

Thirsting for Equity

Gender and Water in Latin America

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The tragedy of Latin American women is this: in one of the most water rich areas on the world¹ home to such fabled rivers as the Amazon and Paraná, an estimated 16 per cent of the total population² spends up to a quarter of every day fetching water for basic domestic tasks.³ Mismanagement and privatization of the water sector across the continent has led to prohibitively high prices in water. This combined with rigid social boundaries between what constitutes men's and women's work has ensured that more than any other group, Latin America's women must bear the brunt of the resulting water poverty.⁴

Over the past fifty years there has been a shift in the public perception of water. Initially, water was considered publicly owned and free to all, now it is considered a resource with a monetary value that must be managed for this reason.⁵ However, international agreements have been forged within the United Nations (UN) and recognized

across international agencies identifying access to minimal levels of water and sanitation as a right, not a privilege that must be paid for.⁶ Despite this, the overwhelming worldwide water trend is defined by a privatized sector. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in Latin America, where average water bills are higher than anywhere else in the developing world.⁷ This theoretical disconnect between water as a right and the harsh reality that water has a price has stalled the movement towards universal water and sanitation coverage. This paper will investigate how the language in international agreements has shifted as our understanding of water as a resource has changed. It will then track the course of water as a commodity before finally reviewing the unique challenges that women in water poor areas face. In the concluding sections, the paper touches upon the ultimately ineffective approaches to bringing a 'gendered analysis' into water management that have so far been utilized.

THE INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOL ON WATER AND SANITATION

To properly explore the history of this stalemate between water as a 'right' and water as a 'commodity', we need to go back into the 1940s. In 1946, water was identified in the original Constitution of the World Health Organization as an important aspect of development and a basic need.⁸ Two years later, it surfaced again in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC) (1948) in Article 12, where "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health" was recognized.⁹ This was further

¹ Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, "The Struggle for Latin America's Water," *Global Policy Forum*, July 2004, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/215-global-public-goods/46052-the-struggle-for-latin-americas-water.html>.

² United Nations, *State of the World's Children*, New York: UNICEF, 2001.

³ Sonia Davila-Poblete and Maria Nieves Rico, "Global Water and Gender Policies: Latin American Challenges," In *Opposing Currents: The Politics of Water and Gender in Latin America*, ed. Vivienne Bennet, Sonia Davila-Poblete and Maria Nieves Rico (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005): 30-51.

⁴ See the collection of essays in *Opposing Currents and Gender, Water and Development* and Maude Barlow's work for further examples; W.J. Cosgrove and F.R. Rijsberman, *World Water Vision: Making Water Everybody's Business* (London: World Water Council, 2000).

⁵ World Bank "Water and Sanitation Topic Brief: The World Bank and Water Supply and Sanitation in Latin America and the Caribbean," *World Bank*, June 2006.

⁶ For further reading see John Briscoe, "Managing Water as an Economic Good: Role for Reforms," *International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage Conference*, Oxford, 1997.

⁷ World Bank, "Water and Sanitation Topic Brief."

⁸ World Health Organization, "Constitution of the World Health Organization," *World Health Organization*, October 2006, http://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf.

⁹ United Nations General Assembly, "Convention on the Rights of a Child," *United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, September 2, 1989, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crhtml>.

roughly echoed the same year in the sentiments of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) (1948) also implying the vital role that water had to play in making good health possible.

Prior to 1989, the importance of clean water and good sanitation was never directly identified as an important factor of good health, although the aforementioned international agreements suggest that its importance was widely understood. The adoption and ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) in that year provided the first recognition in an international agreement of the direct link between adequate water, sanitation and good health. In articles 24 and 27 in particular, we can observe a deliberate call for states to recognize their responsibility in recognizing and addressing the barriers to good health that poor children face, not just in their own countries, but across borders.¹⁰ The UNCRC is one of the first international agreements to bring women into the discussion of water rights, by way of singling out their children.

