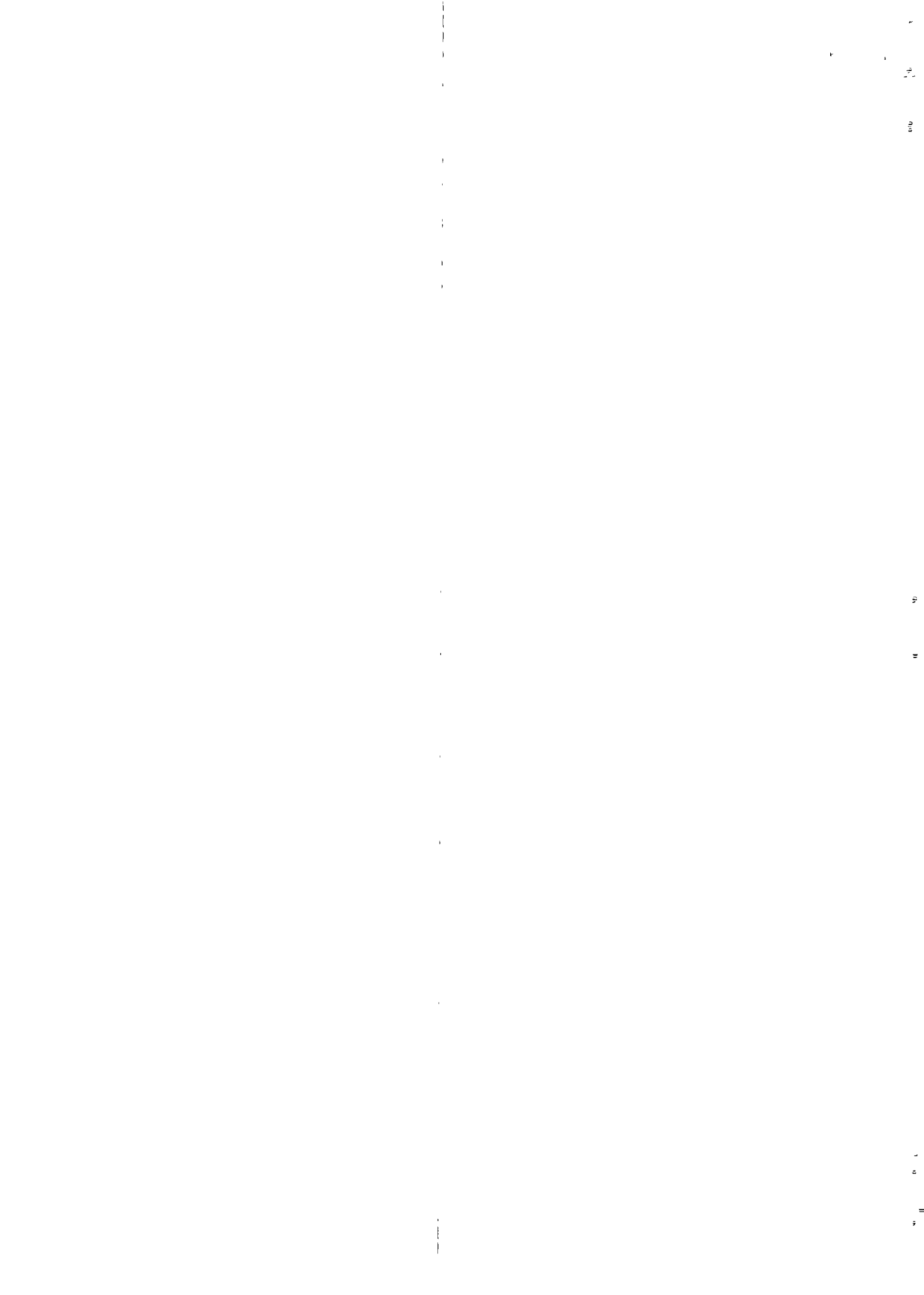
Further the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) contains basic policy statements related to water and environmental sanitation as enlisted below:

Objective XIV states that :

*The state shall endeavor to fulfill the fundamental rights of all Ugandans to social justice and economic development and shall in particular, ensure that all Ugandans enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education, health services, **clean and safe water**, work, decent shelter, adequate clothing, food security, pension and retirement benefits*

Objective XXI states that;

The state shall take all practical measures to promote good water management systems at all levels



Objective XXVII:

The state shall promote sustainable development and public awareness of the need to manage land, air and water resources in a balanced and sustainable manner for the present and future generations

Article 39 of the Constitution states that:

Every Ugandan has a right to a clean and healthy environment

In this Constitution the women's participation in water supply and sanitation is inferred by its gender sensitivity and inclusiveness. The constitution guarantees women's equal rights with men and promotes affirmative action to women in areas where they are marginalized by history, tradition or customs.

This commitment is reflected in Article 33 (2) of the Constitution that states;

... the state shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realize their full potential and advancement.

These Constitutional provisions are then reemphasized by the **National Gender Policy (1997)**. This policy guides and directs, at all levels the planning, resource allocation and implementation of development programmes to be gender responsive. It ensures that gender is mainstreamed in the national development process in order to improve the social, legal/civic political, economic and cultural conditions of the people in particular women. It forms a legal framework for gender oriented sectoral policies that have been developed since 1990.

