



Civil Society  
**WASH**  
Learning Fund

Inclusive WASH  
Advancing Equity And Supporting The Most Vulnerable



Australian Government  
AusAID

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## Inclusive WASH Advancing Equity And Supporting The Most Vulnerable

Civil Society Organisations implementing AusAID Civil Society WASH Fund activities are using a variety of approaches to ensure their WASH programs are inclusive. Inclusive approaches to WASH featured at all three learning events, with a particular focus on gender equality, disability inclusive WASH and WASH for people living with HIV and AIDS.

### Highlights

WASH programs present opportunities to promote the equal participation of women and men and support women's contribution to community governance and decision making more generally. At the learning events, participants spoke about their efforts to advance gender equality in and through WASH programs. Many CSOs are working closely with women's groups in recognition of the key role women play

in promoting and managing WASH within their communities. They are also using WASH as a means by which to advance gender equality, engaging with women and men to support women's participation in decision making, shifting men's attitudes, and building women's confidence and leadership skills.

Participants also spoke about the importance of including and advocating for the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups such as people with disabilities and people living with HIV/AIDS. Through their Civil Society WASH Fund programs, organisations are supporting the design and construction of facilities that are accessible for people with disabilities and other community members with special needs such as the elderly, pregnant women and children. They are also working across sectors, linking WASH, disability and HIV/AIDS agencies at different levels to support better WASH outcomes for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

'WASH programs present opportunities to promote the equal participation of women and men and support women's contribution to community governance and decision making more generally.'



## Participant Experiences

### Oxfam Supporting Women's WASH Platforms

At the Dhaka learning event, Oxfam staff from Bangladesh and Cambodia talked about their approach to advancing gender equality through establishing Women's WASH Platforms – groups that provide a space for women to work together building confidence, technical capacity and leadership skills.



#### Molika Bou

Program Manager with Oxfam in Cambodia spoke about her work with Women's WASH Platforms in Kratie and Takeo Provinces.

“Establishing and supporting Women's WASH Platforms is one of the main objectives of our current WASH project. For this project, we particularly want to address gender issues, trying to start with supporting women. We know that one of the root causes of gender inequality, including with respect to WASH, is that women do not have a voice in decision making. There is also an issue with workload, as typically in Cambodia communities believe that WASH work belongs to the women.

These are the reasons we are setting up Women's WASH Platforms. As part of the process, we train women in leadership, financial management and also project planning. We help to create opportunities for women in business, so they can make their own money and in doing so address the power balance at the household level.

This is important, but our main target is governance structures at the commune level. We focus on building the capacity of women to discuss and negotiate at decision making levels such as the commune council. The commune council is an established structure for prioritising work and managing funds for activities at the commune level. Through the Women's WASH Platforms, we aspire that women can bring their agenda to commune council discussions.

We've used this model before with other programs focused on forestry and fishery. Based on these experiences, we hope to achieve similar outcomes with respect to WASH activities, to improve the sustainability of the WASH.

To establish the Women's WASH Platforms, we're trying to avoid creating new structures and instead are integrating with the existing groups and structures through which women already meet. We're working in two provinces, in one there is already a women's group that we work with, some women are already trained and experienced, and we work with them to involve other women.

As well as trying to encourage women to build the capacity of other women, we also want to influence government. So we're working in two ways – addressing gender inequality issues within the community and also addressing women's role in WASH governance as well. We could go directly to the commune level and ask them to focus on WASH, but this wouldn't be sustainable. It's better if the message comes from the community, if they have ownership. So that's why we're trying to create this space for women so they can be involved in processes for deciding on the commune investment plan and commune development plan. There they can raise WASH issues.

We are proud to include women in a very deep way in what we do through women's platforms. We are proud of the close cooperation and collaboration with ministries at the local and provincial levels.”

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Golam Morshed with Oxfam in Bangladesh, also spoke about the Women's WASH Platforms approach to promoting gender equality in and through WASH.