The Dublin Principles have been the most influential of all agreements made concerning clean water and sanitation. The Principals, signed in 1999 and supported by 100 participating national governments, identified water as an "economic good which is finite and vulnerable, but essential to life."¹¹ They highlighted the paradox however, that water was "still...delivered from one place to another through infrastructure that has economic and social costs".¹² While mirroring the development thinking that began in the neo-liberal era of Reagan and Thatcher, the Principles represent one of the formal shifts in thinking about water as a commodity, rather than

its preexisting status as a necessary resource.¹³

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), released as part of the greater United Nations Millennium Declaration, caused water and sanitation to re-emerge on the public agenda as rights. The MDGs are amongst the most well known of United Nations development plans, and are "key to shaping development thinking and practice."¹⁴

Designed not only by "the United Nations General Assembly, and the world's leading development institutions,"¹⁵ the MDGs are remarkable because they set clear, ostensibly achievable, if optimistic, targets to be reached by the year 2015. While none of the much touted "Eight Millennium Development Goals" relate directly to water and sanitation, they were an original part of Section 18, that later became the first goal; End Poverty and Hunger by "[halving] by the year 2015 the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than a dollar a day... and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to...afford safe drinking water."¹⁶

“The MDGs are amongst the most well known of United Nations development plans, and are ‘key to shaping development thinking and practice.’”

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ann Cole, and Tina Wallace, "Gender, Water and Development: An Introduction," In *Gender, Water and Development*, ed. Ann Cole and Tina Wallace (Oxford: Berg, 2005): 1-21.

¹² Helen Ingram, David Felman, and John Whiteley, "Water and Equity in a Changing Climate," In *Water, Place and Equity*, ed. John Whiteley, Helen Ingram and Richard Warren Perry (Boston: MIT Press, 2008): 271-318.

¹³ Vivienne Bennett, "Introduction," In *Opposing Currents: The Politics of Water and Gender in Latin America*, ed. Vivienne Bennett, Sonia Davila-Poblete and Maria Nieves Rico (Oxford: Berg, 2005): 1-11.

¹⁴ Cole and Wallace, "Gender, Water and Development: An Introduction," 4-5.

¹⁵ United Nations General Assembly, "International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights," *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, January 22, 1976, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>.

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly, "United Nations Millennium Declaration," *The United Nations*, September 18, 2000, <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.pdf>.

THE RISE OF NEO-LIBERALISM IN LATIN AMERICA AND ITS IMPACT

This shift in international water legislation did not occur in isolation, but was one piece in the greater context of the rise of neo-liberal economic thought in Latin America and other parts of the developing world. Following the failure

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of the import-substitution-industrialization development model in the post-World War II years, most countries in Latin America looked to the neo-liberal model as a means of combating the severe economic crises and ever growing foreign debt that plagued the Global South during the mid to late 1980s.¹⁷

Within ten years, most Latin American countries had reduced the size of the state by liberalizing markets and off-loading responsibilities such as energy and water onto the private sector.¹⁸ Harsh Structural Adjustment Programs ensured that this mass privatization was in tandem with drastic cuts to public program such as healthcare, education and childcare.¹⁹ While a thorough critique of a market-led approach is not feasible within the constraints of this paper there are clear indications it has been a less than successful

policy.²⁰ In fact, privatization has not only failed to provide coverage, it has made it difficult for the poor to afford water. Indeed, Latin America and the Caribbean have together been identified as having the highest average water bills in the developing world.²¹

Currently, 75 million Latin American and Caribbean people lack access to adequate water supplies, while 116 million lack access to adequate sanitation facilities, the majority of these people living in rural areas.²² While elsewhere in the developing world it is the basic infrastructure that is absent, the situation of the poor in Latin America is unique in that water and sewage infrastructure is (for the most part) already in place and ready to be used.²³ Problems are mainly to do with the poor quality of the service that is delivered. Generally, the service is unreliable, with too few hours of delivery a day. On top of this the water, when it comes (if it comes at all) is untreated or improperly treated water. These are not exceptions, but issues that are considered common and widespread.²⁴ The surprisingly high percentage of spending by the rural poor on bottled water and water delivered by trucks are in part due to the dubious quality of the water for human consumption and the failure of water companies to regularly deliver water through the pre-existing pipes. Due to these spending habits, the rural poor end up paying approximately twelve times more for water for the same amount of water than their urban and

¹⁷ Davila-Poblete and Nieves Rico, “Global Water and Gender Policies: Latin American Challenges,” 46.

