



**Integrating gender  
equality into water,  
sanitation and  
hygiene projects**



**Guidance for NGOs  
and implementing  
partners**



**WaterAid**

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# Introduction

## Purpose

This guidance will help companies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) turn their organisational strategic commitments on community water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and gender equality into integrated projects that a) support better, more sustainable WASH outcomes and b) are critical on the pathway to women's empowerment. It will also help implementing organisations contribute to increasing global and regional strategic commitments to gender equality including, for example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It will embed gender responsive processes and objectives into WASH projects to ensure they contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment at multiple levels – household, community, national and global – through both direct programming and leveraging this for wider changes in policy and enabling environments that facilitate gender equality.

● **Cover Photo:** Members of the Benkadi women's group standing together inside their market garden where they grow produce to make an income. Bla district, Segou, Mali. October 2019.

WaterAid/Basile Ouedraogo

## Guidance structure:

- Chapter 1 explains **why** NGOs and companies should invest in, and take, an integrated approach to WASH and gender equality and women's empowerment projects.
- Chapter 2 outlines **what** is needed to build the foundations for gender equality and women's empowerment into WASH projects.
- Chapter 3 shares **principles and approaches** for our work on gender equality and women's empowerment in WASH.
- Chapter 4 demonstrates a step-by-step approach on **how** to embed gender equality into WASH projects through the process of project design, analysis and setting of key performance indicators (KPIs). It also signposts to relevant tools and resources to support practitioners.

## Who is this for?

- NGOs implementing WASH and/or gender equality and women's empowerment projects and programmes.
- Corporate or private sector teams responsible for overseeing the company's community WASH programmes and women's empowerment/gender equality commitments.
- A summary version is available [here](#) for companies looking to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into their community WASH projects.

# 1 WASH and gender equality

Around the world, one in ten people don't have clean water close to home, more than one in five don't have a decent toilet of their own, and almost one in three lack soap and water for handwashing.<sup>1</sup> Significant evidence and decades of experience has shown how women and girls are disproportionately affected when communities lack clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene, and climate change is exacerbating those challenges further. Moreover, women and girls bear the brunt of inadequate WASH services; and women's unpaid labour plugs the gaps in services and systems at household, workplace, school and health centre level.<sup>2</sup>

Although the importance of WASH for women is broadly recognised and is being committed to by governments, NGOs and companies, studies have shown that WASH projects often stop at service access and reach outcomes. This results in missed opportunities to bring about the transformative change needed to increase gender equality and women's empowerment in and through WASH.<sup>3,4</sup>

The active participation and involvement of women and girls in WASH projects is critical to the success and sustainability of these investments. WASH services that do not support women and girls equally, safely and with reduced labour, will undermine global commitments to achieve universal access to water and sanitation for all – commitments that pay special attention to the needs of women and girls (SDG 6). Furthermore, systemic bias related to gender roles in WASH is restricting the meaningful participation of women in WASH-related jobs and decision making.<sup>5,6</sup> These factors slow the progress on achieving other SDGs, including gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5) across the board.

As primary WASH users, women and girls have the deep and experiential knowledge of how services can be improved, managed and made more sustainable for everyone. However, too often that knowledge and understanding is not supported or utilised due to the norms and systems that exclude them.

Basic water services could save women the equivalent of 77 million working days per year. Days of which they currently spend collecting water.<sup>7</sup> This would contribute significantly to a reduction in unpaid domestic work, positively impact health outcomes, increase life and work options and accelerate a country's economic success. However, the key to gender equality and women's empowerment is both in the reduction and redistribution of domestic WASH work, so the burden is not the sole responsibility of women and girls.

Recent analysis from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) into women's economic empowerment concluded that economic growth is associated with a reduction in unpaid care work for women. In particular, a reduction in the physically and time-intensive tasks of unpaid work – such as collecting water or fuel – leaving women with more time for paid work and study, as well as leisure and personal care.<sup>8,9</sup>

Too often, WASH and gender equality are treated as separate thematic areas, led by different teams with independent projects, targets and indicators. Yet, they are fundamentally linked.

Gender inequality is ingrained everywhere and stagnates social and economic progress.<sup>10</sup> The World Economic Forum's (WEF) *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*<sup>11</sup> shows that on the current trajectory, it will now take 132 years to close the gender gap worldwide.

When the burden of water collection is reduced, the health benefits for communities increases. A review of nearly 200,000 Demographic and Health Surveys in 26 countries found that a 15-minute decrease in one-way walk to a safe water source is associated with a 41% average reduction in diarrhoea prevalence, improved child nutritional status, and a 11% reduction in under-five child mortality.<sup>12</sup>

- Gita Roy, leader of the Golap Dol, a women's committee who run the reverse osmosis plant. Khulna Division, Bangladesh. May 2021.



## Case study: The Ripple Effect

In 2018, The Coca-Cola Foundation funded Global Water Challenge, USAID and Ipsos to conduct the Ripple Effect Study to examine the transformative impact water access has on women's empowerment.<sup>15</sup> The study delivered quantitative and qualitative evidence that clean water uniquely catalyses a shift towards women taking greater control of their lives, and that they use this to benefit their whole communities. It identified eight pathways to empowerment, capturing the impact water interventions have on women's empowerment, including health, income, nutrition, safety and security, education, leadership and skills, time savings and shifts in roles and norms. Companies and NGOs are using the Ripple Effect Study and its subsequent toolkit as foundational indicators to quantify women's empowerment through improved water access.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, access to clean and functional sanitation facilities is increasingly associated with mental well-being. Ownership of household toilets and enclosed bathing spaces were significantly associated with well-being among women in rural India. In Kenya, access to toilets was associated with better mental health and well-being among women. In Mozambique, women living in communities that have household sanitation facilities reported that their stress levels have decreased. In India, women reported that access to private toilets helped them overcome the embarrassment, shame and anxiety of open defecation.<sup>13</sup> Further, in Bangladesh, the establishment of appropriate sanitation facilities in schools increased girls' attendance by 11%.<sup>14</sup>

**The majority of people working in paid positions in WASH at government department level and service providers are men. A recent World Bank study from 64 water and sanitation service providers in 28 economies around the world found that, on average, only 18% of their workers were women.<sup>6</sup>**

Applying a gender lens to WASH strategies and programmes creates significant potential to make those investments go further and achieve greater impacts that a) result in better, more sustainable WASH outcomes and b) are critical on the pathway to gender equality and women's empowerment.

While many organisations' commitment and policy documents already make a clear link between and commitment to gender equality and WASH, the next stage is to operationalise and implement these so that women and girls, communities and countries realise the benefits of an integrated approach. This requires robust planning, resourcing, programming and monitoring that puts women and girls at the centre and goes beyond WASH projects that are 'just' taps and toilets.

This guidance is therefore intended to support the process of designing projects that result in equitable WASH services and contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.

# Gender equality and women's empowerment through WASH

This chapter outlines:

- A definition of gender equality and women's empowerment in WASH.
- The factors driving WASH-related gender inequalities and the wider impacts of these.
- An example theory of change for WASH-related women's empowerment.

## Gender equality:

Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys, and gender minorities. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.<sup>17</sup>

## What do we mean by women's empowerment in WASH?

Women's empowerment is both a process and an outcome.<sup>18</sup> It is defined broadly as the expansion of choice and strengthening of voice through the transformation of power relations, so women and girls have more control over their lives and futures.<sup>13</sup>

Women's empowerment in WASH is about expanding the ability to exercise choice and control in multiple areas related to WASH. So, her access to resources, her agency and decision-making, and strengthening wider institutional or enabling policies and processes to be responsive to women and girls – all of which support her in meeting daily and long term WASH needs.

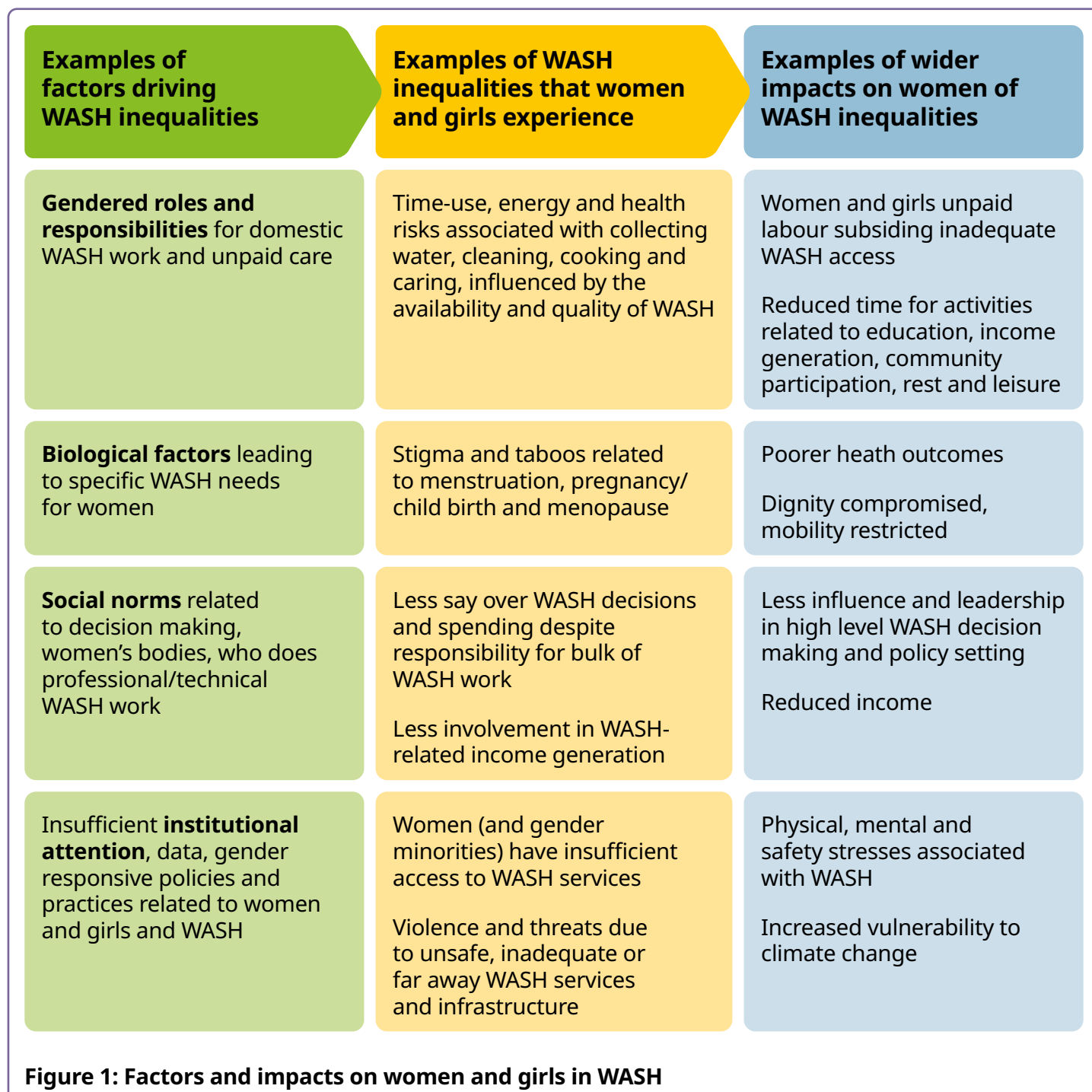
It involves women recognising their own capacities and men recognising and respecting the capabilities of women – enabling them to exercise power, and to have control over their own time, bodies and lives. It means working with women and girls and supporting men and boys, to achieve a positive shift in attitudes, biases and behaviours that negatively impact on women and girls' WASH experiences, outcomes and involvement. It requires raising awareness of women about their rights, building self-confidence, expanding life choices, increasing access to information and control over resources, and transforming the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality.<sup>19,20</sup>

To contribute to overall empowerment and have maximum impact, WASH projects are the most successful when they sit alongside work strengthening education, economic decision making and health outcomes.

