

# Leadership and Voice in WASH

## Background to our work on this topic

Strong leadership and voice are critical for positive change and sustainable access to WASH services. Inclusive leadership ensures equal access for all, and voice – people's ability to express opinions and influence decisions – is vital to avoid exclusion. The Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS-ISF) partners with WASH actors to build capacity and inform policies for inclusive services. Our work aims to understand and change prevailing power structures, harnessing transformative leadership and voice through evidence and insights.

## Our recent thinking and expertise

Our team at UTS-ISF has been involved in several research projects focusing on leadership and voice. Our most recent work and thinking spans the following two broad areas:

### 1. Transformative leadership for inclusive WASH

This work builds on a close collaboration with SNV in Bhutan, Nepal, and Lao PDR. It involved research on gender-transformative leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic; implementing the Make Rights Real approach with local government leaders in Bhutan; promoting transformative leadership for inclusive WASH in Bhutan; and implementing our Climate Heroes program with local leaders in Lao PDR and Nepal. We continue to work together on strengthening local leadership in these countries, empowering government officials to drive inclusive WASH services and advance equality in the face of climate change.

### 2. Women's leadership and voice in WASH

Our work on women's leadership and voice builds on years of gender and WASH research in collaboration with research institutions, CSOs, government stakeholders, and practitioners. A recent project focused on gender equality and women's empowerment in WASH, implemented across Asia and the Pacific. The research identified incentives and partnership models to enhance women's leadership and voice, gathered evidence of women's involvement in WASH-related institutions, and developed innovative impact measurement methods.

Our research on gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH with World Vision Bangladesh supported the implementation of Citizen Voice and Action, mobilising citizens to monitor and advocate for better government WASH services.

Through our work we have found evidence that strengthening leadership and voice in WASH is crucial for driving change. Fostering transformative leadership in WASH creates pathways for strengthened leadership in other areas, opening opportunities for diverse groups to lead and drive change beyond WASH.

# Selected examples of our work on Leadership and Voice in WASH



## Qualities of transformative leaders in WASH: A study of gender-transformative leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic

This research article shares findings and reflections from a positive deviance study involving WASH sector leaders from Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Nepal during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Gender-transformative leadership in WASH during the COVID-19 pandemic

This learning brief shares key insights from a research project that explored how WASH sector leaders responded during the challenging time of COVID-19 to both ensure the needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups were represented and heard, and found ways to transform personal perspectives, norms, and systemic patterns towards gender equality.



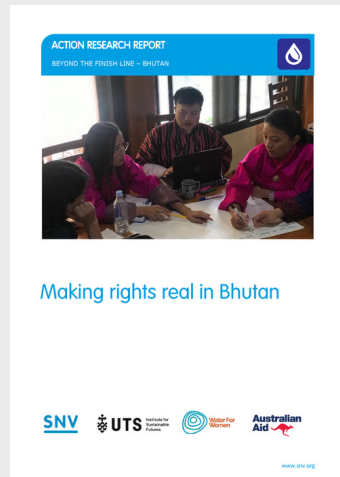
## Gender-transformative leadership video stories

Seven short video stories from six gender-transformative leaders from Bhutan, Lao PDR and Nepal.



## Strengthening transformative leadership for inclusive WASH in Bhutan

This research report shares key outcomes for the leaders who participated in SNV's 'Transformative leadership for inclusive WASH in a post-COVID world' project conducted in Bhutan (2021-2022). Leaders included people working in local government, women with disabilities, and health workers.



## Making rights real in Bhutan

This report captures the action research process related to implementing the Make Rights Real approach in Bhutan. The approach supports the use of the human rights framework to drive and shape the delivery of safe, sustainable, and universal WASH services, and was implemented by SNV with the support from UTS-ISF.



## Inspiring local governments to mainstream climate action into WASH

This case study report shares learnings from a methodological innovation, the Q-methodology, to understand and address local government motivations and barriers to tackling climate change impacts on delivering inclusive WASH services.



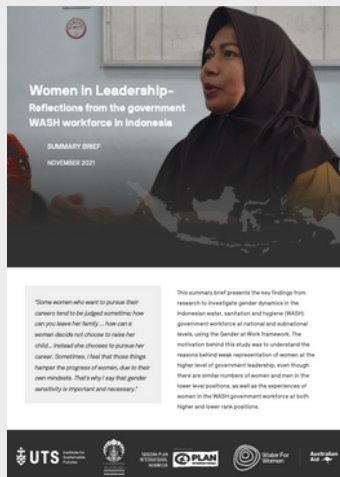
## Leadership and voice: More than 'add women and stir'

This think piece explores women's leadership and voice, and it argues that transformative development requires women in all their diversity to have opportunities to lead and have their voices heard. This article was produced as part of the 'Gender in WASH: Partnerships, Workforce and Impact Assessment' project.



## Gender equality in the government water, sanitation, and hygiene workforce in Indonesia: an analysis through the Gender at Work framework

This paper aimed to investigate gender dynamics in the Indonesian government's WASH workforce at national and subnational levels and evolve conceptual foundations to be used in similar studies implementing the Gender at Work framework.



## **Women in Leadership: Reflections from the government WASH workforce in Indonesia**

This summary brief presents the key findings from research to investigate gender dynamics in the Indonesian WASH government workforce at national and subnational levels, using the Gender at Work framework.



## **“Women who have a WASH job like me are proud and honoured”: Summary Brief**

This summary brief describes how women can participate in and benefit from being part of the government WASH workforce in Cambodia.



## **Case study from the Nobo Jatra Program: Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH**

This learning report presents key findings from research conducted in Bangladesh. It highlights recommendations for fostering gender-transformative social accountability for WASH system performance and service delivery that leads to gender-transformation, disability inclusion and pro-poor empowerment.



## **Outcome Assessment – Policy Brief: Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH**

This Policy Brief shares a selection of outcome assessment findings of gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH. The outcome assessment was carried out at the final stage of the research project.



## **Rural Piped-Water Enterprises in Cambodia: A Pathway to Women’s Empowerment?**

Women and their families are leading piped water enterprises in Cambodia and in other contexts, drawing on their own finance, capabilities, and drive to provide their communities with accessible water sources for domestic use. This study involved asking women leaders if they felt they were empowered in a range of ways, drawing on well-established empowerment frameworks.

For more information: [www.uts.edu.au/isf](http://www.uts.edu.au/isf)

For our WASH projects and resources: <https://www.uts.edu.au/isf/explore-research/international-development/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash>

Who we are: We work to create a world that is socially, ecologically and economically just and safe, where everyone has the resources and skills they need to flourish. UTS-ISF brings together expertise from a diverse range of disciplines to deliver practical solutions for our partners, and to empower our students to effect positive change in the years to come.

Let's collaborate: For more information or to collaborate with us, please contact Diana Gonzalez – [diana.gonzalezbotero@uts.edu.au](mailto:diana.gonzalezbotero@uts.edu.au)