One of these sectoral policies, is in the **Ministry of Natural Resources, Gender Policy**. This calls for ensuring that women participate in community decision making in the area of water and sanitation. To date, in communities where water projects are being implemented women are included in water user committees. Further, in some communities women groups are contracted by projects to carry out specific project components like the making and sell of sanplats to the project beneficiaries and the neighboring communities.

The Water Statute (1995) provides for the use, protection and management of water resources and supply. One of its major objectives is to promote the provision of clean, safe and sufficient supply of water for domestic purposes to all persons. It also calls for ensuring the control of pollution and promotion of safe storage, treatment, discharge and disposal of waste which may pollute water or otherwise harm the environment and human health.



Another policy is the, **Local Government Act (1997)**. This one enhances the devolution of power and authority from the center to the local authorities and lower levels of local governance. It also defines the roles of the different levels of governance in the provision and management of water related services and activities. In this regard the provision of water services and maintenance of facilities is the responsibility of the local councils in the district with support and guidance from the central government agencies.

The Local Government Act also stipulates that, at least 30% of the representation on the Local Councils should be women. This provision helps to strengthen and increase the women's voices and decision making powers in the water supply and sanitation services sector. However, this critical mass has not been reached as women currently form only 10% of the councils at all levels. Nevertheless a provision exists that mandates, the local authorities to formulate bye-laws depending on the critical issues of the districts. It is only hoped that if gender became one of the critical issues then this clause could be invoked

Perhaps, the most instrumental policy instrument on water supply and sanitation services is the **Uganda Plan of Action for the Children (UNPAC) 1992**. This is an important document in the area of child survival, development and protection which government is committing resources for implementation. It aims at the provision of basic minimum social services to as many Ugandans, in the fields of;

- ◆ Primary Health Care
- ◆ Clean Water and Basic Sanitation
- ◆ Primary Education and Adult Literacy
- ◆ Community Care of Children in need of help.

It aims at accessing 75% of the population to safe drinking water. 75% of the population to having access to sanitary means of excreta disposal, improvement in means of disposal of solid and liquid waste and the eradication of the guinea worm disease. It also aims at the reduction by 50% deaths due to diarrhea and by 25% of the incidence of diarrhea in under five year old children and 25% reduction in general diarrhea incidence rate.

In order to enhance the implementation of UNPAC, government is in the process of formulating a National Sanitation Initiative/Strategy. The policy and implementation strategy is expected to be in place by January 1998. Because of the different problems Uganda has been going through, Uganda's sanitation situation has been deteriorating since the 1960s. This new sanitation initiative is geared towards refocusing government's efforts in that direction.

In line with the above policies, the **National Water Policy (1997)** promotes an integrated approach to manage the water resources in ways that are sustainable and most beneficial to the people of Uganda. This integrated approach is based on the recognition of the



social value of water while at the same time giving much more attention to its economic value. The policy objective for water supply and sanitation is;

Sustainable provision of safe water within easy reach and hygienic sanitation facilities, based on management, responsibility and ownership by the users, to 75% of the population in rural areas and 100% of the urban population by the year 2000 with an 80 - 90% effective use and functionality of facilities.

The basic principles of this objective include:

- Protection of the environment.
- Provision of demand driven services.
- Attitudinal and behavioral change.
- Full participation of women at all levels.
- Targeting those segments in society that are deprived of clean water.

In implementation, provision and management of water supply and sanitation, the strategies that have been promoted include,

- ⇒ Technology and service provision
- ⇒ Financing subsidies and tariffs
- ⇒ Private sector participation.
- ⇒ Management and sustainability aspects.
- ⇒ Coordination and collaboration.

In all the above strategies, gender based distortions and biases clearly are highlighted. For instance the policy states that in areas of management and sustainability,

women's involvement in design, construction, operation and management of improved water supply and sanitation facilities should be supported through training activities. The key criteria are that women and men should have equal opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of community management.

The policies and policy statements enumerated above clearly indicate that the government of Uganda is committed to the promotion of women's participation in water supply and sanitation services. A closer look at these policies shows that they are interrelated, interdependent and reinforce each other in the promotion of women's participation in the water and sanitation sector. The challenge is, how these policies are interpreted and implemented at the community and household levels taking into consideration gender dimensions



In the next section we look at some of the practical issues that are at play. Using the data collected from a case study, we reflect on some of the challenges that are at play in the translation of these policies into practice and the gender implications that arise therefrom.



3.0 WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION IN THE SELECTED CASE STUDY AREAS

Level	Location	Population projection (1997)	Population Served	Safe Water Coverage (%)	Number of Households	Sanitation
District	Mbarara	962,406	278,017	29	181,728	66
County	Rwampara	144,953	82,162	57	26,706	92
Subcounty	Bugamba	26,885	18,500	69	4,888	89
Parish	*Bugamba	Data not readily available	-	-	-	-
County	Isingiro	177,367	28,996	16	33,512	77
Subcounty	Birere	34,160	7,156	21	6,211	74
Parish	*Kikokwa	Data not readily available	-	-	-	-

Source: Directorate of Water Development.