## Engaging Government Partners In Inclusive WASH – Plan International In Tanzania

Plan International is working in Kisware District in Tanzania in partnership with the district government. Listen Materu, WASH Advisor with the Kisware District Government attended the Maputo learning event with Plan International Grace Semawaiko. Listen spoke about their achievements supporting women and people with disabilities to participate in community discussions and decision making forums.



**Materu Kisaware**

District Government representative working with Plan International in Tanzania.

“As a representative of the district government, we are pleased with the results of CLTS so far. We are particularly proud of participation of women in issues of water and sanitation. We are doing our level best to make sure women are involved in decision making. In Tanzania it is traditional that men are heads of the family. In our project, we know that women are the ones that collect water. Women are the one who deal with all the issues of water, sanitation and so forth.

It's very rare for a man or a father or a brother to go to the wells to fetch water. Maybe its tradition, I don't know, but women always are there. If something goes wrong with the water source they are the one who know best and also the ones who feel the pinch. So they are fighting to make sure that the well is being maintained and is working.

We are trying to make sure the men understand the importance of women being involved in decisions. Women need support from the men in this. So we are inviting women to be on the committees, we have more than half female representation on the committees. They are now more able to participate in meetings and decision-making, I'm proud of this.

I'm also very proud of the fact that our program is involving people with disabilities. They are participating in decision-making – previously they did not attend community meetings, now they have a voice. Facilities have been constructed in such a way that they can access services, for example using ramps instead of staircases, including handrails and also we've lowered the height of water access points to make them easier for people with disabilities to reach.”

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## Gender Research And Inclusive WASH – WaterAid In Timor Leste

WaterAid Timor Leste recently undertook research focused on gender aspects of WASH in collaboration with the International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). During the Learning Event, WaterAid Program Officer Novi Mau shared her experience participating in the research process and working with communities to explore the ways in which WASH affects women, men and relationships. As the focal point for disability inclusion in the Dili WaterAid office, she also talked about WaterAid efforts to ensure WASH services are inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities.



**Novi Mau**  
WaterAid Program Officer.

In doing the gender research, we found a number of surprising things. Previously, we'd found that women didn't speak up. But, through the research with IWDA we talked with the community about men's perspectives and women's perspectives. We talked about men helping their wives, we talked about family harmony and how the WASH program had improved family harmony. We found that previously women had to walk a long way to collect water, 2 hours each way. Sometimes men were both jealous and suspicious, wondering why women were away for so long. Through the research women and men were able to talk about these issues.

On the question of disability inclusion, over the past two years we've been working on this. I can share one example of a man in a community we've been working with. We supported construction of a toilet this man could use after talking with him during the community meeting. We were using the CLTS approach so not providing a subsidy, and in working together we found ways to ensure the toilet was accessible and still affordable. We've also been undertaking training and talking with communities about inclusion, for people with disabilities and also for the elderly, pregnant women and so on. In future projects we aim to include all these groups in community meetings, so that what we do doesn't come from our knowledge but is directly from them, driven by what the community needs, what people with disabilities need."

'We talked about men helping their wives, we talked about family harmony and how the WASH program had improved family harmony.'



## Care In Lao PDR Supporting Women In WASH Leadership

In Sekong Province in Lao PDR, CARE are working to improve sanitation and water supply as part of their post-cyclone recovery program. They spoke about engaging with women and men separately to ensure their different needs and perspectives were heard.

**Raymundo Rodriguez**  
WASH Advisor, CARE Lao PDR.

"Our work builds on an emergency program that we had following cyclone Ketsana, which hit Lao in September 2009. We had a one year emergency project and now we're in the recovery phase. This project builds on the initial WASH activities from the emergency phase. So we have opportunity to build on that experience and focus more on sustainable WASH services for villages recovering from that disaster.

At the start of the project we were having difficulties marketing the latrines because usually in the community meetings it's the men that would speak. They thought they didn't need latrines because they could easily go to the river, or go to the forest. But for women, it's different. We talked to them in a separate women's group. To do this we asked permission from the village leader to establish a women's group bringing together women, the government and CARE staff.