## The factors and impacts of inequitable WASH

Women and men, and those identifying outside the male/female binary (gender minorities), have different requirements from water and sanitation facilities, different hygiene priorities and face different challenges and societal barriers to meet their WASH needs. For these reasons, WASH projects need to be responsive to the differing requirements and power imbalances that exist.

Gendered WASH inequalities can be associated with four key factors – **differential biological factors, gendered roles and responsibilities, restrictive social norms** and **insufficient institutional attention**. Figure 1 illustrates the various dimensions and impacts WASH has on women and girls with a range of examples.



## Approach to gender equality and women's empowerment

Integrating gender equality and women's empowerment into WASH projects means:

- Enabling everybody – women, men, boys and girls (including those living with disabilities or who are part of minority groups) and sexual and gender minorities – to meet their basic WASH-related needs equitably, with dignity, and at all stages of life.
- Supporting greater involvement, participation and leadership of women in WASH decision making, planning and delivery, leading to WASH services that are sustainable, scalable, acceptable and suitable for more users.

Gender equality and women's empowerment in WASH is not realised by simply providing more taps and toilets, although the hardware component of a project is important. This must be combined with:

Approach	How?	Contributes to...
Better <b>analysis</b> of the factors that contribute to gender inequality in WASH, including an understanding of the gendered norms, roles and barriers that impact on access to, use of and influence on WASH.	Contextual gender analysis (see <a href="#">page 39</a> ) of the communities and locations where WASH interventions are being planned to understand different genders' realities and requirements and their ability to participate, contribute or benefit from the project.	Understanding agency, access and institutional arrangements in order to support positive changes to them.
A commitment to helping <b>transform negative gendered roles, norms and relations</b> connected to WASH. Recognising that women and girls perform most of the labour but have the least say on how services are delivered or planned.	Facilitate dialogue and awareness raising activities with men, boys, women, girls and gender minorities, that bring attention to WASH imbalances, and draw solutions to help reduce and redistribute these burdens.	Increase in women's agency.
<b>Targeted support for women and girls</b> to participate equally in all levels of WASH decision making, and <b>benefit from economic activities connected to WASH</b> .	Work with women to support their effective participation in WASH decision making and action planning. And work with men and leaders to sensitise them on the benefits of women in decision making roles.  Ensure women are benefitting from and able to participate in WASH-related economic activities.	Increase access and agency.

Approach	How?	Contributes to...
Work at <b>all levels of the WASH system</b> (community, local, national and global) and target all areas of the system (financing, service delivery, strategic planning, regulation and accountability, monitoring, government leadership, coordination functions and institutional arrangements) to help drive towards gender equality and women's empowerment within WASH.	Support the creation and implementation of gender responsive WASH policies, budgets, strategies for all WASH actors, including governments and public and private sector service providers.	Positive institutional arrangements for gender equality and women's empowerment.

To meet the specific needs of women and girls, we need to consciously design projects that help expand the **agency of women** and their **access to resources** by, among other things, challenging and changing the gender roles, norms and relations which act as barriers to women's empowerment. It is also important to advocate for the creation of enabling **institutional arrangements** at the community, sub-national and national levels (policies, laws, stakeholder engagement and collaboration) to support an increase in women's agency and access to resources.

This example theory of change outlines how project actions can contribute to project-related changes in agency, resources and institutional arrangement. And in turn, how these contribute to wider changes in WASH access, overall gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Ripple Effect Study<sup>15</sup> and recent work by WHO/UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) and Emory University<sup>17</sup> shows how projects that are planned, designed and implemented with deliberate gender lenses, have realised some of the outcomes identified in the theory of change. Outcomes that go beyond numerical targets to progressively realise women's empowerment and enhance gender equality in WASH.

A rights-based approach to WASH ensures that rights holders know and claim their rights, and duty bearers respond adequately to delivering those rights. As mentioned above, women are the primary bearers of WASH-related work and impacted the most by inadequate WASH services. As such, following a rights-based approach, institutions at all levels must place women's rights to and requirements from WASH at the centre of their planning, implementation, monitoring and partnership building for WASH.



● Yemisrach voluntarily cleans the recently constructed toilets at her school every morning. Amhara region, Ethiopia. January 2021. Funding for this project has been received with additional support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation through Millennium Water Alliance.

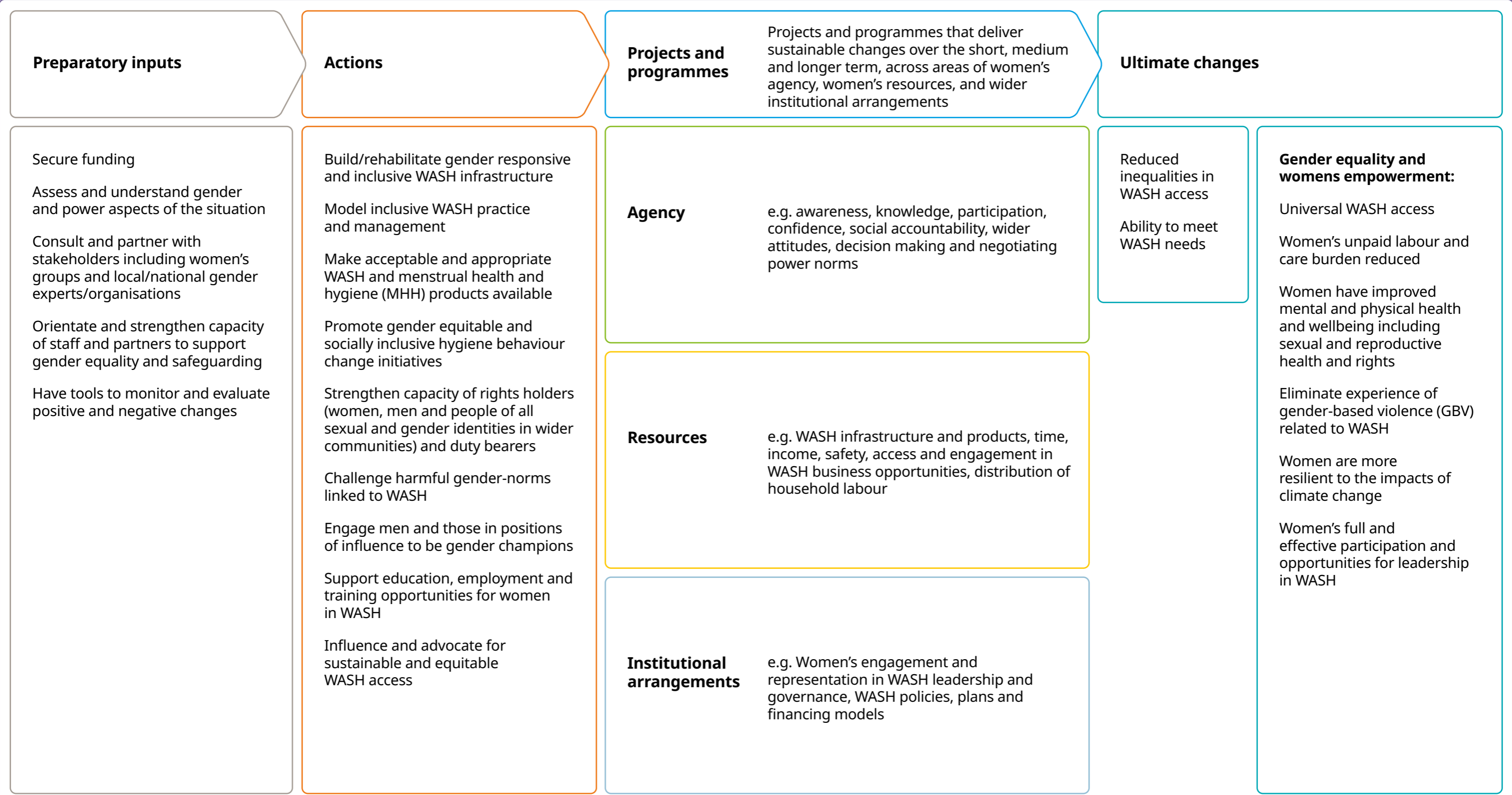


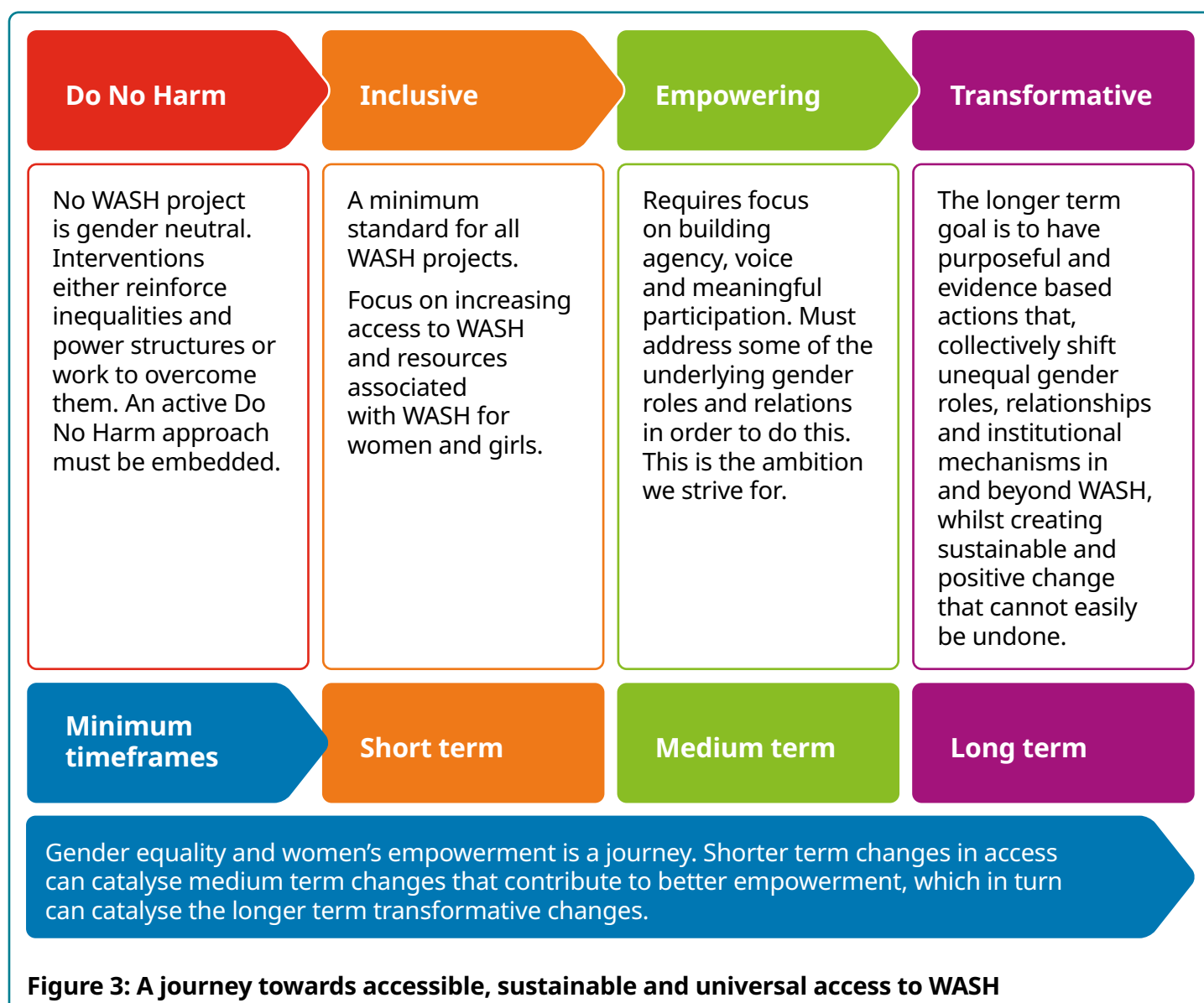
Figure 2: Example theory of change

# Principles and approaches

This chapter provides an overview of the approaches and principles that are central to any project that seeks to integrate, mainstream or contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