** Parishes where the case studies were carried out
NB All figures as of 1st August 1997*

The table details out the different statistics of the areas visited. The available data could only go up to the level of the subcounty. One notices that these two places had varied coverage of safe water, Bugamba had a percentage coverage of 66% and Birere of 21%. In both areas there were efforts to increase the coverage of safe water and sanitation services. In both places the sanitation coverage was quite high with Bugamba having 89% and Birere coverage being 74%. The district was also chosen because it was one of the district where the WES activities had taken root and hence it offered opportunities of critically looking at the situation on the ground. The case study that follows gives an insight to the statistical scenario that has been presented above.



4.0 Case Study Methodology

In order to collect the relevant information on women's participation in the WES program, the following methodology was used.

4.1 Sampling

Considering the time and financial implications, one district in Uganda was chosen that had a history of involvement in the water and sanitation programs. The district of Mbarara in Western Uganda was chosen. We held a discussion with the District Water Officer and District Health Officer, on the potential areas where we could find women who had been involved in some WES related programs. The two villages of Bugamba and Kikokwa were chosen. Two areas were visited and group discussions held.

4.2 Participants Profile

The participants included the district officials, women and men who were members of the water user committees, Local Council officials and a women's sanplat group in one of the areas visited.

4.3 District Discussions

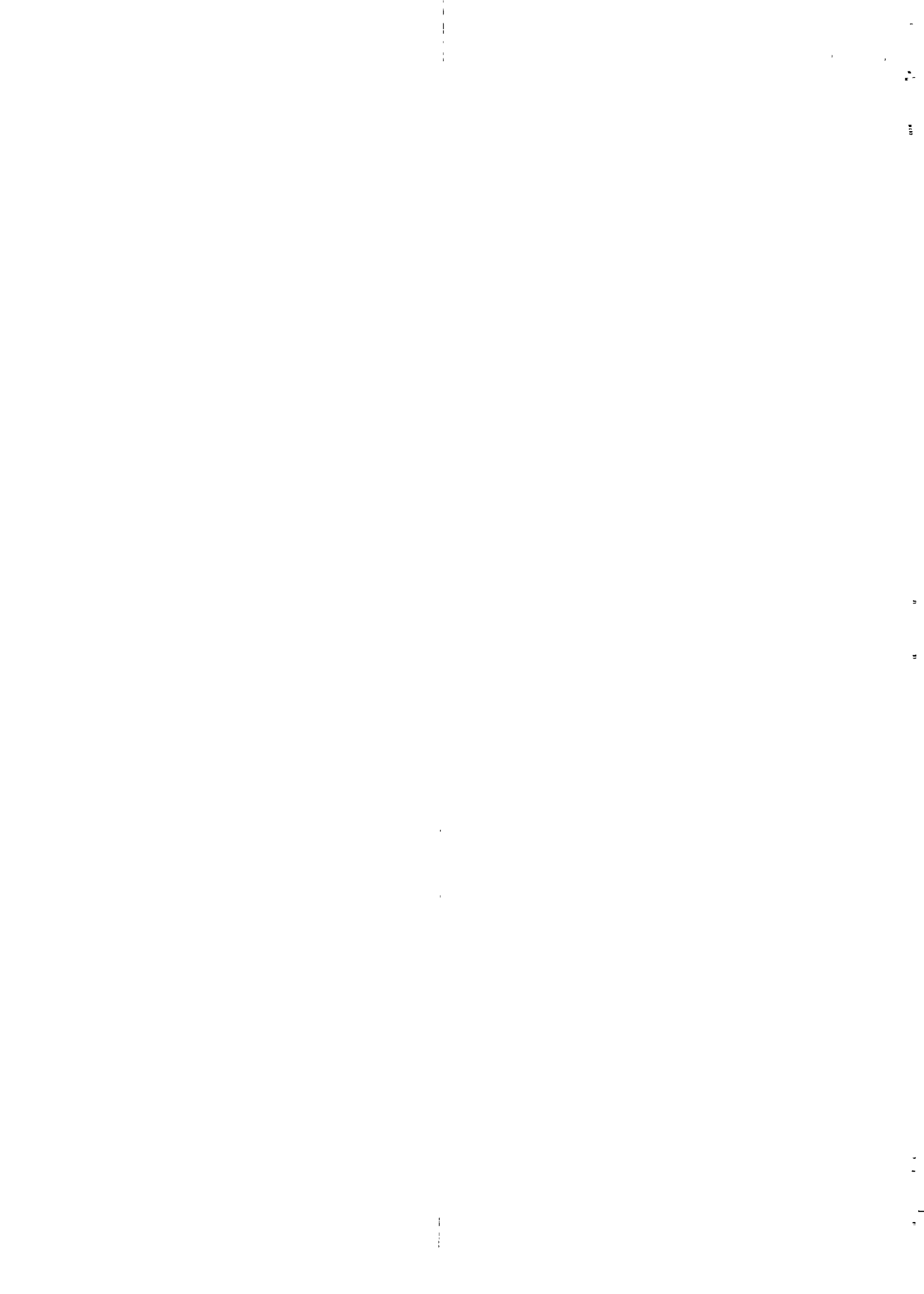
These were carried out with the District Water officer and the District Health Inspector. During the discussions we choose the areas to visit and also had an in-depth interview.