In this group the women said that they need latrines because they have difficulties going to the forest or river. They have to carry a stick because of threats like animals. They were concerned about privacy and convenience. This group was able to present their needs to the bigger community group and the men agreed to support construction of latrines."

'In this group the women said that they need latrines because they have difficulties going to the forest or river.'



## WaterAid India Promoting WASH For People Living With HIV And AIDS

WaterAid India with their partner organisation Integrated Development Foundation have been working with government and HIV/AIDS sector organisations to highlight the links between WASH and HIV/AIDS. At the Dhaka learning event, they shared their experience advocating for improved service delivery for people living with HIV and AIDS and raising awareness of the links between WASH, health and HIV/AIDS. They spoke about their hygiene behaviour change campaign using the Red Ribbon Express – a train organised by the National AIDS Control Organisation that travels across India promoting safe hygiene behaviour and awareness about HIV and AIDS.

### Johnson Jeyaseelan

Program Manager with WaterAid India.

### Manoj Kumar Verma

Director of WaterAid India's partner organisation Integrated Development Foundation.

“We are proud of our approach promoting water and sanitation for all, particularly water and sanitation for people living with HIV and AIDS. India has good HIV/AIDS programs already established, so we have linked to the National AIDS Control Organisation and the States AIDS Control Organisation. We work

directly with the antiretroviral therapy centres, Community Care Centres, drop-in centres, District Level Network and Positive People Networks. Through these networks we convey the linkage between HIV/AIDS and WASH, create awareness and promote access. We advocate through these networks and have also supported service delivery programs for HIV positive people too.

So now the various HIV/AIDS organisations understand the linkages with WASH. They are talking about WASH in their regular HIV/AIDS programs. We are also now talking to WASH sector agencies so they consider working together with HIV/AIDS organisations.

WaterAid took up this issue with the government; we said we want to work with government on the links between WASH and HIV/AIDS. The person we spoke with was very interested and invited us to jointly work on this program. So we were able to set up a partnership, and once we had an agreement there was no looking back, we were able to proceed and work together. Having the government committed means our program will be successful.

One of our activities has been the “Red Ribbon Express”. The Red Ribbon Express is a train that travels over 27,000km in India covering 180 stations. It's organised through the National AIDS Control

Organisation to promote safe hygiene behaviour and fight the stigma and discrimination of AIDS. WaterAid used the Red Ribbon Express vehicle to promote hygiene messages relating to WASH. We developed Information Education Communication (IEC) materials, hoardings, banners, pamphlets, interactive games, plays and organised a cultural team to promote the importance of WASH.

The campaign went very well. People from hundreds of villages came to the WaterAid stalls where messages were promoted on the impact of WASH on human health. Child-friendly games engaged children and a theatre performance attracted people from a range of ages.

WaterAid India banners, posters and hoardings were placed near bus stands, at collectors offices, hospitals and other locations attracting people to visit the Red Ribbon Express. It has been estimated that around 14,000 people were directly reached by this unique hygiene promotion vehicle.”

‘WaterAid used the Red Ribbon Express vehicle to promote hygiene messages relating to WASH.’

## Messages For WASH Sustainability

Providing opportunity for sharing and listening to the diversity of perspectives and needs of different community members through appropriate participatory design is essential for effective WASH.

‘WASH initiatives present opportunities to work with both women and men, building women's skills and confidence,...’

Gender is at the heart of WASH, with women typically responsible for managing water, sanitation and hygiene at the household level and yet typically excluded from decision-making in homes and communities. WASH initiatives present opportunities to work with both women and men, building women's skills and confidence, supporting the participation of women in decision making, and building men's acceptance and support of new and changed gender roles.

Engaging vulnerable groups directly in planning and implementation of WASH programs is essential. Working closely with representative organisations will ensure that the needs of different groups are taken into account in the design and construction of WASH facilities.

In addition to ensuring that WASH programs are inclusive, CSOs can advocate across sectors to ensure that disability and HIV/AIDS organisations understand the critical importance of WASH and can address WASH through their policies and programs.