

Gender and Social Inclusion

Learning Brief from research into effectiveness of WASH approaches and innovations in the Civil Society WASH Fund

The Civil Society Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (CS WASH) Fund is a five-year programme supported by the Australian government with the objective of enhancing the health and quality of life of the poor and vulnerable by improving sustainable access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. Between 2013 and mid-2018, the Fund will have supported 13 Australian and international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to deliver 29 WASH projects with an investment of AUD103 million across 19 countries. The Fund is expected to provide direct benefits to 3.5 million people and indirect benefits to over 10 million people.

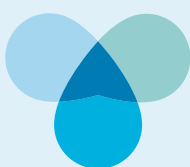
Toward the end of 2017 the CS WASH Fund commissioned a team from Aguaconsult UK to conduct in-depth research of CSO interventions in four cross-cutting areas: i. WASH policy influencing; ii. Gender and social inclusion (GESI); iii. WASH market facilitation; and iv. Innovation integration and uptake. The researchers worked with Fund administrators to prioritise the CSO interventions by focusing on those which have displayed promising approaches in these themes. Working together, they prioritised 23 CSO interventions, with 43 different unique interventions across the four themes. This Learning Brief presents the key findings from research on Gender and Social Inclusion.¹

1. The full research report can be downloaded at www.cswashfund.org/shared-resources/tools

HIGHLIGHTS

INNOVATION INTEGRATION AND UPTAKE

- The CS WASH Fund has, through its implementing CSO partners, been able to implement a wide range of GESI initiatives and play a substantive role in promoting positive change both in direct terms, through increased participation of women, girls and marginalised groups in WASH activities, and contributing to broader transformation at community and institutional levels.
- GESI initiatives at the community level are more effective and sustainable when linked to simultaneous strategies to support the enabling policy environment and institutional structures.
- CSO projects demonstrated a clear integration of GESI initiatives in their Theory of Change, which supported the meaningful mainstreaming of GESI objectives.
- The majority of Fund interventions were aware of, and made efforts to mitigate, unintended negative impacts; this is critical to ensure the safety of social groups and individuals already marginalised in the community or household.
- The majority of projects aimed to contribute to a broader change in gender relations by working to achieve more equitable influence between women and men over WASH-related decisions at the household and within broader community dynamics.



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Research Findings: Gender and Social Inclusion

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) processes focus on ensuring equal opportunities and that everyone can achieve their full potential in life. The GESI theme looked at 12 individual CSO interventions implementing 13 projects, across 11 countries², with Nepal and Zimbabwe appearing twice.

The research examined how CSOs understood, and worked within, designated WASH and GESI policy frameworks and whether these frameworks supported work on the ground to mainstream GESI goals into project design and implementation, and subsequently to effect broader social transformation for greater equality.



ID Poor categorisations in Cambodia have helped target sanitation subsidies, this one is in Daun Koeng commune, Prey Veng Province. Photo credit: iDE

Assessing policy environments and institutional arrangements for GESI



Photo credit: CS WASH FMF/ Palladium

Just under half of the countries in the research group demonstrated strong linkages between WASH and GESI policies, which facilitated effective roles and responsibilities and supporting legislation. But a much smaller number (only three countries) were assessed as having strong institutional structures in place to support GESI interventions. Where strong policy environments and institutional structures and processes were in place, CSOs were able to tap into this enabling environment to effectively support GESI initiatives.

Through the research it was evident that six of the countries examined under the GESI theme demonstrated strong linkages between WASH and GESI policies. One of the strongest policy environments linking GESI and WASH was found in Nepal, where the new constitution affirms sanitation and hygiene as a basic human right. This commitment is further strengthened in the Master Plan for sanitation and hygiene and specifically in the Gender

Equality and Social Inclusion Operational Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Urban Development (2013). These guidelines prescribe GESI areas to be considered during WASH project cycle implementation, giving priority to communities with a high proportion of ultra-poor and poor people.

The research identified eight of the 11 countries as demonstrating basic institutional structures in place to support GESI in Fund projects. Three countries — Zimbabwe, Nepal, and Vietnam — demonstrated strong institutional frameworks that link local processes to GESI policy mandates, from the central level of government to regional and district levels. This strong commitment of governments to GESI policy mandates resulted in the CSO being able to more effectively support strategic GESI initiatives than in contexts where institutional structures are less robust.

2. Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, Vietnam and Zimbabwe

Box 1: GESI Champions – an innovative approach linking community volunteers to government structures in Zimbabwe

The World Vision and Welthungerhilfe projects both utilised and built on an existing network of volunteer home-based carers as well as local people with disabilities identified through social services records to recruit a cohort of volunteers who became known as Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Champions. Volunteers were selected on the basis of having a commitment to learn about gender and social inclusion and willingness to attend regular training, meetings and community activities. Additionally, the Welthungerhilfe project supported GESI focal persons in Local Authority offices and officers from the Ministry of Women's Affairs to mainstream GESI and promote inclusivity. In the World Vision project, GESI Facilitator and Gender Focal Point Persons within local government authorities were closely involved in coordinating the engagement of GESI

Champions in project activities. However, as the project continued, GESI Champions began to undertake a range of community-level actions more independently, with World Vision Zimbabwe, Federal Organisation of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe, and the local authorities' Gender Focal Point Persons playing more of a coordination and capacity development role through refresher trainings, mentoring and monitoring. Impact studies indicate that Government and NGO service providers (external to the project) are making use of the GESI Champions and are now more willing and able to reach people with disabilities. In Gwanda, the Municipal authority said it now intends to consult GESI Champions as a matter of practice whenever organisations start a new project. Based on these successes, both Bulawayo City Council and the

Municipality of Gwanda have decided to expand and replicate the GESI Champions approach independently of World Vision. This has already begun in Bulawayo, where the Council has recruited 550 GESI Champions from every ward in the city.



CSWASH FMF / David Brazier

Mainstreaming GESI in CSO project delivery

The CSO interventions under the Fund utilised different approaches to identify potentially marginalised groups and to assess the barriers to integration in development processes. The most common approach to mitigate barriers faced by marginalised groups was to raise awareness and increase participation; developing policy guidelines and the use of targeted financial subsidies were also important strategies. Projects demonstrated a clear integration of GESI initiatives in their Theory of Change, which supported the meaningful mainstreaming of GESI objectives. The majority of CSO project interventions were mindful of the need to monitor for any negative or unintended impacts of their activities.

Identifying specific groups of women, poor households and those with disabilities and vulnerable ethnic groups – and to understand why and how access to WASH services is constrained – is critical to achieve GESI objectives. All CSO interventions utilised a variety of processes and methodologies to identify potentially marginalised groups. For example, in Bhutan, SNV undertook joint qualitative research with government partners to better understand what poverty means in terms of sanitation access, to analyse the barriers and constraints (beyond financial means) for poor and socially excluded groups, and to identify solutions and develop strategies with local government for proposed pro-poor support mechanisms (see Box 2).

Box 2: Qualitative research to understand barriers to vulnerable groups in Bhutan

Joint qualitative research was undertaken by SNV in Bhutan with government partners to better understand what poverty means in terms of sanitation access, to analyse the barriers and constraints (beyond financial means) for poor and socially excluded groups, and to identify solutions and develop strategies with local government for proposed pro-poor support mechanisms. The objective of the research was therefore to identify appropriate support mechanisms to assist people living in poverty to gain access to improved sanitation and hygiene. The findings showed that a shortage of labour was the main barrier for rural people living in poverty to access improved sanitation. The findings helped to set the stage for effective targeting, with the identification of different dimensions of poverty relating to sanitation access by the community members themselves. These dimensions included: those who lack manpower; single female headed households; elderly people living alone; people with financial constraints; and people with disabilities.

Source: Halcrow, G., Rautavuoma, P., Choden, T. (2014). Tailoring pro-poor support strategies with local governments to improve sanitation services. Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Thimphu, Bhutan, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation. www.snv.org/public/cms/sites/default/files/explore/download/snv_practice_brief_-_pro_poor_support_to_improve_sanitation.pdf



Photo credit: Plan Indonesia

The most common approach utilised to mitigate barriers across CSO interventions was to raise awareness of GESI issues around WASH access, followed by developing policy guidelines and providing financial subsidies or incentives. In the case of Save the Children in Myanmar the project identified men's attitudes as a key barrier to women's participation at the community level and subsequently developed strategies to raise awareness for men to facilitate women's participation in WASH committees, including in leadership roles. In the Welthungerhilfe Zimbabwe project, GESI Champions continuously sought to educate residents and provided training to raise awareness of gender issues in the communities. This has reportedly resulted in increased awareness and more equitable distribution of water-related chores between men and women, and has brought about behaviour change, with men assisting with water collection, although admittedly still on a limited scale.

The development of policy guidelines to address barriers was a strategy employed in the World Vision Zimbabwe project which facilitated the drafting, endorsement, implementation and monitoring of gender mainstreaming plans at municipal level. The Timor-Leste WaterAid project also developed a Manual for Facilitating Dialogue between Women and Men in Communities, which was then adopted by the government as a national guideline.