4.4 Focus Group Discussions

Using the FGDs, objectives of the case study were explained to the participants. The participants then started off by sharing with us some of their experiences in the WES program. In addition, through the use of other techniques information on issues related to women's and men's participation in WES was also generated.

4.4.1 Operation and Maintenance of Water and Sanitation activities by Gender

Cards were distributed to the participants who then wrote down the different activities that men and women were involved in during the WES activities



A list of the different activities was generated and the rationale for activities that were allocated to the different sexes were then discussed. A number of significant lessons were learnt.

4.4.2 Problem/Challenges, Cause Coping Matrix (PCCM)

To understand the different challenges that men and women face in the WES program, a PCCM was used. A basket of problems was first generated by the participants. Using the ranking technique, the participants generated the five most urgent challenges that they had in the WES program. They were then divided into two groups, one for the women and the other for the men. In their different groups they came up with the causes of these challenges/problems and the different ways in which they cope with these problems. Through this technique a number of insights were generated that gave a gender analysis of the problems of women and men in the WES program. The time available allowed for these two exercises. It is from these two that we generated the different lessons that would be the basis for the best practices of the participation of women and men in WES activities.

4.5 Case Study Results

4.5.1 District Discussions

The two district officials explained that the WES program had replaced the SWIP project². The district has a committee that specifically oversees the smooth running of these activities. The committee for WES activities is under the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer and it includes the District Planning Officer, Community Development Officer, the Water Officer and District Health Inspector; all representing the implementing line sectors.

The priority areas that are focused on by the WES program at the district level are; the development of Gravity Flow Schemes, the protection of springs, water tanks, construction of water jars, rock tanks and boreholes. In the sanitation area specifically, the program supports the development of institutional latrines and encourages households to use both the VIP latrines and the upgrading of existing ones. Capacity building and information dissemination is also emphasized.

² SWIP was a project that was implemented by the government of Uganda and UNICEF in 10 districts of South Western Uganda prior to the formulation of the present GOU/UNICEF Country Programme



4.5.2 Strong points of the WES program

- ⇒ The district officers observed that the notion of community maintenance at the water sources is a very strong aspect of the WES program. This is because it did empower communities to take charge of their water points and the archaic ideology of considering water maintenance as a government role was being challenged.
- ⇒ The creation of the institution of a caretaker for the different water points was seen as a very positive step in communities taking charge of their water sources and even redefining the different community priorities of what type of water development they want and what strategies can they use in the promotion of good sanitation. In this way the project staff could gain an insight in which different ways they would intervene in the communities.
- ⇒ The introduction of a water source accounts to generate funds for the water point maintenance is another good system. This in a way is one of the first indicators of how the communities are starting to look at water as a scarce commodity that they need to safeguard.
- ⇒ Communities had gone ahead and laid down bye-laws that were geared towards the protection of water sources.
- ⇒ Subcounty Local Councils had started budgeting for the water sources, which was a sign that water had gained prominence as a priority community need in many counties.
- ⇒ There was also the increased participation of women in water services and sanitation activities.
- ⇒ There were many requests from different areas to help them to improve their water sources, which reaffirmed the WES program philosophy of being demand driven.

4.5.3 Challenges

A number of challenges were also cited by the district officials

- The capacity to repair boreholes was still a big challenge because of the high costs involved. Even though the communities were contributing money their purchasing power for the different materials was still low.



- Sanitation in most places is still a challenge. This is because in some of the areas which are inhabited by the pastoralists, it is very difficult to have latrines because these are mobile communities.
- The youth (mostly male) in most of the villages were not enthusiastic about participating in the WES programs, especially the construction of pit latrines.
- With the inception of the Universal Primary Education³ policy, the sanitation status of most of the schools had deteriorated. This was because of the increment in the number of pupils and the subsequent stress on the existing pit latrines in schools.
- The bye-laws that are passed by the Local Councils have proved very difficult to implement.
- The involvement of women in the WES programs is still at a very superficial level. This is because of some of the dominant traditional beliefs that are being held by both the women and men in communities.

4.6 Experiences from Kikokwa Parish

Kikokwa Parish is in Birere Subcounty, Isingiro county, Mbarara district. It surrounds Kaberebere trading centre with peri-urban life style. Kikokwa is 12kms away from Mbarara town.

4.6.1 Evolution of the WES program

Way back in 1989 in a Parish Council meeting, the Health Staff together with Subcounty Chief, under Southwest Health and Water Integrated Project (SWIP) introduced the Community Based Health Care (CBHC) approach for improving health. The new approach was welcome and the council officials requested for support from the district administration.

A CBHC committee was formed composed of two women and five men to manage the initiative. The chairperson is an influential woman who has held that position since the committee was formed to date. She is also a caretaker of a borehole and a member of one of the tap stands.

³ This is a new policy in the education sector where the government offered to pay (from primary one to seven) school fees for at least four children from each family. The policy is barely one year old and its ramifications on different sectors are just emerging.



