

Gender and rural water services – lessons and experience from RWSN members

RWSN E-discussion on how women's engagement in Water User Committees impact on its performance and system functionality (2016)

RWSN Webinars: Making Water Work for Women, Sharing Inspiring Experiences (9th and 23rd of May 2017)



Photo: WaterAid/James Kiyimba
Jessica Mugala – Water User Committee chairperson, Kangalaba Village.

E-discussion summary prepared by Nadia Nicholas (WaterAid) and Jane Wilbur (WaterAid);
Webinars' summary prepared by Priya Nath and Louisa Gosling (WaterAid) & Meleesa Naughton
(RWSN)

Summary

This note compiles key points from a number of exchanges on gender and WASH on the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN) in 2016 and 2017.

Gender relations are critical to nearly every aspect of rural water supply, but rarely addressed in practice by rural water professionals. All water supply programmes affect men and women in different ways, and while practitioners assume their work will benefit women; how do they know whether it will or not, how do they know what impact it will have? Some of the key factors that influence men and women's differing experiences of water are:

- how daily roles and responsibilities are divided between women and men
- the distribution of paid and unpaid labour between women and men
- the tensions between domestic and economic uses of water, and how this affects women and men
- Who has most influence on decisions and design of services
- How water services can support the long term development aims (empowerment) as well as the immediate practical needs of women and men.

In **2016** RWSN's [Mapping and Monitoring Theme](#) members had an impromptu and rich e-discussion on gender equality and WASH. Starting with a call for quantitative information showing the correlation between numbers of women on Water User Committees and its positive performance, the e-discussion moved onto the practical constraints, challenges and opportunities related to striving for more meaningful participation of women in WASH programmes. In early **2017**, RWSN's [Equality, Non Discrimination and Inclusion \(ENDI\) Theme](#) launched a call to their members for examples of inspiring experiences of 'Making Water Work for Women'. Both discussions have been rich and reinforcing of each other. Full details of each and links to the live streams are included below. But the key points that have emerged across both are:

Focus on the quality of women's Participation in Water User Committees:

- 1. The nature of female participation within water committees should be discussed in terms of quality as well as quantity.** The number of women participating in a committee alone does not provide sufficient evidence about the complex nature of participation. Qualitative indicators can help to show whether women's participation is tokenistic, or active and meaningful.
- 2. Women are often assigned roles within Water User Committees that confirm existing traditional gender norms.** Men often fulfil the role of chairman while women are more likely to be treasurers, secretaries or hygienists where they have less influence over decisions. If their roles do not

offer any opportunity to influence committee decisions and outcomes, their participation is largely tokenistic.

3. **High-level government commitment to minimum quotas for women's participation was seen as a crucial prerequisite** to creating the space for the inclusion of women and the ability to demand it. But the Water User Committee reform regulations should be reviewed to move beyond quotas. They should include a focus on electing more female members, using clear and local languages in resources, along with a discouragement of gender stereotypes and awareness of cultural biases.
4. **Where women were more influential on Water User Committees as in the India example, it was strongly attributed to the special efforts of implementing organisations** who worked on mobilising women and increasing their confidence and awareness about the committees and the work involved, sensitising men equally to create space for women's involvement in the committees. In one area, a 6-month preparation stage was introduced to prepare both men and women about what it means to be members of a committee. In Nicaragua female committee members were trained on women's rights. A key learning is around the importance of confidence building as women are not only trying to overcome the social attitudes and norms imposed by the community, but also their own idea of what they can and cannot do. To increase the number of women successfully managing service delivery, intentional and well-designed efforts to empower women must be planned from the project inception

Focus on empowerment: Challenge gender norms and strengthen the leadership of women in rural water

By working closely with women and men together it is possible to challenge gender norms amongst women and men in rural communities, so that they begin to share unpaid work associated with WASH more equally between women and men, and to give greater weight to women's views in decisions, as demonstrated by Helvetas' experience in Ethiopia.

