

## WASH AND GENDER

### GENDER AND COMMUNITY MOBILISATION

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### Introduction

Community mobilisation is a process by which members of communities, through active participation and behavioural change identify and overcome challenges themselves in an empowering, and sustainable manner.

Because community mobilisation actions target all groups within a community, including marginalised groups such as women, people with disabilities, the elderly and ethnic minorities, the needs of the whole community are brought to attention and addressed, everyone is educated, and change becomes more sustainable<sup>1</sup>.

Evidence from many past projects shows that when women’s involvement is a key principle, the projects have greater long-term success. This document will look at why women’s participation can be beneficial to projects, before looking at the challenges faced when incorporating gender equality into planning and implementing such projects, actions and good practice to follow to overcome such challenges, the outcomes and impacts of these actions and useful indicators to measure women’s roles in Community mobilisation projects.



### Key Challenges to Women in Community Mobilisation

A variety of factors can result in women being less active than men during Community mobilisation activities, these are discussed below.

<b>Cultural Limitations</b>	<i>Male Dominance</i>	In one Brazilian village it was noted that women could not easily hold positions of responsibility due to long set perceptions, and cultural norms of men being superior to women <sup>2</sup> .
	<i>Male Respect</i>	In South Africa women are usually not allowed to attend meetings if men are present, and when they do attend the women must sit behind the men out of respect, and not speak out loud <sup>3</sup> .
	<i>Male Support</i>	One Brazilian village saw that women would not take on roles of responsibility if not supported by their husbands <sup>4</sup> .

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, 2012. *Communication Strategy on Water, Sanitation & Hygiene for Diarrhoea & Cholera Prevention*. UNICEF.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, 2006. *Gender, Water and Sanitation: Case Studies on Best Practices*. UN.

<sup>3</sup> Mjoli, N. & Nenzhelele, R., 2009. *Assessment of Gender Equity in Water User Associations*. Water Research Commission.

<sup>4</sup> (United Nations, 2006). As no 2 above.

	<i>Elder Respect</i>	In some cultures, women cannot take on positions of leadership if meetings will be attended by older women of the same community as it is considered disrespectful to do so <sup>5</sup> .
	<i>Other Constraints</i>	Women's participation in community development requires flexibility throughout the village. They can often be excluded from participation because of everyday time constraints and expectations of their spouses, depending on their age and position in the family structure. In Cambodia women could not take on responsible roles in WASH platforms because they did not have time to attend meetings due to household chores and working hours, and because of the traditional status hierarchies of age, gender and wealth which marginalised them within their communities <sup>6</sup>
<b>Social Consideration</b>	<i>Status</i>	Social standings within a community can determine whether women partake in Community Mobilisation activities. In Nepal caste was perceived as an obstacle to be addressed: women from lower castes did not attend meetings due to societal norms and their own perception of inferiority <sup>7</sup> .
<b>Lack of Knowledge</b>	<i>Illiteracy and Schooling</i>	Amongst the poor, females spend less time in education than men in the same communities <sup>8</sup> . They also make up more than two thirds of illiterate individuals across the world. This makes it more challenging to educate women in development issues.
	<i>Technological Knowledge</i>	Women are typically less knowledgeable in science and technology and so feel they cannot make decisions in planning solutions to problems <sup>9</sup> .

<sup>5</sup>United Nations, 2005. *Women & Water*. UN Division for the Advancement of Women.

<sup>6</sup> Greene, K., Romano, G. & Morshed, G., 2011. *Women's WASH Platforms in Bangladesh and Cambodia*. Oxfam.

<sup>7</sup> WaterAid in Nepal, 2009. *Seen But Not Heard: A Review of the Effectiveness of Gender Approaches in Water and Sanitation Service Provision*. Nepal: WaterAid.

<sup>8</sup> Olinto, P., Beegle, K., Sobrado, C. & Uematsu, H., 2013. *The State of the Poor: Where are the Poor, Where is Extreme Poverty Harder to End, What is the Current Profile of the World's Poor?*

<sup>9</sup> UNEP, 2004. *Women and Water Management: an Integrated Approach*. UNEP, WEDO, United Nations Foundation.



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Women can play a vital role in ensuring the success, and sustainability of community mobilisation programmes.

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## Good Practice for Community Mobilisation

There are several actions which must always be included in Community mobilisation programmes in order for the best outcome to be achieved. These Good Practice steps are described below, with specific relation to Gender integration and examples from the field.

Good Practice	Why is it important?	With Gender
<i>Needs Assessment</i>	Investigating the behaviours of a community can guide the programming of Community Mobilisation by informing on what actions need to be taken. Looking at WASH behaviours determines which behaviours need to be triggered during the programmes. Looking at social and cultural relationships determines what capacity building techniques are required.	Looking at gender positions and relationships within a community determines what is required in the first steps of Community Mobilisation. Is Gender Sensitisation required? Is Gender Mainstreaming training needed? Can women actively participate in meetings and trainings?
<i>Diverse Engagement</i>	The process must be inclusive otherwise activities are not adopted properly and the needs of marginalised groups are not brought to attention resulting in the community as a whole not observing the full benefits of Community Mobilisation <sup>10</sup> .	By engaging all groups within a community, including those often marginalised and especially women, the household WASH needs are recognised and addressed. Women must be able to input into the improvement of the community.
<i>Authentic Participation</i>	Essential to Community Mobilisation success is community members taking part in triggering activities and facilitation promotions. If not everyone attends the informative sessions the community as a	Women are normally responsible for household WASH and so are essential to Community Mobilisation; they must actively participate. Women are good at encouraging others to adopt new behaviours and change.