Community Health Workers (CHWs), who were predominantly female, were selected. Each of them was responsible for health improvement in ten homes in the village. Committee members and CHWs were given training in basic health messages, sanitation promotion, hygiene education and the safe water chain. They were also assisted to carry out community diagnosis as base line for progress monitoring purposes and the community health improvement procedures. Committee members and CHWs were guided to write monthly reports including achievements, constraints and possible solutions to help in the planning of the different activities of the programme.

Eight trainers for the whole subcounty were selected, four of whom were women. In 1992, four of the trainers underwent a Training of Trainers (TOTs) course. The project issued them with bicycles to facilitate their movement and scales for child growth monitoring.

The absence of safe water came up as a constraint in every report that was written by these CHWs. At the time, the parish had one spring which had been protected in the early 1980s. In response to the parish out cry, in 1992 the district staff inspected the water sources in the parish. They proposed building a reservoir tank at the protected spring to improve on the yield so that water could be gravitated to the trading centre 2½ kilometres away from the source.

Owing to the already existing demand, the proposal was more than acceptable. Work started right away. However, the district staff laid down a condition, that water supply will only be worked on if sanitation improvement reached at least 80%. So health education increased from one to eight cells/villages, sanplats were sold and more latrines were constructed, disposal of children's faeces emphasised and monitoring activities increased.

When the district staff were satisfied with the progress, water supply construction work started with the collection of locally available materials, that is, sand and hard core provided by both women and men. The community was also advised to open a bank account for the scheme. In the meantime, technical people were engaged in the feasibility study

In August, 1992, construction work started. The tank was constructed, trenches were dug, pipes laid and three tap-stands were installed. By the end of 1992, the work had been completed. The scheme was commissioned and certificate issued to the community.

Through a user group meeting, it was decided that the CBHC committee manages the Gravity Flow Scheme (GFS) as well. In addition to the existing committee members, they added two LC2 councillors, Parish and Subcounty chiefs. In addition to that, subcommittees known as "tap-stand committees" were formed that were composed of two women and three men as tap-stand caretakers.



The committee formulated bye-laws on use of the source - to guide users especially children and old women. They also established an operations and maintenance (O&M) system whereby all user households pay Ug.Shs.1000 (US\$ 1) per year, and vendors Ug.Shs.10,000 (US\$ 10) per year which is paid in two instalments. (Household which regularly buy water from vendors are not required to subscribe to O and M). The extension of the water supply scheme increased the number of users from eighty nine households to about nine hundred households.

4.6.2 Successes noted:

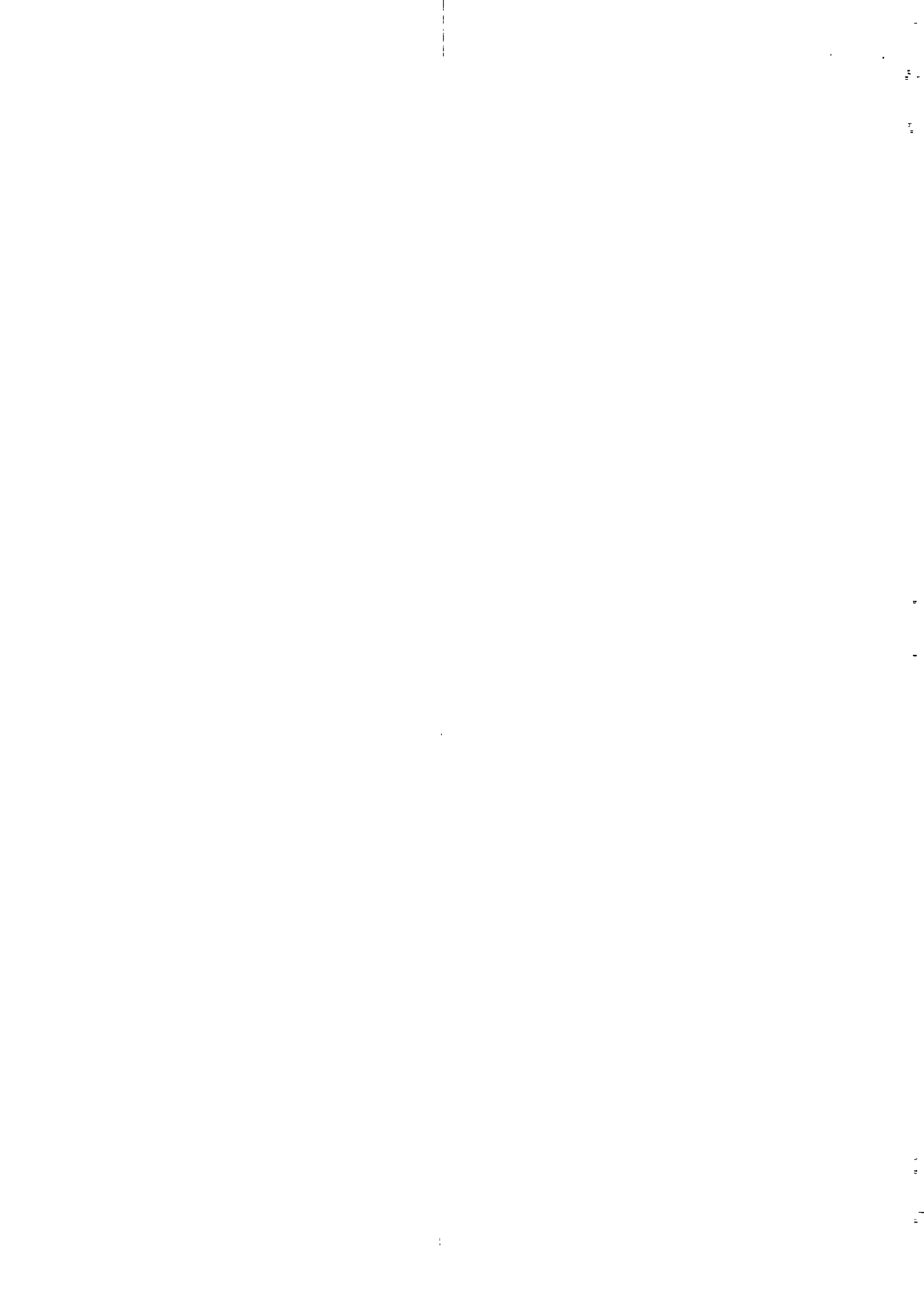
A number of successes were attained as listed below:

- ◇ Expansion of the programme to include an AIDS control programme (supported by a local NGO known as TASO).
- ◇ The communities appreciate and use only the clean water sources .
- ◇ There is also increased participation of men in the home sanitation. This was visible through some of the men participating in the disposal of children's excreta in their homes
- ◇ Establishment of a health unit at the subcounty headquarters near by.
- ◇ Availability of Family Planning services to the community.
- ◇ An expanded child growth monitoring programme was initiated
- ◇ Reports showed a reduction in WES related diseases among the community members.
- ◇ The water user communities and the house did ensure that there was adherence to the safe water chain. For instance, individuals with dirty clothes and containers were not allowed to fetch water at the water sources.

4.6.3 Constraints

The constraints registered included :

- ⇒ Natural population growth which has made monitoring of the project activities tedious since there was no simultaneous increase in the number of trained personnel.



- ⇒ Partly because of the population increase, there was a consequential drop in the latrine coverage 80% to 75% which had a big implication both for the sanitation and water programmes.
- ⇒ When the SWIP project wound-up and WES took over there was laxity in the supervisory and materials support for the communities where the project had worked. This led to the abandonment of some project activities.
- ⇒ There was also a drop in some of the lessons from the sanitation education and this was evident in the laxity of some homes in the disposal of children's faeces.
- ⇒ At one water source there was also a marked gender division of labour in the collection of water. Participants observed that this water source in the early morning it was used by vendors mostly who are all men. In the afternoon it was mostly women and in the evening it was mostly children when the schools are closed. The evenings were also noted as times when the sources were crowded hence a time consuming period of the day as well one that was prone to generating conflict as people wait or struggle for their turns to fetch water.