5. **Identifying the agents of change (women and men) from the community** who are motivated and determined to advocate for water and sanitation; providing them with mentoring and coaching on how to claim rights as well as capacity building on health, sanitation and decision making can nurture lifelong advocates, as illustrated by the experience of Ritu from Bangladesh. Despite coming from very a marginalised background she was able to become an influential leader for WASH with enough support and mentoring from an NGO

6. **Women who were more influential, trusted and respected within the Water User Committees** often had high levels of education, experiences of business activities and exposure to the world outside their communities. Paying attention to intersectionality rather than just assuming all women have equal opportunity and status is key to support full inclusion.
7. **Disaggregating monitoring indices by gender can help to raise gender equality as a priority**, and set specific expectations about the participation of women in different aspects of service provision. Monitoring should be committed to over a long period to assess change.
8. **Conflict-sensitive approaches to water and sanitation can help to facilitate peace building by creating a platform for women around a common need.** Experience from India showed how women from communities that had been in conflict with each other were able to gradually decrease tensions by working together on water supply. Working long-term with affected communities is essential to the sustainability of these efforts.

Links to the original materials:

2016 E-Discussion: https://dgroups.org/rwsn/mapping_rwsn/discussions/8a134faf

2017 Webinars recordings and presentations (in English and in French):
<http://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/779>

Acknowledgements

We extend thanks to all the RWSN Mapping and Monitoring theme members who participated in the 2016 e-discussion, as well as the presenters, attendees and organisers who participated in the 2017 webinars. This synthesis is based on an e-discussion where RWSN members, including WASH professionals, independent consultants, academics and NGO workers shared valuable experiences. All the RWSN members who participated in the e-discussions and webinars are named in Annex 1.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Rural Water Supply Network's	RWSN
Equality, Non-Discrimination and Inclusion group	ENDI
Rural Water Supply and Sanitation	RWSS
United National International Children's Fund	UNICEF
Water, Hygiene and Sanitation	WASH
Water User Committee	WUC
Water User Association	WUA

Table of Contents

Summary.....	2
Focus on the quality of women’s Participation in Water User Committees:	2
Focus on empowerment: Challenge gender norms and strengthen the leadership of women in rural water	3
Introduction to the 2016 E-Discussion.....	6
Insights from East Africa.....	6
Insights from Burkina Faso	7
Insights from Southern Africa	8
Conclusion.....	8
Introduction to the 2017 webinars "Making Water Work for Women - Inspiring Experiences" (part 1 and 2).....	9
Insights from Burkina Faso and Tanzania: highlighting the 'neglected injuries' of water collection	9
Insights from Bangladesh: a 'Mother Parliament' empowers women for better water services.....	10
Insights from Ethiopia: behaviour change as a couple.....	11
Insights from India: working with water to build understanding	12
Insights and examples from India: the Community Water Plus Project.....	13
Insights and examples from Nicaragua: integrating gender into the human rights to water and sanitation.....	15
Insights and examples from the World Bank: a tool to assess gender analysis, activities and monitoring across projects	16
Annex 1: Contributors.....	20
Annex 2 Useful papers and further reading.....	21

Introduction to the 2016 E-Discussion

In July 2016, the Rural Water Supply Network's (RWSN) Mapping and Monitoring had an impromptu e-discussion, entitled "Gender indicators within Water Point Mapping Data." The e-discussion developed with a focus around women's engagement in Water User Committees; how this impacts on the Committees performance and the functionality of the WASH services.

Recent analysis carried out by UNICEF of their work in Vanuatu showed that Water User Committees with women in key posts perform better than those without. UNICEF Vanuatu concluded that women's participation in decision making positively correlates with better management and functionality of the WASH service. UNICEF Vanuatu released a call to the RWSN Monitoring and Mapping theme members asking for data from different contexts that support this finding. It was felt that gathering data from different settings would strengthen the case for including women in decision-making positions on Water User Committees at a global level. This led to a very rich e-discussion on the topic with experiences shared from Oceania, Africa and Asia. This report synthesises these.