## The process

Work on gender equality and women's empowerment is a process that takes time and intentional commitment. Figure 3 shows that depending on the starting point, the level of effort, investment, time available and detailed design, projects can make different levels of contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment. The diagram recognises that some foundational work might be necessary in the shorter term, but for more empowering and transformative results, the project must be designed to continue over at least three years.



## Principles to guide WASH work

### 1. WASH projects do not automatically lead to empowerment:

- While NGOs, companies and other partners' activities can play a role in helping to facilitate women's empowerment, they do not have the power to empower anyone directly. Empowerment is a process which includes change at individual, household, community subnational and national levels.
- Empowerment is a journey, and many factors must be addressed for a project to successfully say it has contributed to women's empowerment. A one-off activity does not achieve this.
- While projects can seek to increase empowerment and equality related to WASH, barriers in other areas of life must also be tackled in order for full transformative change to be realised. That is why WASH-related projects working alongside projects in other areas – such as health, education and work – have a powerful impact for women, girls and communities as a whole.

### 2. Prioritise women's knowledge and work with gender equality experts:

- The achievement of women's empowerment requires both specialist and context-specific skills and experience. Therefore, identifying sub-national or national gender specialists and/or organisations should be key part of the project's approach.
- Traditional knowledge and a deep understanding of local contexts are also invaluable.
- WASH projects must move beyond a one-way system of information sharing. While WASH practitioners have certain skills, women are aware of their WASH-related issues, so ignoring this can lead to a lack of ownership or counter-productive projects. Listening to women and recognising their knowledge on the topic is key to a successful project design.<sup>21</sup>



● Community members participate in MHH training at the panchayat bhawan of the village Achalikheda, Uttar Pradesh, India. December 2019.

WaterAid/Arindito Mukherjee

### 3. Time reduction through WASH does not automatically lead to more time for women:

- There cannot be an automatic assumption that time saved in one WASH-related activity, leads to more leisure or personal care time for women to use as they wish, as that can be constrained by rigid gender norms about women's roles and responsibilities. Therefore, projects must be intentional in their focus and avoid merely shifting the burden of women's work from one task to another.<sup>9</sup>

### 4. Project staff and organisations must build their own capacity and understanding on gender equality in order to do effective work:

- Teams and individuals working on projects that aim to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment must ensure they build their own capacity and tackle any biases, assumptions and discriminatory attitudes that will stand in the way of effective work. See [page 20](#) on how to form a project team.



### 5. Gender equality work must target more than just women and girls:

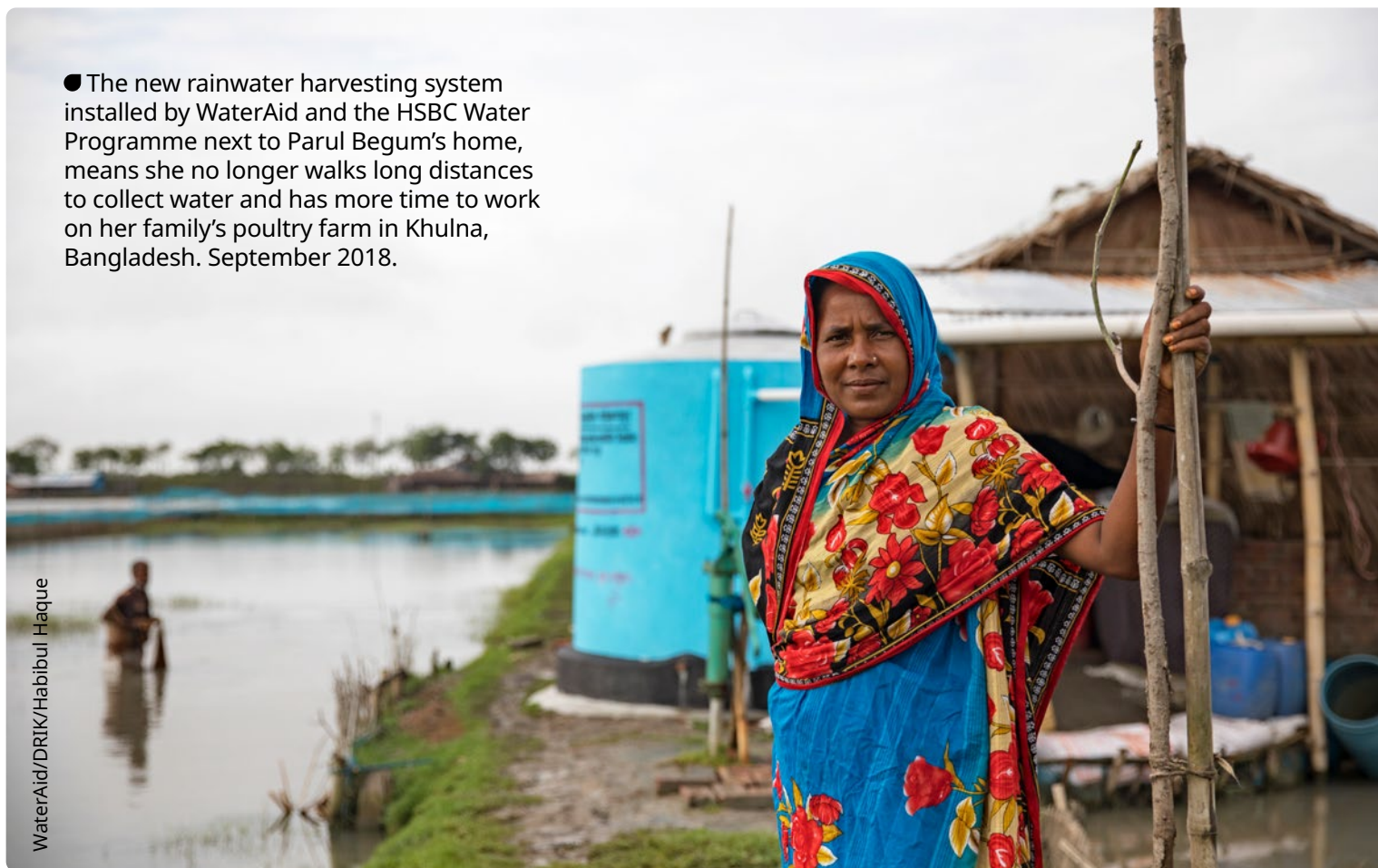
- Transforming gender inequality must go beyond a focus on women. It is important that men and boys are part of the solution and become change agents in this journey. However, this must be done in a way that protects and secures women's empowerment, without compromising it.
- Gender is also not restricted to male and female. There are diverse gender identities, such as third gender, transgender and gender non-conforming people (sometimes known as gender minorities) who often have their WASH needs ignored or their access denied. In some places, the safety of gender minorities is at risk if they are identified. Work with an expert organisation that protects their rights to understand the political and security context for these groups and to engage with gender minorities safely and securely.

### 6. Projects must recognise, understand and respond to women in all their diversity:

- Women have differing access to resources and levels of control in their everyday life. Aspects of their identity – disability status, class, caste, sexuality, education, marital status, age, ethnicity and income – can influence their ability to engage in water and sanitation decision making outside the household. Women with disabilities, for example, often face more barriers to WASH because of the added layers of isolation, social discrimination and physical exclusion.
- Additionally, responsibilities within the household can mean little time exists for women to be involved in WASH discussions or decision making.
- Projects must assess and design interventions that meet these differing needs and barriers. Additionally, cultural, societal and practical barriers should be considered when designing consultation meetings with women.

- Now Bizuayehu Anteneh has a water source close to home, she spends less time collecting water and has more time to earn a living. Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. September 2021.

● The new rainwater harvesting system installed by WaterAid and the HSBC Water Programme next to Parul Begum's home, means she no longer walks long distances to collect water and has more time to work on her family's poultry farm in Khulna, Bangladesh. September 2018.



WaterAid/DRIK/Habibul Haque

## Do No Harm – a central approach

Do No Harm (DNH) refers to a conscious effort to ensure that no negative consequences or harm comes to anyone from the project's processes and actions or the organisations (and individuals) involved.<sup>22,23</sup> This includes both obvious harm, such as negative health effects due to poor water quality, and unforeseen harm, such as a decrease in school attendance due to students in low-income families unable to attend and donate to hygiene clubs where donations are collected to improve facilities.<sup>24</sup>

All societies suffer from imbalances in power and opportunities based on gender. These imbalances are reflected in WASH systems (institutions, policies, processes), and can be increased by WASH actors too.<sup>25</sup> For example, these imbalances may be reinforced by WASH projects that consult leaders who are men in decisions or only involve men in formal WASH management arrangements.

Working on women's empowerment or seeking to transform gender inequalities can challenge and confront some of the norms, roles and power relations that people are familiar with. For example, norms about who is responsible for domestic WASH work versus technical wash decision making at a community or national level. As a result, it can cause discomfort and even backlash, particularly against the women or minority groups who are participating in the project.

To Do No Harm, projects must be proactively designed from the start with approaches to understand and mitigate these context-specific risks of harm and/or potential backlash. It must monitor any risks and include accountability mechanisms to capture unintentional negative impacts of projects and practice.<sup>23</sup>

## Case study

A woman and man were selected from a rural village to attend a training session on manual drilling in a neighbouring district. The woman attended the training and participated fully. She was the only woman at the training, and when she returned to her village, she faced unpleasant rumours that she'd had sexual relations with men while she was away.

The project or initiative that supported the training should have done more to understand and mitigate some of the risks that this woman faced. They could have, for example:

1. Understood the social context and risks associated. Carried out sensitisation activities with the whole community on the value of drilling, women's involvement and leadership.
2. Ensured a cohort of women participants for both safety and support, rather than expecting one woman to attend.
3. Supported the post training integration with the community.<sup>26</sup>

Overall principles to keep in mind are:

- Carry out a thorough 'Gender and power analysis' to assess and respond to the context (page 39 and Annex 1).
- Have safeguarding policies and procedures, including anonymous reporting mechanisms, in place for those targeted by or involved in the project.
- Ensure project staff understand the complex nature of gender inequalities, including their own bias and assumptions, through proper training sessions (see page 21).
- Include risk mitigation as part of the project planning (see pages 34–35).
- Collect required qualitative data to monitor, review and reflect on unintended consequences or risks associated with the project.<sup>27</sup>
- Work with partners who are experts on promoting women's leadership and empowerment to ensure women and girls are protected and supported through project activities in a way that takes better account of overall societal gender dynamics, norms, attitudes and power relations (see page 16).