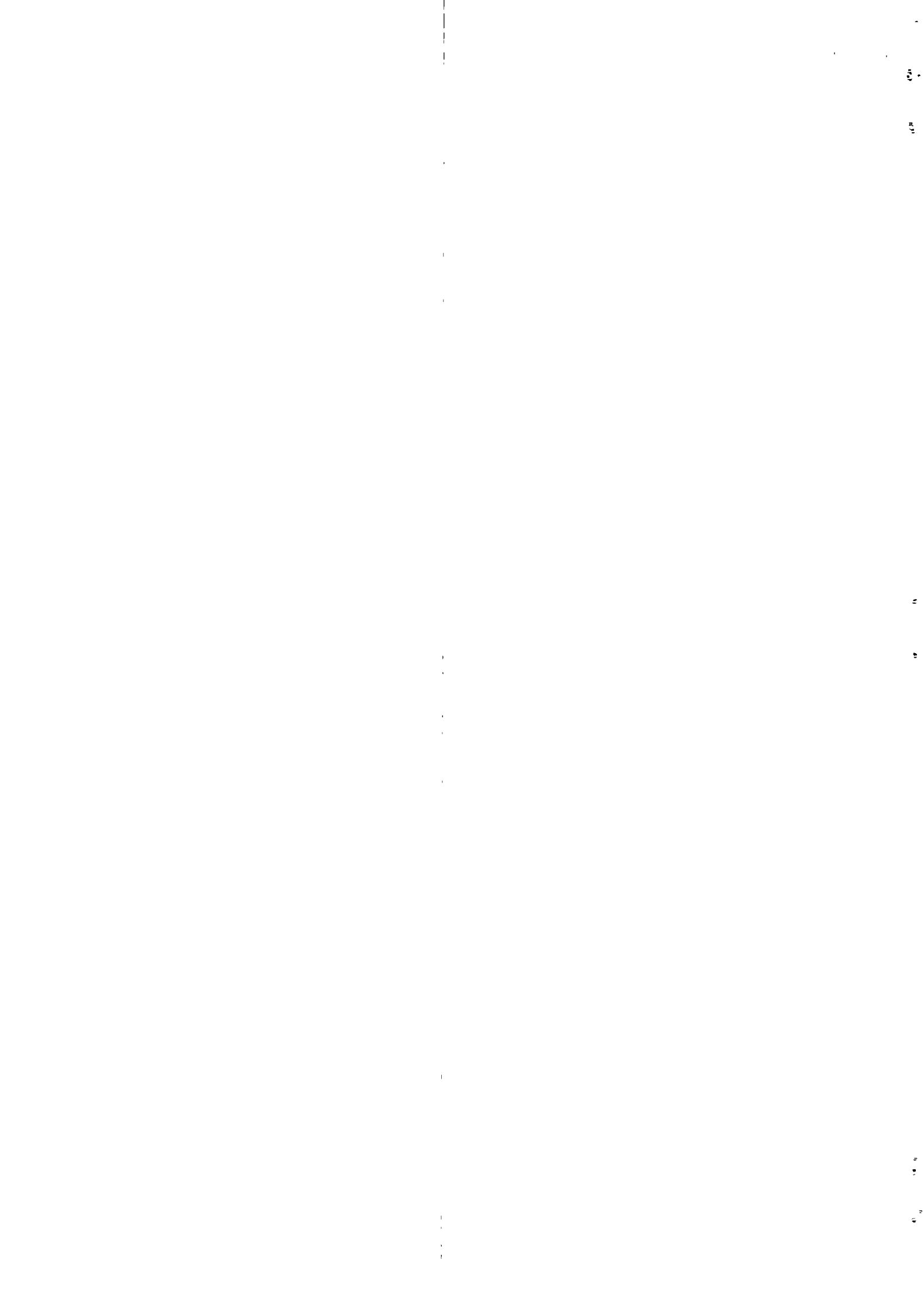
4.7 Experiences from Bugamba Parish

4.7.1 Evolution of the WES Activities

In 1986, a field officer for water supply and a member of Bugamba Parish Community, identified a water source which could be gravitated to serve the parish with safe water. He contacted the district headquarters and discussed the matter with the water office. The parish was asked to make a formal request by filling a form, which they did. As there was no response, in 1987 another request was made, this time, by the Headmaster of Bugamba Secondary School, a school within Bugamba Parish.

In the meantime, the Southwest Health and Water Integrated Project (SWIP), in line with the decentralisation policy, an arrangement to bring services nearer the consumers, and conscious of women involvement in the programme, requested the districts to decentralise sanplat casting yards and, where possible, entrust the work to organised women groups.

Bugamba Bakyala Tuyimukye, an already existing women's group engaged in agriculture as income generating activity and health promotion activities, was approached by programme and district officials and was interested in diversifying their income generating activities and improving sanitation of their latrines through the production of sanplats. Initially the group was to be trained and provided with materials not locally



available such as cement, wire mesh etc., so as to build capital money and eventually become independent. The slab would also be sold at Ug. Shs. 1000 (\$ 1).

The group took-up the idea and made a proposal to the district. The district responded by requesting the group to send one member to be trained in Mbarara who on return would be able to train others in slab casting skills. The group identified a young man, outside the group, to go for the training in Mbarara and pass on the skill on return. They also approached the subcounty officials to utilise the nearby subcounty premises for the sanplat production.

Indeed on return, the man trained the twenty members of the group in shifts on alternative days (Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays). Even after training them, he continued to work with them, but drawing a monthly salary.

The women started production of sanplats in 1993 on alternative days in small groups. They would produce twelve sanplats per day. The question that arose was the market for their products. In order to increase demand and be listened to by community members they went through the local leaders (LCs) to conduct a hygiene education and mobilise households to purchase sanplats at subsidised prices. Sales started and they opened a bank account which they are still operating to date.

In the same year (1993) the district also responded to the long standing application for construction of a Gravity Flow Scheme. A Gravity Flow Scheme Water and Sanitation Committee (WSC) was formed composed of 7 members:

- 2 from Parish Health Committee Members
- 2 from Bugamba Women Group Members
- 2 from Source Finance Committee Members
- 1 from Local Council (LC) Chairman.

N B The LC3 Chairman is the Chairman Source Finance Committee and also Secretary for the Scheme Committee

The scheme was to cover five cells/villages with a total of nineteen tap stands. Other management tap stand committees were formed to cover the whole scheme. Each tap stand committee was composed of seven members (surprisingly the participants in the focus group were not sure of how many were women!) These user group committee members conducted a house to house mobilisation, encouraging households with no latrines and sanplats to acquire them. The women's group also cashed on this opportunity to market their sanplats.

As regards operation and maintenance (O & M), community members were to pay towards the scheme. Women paid Ug. Shs. 300 (US\$ 3 cents) and men Ug. Shs. 1000 (US\$ 1) per head for maintenance per tap. A bank account was opened with Ug. Shs 20,000 (US\$ 20).



In 1994, the construction activities of the scheme started. Both women and men were engaged in unskilled labour such as collection of locally available construction materials such as sand, hard-core, bricks, clearing site, digging of trenches and attending meetings. However, the women cooked for the workers and the men were engaged in a more skilled tasks such as protecting sources, building the tanks, laying pipes and installing taps. Men also decided on the sites because, as they put it, "each woman wanted the tap near her kitchen", so men decided on the more "neutral" points.

The women's group went ahead with casting of sanplats. To-date they have produced over 900 (nine hundred) sanplats. They also increased their sale of sanplats from US\$ 1 to US\$ 24. It was reported that all women group members, sanitation committees and institutions in the parish now have slabs/sanplats.