¹⁸ Howard Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development* (London: Prentice House, 2008): 53.

¹⁹ Handelman, *The Challenge of Third World Development*, 54.

²⁰ Susan George, “A Short History of Neoliberalism,” Presentation at the Conference on Economic Sovereignty in a Globalising World, Bangkok, 1999, <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/econ101/neoliberalism.html>.

²¹ World Bank, “Water and Sanitation Topic Brief: The World Bank and Water Supply and Sanitation in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

²² Ibid

²³ World Health Organization, “Constitution of the World Health Organization.”

²⁴ World Bank and UNICEF, *Meeting the MDG Drinking Water and Sanitation Target: A Mid Term Assessment of Progress*, (New York and Geneva: WHO and UNICEF, 2004).

wealthier counterparts.²⁵ The water problem in Latin America is not a lack of access to water or a dearth of infrastructure, but rather stems from a failure to adequately distribute water through the pre-existing system.

Age, ethnicity, health/able bodiedness, income and most pertinent for us, gender, all influence whether or not one has access to water and sanitation. The present water scarcity crisis, caused by inequitable distribution of resources, erects barriers to a high standard of living that poor women in particular experience while their brothers, fathers, husbands and sons do not. Examining the barriers to an improved lifestyle unique to water poor women reveals the truth that organizations such as the UN and World Bank have known for some time but have failed to act on: until the barriers that present themselves specifically to these women have been eliminated, the appalling living conditions that so much of the world experiences as 'normal' will continue to be so.

Discussing the concerns that water poor women face as distinct from their male *counterparts* is relevant, as it helps us to further understand how poverty as a mechanism works in Latin America. While a discussion such as this is problematic in that it makes claims to a universal experience of poor women across the continent, understanding typical significant burdens that experienced by women in poverty is instructive. By studying the 'worst case scenario' for a woman with little to no social or financial capital, we can compensate for levels of agency on a case by case basis, while still being able to refer a figurative collective in developing global policy.

WOMEN's BURDENS

Women are the primary users of water for domestic purposes, which constitute about a tenth of all water use, and also provide a significant amount of labour in agriculture (primarily weeding and

planting), which constitutes the majority of water use at around 70 per cent.²⁶ Water is also needed for food production and preparation, watering of any domestic animals that the household raises, personal hygiene and the hygiene of dependents, care of the sick, cleaning the house, washing clothing and dishes and waste disposal. For the most part, all of these are jobs that have been strongly gendered and are usually assigned to females.²⁷ When water is not easily accessible, it typically intensifies stressors in a woman's life. Some of the major stressors and burdens are investigated below.

Commuting

When water is not piped directly into the home or nearby, it is the woman or girl's job to collect water from the nearest source. According to a recent study, women spend approximately six hours each on average globally every day carrying and standing in lines in order to collect drinking water.²⁸ Put another way, that same woman allocates 42 hours every week, more than the Western norm for a full-time job, just collecting the water that is necessary to complete her daily chores. In Latin America, the average distance between the typical water poor household and water access point is 15 minutes.²⁹ For these women, water collection is only one task on top of a typically already overloaded list of daily tasks and responsibilities. Water collection cuts into time that women could spend doing more productive tasks, such as other neglected household tasks or, focusing more time on child rearing even more

²⁶ Cole and Wallace, "Gender, Water and Development; An Introduction," 12.

²⁷ David Hemson, "Easing the Burden on Women in South Africa?" In *Poverty and Water: Explorations of the Reciprocal Relationship*, ed. David Hemson, Kassim Kulindwa and Haakon Lein, (London: Zed Books, 2008).

²⁸ Robina Wahaj, *Gender and Water: Securing Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods* (Rome: Inta, 2007): 2.

²⁹ Vivienne Bennett Sonia Davila-Poblete, and Maria Nieves Rico, "Toward a Broader Perspective," In *Opposing Currents: The Politics of Water and Gender in Latin America*, ed. Vivienne Bennett, Sonia Davila-Poblete and Maria Nieves Rico (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005): 199.

