



CSD-13 on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements

New York, March 11 to 22nd, 2005

Speaking Points

Subject: Inter-linkages among the three themes and all cross-cutting issues:

Date and Time: 13.04.2005: 16:30 – 18:00 Conference Room 1

Responsible Person: Tatjana von Steiger

Mr. Chairperson

Allow me to raise two cross-cutting issues which Switzerland considers of critical importance in the development and implementation of strategies to improve access to water, sanitation and human settlement. These are culture and gender.

Culture

Respect for local socio-cultural complexities is a key to achieve equitable and sustainable development. This means, for example:

- 1) Recognise and build upon local initiatives;
- 2) Recognise that roles and responsibilities with regard to the provision and maintenance of water, sanitation and habitation are culturally prescribed and distributed among different members of a society;
- 3) Each culture has its own concepts of purity, pollution and danger, which affect their knowledge, attitudes and practices in relation to hygiene, domestic water management, and sanitation;
- 4) Each culture has some rules and taboos on domestic water management, sanitation and housing that have to be respected, for example in the design and site selection for wells, water points, latrines, as well as for settlement patterns, and housing designs;
- 5) Traditional architecture, construction materials, and settlement patterns are functional to specific lifestyles, well adapted to local ecological conditions and gender-sensitive;

These and many other cultural dimensions need to be seriously kept into account, also in relation to post-disaster reconstruction programmes!

Thorough contextual knowledge, bottom-up project identification strategies and community participation are essential ingredients of culturally sensitive planning and implementation of water, sanitation and housing programmes. We must ensure that we go beyond paying a lip

service to participation and allocate sufficient time and resources for participatory planning and implementation methodologies.

Gender

Switzerland fully supports the points mentioned in the chairman's-summary, concerning gender issues. In addition, we would like to see the following practical measures highlighted in the negotiated policy outcome:

The delivery of water and sanitation services has a potential impact on context-specific gender power relations. This may increase the vulnerability of marginalised groups through exacerbating existing inequalities. Especially with respect to the commodization of water one frequently observes a drive for the formalization of property rights over watershed areas. In these processes, women who had informal access rights often find themselves excluded. It is therefore of crucial importance to integrate domestic water uses, such as health, hygiene, etc., which often depend on informal access rights, in the management models, to assure their equity and sustainability of such models.