At the end of 1995, SWIP wound up. The women's group regular supply of materials slackened. So the production reduced and at one time came to a halt. The group is struggling to revive it by purchasing some of the materials that they need.

The water scheme is complete though not yet commissioned. When asked about what they consider their successes, women group members stated the following;

4.7.2 Benefits of the sanplat project

- ◆ There is a profit of Ug Shs 600,000 (US\$ 600) which members are currently using as a credit scheme for their small scale income generating activities such as bee-keeping, piggery, diary farming as well as a retail shop. This is revolving fund for the use of all the members in the community.
- ◆ The demand for sanplats is quite high, neighbouring parishes, subcounties and even other districts such as Ntungamo district had started purchasing their products.
- ◆ The women had also acquired new skills in sanplat production that they were able to use even after the project had wound up.
- ◆ The women were also able to challenge some of the traditional notions about gender relations since they had acquired a skill that was traditionally thought of being masculine
- ◆ The incomes of women and their households had also increased as a result of the sanplat project
- ◆ There was demand for new skills, for the group to acquire skills in water technology such as constructing water jars



- In the case of Uganda the Gender Policy of the Ministry of Natural Resources points out that women have got to be involved in the design and implementation of all water projects. However, the challenge is how do the different implementers of such policies carry them out. Is the issue only the visibility of women in project? In addition to visibility, there should be a policy dimension that emphasizes the engendering of all the aspects of a policy. The main thrust would be to show the inevitability of having gender as central to any water and sanitation policy. Women's contribution in this case would not be seen as "added value" but the absence of it "as no value" at all!
- Uganda has not yet put in place a sanitation policy, efforts are under way to put one in place. In the case study, it was revealed that sanitation was a big problem within the pastoralist communities. There is a general challenge of how to relate issues of sanitation to such groups, but it is important to note that in such situations the women bear a bigger brunt, because even in these mobile communities they are the ones that are very close to ensuring household sanitation. This means that a strategy that targets improving pastoralists sanitation would have to explicitly target the women who usually are the ones that handle the animal products that are food for the pastoralists and are in charge of children's health. Hence, this challenge does call for a gender-sensitive action that can employ the women's space in advocating for healthy sanitation practices. On another level should also be the need to find appropriate strategies for mobilization young males in sanitation improvement.
- The link between policies is another important policy lesson that needs to be derived. In the case of Uganda, the inception of Universal Primary Education policy had a very big impact on the sanitation status on most of the schools in the country. This was because of the increment in the number of pupils with no increase in the existing toilets in schools. Further, in some schools this situation was even made worse because there is a laxity in the provision of different toilets for the boys and the girls, if they exist at all. This caused some of the girls to abandon schools because of this hostile environment⁴. Such situations certainly needs to be followed up and rectified. It would be important to see water and sanitation issues as cross cutting through different policies and hence the need to harmonize them in order to overcome the negative effects that may arise

⁴ This was reported in one of the local newspaper dailies (The New Vision 15th October 1997). The news article quoted a UNICEF/WHO report that had found that one there was an increased drop out rate of 45% between the classes primary five and primary seven

- In case of the project in Mbarara, the sudden closure of SWIP affected the women's group adversely. This was because there was no sustainability mechanism that was built in the group's activities to ensure a soft landing. This would imply that policies that are put in place to ensure the participation of women in projects need to look at how easy it is for a group to continue without the support of the project. This would entail changing the philosophy of projects to look at the whole spectrum of aspects social aspects that may impede the successful continuation of the women's participation.
- The strategy of women's participation risks concentration on a few women, who are already "enlightened". This frustrates the concern of having a critical mass of women in WES activities and at the same time the few women are overburdened by the responsibilities that they have to undertake and may end up compromising the performances. The case study shows that the women who belong to the women's group are the same women who belong to the women's councils, the water user committees and local communities.
- The women who have been integrated in the WES activities have gained a lot of self esteem and are articulate and confident in the way they handle issues.
- The policy of decentralisation is increasingly bearing fruit, this is evident by the way the LCs are taking charge of the activities in their communities.
- Whiles the policies in place does encourage women's participation it also assumes that women are a homogenous group. This has dangers as was realised from the case study. The female headed households were required to contribute as much as other households yet these households in most cases had one economically active person who sometimes does not have access to the resources like the other households. This calls for a clearer understanding of gender at the community level through sensitisation.

4.9 Conclusion

This paper has endeavoured to look at the pertinent issues related to water, sanitation and gender with the policy environment in Uganda. It has been shown, that there are a number of policies guidelines that explicitly seek to address issues of increased women's participation in water and sanitation activities. However, the unanswered challenge is how to translate these policy instruments into practical participation. Through the case study, some of the policy challenges have been answered through the success that have been noted.

The case study has shown us that certainly there are positive dimension that explicitly arise from the participation of women in water and sanitation projects: From the sanplat project, it came out clearly that women were very instrumental in the smooth running of the project. What needs to be critically analysed is how to ensure that policies that spell out women's participation are able to move beyond rhetoric and to practice that does not only stop at mentioning women but also takes into consideration the different gender relations that surround women's participation. In this paper we have not offered any practice that will be the best, but we hope that through the analysis of the different elements that are brought out in the case study, a modus operandi can be generated.

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