



Original Paper

<http://ajol.info/index.php/ijbcs>

<http://indexmedicus.afro.who.int>

Barriers to inclusion in the WASH sector: insights from Uganda

R. KULANYI^{1*}, M. JONGA², E. VOS³ and S. VAN SOELEN⁴

¹Country Coordinator WASH SDG/WAI, P.O. Box 40223, Kampala, Uganda.

²MEL officer WAI, Kampala, Uganda.

³Programme Officer (YEP) for Simavi, Uganda.

⁴Programme Manager for Simavi, Netherlands.

*Corresponding author; E-mail: rashidah.kulanyi@simavi.nl

Received: 11-08-2020

Accepted: 03-09-2021

Published: 30-12-2021

ABSTRACT

In the WASH SDG Programme, Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) is a transversal topic in the different phases of the programme. As such, there was a GESI assessment done in 2018 during the inception phase of the programme to identify who is left behind and which barriers the socially excluded groups are often facing. From this assessment, our assumptions and expectations on barriers to inclusion were challenged by the relationships and differences we found in the field. In order to make sure “no one is left behind” it is vital to research why and how certain groups are excluded. We have to know the root causes of exclusion to reach inclusion and have to be context specific. There could be different types of barriers hindering socially excluded groups (e.g. social/cultural, economic, technical, political and technological) and these need to be well understood in order to address and remove them. WASH (*Eau, Assainissement et Hygiène*) programmes need to go beyond inviting marginalised groups to participate in meetings. Attending a meeting does not naturally translate into the voices of the marginalized being heard or will not contribute to removing the barriers that hinder social inclusion. Incorporation of GESI into the WASH programme cycle can help addressing gender and inclusion differences and change these relations over time.

© 2021 International Formulae Group. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Barriers, GESI, inclusion, LNOB SDGs.

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) report of 2018 highlighted that majority of the world's population still lacks safe WASH (*Eau, Assainissement et Hygiène*) services. In 2015, 844 million and 2.3 billion people lacked even a basic service for water and sanitation. (UN, 2018) Sub Saharan Africa still contributes more than half of this disparity with 34% using basic water services, 28% using

basic sanitation services and 15% using basic hygiene services respectively.

In Uganda, the policy on WASH has improved. WASH indicators have predominantly increased over the last decade. However, there is still a lack of improved services and demand on the ground within the communities. National estimates indicate that 30% of population still depends on surface water sources such as streams. Where there is a source there is a 15% likelihood that the water

source is non-functional. 20% of the population was reported to lack access to decent sanitation facilities and more 70% of the population is without a handwashing facility (MWE, 2019).

The 2030 Agenda and SDG 6 promise to extend services to those unserved populations across the world through the leave no one behind commitment (UN, 2015). To deliver this development agenda, governments and development agencies have to understand who is left behind, what barriers exist and how do the dynamics of exclusion affect WASH needs. It is only by tackling these issues that inclusive WASH interventions can be designed and implemented.

Social Inclusion is widely defined as the process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that those marginalized can achieve their full potential in life. The World Bank Group expands this definition to encompass improving the opportunities, ability and dignity of the disadvantaged (The World Bank, 2019). Whereas exclusion is the barrier that impedes social inclusion through partial or wholly excluding individuals on grounds of social identities including age, sex, culture/ethnicity, religion, language, physical and economic disadvantages. Exclusion could manifest as a lack of voice or recognition (Ahrari et al., 2018). Barriers to social inclusion can be categorized as social, economic, political, physical or environmental factors. These may appear directly or indirectly and take place at different levels- either at a global scale, within countries or between the urban and the rural populations. (White et al., 2016)

The WASH SDG programme (2017-2022) is implemented in seven countries by a consortium consisting of the WASH Alliance International (WAI), Plan Netherlands and SNV. The programme aims at improving WASH situation for all. It is built on three core strategic objectives, namely: (1) increasing demand for improved WASH facilities and practices; (2) improving the quality of service provision; and (3) improving governance of the sector. Gender and Social

Inclusion (GESI) is an area of specific attention in each of the three strategic objectives as well as Climate Vulnerability and Resilience (CVR). Funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 5-year programme will run from July 2017 to September 2022.