Financial subsidies were another important strategy to reduce barriers to access. In Cambodia, for example, iDE supported the development of markets for WASH products with an emphasis on affordability and accessibility to directly benefit poorer, often female-headed households. By facilitating affordable financing and enabling families to purchase a latrine and install it close to the household, the project intervention helped to improve the lives of disabled people who found it difficult to practice open defecation far from the house or without assistance.

A critical area for the sustainability of GESI initiatives is to ensure that GESI objectives are mainstreamed into the programme's overall Theory of Change; more than half of those interventions studied provided strong evidence that such mainstreaming was occurring effectively. A strong example is from the SNV Nepal Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All (SSH4A) project, which aimed to ensure that the practical needs and strategic gender interests of women and men were taken into account across the project and that effective participation was promoted at all levels. These interventions were reflected in an increase of gender and social inclusive programming at the district level.

Gender sensitive budgeting is critical to support gender mainstreaming. In Nepal, the Australian Red Cross (ARC) facilitated a sanitation fund for 500 ultra-poor households, allowing these households to upgrade their sanitation facilities to government standards, and 45 households with PLWD to gain improved access to sanitation facilities. In Bhutan, SNV supported the capacity of local authorities to plan, and budget WASH activities, to ensure that local pro-poor support mechanisms are in place to assist households such as single-headed female households and informal settlements.

The majority of CSOs monitored negative or unintended impacts linked to GESI interventions. This is a positive finding and reinforces the importance of adopting a 'do no harm' approach, particularly considering some of the very challenging social and cultural environments for women and marginalised groups across countries in the Fund. Box 3 below, provides perhaps the strongest example across the Fund, of the Thrive East Meets West Vietnam monitoring unintended impacts.

Box 3: Thrive East Meets West Vietnam: on-going assessment of negative or unintended impacts of GESI interventions as part of the Output Based Aid (OBA) programme

Thrive East Meets West undertook in-depth qualitative research in partnership with the Institute for Sustainable Future, University of Technology Sydney to identify whether their systematic engagement of the Women's Union (WU) to implement OBA had resulted in specific gender outcomes at the household level, and among (WU) volunteers themselves. Of the 20 WU volunteers interviewed, 14 (70%) reported experiencing at least one positive gender related outcome that could be linked back to their involvement in the OBA programme. The most commonly reported change overall was an increase of their status in their communities.

Examples included people giving compliments and honour, people giving thanks and rewards, people being friendlier and people recognising and appreciating women's efforts. One promoter from Long Toi Commune reflected: "When I started doing OBA for sanitation, I went to mobilise people [and] the men in the hamlet stigmatised me; "This woman asks many things, why don't women stay at home and look after the family? You come to my house and interfere". But now, it is these people who respect me, they often ask me questions and pay me respect. That makes me happy."

Only one negative impact was reported from the research; that women who took on the work as WU volunteers sometimes had a high workload. Five out of 20 volunteers (25%) reported drawbacks or negative aspects of their involvement including significant investments of time, travel to cover large areas and repeated household visits required to persuade households and assist with loan applications in order to achieve latrine coverage targets.

Source: CS WASH Fund, Key Performance Questions, Thrive Vietnam, 2017

Assessing the potential for GESI transformation

The majority of projects provided good evidence that their activities supported gender transformation through WASH interventions. Participation of women and marginalised groups in project activities was used as the most common feedback tool and indicator of success of CSO GESI initiatives. All projects aimed to contribute to a broader change in gender relations by working to achieve more equitable influence between women and men over WASH-related decisions at the household level and broadening women's influence and decision-making power in the community.

Across the CSO interventions, ten projects provided good evidence that their activities supported gender transformation through WASH. Gender transformation is defined here as the process of actively challenging and changing gender norms, by promoting positions of social and political influence for women in communities that can address power inequities. The majority of projects took participation of women or marginalised groups in project activities as the most significant measure of success of GESI initiatives, including the increase of influence that women and marginalised groups had around the implementation of WASH activities in the communities (see Figure 1).