For more learning on applying the DNH principles in WASH, see:

- 2019 Water For Women Fund Learning brief: *'Do No Harm' for Inclusive WASH: Working Towards a Shared Understanding*. Available [here](#).
- 2019 SNV's Developing approaches to 'Do No Harm'. Available [here](#).

A DNH workshop ran by the Water For Women Fund and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation demonstrated how in a particular project, the water collection workload of women was eased when new water connections were established. But the women then became overburdened with new responsibilities, such as washing men's clothes, which the men had previously done for themselves while bathing at the water source.

Findings from a workshop on DNH run by Water For Women Fund and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation

- Gita Roy, leader of the Golap Dol, a women's committee who run the reverse osmosis plant, washes her hands with clean water. Khulna Division, Bangladesh. May 2021.



WaterAid/Drik/Farzana Hossen

## WASH and violence

A crucial part of 'doing no harm' is to understand and work to prevent violence against women associated with WASH projects and service provision. Although the lack of WASH is not the root cause of violence, it can increase people's exposure to it. WASH projects that do not consider safety issues can increase the risks faced by women and girls, as well as men, boys and gender minorities. Risks exist in relation to many factors including, but not limited to:<sup>23</sup>

- Risks of intimidation, harassment or abuse (sexual, physical and emotional) when defecating outside or while using inadequate, distant or insecure WASH facilities in the community, workplace, public places or institutions.
- Delay in eating and drinking if there is a fear of using the toilet when needed, causing psychosocial stress and health risks. Walking long distances or queuing at odd hours for water, also brings risks of violence.
- Taboos around menstruation and bodily functions mean that if bathing, toilet or wash facilities are poorly located, lack privacy or do not allow for easy management of menstruation, women and girls may delay using them until after dark, further increasing safety risks.
- All crises – whether related to climate, economic or health – are known to increase violence against women. This was re-emphasised during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>28</sup> WASH programmes and services must be aware of the risks and their role in mitigating these. For example, as climate change increases water scarcity, this puts pressure on relationships at household level, including violence against those deemed 'responsible' for collecting water and doing WASH chores.
- Sexual exploitation in return for services – such as water, hygiene products and menstrual materials – is a known and growing issue.<sup>29</sup>
- As WASH programmes seek to improve gender equality, they can focus on supporting women to take on roles that are perceived to be male. As a result, they may face emotional and physical abuse such as being excluded from relevant meetings and being bullied by others who do not appreciate their willingness to take on a new role.
- Some women in women's economic empowerment programmes experience domestic violence relating to their increased economic independence.<sup>30</sup>
- Organisations and people working in development or humanitarian projects have power. There is a risk that they will use this power to exploit the people they are supposed to be supporting. When this power is used to abuse, it is typically women and girls who are the affected.
- WASH is a sector dominated by men, which means staff who are women, especially technical and field staff, can be outnumbered. More work now exists to tackle this and increase women's involvement and safety, while also transforming the overall workplace environment, policies and processes.

### Actions:

- Use gender and power analysis and/or safety audit tools (Annex 1, [page 39](#)) to ensure service design and delivery is informed by the WASH requirements of women and girls. The more participatory the process, the more likely the infrastructure will fully meet everyone's needs.
- Work with experts, such as women's rights partners, when designing projects to ensure they inform designs and support engagement with women users.
- Ensure the organisation has thorough safeguarding and DNH commitments – including an organisational policy and required training.
- Allocate resources to reduce vulnerabilities to violence in budgets and funding – for example, training for staff, engagement of experts and safety features in WASH infrastructure.
- Work with local and national governments to ensure that violence against women in WASH is an issue recognised in policies and guidance, and that actions are planned for the WASH sector as a whole.
- This [Practitioners toolkit](#) provides a comprehensive set of training material and information on how to tackle violence against women within WASH.

- Tiru Getahun makes a living by monitoring the water pump and collecting money from the community to pay for the maintenance. Derekwa, Ethiopia. February 2020.



## Stakeholder engagement

To deliver gender equality and women's empowerment well, it is important to seek the advice, support and partnership of women's rights organisations. These partners will:

- Build internal capacity and understand gender equality and women's empowerment issues.
- Advise and co-design with teams, effective and safe approaches to projects and activities.
- Lead the implementation of specific components of the project. For example, utilising their expertise to help deliver leadership training for members of WASH committees who are women. Or support women-led small and micro enterprises related to WASH.

Actions:

- As part of a broader stakeholder analysis, map existing women's rights organisations and groups at local and national level.
- Consider their role, interests, capacities, level of and methods of influence, and relationships with other stakeholders.
- Discuss their priority areas to see where there can overlap.
- Form strategic and project-specific partnerships (if agendas align) to ensure their expertise is formally integrated.

### Principles to remember:

- Ensure all stakeholders know how to raise concerns about the project through an accessible and confidential feedback mechanism.
- Use joint consent processes for research, assessments and photography.
- Ensure women's groups and organisations are paid/compensated for their services. They are providing vital contextual knowledge, expertise and advice, so these, along with their time, should be budgeted for through the project design process.
- Ensure the duration of the project design process is sufficient to allow for meaningful participation of these partners. Create a mutually agreed timeline to support this.
- Ensure that roles, responsibilities and expectations in the process are clear, defined and agreed. Create a RACI (responsible, accountable, consulted and informed) chart to support this.

## Case study:

### Water entrepreneurship for women's empowerment

In Khulna, southwest Bangladesh, climate change has increased the salinity of the water and contaminated groundwater aquifers. With freshwater supplies dwindling, women in the village of Tengrakhali, walked for hours every day to find clean drinking water.

WaterAid's project in Khulna, funded by Severn Trent Water, aimed to improve WASH services and infrastructure through three reverse osmosis plants (which convert saltwater to drinkable water), rainwater harvesting systems in healthcare facilities and schools, and improvements to sanitation. As part of this project, the Water Entrepreneurship for Women Empowerment (WE-WE) approach was implemented, which provides a business-focused solution that empowers women to take ownership of the technology. Through this approach, women entrepreneurs are mobilised to operate and maintain a water supply business.

Ten women from Tengrakhali signed up to run a community reverse osmosis plant. One of the women, Gita Roy, set up a committee named Golap Dol (Rose Group), to maintain the plant and develop business plans to sell the water to the local community at an affordable price. Rupantar, a local NGO, was brought in to provide intensive training on the day-to-day running and maintenance of the plant, and to empower the committee to take on these roles.

At first, the committee faced resistance from the community because the work was considered 'inappropriate' for women. But Golap Dol and Rupantar, with the guidance of WaterAid,

worked together to sensitise the community on the importance of the new plant. As Gita says, "It takes time to change people's mindset and behaviour."

In February 2020, the Moricchap Drinking Water Plant was inaugurated in the presence of regional council members, and the chairman of the local government. Gita made an inaugural address in the ceremony which drew a crowd of more than 250 people from the surrounding villages.

Today, the plant is still running and serves nine surrounding villages. The Golap Dol committee continues to maintain the plant and develop their business plans. Between April and September 2021, Gita's committee recorded profits of 29,648 BDT, which is more than £260. The committee members have also opened a bank account to save the profits. The members can withdraw this money to reinvest in other income generating activities.

Gita and the Golap Dol committee are now household names in Tengrakhali. In fact, Gita was recently elected by community members as their representative in the Union Parishad elections. She says, "As a woman, I want to keep working to empower our deprived women to have more control over their lives. Having my own identity, earning my own income, and not depending on anyone for my needs is very satisfying. It's time for women to stop confining themselves and their potential within their households only."



● Gita Roy, left, set up the women's committee (the Golap Dol) who now maintain the reverse osmosis plant and develop business plans to ensure the plant's future. Khulna Division, Bangladesh. May 2021.

# 4 WASH project design

This chapter provides guidance to support the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into the design of WASH projects. The guidance focusses on project design, but does not cover the implementation of WASH projects in detail.

These stages are relevant to both projects that are targeted specifically at tackling gender inequality (target programmes) and those projects in which gender inequality is mainstreamed as a focus.

Note this chapter will not cover every step that is needed to design a good WASH project. Rather, it focusses on steps that are particularly relevant to support the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into WASH projects.

Stage	What is covered?
1. Planning the design process	Considering who to engage in the design process and how; forming and orienting the project design team.
2. Analysing the situation	Doing a gender and power analysis.
3. Designing a response to the situation	Articulating a theory of change; developing project results; defining project activities; clarifying assumptions; developing indicators and an M&E approach; considering risks; transition approaches; developing budgets with a gender lens.



● Nadine Diallo is part of the soap and shea butter making group in Samabogo, Mali. April 2018.

## Stage 1: Planning the project design process

Taking time to plan the project design process will ensure it is empowering and supports good quality outputs.

### Key considerations:

#### Who to engage and how?

A consultative and participatory project design process will help to ensure that its output is relevant and robust in its approaches and aims. For WASH projects to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, this has to be intentionally embedded through all stages of the project, and particularly at the beginning during planning, analysis and design.

Whenever possible, the process should seek to meaningfully engage some of the following stakeholders (in addition to usual WASH national and subnational stakeholders, NGO or corporate teams) as a minimum. To identify and select relevant stakeholders, it may be necessary to conduct a stakeholder mapping and/or to consult with local women's groups, community leaders or relevant Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

- Women and girl WASH users from different social groups.
- Women's rights groups.
- Local gender equality specialists.
- Representatives from government ministries/ authorities with responsibilities for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Academic or research partners that can contribute to research, monitoring or assessment around gender equality and women's empowerment.

These key stakeholders could be engaged in the project design process in a number of ways. For example:

- Some should be positioned as partners in the project, e.g., women's organisations can be formal and informal partners from start to finish (and beyond).
- Women and girls, as well as men, boys and other gender minorities, should be engaged as key stakeholders through situation analysis/gender analysis, studies or assessments.
- As designers, consultees and approvers of the project approach and aims.

When engaging these key stakeholders, consideration should be given to the following:

- DNH principles (see DNH section, [page 13](#)).
- Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Establishing meaningful, partnerships and avoid tokenistic involvement (see stakeholder engagement section, [page 16](#)).

## Forming and orientating the project design team

There is commonly a core team who are responsible for leading the WASH project design process. It is usually the responsibility of this core team to plan the process, engage stakeholders, develop the project design outputs and submit a proposal. The form, composition and capacities of this team are important, so considering these at this stage will ensure the process and its outputs promote and integrate gender equality and empowerment throughout. If the team already exists, building the required capabilities and bringing in additional capacity might be required.

Examples of things to consider when forming a project design team (or using existing teams):

- What communication processes/protocols/approaches will be in place and how will these support women's voices?
- How will decisions be made and who will make them?
- What are the formal and informal ways of working? Do these inadvertently disadvantage women's participation or the incorporation of women's voices on the core team?