The WASH SDG Programme in Uganda consists of the Uganda WASH Alliance sub-programme and Uganda Kamuli Buyende and Nebbi sub-programme. The WASH SDG Programme in Uganda aims at sustainably deliver access to, and use of, safe drinking water for at least 86,400 people; and improve access to, and use of, sanitation and improve hygiene behaviours for at least 279,400 and 150,700 people respectively.

The Uganda WASH Alliance sub-programme is being implemented in Agago district in Northern Uganda, as part of Agago sub-catchment. Simavi is leading the Uganda WASH Alliance sub-programme. The Uganda WASH Alliance sub-programme is implemented mainly by the local partners. These include: Agency for Sustainable Rural Transformation (AFSRT), Amref Health Africa- Uganda, Health through Water and Sanitation (HEWASA), Joint Effort to Save the Environment (JESE), RAIN Uganda, Network for Water and Sanitation Uganda (NETWAS Uganda) and Water and Sanitation Entrepreneurs Association (WASEU), and supported by the Dutch WAI partners: Simavi, Amref, Akvo, RAIN, RUAF, IRC and Practica.

GESI has been a key focus area from the start. As it was a key topic during the baseline, a GESI assessment was done in the inception phase to understand the GESI issues in Agago and take this along in programme development. The baseline assessment designed and conducted by Simavi found a negative relation between access to and use of WASH services and marginalized groups. This entails that; there are certain barriers that prevent communities from establishing inclusive WASH services and WASH governance. The findings that came out of the assessment question previously made assumptions on exclusion and are therefore of great value. This paper aimed at discussing the

main GESI findings and how these are implemented in the WASH SDG programme.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to ensure that the WASH SDG Programme is addressing GESI, different methods have been used in different phase of the programme cycle:

- *GESI-informed programme design:* a GESI assessment was done, based on document review, interviews, questionnaires, and focus group discussions. Assessments focused on: marginalisation within the household; between households and of community. The assessments also reviewed public administration and legal and policy barriers/enablers.

- *GESI-focused implementation and management:* Support was provided to both GESI- specific activities that are targeted directly at women and/or socially excluded people as well as the mainstreaming of these issues into broader activities. Programme organisation structures, budgets, staff, capacity building and establishment of programme modalities were also addressed for GESI related activities.

- *Monitoring, evaluation and learning for GESI:* In monitoring and evaluation, data is included with disaggregation for gender and socially excluded groups. The WASH SDG Consortium is developing a systematic learning programme on the experience of implementing a GESI focused WASH programme, including learning between country programmes. Therefore, an example from Indonesia can be adapted by other subprogrammes through the learning programme and *vice versa*.

Looking at the Uganda WASH Alliance sub-programme in Agago, a GESI assessment was conducted in order to assess who is left behind in Agago district. The following GESI research questions were asked:

- Who is left behind from access to WASH services?
- Who controls the resources and takes the decisions?

- What are the barriers for inclusion?

- How are the WASH practices different for different (marginalized) groups?

The GESI assessment was done based on primary and secondary data sources. A cross sectional study design was used to undertake the qualitative assessment (Ofumbi, 2018). Furthermore, data from the baseline study was used. The baseline study consisted of a household survey; 913 respondents, including a water quality assessment. Through this household survey the WASH practices following the JMP ladders were clarified. These findings were then disaggregated for different wealth quintiles (based on the Poverty Probability Index (PPI) for Uganda (IPA, 2015)), urban/rural settings and gender. Additionally, interviews with key informants and stakeholder were conducted, followed by a GESI Assessment where the special position of marginalized groups was assessed. The collection of this data contributes to the research of exclusion in WASH service provision and the design and implementation of the programme.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total number of 913 respondents have been included in this household survey. The main focus was on female members of the household and that can be seen in the gender distribution of all respondents: 83% female and 17% male. The average household size within the sample is seven household members. In 74% of the households there are children under five. 87% of the households there are children between five and 17 years old. Most households are headed by a male member (71%), showing that the intervention area represents a traditional structure in terms of power in the household (patriarchy). Most of the heads of the households are able to read and write (73%) and most households have finished primary education (44%), secondary education (22%) or no education (23%). Almost all households in the sample are Christian, and 95% of all households are from the Acholi tribe, showing a homogenous society in general. Agriculture is the main