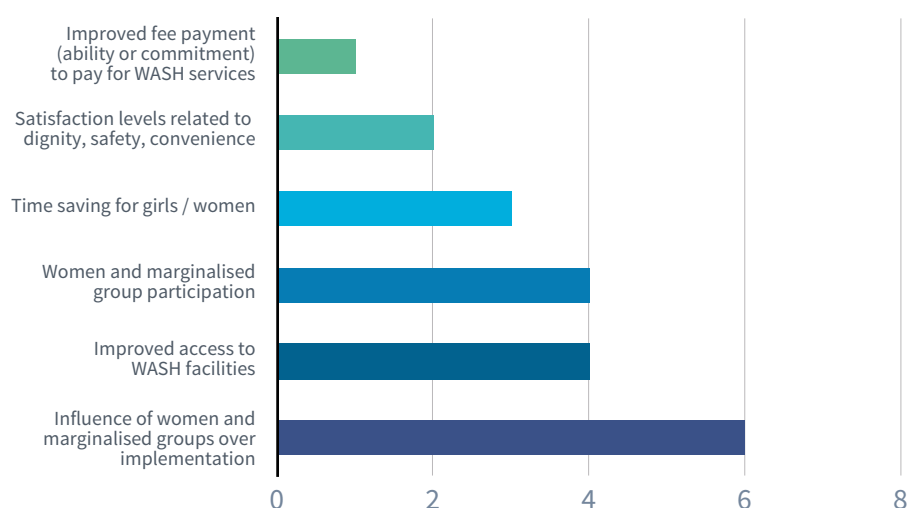
Examples illustrating that increased participation will lead to both a greater

capacity of women and an enabling environment for women to be involved in decision making in the household and the community were found within projects across the Fund. The Live & Learn project in Vanuatu reported that as a result of participation in the leadership of the Community-based Sanitation Enterprises, women gained greater respect from the communities and men in the business enterprises supported their leadership. The project also reported the gender awareness sessions carried out by the project contributed to breaking the traditional barriers of women not actively participating or being involved at the decision-making level of community development projects.



Photo credit: SNV Nepal

Figure 1: What measures have been used to assess the success of these gender transformation initiatives/approaches?



Main findings

Supportive national GESI policy mandates and linking with institutional structures can improve GESI interventions at the community level: GESI initiatives are more sustainable and effective where there are supportive policies for GESI within the enabling policy environment and where programme interventions link well with institutional structures that operationalise such policy mandates.

CSOs successfully employed a range of approaches to identify potentially marginalised groups and to assess the barriers to integration in development processes, including qualitative research methods: utilising existing government systems for identification of poor and marginalised households was particularly effective, although not possible in all countries.

The majority of CSOs monitored negative or unintended impacts linked to GESI interventions: This is a positive finding and reinforces the importance of adopting a 'do no harm' approach, particularly considering some of the very challenging social and cultural environments for women and marginalised groups across countries in the Fund.

The impact of menstrual hygiene management was well monitored by a minority of CSO interventions, but such good practice could be expected to be more widespread: Although there was limited evidence to assess whether interventions actually measured an increase of girls' attendance at school due to MHM strategies, the few strong examples illustrate the important contribution of such practical interventions to longer-term strategic gender impacts.

Standardising and institutionalising operational guidelines can be an effective way of promoting GESI: The development of tools such as operational guidelines and formulating them as national guidelines can be critical to support more effective implementation.

Doing "GESI work" is slow and painstaking and requires dedicated resources and focal points to be most effective: Mainstreaming GESI in the Theory of Change provides an effective framework for social transformation. Allocating adequate resources – human expertise and time – as well as operational budgets to support GESI objectives are all essential to achieving these outcomes.

Recommendations

- Future CSO interventions seeking to address GESI should invest in the analysis of policy frameworks at national and lower levels and the linkages between WASH, gender and social inclusion, as well as the institutional structures associated with policy mandates.
- Donor-funded programmes should continue to include, and strengthen where needed, the monitoring of unintended negative impacts of CSO approaches and activities on women and vulnerable groups. This should include assessments of whether women's workload increases, and what changes in men's participation in WASH activities has been affected.
- CSOs should always incorporate a 'do no harm' approach to GESI strategies in WASH interventions, especially where high rates of gender-based violence are prevalent in communities. Additionally, if the concept is that women's participation will contribute to a more equitable influence between women and men over WASH-related decisions at the household level and broadening women's influence and decision-making power in the community, then these impacts and changes need to be measured more effectively.

- It should be recognised that participation and training does not necessarily lead to, or equate with, systematic societal change for women to gain strategic gender needs. Indicators to assess the increase in influence of women in decision making at various levels of society should be developed and applied; for example, see the Tool Kit on Gender Equality Results and Indicators developed by the Government of Australia and the Asian Development Bank in 2013.
- Future CSO interventions should monitor and assess the ability of women to build on their enhanced capacity, as a result of positive WASH interventions, into other aspects of their lives.



The research into effective CSO approaches was carried out by Aguaconsult, UK; www.aguaconsult.co.uk



This learning brief was authored by Mary Liao, March 2018.