²⁵ World Bank, "Water and Sanitation Topic Brief: The World Bank and Water Supply and Sanitation in Latin America and the Caribbean."

enjoyable tasks, like becoming more involved in community initiatives and taking time for socialization or further education.

Cross-generational Costs

In order to complete essential daily tasks, women often need additional help and use the least expensive and cheapest labour source - their children - to complete those tasks. Due to the incredible pressure that women face to make ends meet, they are often forced to pull a child out of school in order to help run the household. Given the gendered nature of the labour, and the fact that women's tasks generally require less physical strength, "little girls are better replacements for their mothers than little boys are for their fathers"³⁰ meaning that in the end, girls are more likely to be pulled out of school than their brothers or male counterparts. This is reinforced statistically; in 2007, girl children were less likely to be enrolled in school and, upon entering primary school were less likely to complete their schooling. Compounding this, girls are more than 15 per cent more likely to be illiterate worldwide; at 55.1 per cent.³¹ For this reason, it is easy to see that there is a direct link between adequate water supply systems and girl's education. By introducing water supply stations that are conveniently located and run for an appropriate number of hours a day (so that everyone standing in the line is able to get as much water as they need) women will not have to allocate such a significant proportion of each day to merely securing water, and will not need to pull their children, primarily daughters, out of school in order to help with household tasks.

Doing' it' in Public

The amount of acceptable sanitation systems - systems for carrying away human waste - is in an even more appalling state than the global

situation of clean water, with only 58 per cent of the world having access to good sanitation.³² In a simple headline and image an e-card displaying an audience of men looking at a toilet published by The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) addresses an incredibly important aspect of how sanitation coverage affects women and men differently. In some cultures, household situations exist where private toilets are not available. One example amongst many is the situation in Vegueta, Peru, where 45 per cent of the population had no formal method of sanitation, primarily defecating outside in the sand dunes or in the crop fields.³³ Worldwide, women cope with this by rising before dawn in order to defecate out in the open, as this presents a slightly reduced chance of experiencing gender-based violence. Reports have been made of women and girls consuming less food and water as a means of avoiding the need to relieve themselves during daylight hours. If a girl has managed to stay in school until she reaches puberty, she may need to drop out once she starts receiving her period - many schools do not have places for girls to relieve themselves in private, presenting yet another barrier to girl children's completion.³⁴

IMPLICATIONS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION

Setting out to reduce and someday eradicate the above mentioned burdens that women in Latin America experience as a result of water shortages has more than one benefit. Eliminating women's unnecessary burdens should be reasons enough in themselves, especially when that means lessening the odds of gender based violence and reducing water-fetching times. However, there are compelling economic reasons for why these burdens should be eliminated. One is the effect

³⁰ Ann Velencheik, "Girl's Education in the Developing World," Public Lecture, Boston: Wellesley College, 2007.

³¹ World Bank, "Gender Stats: Education," The World Bank, 2007, <http://go.worldbank.org/ODWNXIQA30>.

³² World Bank and UNICEF, *Meeting the MDG Drinking Water and Sanitation Target: A Mid Term Assessment of Progress*.

³³ WUSC, *Final Report from International Seminar in Vegueta* (Huacho and Ottawa: Unpublished, 2009).

³⁴ World Bank and UNICEF, *Meeting the MDG Drinking Water and Sanitation Target: A Mid Term Assessment of Progress*, 20.

that such an act would have upon education, as increasing and improving access to water and sanitation would increase school admission and retention rates amongst girls, as previously described.

Another important aspect not yet touched upon is the positive impact that readily accessible clean water and sanitation has upon health. Long and difficult routes for water collection create the understandable incentive for a woman to “get by” through using as little water as possible for daily needs. Although this makes sense within the daily cost-benefit analysis – the sparing use of water translates into hours potentially saved – in the long term and wider, the costs outweigh the benefits. This is evidenced in one study of East African communities, which found “un-piped households suffer from lower hygiene levels as a consequence of not having water piped to the household.”³⁵ The resulting diarrhoea related illnesses, 90 per cent of which can be attributed to unclean water and are experienced by one in ten Latin Americans at any given time³⁶ have a profound effect on education, being responsible for a total of 443 million lost school days worldwide.³⁷ Clean water and sanitation are so important that “[they] are to diarrhoea what immunization is to killer diseases such as measles and polio: a mechanism for reducing risks and averting deaths.”³⁸

³⁵ Hemson, David, “Easing the Burden on Women in South Africa?” 149.