<sup>10</sup> Harlow et al. 2010. *Resource Guide: working effectively with women and men in water, sanitation and hygiene programs*. Australia: IWDA and UTS

	whole will not be motivated to change and become self-reliant.	Women’s participation in meetings leads to better solutions and increased awareness of WASH requirements within the community <sup>11</sup> .
<i>Strong Leaders</i>	Strong Leaders are essential in Community Mobilisation: their influencing others, and in decision-making ensure that the program successfully benefits the community and becomes sustainable <sup>12</sup> .	Having female leaders enables community women to become involved with Community Mobilisation programs actively, and for their needs and values to be considered during decision-making <sup>13</sup> .

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## Actions: Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the process by which gender is integrated into projects so that women’s needs, and the effects of a project on women are considered and responded to. To achieve gender mainstreaming it is essential to enhance community awareness of women’s needs and sensitise each gender to the other’s needs and uses for WASH facilities.

### Actions

- The community must be made aware of the differing WASH needs between the two genders.
- Sensitisation sessions should be facilitated by both men and women.
- Recognise that women are largely responsible for water collection and household hygiene and sanitation and consequently have a lot of knowledge about WASH.
- The recognition of women’s roles as water users leads to communities encouraging and supporting women in decision-making roles and positions of power within the community.

### Outcomes

- Gender sensitisation: awareness of differing needs and responsibilities and acknowledgement in planning and implementation.
- Respect for women's input in Community mobilisation meetings and activities. Support for women in decision-making and authoritative roles.

### Indicators

- % of men and women present at Gender Mainstreaming activities.
- % of men and women educated in the opposite sex's WASH roles, responsibilities and needs.
- % of men who support women in decision-making roles.

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF 2012. (as <sup>1</sup> above)

<sup>12</sup> Mercy Corps n.d. *Guide to Community Mobilisation Programming*. Available at <https://www.mercycorps.org>

<sup>13</sup> Jalal 2014. *Women, Water, and Leadership*. ADB Briefs. Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank



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It is important for successful community mobilisation that both men and women are become sensitised to the needs of the opposite sex, and recognise the worth of each gender's roles in WASH activities.

## Active Participation

Active participation in a programme ensures that the best outcomes can be achieved in a community. By ensuring that women, and other minority groups actively participate in Community Mobilisation activities, the projects gain enhanced understandings of who and what to focus on and how to mobilise the entire community to change their behaviours.

### Actions

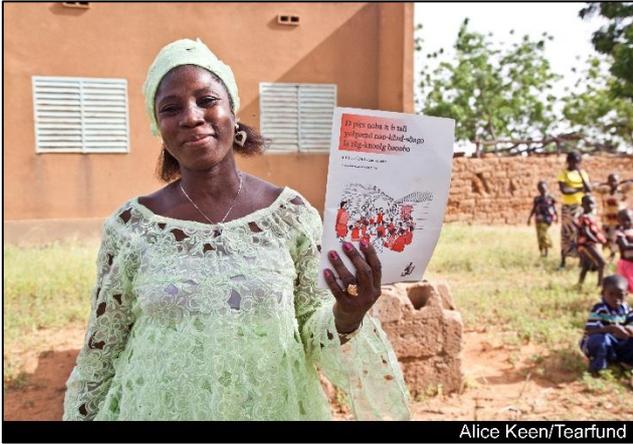
- Remove obstacles to ensure women's attendance,
- Hold focus groups and restricted sex meetings if necessary,
- Use mixed sex facilitators,
- Use role models and natural leaders,
- Peer education especially through Women's Groups,
- Create trust within the community and make environments for sharing,
- Ensure gender integration.

### Outcomes

- Awareness of the roles, responsibilities and needs of all groups within the community,
- Whole community is mobilised to change WASH behaviours,
- Knowledge of key issues that need to be addressed is learnt.

### Indicators

- % of women trained in leadership and community mobilisation,
- % of community men and women present at Community Mobilisation activities,
- Change in awareness of female-specific WASH issues.



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Female facilitators teach the importance of hygiene. Training facilitators is key to mobilising the community

## Create opportunities

By creating opportunities for women to have equal roles and responsibilities as men within the Community Mobilisation process not only are programme goals likely to be met and sustained, but women are empowered through inclusion in decision-making.

### Actions

- Facilitate specialised training in leadership, technical matters and committee management,
- Create shared roles and responsibilities for men and women, often gender divided based on skills,
- Promote Gender equality and integration within the community,
- Enforce a quota for women in decision-making roles,
- Facilitate participatory discussions so that women's voices are heard,
- Create community organisations, women's groups and Self-Help Groups with positions of authority and respect.

### Outcomes

- Female empowerment: women earn respect from others in the community, self-confidence and support from men
- Women are able to input in Community Mobilisation meetings
- Women in roles of authority - their needs and inputs are considered equally
- Increased mobilisation by facilitating leadership and training of others.

### Indicators

- % of men and women in decision-making roles,
- % of men and women present at training schemes,
- % of men who support women in positions of authority.

## Summary

This guidance has provided advice on the key considerations which enable the successful inclusion of women in Water User Groups.