Examples of things to consider when thinking about the composition of the core team:

- What is the ratio of men to women?
- What roles do women play within the core team? Who holds accountability? Who holds responsibility?

Examples of things to consider when thinking about capacities of the core team:

- Have core team members completed a gender assessment and gender equality training (see 'Project team action' box below)? If not, will this be arranged for the start of the project?
- Do core team members have experience and expertise in participatory approaches? If not, are there partners who will bring this skill/methodology to the project?
- Are core team members committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in and through WASH?
- Are core team members trained in safeguarding and DNH principles?
- Do members of the core team have understanding and lived experience of the areas where the project will be implemented? If not, which partners will bring this strong contextual experience?
- Are members of the core team conscious of any potential power imbalances and their implications, and how to address these?
- Are members of the core team conscious of any internal biases they may have? Are they committed to addressing these?
- Do members of the core team feel confident to flag any concerns or evidence of gender discrimination and harassment?

### Project team action: Assessment of team's abilities, attitudes and awareness:

Gender inequality is ingrained, to some extent, in our lives and viewpoints. Therefore, we must start by ensuring we as individuals fully understand what gender equality and women's empowerment means. We must explore what our own gendered assumptions and bias might be, and learn the basics to support and deliver gender equality and women's empowerment work in a WASH context. If we don't do this, we risk our programmes being tokenistic, reflecting our own limited understanding of the reality or worse, perpetuating unequal ways of thinking and doing this work.

#### Actions to take:

- Hire an expert gender consultant for the design process, and hold a workshop or training on what gender equality and women's empowerment is in that context for the team.
- After some basic awareness raising, use the available tool to do a self assessment – preferably facilitated by an external gender equality expert. [This tool](#) is designed for staff implementing WASH projects. It can be used to reflect on the extent and quality of gender equality and social inclusion work in your WASH projects and organisation.

## Stage 2: Analysing the situation

### 2.1 Gender and power analysis

#### Why analysis is needed:

To integrate gender equality and women's empowerment objectives and outcomes successfully into WASH projects, teams must first understand and analyse the current realities of all genders in relation to WASH and everyday life. While the project team can make assumptions based on 'what we know', gender roles and relations are context-specific and can vary from place to place and over time.

All WASH programmes will have gendered outcomes and an impact on power relations, whether intended or not. Projects will either reinforce, neutralise or help transform gender (and power) relations related to WASH and beyond. So, doing this analysis is an essential step in the commitment to DNH.

Starting with an analysis of how gender roles and relations work within household, community, local and national settings with respect to WASH, will help the project team:

- Understand the gender roles and relations that exist within WASH (and how they relate to agency, access to resources etc) in that specific context.
- Understand the barriers and challenges for the WASH needs of women to be met or for them to be part of WASH planning and decision making.
- Show the power dynamics, based on gender, that will impact on the project activities and vision.
- Highlight the opportunities and challenges that need to inform the design or revision of project activities.



● Magfura Khatun, Community Facilitator, chats to the community in Sorol Gain Para about personal hygiene, as part of a climate resilience project funded by the HSBC and WaterAid. Khulna, Bangladesh. September 2018.

WaterAid/DRIK/Habibul Haque

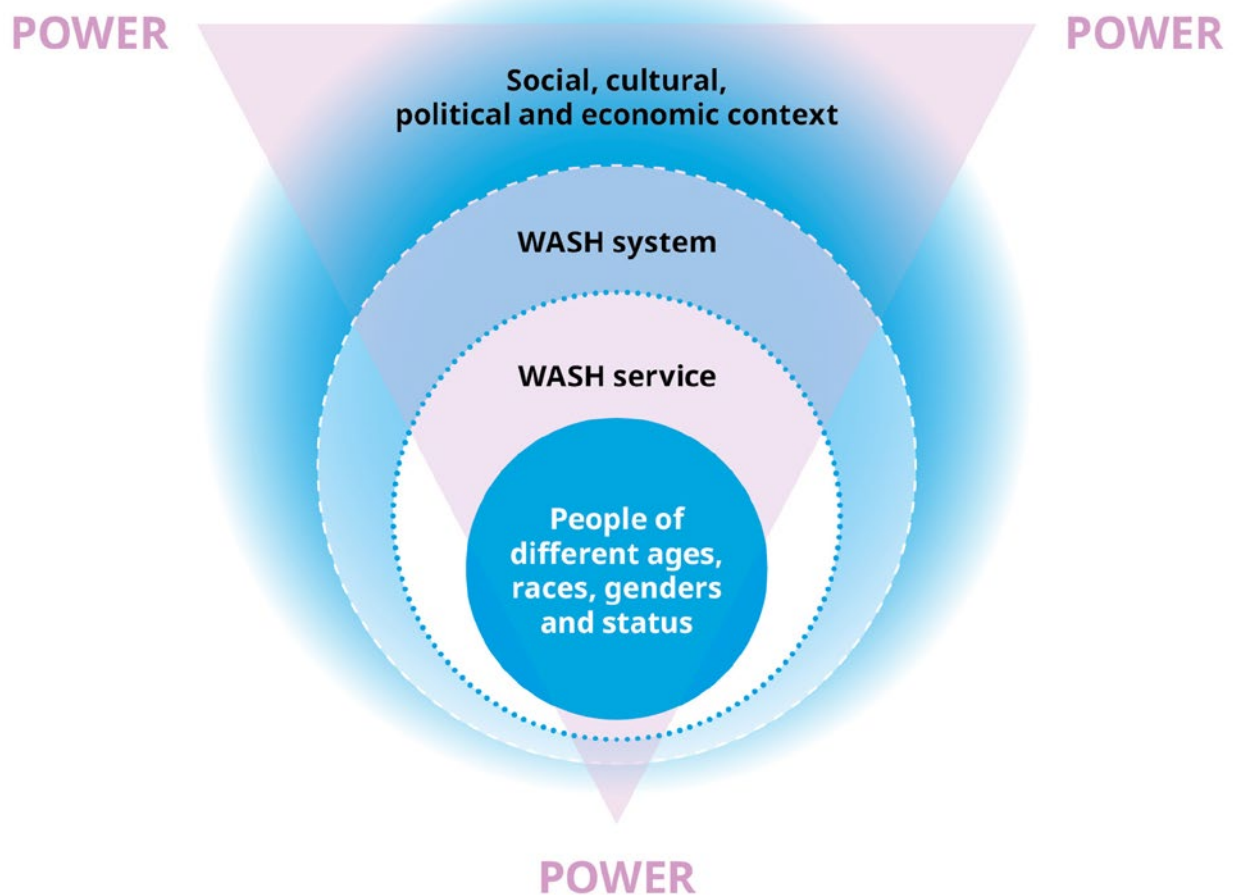
## 2.2 Making workshops accessible and open to all:

- Workshop formats, times and locations should enable women to actively participate, including those with less power.
- Sessions should be conducted in local languages and using accessible formats, with translation and interpretation where necessary.
- Visual materials for people who cannot read or hear and audio formats for people who cannot see, is good practice, particularly when including women with disabilities, their representative groups, or other groups where literacy might be low.
- Within the workshops, separate discussions should be facilitated with women and men where necessary.

### How to carry out an analysis:

A more detailed explanation of gender and power analysis is laid out in Annex 1 (see [page 39](#)). This draws from gender and power analysis tools and approaches of WaterAid, World Vision and CARE International, with a focus on WASH.

Please note: Gender and power analysis can be an activity in itself or integrated into a wider context analysis, situation analysis or political economy analysis. But adequate space, time, budgets and expertise is needed to do this in either format.



**Figure 4: Gender and power analysis**

## Stage 3: Developing the project response

The analyses conducted in stage two can now be used to underpin and inform the design (or readjust the initial design) of project results, activities, indicators, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches and budgets, and to support consideration of risks and transition/exit approaches. All of these aspects could be discussed, considered and agreed in a workshop setting, with key stakeholders as priority participants.

Important note:

- Projects should be seeking to focus not only on women's access to WASH, but also on the social norms, labour, leadership and violence that impact women's experiences of WASH covered in Chapters 1 and 2.
- While some initial high-level mapping of project results, indicators and approaches might have been done earlier, it is only after the analysis stages that these should be finalised.

### Key steps

#### Discuss and articulate the project's theory of change

Using the understanding of the situation gained through the analyses in stage 2 above, a theory of change process can now be used to help discuss and develop the project's results, and set out how and why change could happen within the project.

Together with key stakeholders, discuss and articulate:

- The level of ambition of the project. Given the time and resources available and the current context, ask: 'What level of ambition can, should and will the project aim for to be inclusive, empowering or transformative?' (see Figure 3 on page 10).
- The vision that the project will contribute towards.
- The ultimate changes that are needed to realise the vision. Changes in women's agency and women's access to resources and institutional arrangements will likely feature across the theory of change at different levels.
- The intermediate changes that are needed to realise the longer-term changes.
- The immediate changes that are needed to realise the medium-term changes.
- The strategies/actions that could create/ catalyse the changes.
- Identifying project entry points within the WASH system – at household, community and institutional level – and how change in one, contributes to change in the other.

- The assumptions inherent within the theory, that need to hold true for the changes to be realised.
- The rationale and evidence that support the theory. For example, evidence and understanding of how and why gender equality and women's empowerment can be promoted in and through WASH. An indication of the strength of this evidence should also be included.

#### Defining project results

The theory of change approach can support the development of the project's results. Clearly articulating the project results first will allow teams to then determine the best indicators and measurement metrics.

Typically, projects will have:

- Impacts (high level, broader changes that they contribute towards);
- Outcomes (core project related changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviours/ practices), and;
- Outputs (tangible, direct changes and deliverables resulting from the project).

