



Walking the Talk:

Integrating gender and social inclusion from the start

The Netherlands Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sustainable Development Goal (WASH SDG) Programme aims to sustainably improve access to, and use of, safe drinking water for at least 450,000 people; sanitation for at least two million people and improve the hygiene behaviours of 1.6 million people before the end of 2022. The programme is running in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Nepal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, with 2-3 sub-national level programmes per country.

The programme is implemented by the WASH SDG Consortium: WASH Alliance International (WAI)¹, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and Plan International Netherlands (Plan) and funded by the Netherlands Inclusive Green Growth (IGG) Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs *Directoraat Generaal Internationale Samenwerking* (DGIS).

Social inclusive approaches seek to improve access to services for those who are currently (or potentially) excluded because of their ethnicity, language, religion, caste, age, sexual orientation, disability or poverty as well support their engagement in wider processes of decision making, to ensure that their rights are realised.

Gender-transformative programmes directly work to change the underlying factors that give rise to disparities among men and women (Greene and Levack 2010, 5)²

INTRODUCTION

The WASH SDG programme has three core strategic objectives:

1. increased demand for improved WASH facilities and practices.
2. Improving the quality of service provision.
3. improved governance of the sector. At the heart is a commitment to 'leave no one behind'. To fulfil this commitment, the WASH SDG programme uses a gender and socially inclusive approach.



Photo source: Simavi, Uganda

¹ Consisting of Consisting of Simavi (lead), Amref, Akvo, RAIN, WASTE (via Nedworc-STIP), IRC, Wetlands, Practica and RUA

² Synchronizing Gender Strategies A Cooperative Model for Improving Reproductive Health and Transforming Gender Relations (here).

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Through this approach, Consortium partners focus on removing barriers to the participation of women and/or socially excluded people (which may be individual, environmental, institutional or attitudinal), raising awareness and changing attitudes, practice and policies in order to achieve access to WASH for all.

This brief outlines the Consortium's approach to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). It presents the findings of the GESI assessments conducted by the partners during the inception phase of the programme in 2017-2018 and describes how these have been used to inform the Consortium's immediate implementation plans. The brief concludes with emerging lessons for the WASH SDG Programme, WASH SDG Consortium partners and other WASH organizations interested in adopting the approach.

GESI IN THE WASH SDG PROGRAMME CYCLE

The GESI approach within the WASH SDG programme includes the following elements:

WASH SDG Consortium core principles

- Works towards equality in terms of access and use of WASH services.
- Contributes to greater equality in society beyond WASH.
- Respects the principles of "do no harm" and non-discrimination.

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GESI-informed programme design

GESI assessments were done, based on document review, interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Assessments focused on: marginalisation within the household; between households and of community. The assessments also reviewed public administration and legal and policy barriers/enablers.

GESI-focused implementation and management

Support was provided to both GESI-specific activities that are targeted directly at women and/or socially excluded people as well as the mainstreaming of these issues into broader activities. Programme organisations, budgets, staff, capacity building and establishment of programme modalities were also addressed for GESI related activities.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning for GESI

M&E includes data disaggregation for gender and socially excluded groups. For instance in Indonesia, the Gender Water Monitoring Tool is being used to discuss GESI relations. The Consortium is developing a systematic learning programme on the experience of implementing a GESI-focused WASH programme, including learning between country programmes

LEARNING FROM THE GESI ASSESSMENTS

Performing a GESI assessment can help WASH professionals and their partners to understand the social and gender norms that underpin the unequal distribution of paid and unpaid WASH work, unequal access to WASH facilities and unequal household and community decision-making on WASH. Early identification of the barriers to equality in the intervention areas allowed the WASH SDG programme to look for ways to address some of these from start.

GESI assessments have been used by the WASH SDG programme to identify the socially excluded populations (eg. people living with disabilities, ethnic or religious minorities, etc.), in the settings where they are working. The findings have been used to design a context-specific implementation strategy and institutional policies and practices.

The GESI assessments highlighted marginalisation according to gender, age, wealth and disability status. Assessments identified various 'hidden' marginalised groups as well as those 'hiding in plain sight' such as people with addictions and people with incontinence. Some examples of common findings across all the assessments were:

- **Intra-household:** WASH technologies and services (including pit emptying services) often do not reflect the needs of all those in the household, perhaps due to lack of technical know-how or discrimination.
- **Inter-household:** Women and socially excluded people are often excluded from community-level decision making on WASH services, thus affecting whether the services available meet their needs. WASH facilities in institutions (schools and health clinics) are often not adapted/inclusive.
- **Legal and policy barriers:** Policy and strategy do not always refer to women and/or socially excluded groups or, if they do, are not fully implemented in practice. In particular, persons in informal settlements often lack access to safe WASH services. Tenants, fearing eviction, can be reluctant to demand water and sanitation services from their landlords.
- **Marginalisation in public administration:** Few women and/or socially excluded groups are in positions of influence, at government and local level. Likewise, they may not voice their needs for inclusive WASH services to duty bearers.

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The GESI assessments include a number of common recommendations aimed at promoting inclusion, as well as facilitating their use of improved WASH facilities. These recommendations include: fostering community support to the poorest people; increasing women's and socially excluded people's decision-making power; use of respectful terminology when referring to women and/or socially excluded groups.