Box 1. Participation

Participation is the action of taking part in something. Drawing on *Realising the human rights to water and sanitation: A Handbook by the UN Special Rapporteur* (de Albuquerque, 2014), the right to participation is enshrined in numerous international human rights instruments, and it must be 'active, free and meaningful.' The essential elements for ensuring active, free and meaningful participation set limits on the use of tokenistic forms of participation - merely sharing information or superficial consultation. Meaningful participation entails more than expressing an opinion: the views expressed must be able to influence both the process of decision-making as well as the outcome

Insights from East Africa

A participant with experience of evaluating projects in East Africa noted the need to go beyond 'numbers' and discuss the nature of female participation in water committees. The complex nature of female participation should be discussed using quantitative and qualitative indicators. The following four key factors (amongst others) related to gender that drive success of committees were noted:

1. *The women's position in the committee is important.* Often women fill administrative positions, such as the secretary and treasurer, which gives

them little impact in decision-making. Invariably men hold the positions of influence, such as the Chairperson.

2. *Women's capacities, level of education and awareness of water related issues are important.* Some women lacked an understanding of their roles and responsibility and were uninformed about key WASH issues. On the other hand, women who were informed of WASH issues and were educated were more confident to take part in decision making.
3. *The level of motivation and dedication to work in the committees is important.* Rural women often carry out unpaid labour and they have family commitments. They have little time to take on additional, unpaid roles. There needs to be an incentive for women to take an active role within a Water User Committee.
4. *Women's social position within the community is important.* The success of women in managing water issues can depend on their relationships within the community. Whilst some women are considered 'local champions' and can use this to influence community members to take part in water related activities, others can be seen as 'selfish' and only on the Committee to serve their own interests.

Insights from Burkina Faso

The International Water Management Institute has recently worked on a project called the "Four Basin Gender Profile." This project includes a small case study on women's participation in Water User Committees for rural water supply in Burkina Faso. This project focused upon 32 Water Users Committees in five different municipalities and analysed the institutional, socio-cultural and personal factors that contribute to levels of active and meaningful participation of women (Debevec et al, in press).¹ It assessed women's participation in the Water Users Committees using quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

Findings noted that "despite the reform guidelines that encourage women's participation, overall participation of women is still weak". Women often held the post of a hygienist/ treasurer; these roles do not challenge existing gender norms. Water User Committee members continue to associate women with health and the homestead as well as the traditional perception that women are trustworthy with money. This reflects the experiences shared from East Africa. The research revealed that women with relatively high levels of education, experience of business activities and exposure to the world outside the village led them to either volunteer

¹ For more information on the project, see <https://wle.cgiar.org/project/four-basin-gender-profiles>

for posts on the Water User Committee and for community members to trust and respect them.

The Burkina Faso project offered these recommendations to improve the reform regulations and increase women's participation:

- The Water User Committees hold a general assembly every year and can elect new committee members. There is a possibility to increase women's participation in these committees, with the correct support from the key actors in the administration.
- The reform process should be made accessible to the population that is not literate in the official language -mostly women- through mandatory use of local languages by facilitators and also in the official documents.
- The reform guidelines and implementation materials must use clear language that shows that women and men can take up any of the post on the committee. This point is already addressed in Burkina Faso's official documentation, but not applied in practice.
- Facilitators and municipal government representatives who support the introduction of the Water User Committees should discourage gender stereotypes in relation to water, hygiene and management abilities, while remaining conscious of cultural biases.

Insights from Southern Africa

Experiences were shared from two projects in Malawi: the Kalembo Ground Water Project and the East Mangochi Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project. Taking place between 1995-2006, these projects were funded by the KfW, formerly KfW Bankengruppe (banking group), a German government-owned development bank, based in Frankfurt. Similar trends of limited female participation in Water User Committees and a general decrease in the presence and effectiveness of Water User Committees in the countries were noted. Funding from KfW has also changed from working closely with rural communities to direct budget support to the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programmes. This may have contributed to a decrease in the quality of water point construction and training provided to the Water User Committee members. It was noted in Zambia that there are few Water User Committees and that those that exist are rarely trained or include more than 20% of women.