**Table 1: Examples of WASH project outcomes**<sup>3,31,32,33</sup>

	Short term	Medium term	Long term
	Inclusive (minimum standard)	Empowering (ambition)	Transformative (longer term change)
<b>Women's agency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women and men have greater awareness, knowledge and understanding of rights to water and sanitation.</li> <li>Leaders, decision makers, and men and boys have greater understanding of women's rights to and requirements of WASH.</li> <li>Women are involved in WASH project planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men and boys have increased self-awareness about unequal WASH roles and responsibilities within the household and at community level.</li> <li>Women and girls have greater self-confidence, ability to challenge unequal WASH roles and claim their rights to WASH.</li> <li>Women and girls have greater mobility during menstruation.</li> <li>Women and men are champions of gender equality in WASH.</li> <li>Women hold government/leaders to account for their WASH rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women and girls have greater negotiating power within the household/ relationships/ community in relation to WASH and overall.</li> <li>Attitudes in relation to women's roles in WASH leadership have changed with increased respect for women and support for them as WASH leaders (beyond community level only).</li> <li>Less restrictive/ harmful social attitudes/practices/ exclusion/taboo associated with menstruation and childbirth.</li> <li>Women and girls have more discretionary time due to reduced WASH work and the ability to decide how to use this time.</li> <li>Gender norms and roles related to WASH are shifting e.g., sharing of household WASH roles between men and women, no negative perceptions associated with menstruation.</li> </ul>

	Short term	Medium term	Long term
	Inclusive (minimum standard)	Empowering (ambition)	Transformative (longer term change)
<b>Women's access to resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WASH services meet different needs according to gender (plus age, disability etc).</li> <li>More gender responsive/ female-friendly sanitation and MHH facilities in schools, healthcare facilities, public areas</li> <li>Water at more convenient locations and times, e.g., on premises</li> <li>Better operating times, fairer fees for users</li> <li>Women and girls are safer when collecting water.</li> <li>Women and girls have increased access to information and appropriate products to manage menstruation safely and conveniently.</li> <li>Business opportunities related to WASH available to women and other marginalised groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved, reduced and/or more equitable distribution of unpaid household labour related to WASH such as water collection.</li> <li>Decrease in risks and burdens for women and girls directly related to WASH.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women have more control over WASH resources and assets.</li> <li>Reduced discrimination and violence based on gender related to WASH.</li> <li>Women equally accessing economic empowerment opportunities through WASH entrepreneurship including in non-traditional roles.</li> </ul>

	Short term	Medium term	Long term
	Inclusive (minimum standard)	Empowering (ambition)	Transformative (longer term change)
<b>Institutional arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More women are included in WASH management committees.</li> <li>Improved understanding of policy makers about rights to water and sanitation, how gender impacts WASH and how to address related inequalities.</li> <li>Some funding for gender responsive WASH services and infrastructure.</li> <li>Some involvement of women's rights organisations/groups in WASH sector work.</li> <li>Improved coordination and collaboration between WASH and gender government stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National policies and programmes ensure equitable and gender responsive WASH access.</li> <li>Women are actively and equally involved in WASH committees and WASH institutions, including involvement in decision making.</li> <li>Women have opportunities to voice expectations and influence decision-making within the WASH sector (e.g., citizen accountability to local and national government).</li> <li>Stronger commitment of policy makers to addressing WASH inequalities.</li> <li>Women and their representative groups active in accountability mechanisms around WASH.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women are represented equally in WASH leadership/ decision making and technical positions.</li> <li>Women are active and equal in the management of WASH.</li> <li>Women are active and equal in WASH governance processes at all levels.</li> <li>Sustainable, inclusive, long term financing models for WASH that prioritise women's and girls' requirements (e.g., WASH financing is gender responsive).</li> </ul>



WaterAid/Basile Ouedraogo

Before the borehole was installed by WaterAid, Cecile Oubda and Bibata Ouedraogo spent their time searching for clean water. Now, they have time to work and earn a living. Region of Centre-East, Burkina Faso. January 2018.

**Table 2: Examples of project outputs**

<b>Women's agency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Training conducted with men and women on rights to WASH.</li> <li>● Training conducted with women on WASH management.</li> <li>● Discussion forums/groups established/strengthened to support women and men to discuss WASH roles, responsibilities and gendered norms.</li> <li>● Training conducted of WASH/gender champions.</li> <li>● Forums facilitated between women and sub-national/national government and service providers to discuss WASH concerns.</li> <li>● Community and/or other forums facilitated to discuss and tackle taboos around menstruation and childbirth.</li> <li>● Community campaigns delivered to engage men and women on WASH rights and taboos around menstruation.</li> </ul>
<b>Women's access to resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender responsive/female-friendly sanitation facilities established in institutions and public places.</li> <li>● Water systems established in convenient locations for women and operate at times that suit users.</li> <li>● Hygiene products distributed within institutions.</li> <li>● Training conducted with women on WASH business skills.</li> <li>● Women linked with WASH business opportunities/financing.</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support and training (including mentorship) delivered.</li> <li>● WASH committees established and equitable in its make-up and decision making processes.</li> <li>● WASH operational and management plans developed/in place.</li> <li>● Costed policies/plans/roadmaps developed that support equitable WASH access.</li> <li>● Training conducted with policy makers on rights to water and sanitation, how gender impacts WASH and how to address related inequalities.</li> <li>● Training conducted with WASH authorities on WASH lifecycle costing.</li> <li>● Training conducted with WASH authorities on WASH monitoring, including gender responsive indicators and means of verification.</li> <li>● Advocacy conducted to promote WASH investments relevant to advancing gender equality.</li> <li>● Roundtables facilitated with policy makers to discuss and highlight WASH and gender concerns and inequalities.</li> <li>● National WASH policies produced/updated that address gendered realities and requirements.</li> <li>● Accountability mechanisms established that are accessible and used by women and girls.</li> <li>● Sex and gender disaggregated data collected and used to demonstrate how activities and outcomes are being experienced by women and girls compared to men and boys.</li> </ul>

## Defining project activities

Below are some examples of project activities that could feature within a WASH project that seeks to also enhance gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Table 3: Examples of project activities**

<b>Cross cutting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Monitor and evaluate project activities.</li><li>● Conduct additional gender analysis or baseline studies as necessary.</li><li>● Gather and share learning.</li><li>● Continually build internal project team capacity and confidence on supporting gender equality and women's empowerment within and through WASH.</li><li>● Establish and manage DNH and safeguarding procedures.</li><li>● Establish accessible and inclusive community feedback mechanisms.</li><li>● Establish and commit to robust processes to collect gender and sex disaggregated data.</li></ul>
<b>Women's agency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Facilitate and support gender dialogues at community level (discussing workloads, household decision making) using experienced facilitators/ women's rights partners. For example, utilise this <a href="#"><u>community dialogue manual</u></a> designed to help discussion and action on lifting and shifting unequal household burdens related to WASH and gender roles.<sup>34</sup></li><li>● Raise awareness on gender norms and roles with men and boys.</li><li>● Facilitate training for men and women to become WASH and gender champions and role models.</li><li>● Support WASH management committees to develop plans (e.g., WASH operational and management plans) and to strengthen skills in WASH management.</li><li>● Support and work with women's rights organisations to increase their participation in WASH sector conversations at local and national levels (advocacy, representation).</li><li>● Facilitate or support hygiene behaviour change campaigns that empower women and girls, helps share responsibility for domestic hygiene and reduces burden of care for older and sick relatives or children.</li><li>● Support women to engage in the planning and design of community WASH services. Provide skills development training, strengthen their voice in WASH committees, and ensure the design process includes meaningful consultation sessions with women users.</li><li>● Support women to build WASH businesses.</li></ul>

### Women's access to resources

- With women and authorities, design and establish gender responsive WASH infrastructure and services within communities and institutions. This provides guidelines for female-friendly public and community toilets.
- Facilitate training on the ongoing operation and management of WASH services.
- Influence and advocate for implementation of government policies and laws that support women, e.g., on promoting gender in WASH, protection against GBV.
- Support organisational development to women's rights organisations.
- Build, upgrade or support female-friendly toilets, following guidelines. This example from Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP) demonstrates a gender inclusive approach in practice.
- Support women's groups to promote sanitation activities at village level.
- Facilitate access to microfinance for women-owned WASH enterprises.

### Institutional arrangements

- Influence and advocate for improved government policies and guidelines for WASH services and approaches that respond to men's, women's and minority groups' differing WASH requirements.
- Influence and advocate for improved and better targeted WASH financing.
- Support skills training of authorities responsible for WASH and gender, e.g., WASH monitoring and data collection.
- Provide technical support to authorities responsible for WASH and gender to develop plans and policies, coordination mechanisms, and monitoring mechanisms for WASH and gender.
- Facilitate and broker relationships between WASH and gender stakeholders.
- Support women's engagement and leadership within WASH committees with relevant capacity building trainings, support models, etc.
- Support representation of women in WASH leadership and decision making at sub-national and national fora (to learn, share, advocate). This could include creation and utilisation of mentorship programmes for women in the sector, sector level working groups for women in WASH and sector monitoring.
- Raise awareness of WASH rights with decision and policy makers.

When developing the project's activities, it's also important to consider, discuss and agree how they will be delivered. This includes considerations of:

- **The project's staffing requirement:** For example, ensure that local gender expertise is included, and consider the balance of men/women in the staffing structure, and the roles/responsibilities women will have.
- **The project's governance structure:** For example, a project steering group or advisory group that includes representatives from women's rights groups, women community leaders and gender champions.
- **The activity timelines and sequencing:** Ensure the project includes adequate and dedicated time for project inception activities, including community consultations, gender and power analysis, baseline studies, and training in gender equality with project staff and partners. Ensure sufficient time is factored in for M&E, including regular community feedback sessions.

## Project assumptions

It's important to identify the assumptions inherent within the project's theory of change. The assumptions will need to hold true for the project results to be achieved. If they don't, the results are unlikely to be achieved – and/or the project approach may need to adapt or additional risk mitigation may need to be put in place.

Assumptions tend to be macro level events that the project cannot control for and/or things that are – through evidence or experience – widely regarded to be true. To determine assumptions, ask, consider and discuss the following: 'what needs to hold true for the desired results to be achieved?', 'are these likely to hold true?' and 'are these beyond the control of the project?'

Examples of assumptions include:

- The security situation in the project location remains stable.
- It is possible to work on the ground in the project location to conduct participatory research and M&E with women and girls.
- WASH infrastructure is procurable.

In some projects, a common assumption might be that men in the project location are supportive of women's engagement in the project, or women and men have time to engage in project activities. However, if the gender analysis shows that this is unlikely to hold true, then it shouldn't be included as an assumption. Instead, the project should seek to include activities to build men's support for women's engagement in the project – and should include appropriate risk mitigation strategies to manage any associated risks. Additionally, if time to engage (for both men and women) is found to be low (highly likely) consider other forums or groups they may already be involved in that some of the project activities could be integrated into.

- Siphesiwe 'Minky' Sithole stands in the riverbed that she and her extended family depend on for water, in New Thulwane, eSwatini. November 2018.

## Project indicators and M&E approaches

Having developed the project's results and activities, the indicators can now be considered.

Project indicators track and measure progress and support adaptive project management.

Below are some examples of indicators at different result levels. These examples are informed by work from several sources, including from the Ripple Effect Study,<sup>15</sup> the recent work of WHO and UNICEF's JMP supported by Emory University<sup>17</sup> and documented case studies.<sup>35</sup>

Note: Corporate level indicators can stem from project indicators. They usually comprise a small set of common project indicators with definitions that are aggregated across all projects.