³⁶ Giarracca, Norma, and Norma Del Pozo, “To Make Waves: Water and Privatization in Tucuman, Argentina,” In *Opposing Currents: The Politics of Water and Gender in Latin America*, ed. Vivienne Bennett, Sonia Davila-Poblete and Maria Nieves Rico (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 2005): 81.

³⁷ David Hughes, “Foodborne and Water-Related Disease: A National and Global Update,” National Foundation for Infectious Disease, July 2007, <http://www.nfid.org/pdf/pressconfs/duma07/facthughes.pdf>.

³⁸ United Nations Development Program, “Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis,” United Nations Development Program, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2006>.

RECOGNIZING WOMEN AS STAKEHOLDERS

There is a significant emphasis placed upon involving women as stakeholders within local water management schemes amongst scholars, for obvious reasons. To involve women would be intrinsically valuable, as providing the same opportunities to women as to men is something that has been deemed worthwhile, and even enshrined in the Millennium Declaration under Section 20 “The equal rights and opportunities of women and men must be assured.”³⁹ Moreover, involving women in the process of water management would be a prudent move towards involving a major stakeholder group.

Incorporating women as stakeholders into water management projects brings two major advantages to the table. The first one is their positions not only as individuals but also as the chief caregivers of a community’s children. As UNICEF’s overall objective in improving and expanding worldwide water and sanitation is to promote the increased survival and development of children,⁴⁰ Education of mothers helps with this goal, as it ensures that they will be able to utilize improvements in water and sanitation to the advantage of their children by enforcing hand washing and water boiling. Secondly, women as a demographic make economic decisions that lend themselves to poverty alleviation strategies. Women are more likely to place family health before economic success and while men prefer to allocate water resources towards irrigating cash crops or livestock, women tend to prioritize staple, vegetable, and kitchen crops or domestic usages in their water consumption patterns.⁴¹ This fits into the wider findings by economists that when women in all cultures are able to control a larger portion of household income, expenditures on higher quality foods, education and healthcare increase.⁴²

³⁹ United Nations General Assembly, “United Nations Millennium Declaration.”

⁴⁰ UNICEF, “Water and Sanitation: WASH and Women,” http://www.unicef.org/wash/index_women_and_girls.html.

⁴¹ Wahaj, “Gender and Water: Securing Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods.”

⁴² Velenchik, “Girl’s Education in the Developing World.”

However, the current structure of water management, with its bias towards wealthy, land owning individuals needs to not to make allowances for women by including them but rather, requires a restructuring in order to enable the engagement rather than mere inclusion, of women as recognized stakeholders of water and sanitation resources. One response to this problem has been initiating gender mainstreaming initiatives as a part of development projects.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND THE ALTERNATIVES

While alleviating some of the burden from the shoulders of women, such projects as improved drinking water and more taps do not close the discussion of gender as it relates to water supply and sanitation. The discourse of water management generally refers to gender mainstreaming, "the adoption of frameworks, training, gender disaggregated data collection, the recruitment of gender specialist advisers and sometimes the establishment of gender units."⁴³ One would be led to believe, reading much of the academic literature, that by bringing in more female project managers and ensuring that women come to Water User Associations (WUAs, and particularly popular in Latin America) all of the challenges relating to water that women face will dissipate.

Instead of initiating gender mainstreaming at the highest levels, what is desperately needed is meaningful change at the grassroots. The substantial lack of involvement of poor women in local Water User Associations (WUAs) is mostly due to the requirements of members to possess land in order to have the right to manage water and the way water rights are not enshrined in national constitutions but rather as a part of

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property rights. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) reports that that many women in their projects are ashamed to attend meetings because of their illiteracy and general low self-esteem.⁴⁴

One project that ended up confronting these issues was supported by IFAD and was based in the highlands of Peru. It focused on knowledge

transfer of small scale farming techniques. Since one of their aims was to integrate women into local irrigation, the project included gender sensitization sessions, which met with enormous success. Not only were families encouraged to "rethink the roles of men and women, older people and youth...there has been a reduction in women's workloads due to increased help from men, who now recognize women's roles within the family and the community."⁴⁵