The project in Malawi, successfully exceeded a Water Point gender balance of 60% women to 40% male on over 1,400 water points. Although the project was deemed 'very successful', information on the levels of meaningful participation that the women on the Water User Committee was not shared as part of the e-discussion.

Conclusion

Working towards the commitment of the Global Development goals to 'Leave No-one Behind' gender issues around WASH participation should be integrated into all thinking around development. This synthesis of an RWSN e-discussion by the Mapping and Monitoring theme in which experiences and lessons from Africa, Oceania and Asia highlighted the different aspects to consider when striving for gender equality in relation to WASH services. Beginning as a call for further information around Water Point Mapping Data to show a positive correlation between numbers of women on a Water User Committee with the functioning and sustainability of the WASH services, this e-discussion moved onto a very rich exchange on the practical constraints, challenges and opportunities related to striving for more meaningful participation of women in WASH programmes.

Introduction to the 2017 webinars "Making Water Work for Women - Inspiring Experiences" (part 1 and 2)

In March 2017, RWSN's Equality, Non Discrimination and Inclusion (ENDI) Theme launched a call to their members to share recent experiences and research on what is working and not working in the practice of making water work for women. The call produced many case studies, which were presented over the course of two webinars on 9 and 23 May 2017 jointly hosted by the RWSNs Self Supply & Access and ENDI groups. Some of these experiences were also presented at the Abidjan Forum in 2016. Some are new experiences that have come in from the call.

Insights from Burkina Faso and Tanzania: highlighting the 'neglected injuries' of water collection

Dr Sara Marks from EAWAG presented a study on Water Fetching and Women's Safety in Burkina Faso and Tanzania, in the context of domestic use of water as well as water for multiple uses (MUS)², i.e. water used for shea butter production, small enterprise activities, animal husbandry, small-scale agriculture... This research was presented at the RWSN Forum in Abidjan in 2016³.

Studies often measure the burden of water for women and girls quantitatively, in terms of time spent, distance travelled, or opportunity costs. This study however focuses on the 'neglected injuries' associated with domestic and MUS water for women, such as incidences of violence, vehicle collisions, and acute or chronic injuries. Data was gathered through household surveys, community meetings and

² <http://www.eawag.ch/en/departement/sandec/projects/wst/multiple-use-water-services-impact-evaluation/>

³ https://rwsnforum7.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/full_paper_0097_submitter_0160_marks_sara.pdf

focus group meetings, and compared communities which collected water for domestic use only with those which used it for multiple purposes.

Findings from the focus groups discussions found that the greatest fears were of children falling into open wells and dying as a result. Other 'neglected injuries' linked to the water burden for women and children were chronic neck and back pains and injuries; fear of snake bites; fear of being hit by motorcycles when walking to the source; and risk of water wells caving in on people while being dug deeper in dry months. The risks mentioned varied greatly depending on the context.

Lessons:

- Sources of water closer to the home, covered, protected and more reliable, conferred many types of health and safety benefits to women, beyond time saving.

Insights from Bangladesh: a 'Mother Parliament' empowers women for better water services

Sara Ahrari from SIMAVI presented a story from Bangladesh on gender and empowerment through WASH⁴. In 2012, SIMAVI (along with their local partner, the Development Organisation for Rural Poor (DORP)) started the “Mother Parliament” initiative under a WASH Alliance programme in Fakrihat union, Bagherat district of Kulna Division in Bangladesh⁵.

The idea of having a Mother Parliament was to link the existing maternity benefit of the government, through which mothers are entitled to receive some support from the government for their first two children, as an incentive to bring women together in a platform, where they can learn more about their rights. This includes the right to water and sanitation and the right to vote and participate in local elections. In order to familiarize women with the election process, similar procedures were applied for the Mother Parliament as for local government and parliamentary elections. Mother Parliaments were given support to raise awareness on women and WASH rights, for instance by making an inventory of the need for toilets and tube wells in their villages and presenting it to relevant government authorities.