WaterAid/Nyani Quarmyne/Panos

**Table 4: Examples of project indicators**

Change domains	Output indicators	Outcome indicators	Impact indicators
<b>Women's agency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of women engaged in WASH project planning</li> <li>% of women and girls reporting satisfaction with project established WASH facilities</li> <li># of women trained to become WASH/ gender champions</li> <li># of women supported to establish WASH businesses</li> <li># of women and girls reached through hygiene behaviour change activities (e.g., mass media work, community events etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of involvement in household decision making by women on WASH improvements and expenditure</li> <li># of women in leadership positions within WASH committees</li> <li>% of women reporting feeling safe while accessing community WASH services</li> <li># and % of women reporting capacity in WASH business management</li> <li>% of women who report using negative coping strategies (e.g., suppressing WASH needs)</li> <li>% of women who report feeling able to move freely during menstruation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of reported mobility/freedom of women to engage in social activities</li> </ul>
<b>Access to resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distance to water point</li> <li># of sustainable water systems established</li> <li># of inclusive, accessible toilets established</li> <li># of accessible handwashing facilities established</li> <li># and % of handwashing facilities that have successfully completed an accessibility audit</li> <li># and % of handwashing facilities with visual nudges/cues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># hours/days spent by women collecting water</li> <li># and % of women and men with access to drinking water from an improved source</li> <li># and % of women with access to improved sanitation facilities</li> <li># and % of women with access to improved handwashing facilities</li> <li>% of women/men who report knowledge of rights to water and sanitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># hours/days spent by women on household WASH roles</li> <li># hours/days spent by women on income generating activities</li> <li>Average attendance rate of girls in school</li> <li>% of household assets owned by women/men</li> <li>% of household income contributed by women</li> </ul>

Change domains	Output indicators	Outcome indicators	Impact indicators
<b>Access to resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># and % of project handwashing facilities that meet basic accessibility criteria</li> <li># and % of functioning handwashing facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of knowledge among women about rights to water and sanitation</li> <li>% of women/men observed to be practising targeted hygiene behaviours</li> <li>% of women reporting that WASH services are affordable</li> <li># and % of women engaged in water user groups</li> <li>% of women and men who think they should share household WASH tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prevalence of reported diarrhoea (72 hours recall period) among girls</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional structures/change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of women supported to engage with WASH committees</li> <li># of dialogues of rights to WASH facilitated between communities and decision makers</li> <li># of policy makers trained in rights to water and sanitation</li> <li># of operational and maintenance plans developed</li> <li># and % of policy makers trained in WASH financing</li> <li># and % of policy makers trained in WASH monitoring</li> <li># of learning products produced and disseminated</li> <li># of roundtables convened between WASH and gender stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level of confidence reported by women to hold decision makers to account for their WASH rights</li> <li>Level of comfort reported by women to discuss WASH problems with community leaders</li> <li># and % of roles within WASH management committees held by women/men</li> <li>Evidence that policies reflect women's WASH requirements</li> <li>Level of coordination between WASH and gender government stakeholders (e.g., joint planning; regular communication)</li> <li># and % of policy makers reporting capacity in e.g., WASH financing or WASH monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$ of WASH financing</li> </ul>

When developing indicators and M&E approaches, consider the following principles:

Preparation:

- Ensure separate focus group discussions for men and women.
- Ensure sufficient time is budgeted for M&E. Sensitive topics and areas of taboo must be approached and handled sensitively during data collection and this takes time. Especially for such sensitive topics, use data collectors that are a) same gender b) potentially already trusted by the community/group (e.g., local women's rights organisations, disabled people's organisations).
- Ensure there is sufficient budget and capacity available to measure the indicators in a robust way.
- Consider how data will be collected from women with disabilities.
- If carers will be interviewed, consider if transport and interpretation costs are needed for the organisations you partner with.
- Ensure all facilitators are trained in safeguarding principles and procedures.
- Ensure evaluation teams include and use local expertise and languages.
- Ensure DNH processes are known and followed throughout data collection – including the use of consent processes, e.g., photography and participation.

### Data collection

When collecting sensitive or personal data from women and girls, it is wise to ensure that enumerators are a) women and/or b) trained in appropriate collection of sensitive or personal data. For example, asking women and girls about their experiences of accessing water or how they manage menstruation, must be done with awareness and understanding of the social or cultural restrictions and taboos that exist around discussing these issues. Enumerators or data collectors of the same gender can help overcome some of these potential concerns, and must be done in an appropriate way with specialist support.

Engagement:

- Ensure women and girls are engaged throughout project M&E. For example, women and girls could be engaged as interviewees, interviewers, data enumerators, and as key stakeholders in dissemination and engagement around project findings/results.

Types of indicators and volume of data:

- Using both quantitative and qualitative indicators will help build a rich picture of progress.
- Ensure the indicators will yield sufficient and necessary information to support adaptive management.
- Always consider if the data is needed and how it will be used. Do not overburden women and communities by collecting data that is not necessary.
- Consider if secondary data can be used, especially at impact level.
- Include indicators to track assumptions in the theory of change.
- Data should be disaggregated by sex and other factors where useful and relevant. Ensure that appropriate monitoring methods are included and budgeted to enable robust disaggregation. For example, it may be necessary to include a household survey
- Include approaches that seek to capture unintended outcomes as well as intended project results.
- Beware of claiming attribution at the impact level.

Feedback findings:

- Ensure there are regular opportunities to report monitoring findings/results and engage communities in these findings. Ensure there are opportunities for women's voices to be heard.



● Batauuka and her daughter started growing vegetables in their backyard garden during the COVID-19 pandemic. Kampala, Uganda. October 2020.

## Considering risks

A standard simple risk assessment process typically includes the following steps:

- Discuss possible project risks associated with the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in and through WASH. Ideally, this brainstorming should take place with project stakeholders. Information gathered during the situational and gender analyses can help to inform this brainstorming. Lessons from previous project work will also be useful here. As throughout the design process, attention should be paid to different social groups of women and intersectionality. For example, what might not be risky for some women, can be risky for others.
- Discuss, consider and rate (e.g., high, medium, low) the likelihood of the risk and the severity of the impact if the risk were to be realised.
- Give each risk a total risk score – a combination of the likelihood and severity of the risk.
- Discuss and consider possible mitigation options that help to reduce, eliminate, or avoid the risks.
- Consider if the 'residual risk' – the remaining risk after mitigation measures are applied – is acceptable to proceed. If it is not, additional mitigation measures may need to be proposed, or amendments made to the project design.
- Revisit and review the risk assessment regularly during project implementation, adding or amending risks and controls.

The following are examples of common risks and possible mitigation strategies within WASH projects that are seeking to promote gender equality and women's empowerment:

Example risk	Example mitigation strategies
<b>Participation in focus group discussions has a financial cost for women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide participants with a per diem.</li> <li>● Hold discussions as close to home as possible, to lesson travel costs.</li> <li>● Utilise existing groups – e.g., local women’s groups – to help gather inputs and insights without adding additional time burdens.</li> </ul>
<b>Women’s participation in the project (e.g., in project meetings/focus groups) exposes them to harm, harassment, discrimination or backlash</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hold single sex focus groups.</li> <li>● Ensure anonymity in project documentation/reporting.</li> <li>● Ensure the location of project meetings is safe and comfortable.</li> <li>● Hold meetings with men and women to explain project aims and purpose of meetings.</li> <li>● Ensure the project targets men and boys (and older members of families/communities who may hold power) with activities that help shift their negative assumptions about gender roles related to WASH and actively engages them as project participants in gender equality outcomes.</li> <li>● Work with community leaders, formal and informal, as potential champions of gender equality and women’s empowerment in WASH.</li> <li>● Ensure there are opportunities for regular community engagement and anonymous feedback through feedback mechanisms.</li> <li>● Work with, involve and consult local leaders from the design stage onwards.</li> <li>● Work with women’s rights partners to reduce risks of community backlash against women who are seen to be challenging the traditional gender norms and who can support women with services, advice and protection should anything happen.</li> <li>● Monitor the projects ‘unintended consequences’ and take rectifying actions immediately if the projects actions are increasing harm, risk or backlash against women.</li> </ul>
<b>Women’s participation in the project increases pressure on their time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use both quantitative and qualitative measures to track changes in women’s time and labour at intervals throughout the project.</li> </ul>
<b>The most marginalised women are not engaged in the project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Gender and power analysis at the start of a project should help identify socially excluded groups (including women). Design specific ways in which project activities can reach excluded groups in collaboration with the groups themselves. Then monitor if this is happening, including why and why not.</li> <li>● Work with rights-based organisations representing socially excluded groups to better understand and meet their requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>WASH services are not appropriate or safe for women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Perform accessibility and safety audits pre-design to inform design/rehabilitation of service.</li> <li>● Focus group discussions with women on the barriers to using services – at the beginning, middle and end of the project.</li> </ul>

## Considering transition approaches

Thinking about transition requires asking 'what will/needs to happen when the project comes to an end?'. Transition is closely linked to sustainability – and therefore thinking about transition also requires asking: 'What does the project need to include to ensure the outcomes and outputs are sustained after the project ends?'.

Examples of things to consider when thinking about transition:

- Discuss transition options and approaches early and transparently with project stakeholders and partners.
- Include activities and budget within the project to support transition.
- Consider how and by whom WASH infrastructure will be managed. Do WASH management committees already exist? Can the project support and strengthen these? How could women lead or engage in the management of infrastructure going forward?
- What role could women's right groups play after the project ends? What capacities might they need and how can the project support these during the project period?
- What role will local authorities need to play? How can the project support authorities – through capacity strengthening and technical assistance, for example – so that they have the skills, processes, plans and systems in place to sustain outcomes and outputs after the project ends?
- Is future funding needed? How could this be raised? Will this funding come from donors, local authorities, private sector organisations, tariffs? Are costed roadmaps in place – could the project support the development of these with local authorities?
- Can the project support the development/ strengthening of WASH operational and management plans? Who will 'own' these during and after the project ends?



● Ivy Michelo washes fresh tomatoes with clean water from the local borehole. Men and women from the community work together and grow crops, which they sell after harvest to raise money for the operation and maintenance of the local water point. Milimo village, Zambia. February 2019.

- How will ongoing monitoring of WASH facilities take place? Can the project build capacities in WASH data collection and monitoring to support ongoing monitoring after the project ends?
- How will community feedback and accountability mechanisms be sustained after the project ends? Who will own and manage these?
- How can stakeholders continue to use safeguarding feedback mechanisms after the project ends? Who will manage these?

## Develop and review the project budget using a gender lens

There are two main steps in the development of a gender responsive budget:

**Step 1:** Develop a budget ensuring that all direct and indirect costs associated with the activities (developed above and based on comprehensive gender and power analysis and engagement of key stakeholders) are captured in full.

**Step 2:** Reflect on the budget through a gender lens and consider:

1. Does it resource the gender and power analysis (or situational analysis etc) adequately to allow the time, expertise and scope needed?
2. Does it capture and financially support the different WASH requirements of women, girls, men, boys and gender minorities to be fulfilled as identified in the gender analysis? i.e., infrastructure that meets the safety, privacy, social and biological requirements of all women users?
3. Does it help to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment?
4. Are there any possible unintended consequences that may enhance rather than reduce gender inequalities?
5. Are women's organisations or gender experts' costs and involvement adequately covered?

During both steps, it is recommended to consult and engage with the key stakeholders identified in stage 1 to ensure that costs are reasonable

and sufficient, and that they capture project requirements for women and girls.

Based on reflections in step 2, it may be necessary to revisit project aims and activities and make adjustments or additions.

Below are some examples of items that could be included in WASH project budgets, to help ensure they are gender responsive:

- Regular training for project staff on gender equality and safeguarding.
- Per diems/costs for participation of women and girls in focus group discussions.
- Organisational development costs for partner women's rights organisations.
- Costs for ongoing gender thematic expertise.
- Costs to carry out accessibility audits and safety reviews of WASH infrastructure.
- Costs to cover the M&E of project indicators – especially gender focussed indicators. Consider if additional costs are needed to gather data from women with disabilities – e.g., costs for transport, carer support, or interpretation.
- Costs to cover regular community feedback and reflection sessions with WASH users who are women and girls, in particular.
- Costs to cover accessibility and inclusion requirements such as translation and interpreters.
- Costs to cover risk mitigation strategies.