Economically empowering poor women, through micro-financing institutions such as the Grameen Bank, and ensuring more women get adequate education can go a long way to re-balancing the scales of water management. It is not enough to increase women's attendance at WUA meetings. Efforts need to be taken to ensure that poor women are attending, not only wives of wealthy land owners in the area. Once poor women start attending meetings, they need to be encouraged to participate – findings from one project in Peru revealed that on average women spoke for 3.5 minutes, which the men spoke for 28 minutes each,⁴⁶ proving that support needs to exist for women longer than the first few meetings.

Gender mainstreaming as the major response

⁴³ Cole and Wallace, "Gender, Water and Development: An Introduction," 20.

⁴⁴ Wahaj, "Gender and Water: Securing Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods," 23.

⁴⁵ Wahaj, "Gender and Water: Securing Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods," 20.

⁴⁶ Wahaj, "Gender and Water: Securing Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods," 16

to gender inequity proves that the literature on this subject has missed the point entirely.⁴⁷ The water problems that poor women face in Latin America will not be solved by ensuring that gender specialists are consulted in project design, or by ensuring there are more female attendees at international water conferences. What is rarely mentioned when the issue of 'water fetching' arises is the long work days of women in general. While six hours spent fetching water is too much for anyone, many cite a need to focus on eliminating this task in particular, as a way of 'lessening the drudgery of women' rather than questioning why it is always women that are reduced to such positions. The absence of water has emphasized what is already there; that back breaking work for women in general and poor women in particular, is more normalized than it is for their male equivalents. This is best highlighted in family discussions in Santiago, where family discussions of where to allocate funds, ultimately resulting in the purchase of a radio, a conspicuous symbol of wealth, rather than a washing machine that would save hours of female labour.⁴⁸ It is evidenced every time that a girl is pulled out of school instead of her brother in order to help out around the house. It is conversations such as the ones happening in the highlands of Peru, where the nature of gender roles are being closely examined by those who most directly suffer and benefit that will make the difference.

CONCLUSION

The relationship between water and sanitation and women in Latin America is complex. The region's mismanagement of water since the 1980s under neo-liberal policies which caused high prices and faulty distribution, its societal approaches to gender and the sparse amount of social and financial capital that women control have all come together to form the present situation

that poor women on the continent face. Despite this, by the time the MDGs were introduced, the statistics, objectives and methodologies that are associated now with clean water and sanitation provision had already been cemented decades earlier. Reports released in 2009 do not discuss how the present water situation came to be nor how to overcome it, they, instead reiterate why achieving universal coverage is a worthy goal, and present the newest projections of how far off-track the "international community" is in achieving the 2015 goals.

The focus of the discussion needs to shift back to the root causes of poverty. Analysts need to step back, look at the bigger picture and ask inconvenient questions. "Why are so many water poor, in a continent that has so much water?" or "Why would a family rather buy a radio than a washing machine?" Sidestepping issues such as these, and attempting to patch over such issues as extreme poverty with solutions like gender mainstreaming will only play lip service to the goals of gender equity, and not improve the living situations of Latin America's women. Research has to as well - a major barrier to developing more robust programs targeted at poor women is the lack of gender disaggregated data, which make it difficult to do anything but paint the broadest statistical brushstrokes possible of the situation of poor women.

Development programs need to be holistic and respond to needs on the ground rather than mindlessly playing into a larger academic discourse. IFAD's projects in Peru is an excellent example of this, proving that gender analysis with local people can be effective and provide long term change in the lives of poor women. Just as the situation of water and gender is complex, our reactions and analysis to it need to reflect this complexity, drawing together multiple approaches and disciplines in order to create a suitable retort to the often daunting goals of development and gender equity.

⁴⁷ Stephen Lewis, "Women: Half the World, Barely Represented," In *Race Against Time*, by Stephen Lewis (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2005): 109-145.

⁴⁸ Katharine French Fuller, "The Impact of the Washing Machine on Daily Living in Post-1950 Santiago, Chile," *The Journal of Women's History* 18 No. 4 (2006): 79-100.