One of the participants, Ritu Sardar learnt about the Right to Water and Sanitation through the Mother Parliament initiative. She used to go to the meetings of different government bodies, such as office of the Union Parishad (lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh) twice a week, to advocate for water and sanitation in her community. She would not hesitate to go to the meetings even if she was not invited.

⁴ <https://simavi.org/long-read/female-leadership-in-bangladesh-women-empowerment/>

⁵ <https://simavi.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/SimaviGWAPB-Final-Report-cases-empowerment.pdf>

After 3 years her perseverance paid off and the authorities provided her village with a Pond Sand Filter (PSF). The Mother Parliament organized a management committee for the PSF and Ritu was elected as the treasurer. She also promotes use of toilets among the people in her community. She spent at least two hours of a day on her volunteer work.

She is happy with the results of her work. At the community level, she saw enormous changes in attitude and behavior of the villages. Women speak out in the meetings and submit written requests and feel more confident; and men spend money on the toilet, which they did not do before.

Lessons:

- Identify the agent of change (women and men) from the community who are motivated and determined to advocate for water and sanitation; provide them with mentoring and coaching on how to claim rights
- Provide them (and others) with knowledge and information on health, sanitation and rights through several techniques: court-yard sessions, training workshops, posters, leaflets and banners, exposure visits
- Provide a platform to discuss and share this knowledge with others and for practicing advocacy and claiming rights
- Put more emphasis in the programme on changing the gender roles and norms in the community to avoid overburdening these agents of change.

Insights from Ethiopia: behaviour change as a couple

Nigussie Mihretu of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation presented the story of Ms. Workinesh Assefa and Mr. Belay Mazengia from Meha Kebele in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, which was also presented at the RWSN Forum⁶. Initially, Ms. Workinesh Assefa, wife of Mr. Belay Mazengia and mother of three children did all the work related to caring for the home, her children, working with her husband in the fields and fetching water. During the dry season, she worked for about 14 hours a day as fetching water was very time consuming due to increased queuing time. As a result, quarrels with her husband became more common and even resulted in domestic violence, which was – unfortunately – common in the village.

The project used the following approach:

1. Training sessions for couples on WASH and gender issues, which brought together couples side by side during a public event.

6

https://rwsnforum7.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/full_paper_0169_submitter_0255_mihretu_nigussie.pdf

2. Visiting in model village: This was the determinant factor in triggering behaviour change, and took place right after the training session. Couples were impressed by the cleanliness of the households, the efficient stoves, the quality of the traditional latrines and the distribution of tasks between men and women. In this village, women ploughed, while men cooked; men also fetched water and took care of children and elders. Both men and women were surprised and this led to a change in their behaviour: for instance, Ms. Assefas pushed her husband to construct an improved latrine.

3. Community discussions: Community discussions played an important role; villagers discussed how to translate this experience into practice. They assessed the construction of improved latrines in terms of benefits and personal hygiene, as well as the management of water points, sharing of tasks by husbands and wives, gender based violence, and other issues.

As a result, Ms Assefa now receives support from her husband and they find mutual agreements in their daily lives. She is an active member of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee (WASHCO), where she raised the issue of allocating a dedicated time slot for elderly people, which has been allocated and endorsed by the villagers. The community is now open-defecation free and contributes to the operation and maintenance of WASH services.

Lessons:

- The training helped especially married women to get the same access to information regarding WASH services as their husbands; this was unusual and new, and enabled the women to develop self-confidence and increase their stake in WASH, which helped for effective and efficient implementation of the community's WASH activities;
- Couple capacity building interventions are best for men and women to understand traditional gender division of labour as a social construct, which can be changed through mutual decision making and respect at household level as well as through awareness raising at community level;
- Continuous support and follow-up meetings, and community discussions are essential for the villagers to ensure sustainability of achievements.