● Ruth Dialo with the rest of the soap and shea butter making group in Samabogo, Mali. April 2018.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this guidance is to support implementing organisations to better integrate gender equality into WASH projects, in order to achieve more sustainable WASH outcomes and contribute to women's empowerment. While this ambition is not new, the commitment and expertise on how to do this is often lacking. It is hoped that intentional and systematic approaches to WASH project design will help move commitments into more concrete outcomes which benefit both universal access to WASH and the advancement of gender equality more broadly.

● Fatimata Coulibaly, a member of the Benkadi women's group, oversees the water monitoring and management of the water tower, Circle of Bla, Segou Region, Mali. February 2019.



# Annex 1: Tools

## Steps for a rapid women's safety audit process

This is a rapid process for conducting a safety audit. A more detailed version is available in this [handbook](#)<sup>36</sup> and these [accessibility audits](#).<sup>37</sup>

**Step one:** Gather your team. Since the focus is to understand and respond to the safety and security of women and girls in relation to WASH, ensure the team is mainly women, of varying ages, along with staff from your institution and community leaders or decision makers (if possible).

**Step two:** Do a rapid situational analysis of the essential services in the community that are relevant to WASH – via observation and/or mapping with community members.

**Step three:** Interview key service providers to understand their perspectives of any accessibility and safety issues or priorities.

**Step four:** Hold focus group discussions with diverse groups of women, men, girls, boys and gender minorities to understand how service gaps affect different people. Plus, conduct in-depth interviews with women and girls to gain deeper insights into the safety and accessibility issues they face when accessing these facilities.

**Step five:** Do a safety (and accessibility) audit walk with the group. Discuss and observe the dimensions of safety and accessibility on their journey to and from, and use of the facility. Talk about the different forms of harassment or risks they face at different points of the day. These [accessibility and safety audit tools](#) can be utilised to assess toilets in schools, markets, community locations and also to assess MHH facilities.

**Step six:** Design project activities to address the concerns and risks. Project activities can also support community representatives to work with the local government and service providers to address essential safety issues with the services, thereby increasing safety for the community.

**Step seven:** Use your organisation advocacy to lobby for safer and accessibility service design. Draw from resources such as this guide on [\*Female-friendly public and community toilets: a guide for urban planners and decision makers\*](#).

## How to carry out a gender and power analysis

Gender and power analysis can take many forms. It can take place as a specific activity or by incorporating the key dimensions into a wider situational analysis, political economy analysis or context analysis.

The best time to carry out this analysis is at the beginning of your project or, better still, in the initial planning stages. This analysis will then affect your thinking about where to focus the energy, what issues to cover, what types of activities are needed, and therefore what budget and expertise are required.

This draws from gender and power analysis tools and approaches of WaterAid,<sup>38</sup> World Vision<sup>39</sup> and CARE International,<sup>40</sup> with a focus on WASH.

### Gathering information

In order to be well-rounded, gender and power analysis draws on a range of different sources. This includes (but does not have to be limited to):

- **A review of existing literature and information as well as policies and commitments** that help demonstrate the position of women, girls and gender minorities in relation to men and boys in WASH. Along with political commitments and national/subnational standards or guidelines.
- **Direct or primary research** to capture experiences of all gender groups and marginalised genders, in the geographical areas of focus.

## Primary data collection – choose at least two from list below:

Ways to gather the information	Key principles and useful tools to use
Focus group discussions with women, men and gender minorities (separate, plus some combined groups)	<p>Use participatory tools to help spark conversations and gather information such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Women's and men's daily activities</b> to assess how each group spends their time comparatively (WaterAid Tool, available <a href="#">here</a> on page 15–18).</li> <li>● <b>Who does, who decides</b><sup>41</sup> exercise to assess WASH-related gender roles, and decision-making responsibilities (WaterAid Tool, available <a href="#">here</a> on page 19–25).</li> <li>● <b>Social mapping</b> to understand the different social groups and individuals' access to and control over WASH resources and services (World Vision Tool, available <a href="#">here</a> on page 36–39).</li> </ul>
One to one interview with community members (men and women)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Using women interviewers to ensure the women respondents feel able to talk freely and honestly.</li> <li>● Make sure interviews are at time and location that best suit interviewees and enable them to speak safely and openly. For example, women members of WASH associations might prefer separate conversations.</li> </ul>
Interviews with men and women community leaders (formal or informal leaders)	
Discussions with existing WASH User Committees/Associations	
Interviews or workshops with national government officials and/or municipal officials linked to WASH and gender, plus other WASH stakeholders of interest e.g., other INGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use this opportunity to get a 'big picture' understanding of how the WASH sector and government understand and apply gender equality considerations to their WASH work. <a href="#">This tool</a> by WaterAid helps explore gender within the WASH system – use step 1, page 8–9 to help guide your discussions.<sup>42</sup></li> </ul>
Interview and/or workshops with local women's group(s) and national women's rights organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use this opportunity to explore gender roles and relations at household and community level.</li> <li>● Additionally, use this opportunity to explore the 'big picture' of gender within the wider WASH system with the tools in the box above.</li> <li>● These methods can be used to both gather the information itself, and to test and analyse the findings of other data collection methods above and below.</li> </ul>
Workshop with local project staff plus local women's groups or women's rights organisations and representatives of the community	
Conduct an accessibility and safety audit of existing communal WASH facilities (such as shared community toilets or public toilets, water points and groundwater sources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Carry out these audits with a group of women and girls, as well as other members of the community that might have access or safety issues.</li> <li>● These accessibility and safety audits from WaterAid can be used and simplified.</li> <li>● WaterAid's <a href="#">Female-friendly public and community toilets and assessment tool</a> can also be used or simplified.</li> </ul>

## Secondary data

Desk review of national, sub national WASH and gender policies and commitments, e.g., National Gender Policy; WASH policies, strategies and guidelines.

Review statistics (disaggregated by gender) on access to and participation in WASH as well as indicators related to social norms, such as levels of asset ownership by gender, access to and use of sexual and reproductive health services, decision making at household level and educational attainment rates. These can be obtained from specific WASH statistics and sources such as national Demographic Health Surveys.

Review previous project evaluations or research.

Review international sources – such as UN, World Bank or donor country reports in relation to WASH and gender.

Analyse:

- What requirements do they lay out for gender responsive WASH?
- What information do they provide about current state of WASH for different genders?
- What trends, themes, gaps and vulnerabilities do they identify?

## Questions to explore as part of your gender and power analysis

A gender and power analysis is a process of asking and answering a series of questions related to the area of WASH that you are planning to work on and its gendered differences.

If you are doing this analysis within a wider context or situational analysis, you will no doubt already be exploring similar questions to those laid out below. But to make sure it contributes to a thorough understanding and picture of gendered situation; you will have to be very deliberate and intentional about asking specific questions and ensuring that you disaggregate the information by gender.

If you are doing a stand-alone gender and power analysis to inform your work and project design, you will have more room to explore a range of questions and use a range of formats (as above) to collect that information.

Household:

1. What are the typical roles and responsibilities (or expectations) that men, women, boys and girls have in relation to WASH (include cooking, cleaning, caring for sick relatives, caring for children, bathing, water collection, water treatment and toilet management)?
2. What income generating activities do they need water for?
3. How much time and energy is spent on WASH activities? What do these activities involve? (Think about the collection and treatment of water, the maintenance and cleaning of toilets or sanitation areas, household hygiene tasks such as cleaning and washing clothes, and water access for use in toilets, for cleaning or cooking, and for bathing).
4. How does WASH, or the lack of these things, impact on life, for women and girls, compared to men and boys (and other gender minorities)?
5. Who makes decisions? How are decisions made about WASH-related needs? (Include focus on the purchase of menstrual products, water and sanitation waste collection, or using shared or public toilets versus the acquisition of a household toilet).
6. Are there any safety concerns that prevent any genders from using water, sanitation or washing facilities?
7. How well are women and girls able to meet their menstrual health and hygiene needs?
8. What are the norms and expected practice around managing menstruation in the household and in the community?

Community/local level:

1. Who currently owns, controls or manages resources related to WASH? (Think here about water points, water collection technologies, toilets, handwashing facilities).
2. How are decisions made about community water or sanitation facilities/infrastructure? (Explore budget, location, what is priority etc).
3. What is women's involvement compared to men's involvement in any of the decisions above?
4. What is known about women and girls' requirements of WASH facilities compared to the requirements of men and boys?
5. What is the make-up of water user associations or committees – gender and role breakdown?
6. Who owns and operates businesses related to WASH in the community?
7. How is maintenance organised and who is involved in this? Are women and men trained in maintenance? Are women and men paid for this work (similar or differently)?
8. What is the status (in terms of safety and accessibility) of current WASH facilities for women and girls (and gender minorities)? (Use [accessibility and safety audits](#) and this assessment<sup>43</sup> of the gender sensitivity of public or shared toilets). How do different gender identities feel about these facilities?
9. What local women's groups exist and to what extent are they involved in WASH issues?

Sub national or national WASH system:

1. What sector policies and/or strategies are in place? Is there a WASH policy or strategy that includes targets for gender inclusion or equality?
2. Are women represented in ministries and WASH providers? To what extent?
3. Are there women's rights organisations active? Are they involved in WASH advocacy or programming?
4. Are the specific needs and requirements of different genders addressed by WASH policies, plans and implementation work?
5. Are there policies and practice that support women's involvement and leadership in climate change adaptation strategies – especially related to WASH?

## Analysing and using your findings

Once the key information has been gathered, using the different methods listed above a **problem analysis** needs to be undertaken:

- Summarise and analyse the **key issues/ barriers** that have emerged and prioritise which ones your project can act on. Use the gender analysis to try to unpack their root causes.
- Use the analysis to inform your project design or revision (see stage 1, [page 19](#)).

Principles to remember:

- Ensure separate focus group discussions for men and women during gender analysis.
- Use women facilitators or data collectors during focus groups or interviews with women.
- Ensure all facilitators are trained in safeguarding principles and procedures.
- Ensure all participants can raise concerns on the project or process through an accessible and confidential feedback mechanism.
- Ensure focus groups take place in a safe and comfortable environment.
- Anonymise contributions where necessary to ensure safety and when requested.
- Ensure that focus group discussions take place at a suitable and convenient time of day for women.
- Use consent processes for interviews, information use and photography.
- Emphasise at all points that participation is voluntary and can be stopped at any time.
- Financially support engagement where appropriate, particularly if you are asking people to take time away from their daily work (paid or unpaid).
- Utilise existing groups (e.g., community-based women's groups, hospital or WASH user groups etc.) where possible, to reduce time burdens but equally be conscious of missing voices from existing groups and seek other ways to fill these gaps.
- Ensure the duration of the analysis stage is sufficient to allow for meaningful participation of women and girls.

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● Sadia collects water from the pond sand filter plant which treats the saline water to make it safe for drinking. Kathamari, Bangladesh. September 2018.



This guidance document would not have been possible without the support and contribution of the following people and organisations: WaterAid – with special thanks to Adnan I. A. Qader, Fauzia Aliu, Tara Bartnik, Sue Cavill, Pamela Chisanga, Livia Da Costa, Justino Da Silva, Hannah Greig, Chelsea Huggett, Ella Lines, Eleanor Lucas, Mubiana Muyangwa, Priya Nath, Martina Nee, Tripti Rai and Alice Woodland. CARE, Global Water Challenge, WSUP, Unilever, World Vision, Chris Kamau and Caroline McCausland.

With contribution and funding from The Coca-Cola Company and Diageo.

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