source of income for 95% of the households. 20% of households reported to have a person with disability. In the majority of cases this is a physical disability. Other types of disability like lack of vision, hearing and/or mental problems are also present. This shows the importance for the programme to focus on the inclusion of people living with a disability in the programme (Simavi, 2018).

Figure 1 shows the correlation between the JMP service ladders on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene and wealth. More households within the lowest wealth quintiles are using lower service levels of water, are practicing open defecation and do not practice handwashing. Majority of the households >60% were accessing a limited service level. More than >80% were using unimproved sanitation and >90% didn't have hand hygiene facilities to their disposal. Looking at different wealth groups the baseline findings show that there is a difference between sanitation and drinking water. Safe drinking water is better accessible throughout different wealth groups. This is because drinking water is generally organized on community level. With regards to sanitation the difference between wealth groups are much more diverse. This is related to the fact that sanitation is often organized on household level. This shows that there should be a different approach for reaching marginalized groups in different elements of WASH.

The GESI assessment found different barriers to social inclusion in Agago. In terms of social and cultural barriers, stereotyping and prejudice against women and other marginalized groups limit their participation in WASH decision making at household and community level. Furthermore, there is discrimination and stigma for certain socially excluded groups.

There are two main barriers to economic inclusion of women. One, limited control and decision-making power of women over household and community investments and resources. Two, women carry the burden of most of the unpaid work. On the other hand, women were the main recipients of loans from saving and or credit groups, which combined

with their limited decision making power can lead to their exposure to violence within/outside the family. At the same time, the existing WASH businesses are not focusing on rural areas or on the needs to women and other socially excluded groups (e.g. people living with a disability and the elderly).

In terms of technological barriers, the Local Government in Agago has limited capacity in terms of knowledge, skills and financial resources to mainstream social inclusion. Looking at political barriers, most policies, laws, strategies, plans and guidelines on social inclusion are sound in Uganda, but are not fully implemented. Looking at technological barriers, some WASH technology options/ designs like pit latrines and boreholes are non-inclusive to the People living with Disability and elderly.

Implications for implementation

From the baseline study and GESI assessment, the WASH SDG Programme started implementation of the programme on 1st of July 2018. The programme is promoting a GESI-sensitive approach, for instance in making sure women and socially excluded groups have equal opportunities to access and influence WASH related decision making and use improved WASH services. A GESI-focused WASH programme requires adjustments to hygiene behaviour change communication, sanitation demand creation (e.g. CLTS), supply chain development (e.g. sanitation marketing approaches) and WASH governance.

Increase demand for improved WASH facilities and practices

A GESI approach within the WASH SDG programme places increased emphasis on participatory methods and tools to create demand for improved WASH facilities and practices. Existing methods and tools are being adapted to support a more GESI transformative process as well as more equal outcomes. The WASH SDG programme will engage with young people, adolescent girls and/or boys to influence harmful gender stereotypes. In 10 households from three selected villages in

Omot sub-county, the WASH SDG Programme is piloting household level gender action planning (GAP). This activity is conducted to understand existing gender inequalities at household level and re-defining women's and men's gender roles and relations through guidance on gender mainstreaming at household level. In all 10 households a gender responsive and transformative action plan that clearly recognizes the women and children's contribution to household resources was developed. We will continue to follow up on the implementation of these plans and there after role out GAP to other villages. From this GAP exercise it's noted that the issue of ownership of household resources particularly land and money is a reserve of men yet women have the greatest contribution. It's important that under the WASH SDG programme we should have a deliberate gender mainstreaming and awareness campaigns in order to recognize and increase effective women's participation in production and use of household resources. This entails empowering both women and men.