Insights from India: working with water to build understanding

Nafisa Barot from Uthan shared the experience of working with vulnerable communities in Gujarat, around issues of right to water sanitation, livelihood security, gender equality and women's rights (including excluded and vulnerable communities), as well as on conflict transformation leading to justice and peace⁷.

⁷ Information related to this initiative can be found here: <http://genderandwater.org/en/gwa-activities/international-and-global-profile/world-water-week-2008/seminar-conflict-over-water-and-water-to-solve-conflicts/a-paper-peace-building-by-improved-access-to-water-and-sanitation-for-women-and-men-in-gujarat-after-communal-riots/>

In 2002, in Gujarat, targeted violence against Muslims left more than 3500 Muslims dead, a large number of women and girls raped and incomparable destruction of properties and assets. The Utthan team contacted the Muslim families living in the relief camps who had returned home but were still gripped with fear, anxiety and despair. Some women leaders expressed the importance of restoring their earlier relationship with other communities, with whom they lived for so long. However, they felt that there should also be a strong initiative from the Hindu and Tribal community leaders to do so.

Many of the Muslim women wanted toilet and water facilities near their house as they feared for their security. Through the project, Muslim women were fully supported to build sanitation facilities while a small revolving fund provided a very low interest loan to women from other communities. This was well received by the communities: about 200 toilets were built by Muslim women and about 300 were built through loan support. Another common need of women that had emerged was to have a safe place for washing and bathing (dhobi ghat). After several rounds of meetings with women from both communities – separate as well as together, three locations were identified that would be appropriate for everyone.

Although women from both communities were using the facilities they initially used them at different times. Some women took it upon themselves to mobilise a mixed group of women from both communities and accompany them to go the dhobi Ghat.

As a result, a women's federation from mixed communities called 'Mahila Ekta Sangathan' (women for oneness) emerged. It has been operational since 2004, and has continued to work on building capacity through gender empowerment and peace. Ekta sangathan has more than 1500 members from 3 Districts.

Lessons:

- Water and sanitation can be used as a medium to facilitate peace-building in mixed communities after conflict
- Creating a platform for women from mixed communities can help empower them and decrease tensions.
- Working long-term with affected communities is essential to the sustainability of these efforts.

Insights and examples from India: the Community Water Plus Project

Dr Snehalatha Mekala, an independent consultant and the National Research Coordinator for Community Water Plus Project presented the findings from a 3 year research project that explored what exactly is required from the community to implement and manage water services on a continuous basis which leads to

sustainability. From within the research findings, Dr Mekala was able to distil particular learnings and evidence on women's role in water user committees.

The research selected 20 case studies of practice from across 17 states in India that represented a diversity of social, economic and cultural contexts, different hydrogeological conditions. In each case one single criterion was consistent; the Water Committees should have been running for last 5 years independently with little or no support from implementing organisations.

Using a mix of focus group discussions, household interviews and Water Committee documentation, the study found some interesting

- The context of India's existing legislative provisions and governmental commitment was very important. The 73rd amendment states that 30 % of seats on all locally elected bodies, including water committees should be reserved for women. The research found that in most cases where these committees did exist, they had almost exactly 30% female membership. There were still a few areas (control areas where no specific intervention had taken place) where there were no women, particularly in tribal areas which followed a different set of rules and regulations. So *most* committees formed abided by the 30% rule.
- Issues with the quality of the '30%' however remained. Evidence showed that sometime the role of women is limited to paper, that other male family members attend on their behalf, or that women are present but not actively involved.
- There were particular exceptional cases where women's participation in Water Committees was much higher and more active. These were attributed to a number of factors but broadly the special efforts of implementing organisations who worked on mobilising women and increasing their awareness about the committees and the work involved, sensitising men equally to create space for women's involvement in the committees. In one area, a 6-month preparation stage was introduced to prepare both men and women about what it means to be member of committee. This time was used to raised community contributions for operation and maintenance and involve women directly in the preparation of Village Action Plans
- In order to become successful, implementing partners and committees had to challenge and overcome prevailing myths about gender including:

That only men can be part of / know about technical nitty gritty of water and that women's knowledge of water is limited to the household level only. To break the myth and make sure women are part of the implementing programmes , special efforts were made to consult with women first on where they need to have taps, their experience of seasonal variations in water and to sensitise men and women about

the importance of women's participation. Training was also provided for women on efficient planning and implementation of programmes.

