Bottom-Up Meets Top-down:
Learning Lessons From Sri Lanka
(Asian Context)
Water Literacy for Empowerment of Rural Women

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NetWater
Background Information of the Project Area

- Rural area in dry zone
- Depending on rainfed agriculture for the livelihood
- Irrigation Development, new reservoir impounded in 2000
Back ground of the Initiative by NetWwater

• Water of the main reservoir to be shared by formally rainfed farmers
• Irrigation water has to be managed, systematically for the first time in their life
• Limited water has to be shared carefully
• Field level decisions on water sharing taken by male dominated Farmer organisations
Filling the gaps

• Woman Irrigation Engineer seeks assistance from NetWwater to organise women farmers
  – To help them to adjust to “new water environment”
  – To empower them to become active contributors to the Farmer Organisation
  – To create networking environment
How it Progressed

- Inauguration meeting on October 2002 on Rural Women’s Day
- Committee appointed – (with school teachers, health care nurses, officer in subpost office and other village level educated women)
- Monthly meetings /Excursions/Trainings
• **NetWwater Intervention**
  – Make small grants for monthly meetings (US $50)
  – Support excursions and training costs
  – Provide resource persons and invite supporting organisations for monthly meeting
  – Tie up with the annual work plan of the National Council of Women
  – Water literacy in National language

• **Women’s contribution** - financial & inkind
Success story after three years

- Has registered as a legal organisation
- Exposure to many areas of water literacy
- Established access to strategic planners
- Requests for replication of similar organisations in other settlement schemes
Constraints

- Limited finances
- Difficulties in accessing because of long distances and no modern communication
- Difficulties in obtaining legal status
- Women have limited time to participate because of their other obligations
Lessons Learnt

• Women are the effective catalysts
• Role of women water professionals for interface with rural women – cultural acceptance
• Empowerment of women through their recognition of their role in development
• Multi level Networking for empowerment
Key Message from Sri Lanka

Women are catalyst for community development. Make women aware of their ability to contribute to development. A female role model can play a very important part in this.
Thank you for your Attention