Furthermore, the assessments highlight a number of positive practices within communities that the WASH SDG programme will build on to support the inclusion of women and socially excluded people

TAKING THE GESI ASSESSMENTS FORWARD INTO THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR WASH PROGRAMMES

Some sub-programmes have taken these recommendations to promote a GESI-sensitive approach, for instance in making sure women and/or socially excluded groups have equal opportunities to access and use WASH related decision making and improved WASH services. In other cases, the recommendations are being used to inform a more transformative programme, particularly for gender specific outcomes. For instance, in the Bangladesh WASH Alliance sub-programme, a specific pathway of change was dedicated to enhanced participation of women and socially excluded groups. A 'toolbox' of approaches promoting gender equality and social inclusion is currently being trialled and refined through practice and action research.

Increase demand for improved WASH facilities and practices: A GESI approach within the WASH SDG programme places increased emphasis on participatory methods and tools to create demand for improved WASH facilities and practices. Existing methods and tools can be adapted to support a more GESI transformative process as well as more equal outcomes. For instance, Plan International Uganda are planning dialogues with cultural and religious leaders on gender and WASH issues. Individuals within these group will also be encouraged to become Champions of Change by challenging stereotypes and

cultural norms. Partners will engage with representative groups (Disabled Peoples Organisations, women's groups, Sexual and Gender Minority right's organisations as well as men's organisations) in order to mobilise and give voice to marginalised groups. The WASH SDG programme will engage with young people, adolescent girls and/or boys to influence harmful gender stereotypes, for example through Children's Clubs.

Improve the design and implementation of service provision: A GESI-focused WASH programme requires adjustments to hygiene behaviour change communication, sanitation demand creation (e.g. CLTS), supply chain development (e.g. sanitation marketing approaches) and WASH governance. In Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Zambia and Tanzania, partners are adapting the design of toilets and handwashing facilities to ensure they meet the need of elderly people, women, children and people with disabilities. In Nepal, SNV has designed a public latrine that is inclusive for people with disabilities and transgender people to use. In most countries where the programme is being implemented, women are under-represented in formal, WASH technical roles (such as toilet construction or pit emptying) as well as service delivery for instance as WASH entrepreneurs). In response, sub-programmes are training female entrepreneurs to help them to compete with male counterparts. And in Bangladesh a Training of Trainers on Women Social Economic Empowerment, which includes entrepreneurship training is being rolled-out. Masons and WASH entrepreneurs are also being trained on the WASH products suitable for people with particular needs.

Improve governance of the sector: Partners are supporting government institutions and community committees and leaders to better plan and budget for WASH services. Sub-programmes are building the capacity of government and traditional leadership on gender transformative and inclusive WASH approaches to ensure ownership of activities. In particular, a number of sub-programmes, including the Bangladesh WASH Alliance, are using the Making Rights Real (MRR) tool to bring attention to the human rights to water and sanitation as well as to strengthen accountability mechanisms. In Uganda, the WASH Alliance is working with District Local Government in Agago to introduce by-laws related to GESI.

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EMERGING LESSONS FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS DESIGNING GESI-FOCUSED WASH PROGRAMMES

Programmes should implement a twin-track approach:

i.e. a set of GESI-specific activities targeted directly at women and/or socially excluded people as well as the mainstreaming of GESI principles to achieve other outcomes.

Implications for organisational ways of working:

a GESI-focused approach requires the recruitment of experienced GESI advisors as well as field staffs who are female and/or from socially excluded groups; sufficient programme budget; more time spent reflecting on activities to improve programme quality as well as learning involving partners, donors and peers.

Design for GESI from the start:

WASH programmes can become more inclusive by making sure everyone is able to participate and is included in community planning and management processes and decision-making as well as reducing the physical barriers to accessing WASH infrastructure and participation in hygiene promotion. This is no easy task but well worth the effort. The outcome is that all community members benefit equally from WASH and other services in the community.

Ensures the “do no harm” and human rights non-discrimination principles in the intervention:

Without attention to ‘do no harm’, a GESI-focused approach may put women and socially excluded people at more risk of physical or verbal abuse in the household or community. A ‘do no harm’ approach includes careful consideration of backlash as well as an assessment of organizational strengths and weaknesses on inclusion. Safe and accessible spaces may also be needed, places created for women and/or individuals from socially excluded groups to feel safe to engage in programme processes at the community level. Spaces are also important for partners and staff to reflect and respond appropriately to the changing situation

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WASH PROGRAMMES THAT AIM TO ‘LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND’

- Design for GESI from the start – make it central to the Theory of Change. Incorporation of GESI into the WASH programme cycle can help address gender and inclusion differences and change these relations over time.
- GESI programmes must be evidence based – do assessments and use tried and tested approaches - but also make space for innovation.
- Transformative change requires learning organisations for personal and professional change.

CONCLUSION

The integration of GESI from start into the WASH SDG programme has forged the way to ensure the programme is better able and equipped to contribute towards equality in terms of access and use of WASH services. It will also contribute to greater equality in society beyond WASH by ensuring the implementation of the “do no harm” principle; and ultimately to the realization of the ambition of leaving no one behind in 2030.

For more information about the WASH SDG programme, please contact the Consortium Programme Coordinator (washsdg@simavi.nl).

August 2019



Photo source: Plan International, Nepal

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Photo source: Plan International, Uganda