Money and number are not a women's game. Efforts made to ensure women can deliver in these roles. Evidence found that in some cases such as Odisha, women provided clearer transparency and accountability than male counterparts in those roles. They were deemed better custodians of the money who weighed up the pros and cons of spending more thoroughly. In Punjab (WB project) a women accountant was put in forcefully at the beginning but ended up meticulously manages all records and creating an electronic records system. In Gujarat, women were trained in the process of information communication so that they could more effectively share the committee's expenditure and work through the Village General Body meetings.

Lessons:

- A government / high-level policy is a prerequisite to create space and allow implementing organisations to demand space for women's participation i.e. in Water Committees.
- High-level policy needs to be backed by special efforts and investment to support implementation and build capacity of the women (on an ongoing basis based on 3 Ms – Mobilising, Motivating, And Mentoring) and sensitise men and women simultaneously. Men need to be sensitised on giving space and women need to be encouraged and supported to participation – working on their self-confidence to take on non-traditional roles.
- Need enough time as both men and women have established cultural mind-sets and attitudes, which will not change overnight. Trainings, capacity building and handholding support on continuous basis.

Insights and examples from Nicaragua: integrating gender into the human rights to water and sanitation

Celia Faller a law professor and long-time collaborator with ONGAWA, a Spanish NGO, shared experience from their work of integrating gender perspective into their work on rights to water and sanitation in Nicaragua since 2011. There a gender perspective in rural water management has been ignored. So in order to address this, ONGAWA aimed to change the collective perception of this problem through the empowerment of women and changes in the enabling environment.

A School of Women Leaders was set up to support women who hold positions in local water committees. Feminist education principles were employed to bring women together for collective reflection on gender inequalities currently present in communities collective management of water and sanitation services, dialogue and individual learnings that could help women be agents of change.

They were also given capacity building on water regulations, labour relations and gender policy in Nicaragua and supported to identify the everyday situations in community water management that reflect inequalities in water relations and explore proposals for change

Learnings:

- Training on the gender gap in water culture, construction and operation, participation and access to power in community water management can help position women's work on Water User Committees within wider gender equality context. This matched with capacity building on the technical side of water regulations and government policies, which can add value to women's ability to act.

Insights and examples from the World Bank: a tool to assess gender analysis, activities and monitoring across projects

Rosemary Rop from the World Bank Water Global Practice presented on the increased emphasis on gender at the World Bank including the increased commitment to the quality and quantity of work addressing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The World Bank Water Global Practice work focuses on water supply and sanitation; hydropower; water resources management and irrigation. Social inclusion and intersection with identity of race, religion, disability and gender are key pillars.

In 2015, the World Bank introduced new Gender Strategy. It focuses on areas of continuing inequality gaps in health and education, quality of jobs and earnings, ownership and control over assets, women's voice and agency in decision making.

Rosemary used her presentation to examine what has been working so far in respect to gender and water work.

- Making sure there is partnership with private sector and others to implement the strategy
- Closer tracking of substance of gender work and efforts to ensure they are moving away for treating it as a ticking the box exercise. Questions at the start include 'does the activity identify project related gap between males and females especially in relation to gender gap at country level.'
- There is an increased target now of 55% of projects across the Banks work mainstreaming gender. They aim to not only reflect on the analysis of these projects (looking at macro, meso and community level) but also be better at translating analysis into concrete action.

- Actions continuously to encourage full participation of women and target minimum representation of quality and quantity of women in decision-making. In addition, local contractors will employ minimum 30% female workers in maintenance, construction and repair work and they will be paid same as men.
- Creating priorities through measurement indices such as monitoring actively that among local labour, 30% are women workers. And will measure and monitor over the course of the 5 -6 year period we see increase in representation of women in the various water committees put in place

Examples were shared of World Bank WASH projects that contribute to the overall gender strategy through clear measurement tools in project frameworks that show clearly, in which ways they are contributing to overall gender strategy.

- Ghana community Water and Sanitation Project (not new project) helps Governments to implement their policy and increase health benefit of the WASH sector. Focus on school and communities and behaviour change. This project has achieved a high level of women's participation in water and sanitation committees and contributes to overall World Bank Gender Strategy.
- Peru Sierra Irrigation Project – at start 75 % of management position at all levels of public and private enterprise held by men and there were many cultural restrictions on women's involvement in Water management. Women were doing bulk of water work but had no voice and were not earning the income. A successful intervention was implemented in the coastal region and then replicated in the Sierra Region, but there they found that despite intervention, women's participation was still very low. So the focus switched to the engagement of men to build their understanding of importance of women's participation. And building women's empowerment through exchange visits between women in inlands and those on the coast. In addition, to address the issue of lack of acces to land, land was set aside for the women's irrigation work.
- India - Uttar Pradash and Uttaranchal rural Water Supply and environment sanitation project. This was a rural water project specifically targeting women. Result – increased women's voice throughout project cycle; 38% women's representation; 30% representation from scheduled castes/ tribes (deliberate focus). This project had strong links with the social unit of the bank. The projects management unit itself ensured there was balance between men and women staffers. They were able to count women's months of employment and earnings for women. And as the project is being implemented, the capital-intensive process of implementation itself creates an opportunity for women to increase their economic standing. Finally self-help groups were linked to micro finance institutions so that the groups managing water had members that were also linked to these self-help groups within increased amount of income they were able to pay for

water but also invest in water projects overall and increase their income overall.

References

De Albuquerque, C. (2014), *Realising the human rights to water and sanitation: A Handbook by the UN Special Rapporteur*. Available at <http://www.righttowater.info/wp-content/uploads/BOOK-7-PRINCIPLES-22FEB.pdf>

Debevec, L., Y.Banhoro and A.Yemtim. (in press), *Understanding women's participation and access to decision making in rural supply water users associations: The case of Burkina Faso*.

Annex 1: Contributors

Contributors to the 2016 e-discussion include:

- **Snehalatha Mekala**, independent consultant
- **Dr Liza Debevec** Social Scientist-Theme Governance, Gender and Poverty. International water management institute (IWMI)
- **Dr. Dorice Agol** Research Associate, School of International Development, University of East Anglia & International Consultant, Environment and International Development
- **Jim Anscombe** Hydrogeologist Zambia
- **Brecht Mommen** Technical Advisor to the Department of Water Government of Vanuatu -UNICEF

Contributors to the 2017 webinars on making water work for women include:

- Nafisa Barot, Founder and Director, Utthan, India
- Sara Ahrari, Senior Programme Officer WASH Asia, and Aika van der Kleij, SIMAVI Bangladesh
- Sara Marks and Ariane Schertenleib, Researchers, EAWAG
- Daya Moser and Nigussie Mihretun, Helvetas Ethiopia
- María del Mar Rivero and Celia Faller, ONGAWA, Spain
- Rosemary Rop, World Bank
- Snehalatha Mekala , independent consultant

Annex 2 Useful papers and further reading

<https://wle.cgiar.org/project/four-basin-gender-profiles>

<http://indiawashforum.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Sanitation-Behaviour-Change-Formative-Research-2016.pdf>

<http://www.ircwash.org/projects/india-community-water-plus-project>

Debevec, L., Y.Banhoro and A.Yemtim. forthcoming. Understanding women's participation and access to decision making in rural supply water users associations: The case of Burkina Faso.



Photo: WaterAid/ Dennis Lupenga
Chifuniro Yambani, the Chairperson for Bwemba Village Kasungu, Water Kiosk Committee.