Improve the design and implementation of service provision

Partners are adapting the design of toilets and handwashing facilities to ensure they meet the need of elderly people, women, children and people with disabilities. In Agago,

women are under-represented in formal WASH technical roles such as toilet construction or pit emptying as well as service delivery for instance as WASH entrepreneurs. In response, sub-programmes are training female entrepreneurs to help them to compete with male counterparts. Masons and WASH entrepreneurs are also being trained on the WASH products suitable for people with particular needs. Through mentoring and the use of role models, women are encouraged to become entrepreneurs.

Improve governance of the sector

Partners are supporting government institutions and community committees and leaders to better plan and budget for WASH services. The partners are building the capacity of government and traditional leadership on gender transformative and inclusive WASH approaches to ensure ownership of activities. In Uganda, the WASH Alliance is working with District local government in Agago to introduce bylaws related to GESI. One success is that the local government is taking the GESI issue seriously. The local government has issued a by-law to prevent alcohol abuse, as they see a link between alcohol abuse and gender-based violence (e.g. 37 women were murdered by their husbands in Agago district in 2018).

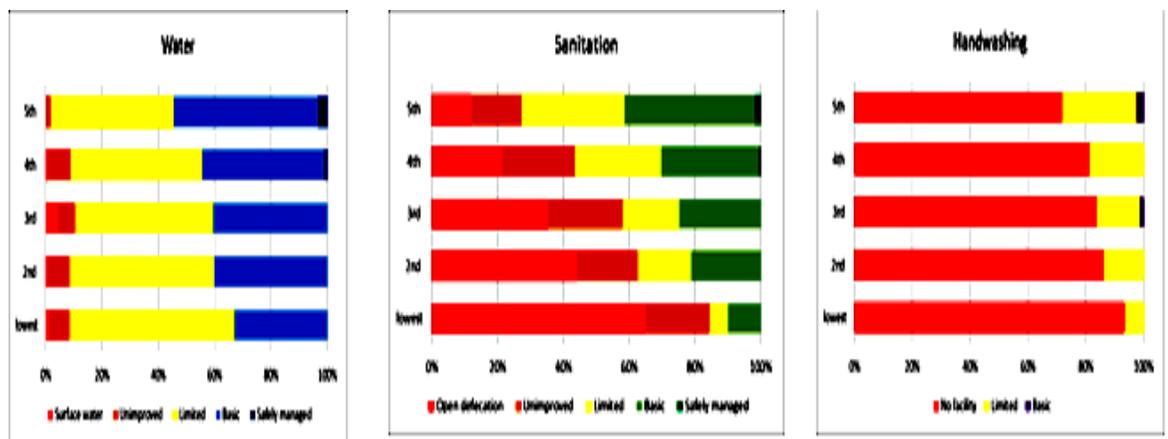


Figure 1: results on the water, sanitation and hygiene ladder per wealth quantiles.

Conclusion

Gender stereotyping, patriarchal system, limited female mobility outside the house, discriminatory beliefs and stigma's against minorities, women's lack of decision making power, gender based violence and lack of knowledge by men and boys on gender equality were among the major barriers faced by women and other socially excluded groups. The study shows the importance to be specific in identifying the barriers to inclusion and drivers of exclusion in each context and for each topic. The integration of GESI from the start into the WASH SDG programme in Uganda has forged the way to ensure the programme is better able and equipped to contribute towards equality in terms of access to and use of WASH services. It will also contribute to greater equality in society beyond WASH by ensuring the implementation of the "do no harm" principle; and ultimately to the realization of the ambition of leaving no one behind in 2030. Recommendations for WASH programmes that aimed at "leaving no one behind": Design for GESI from the start – make it central to the Theory of Change. Incorporation of GESI into the WASH programme cycle can help address gender and inclusion differences and change these relations over time; GESI programmes must be evidence based – do assessments and use tried and tested approaches - but also make space for innovation; Transformative change requires learning organizations for personal and professional change and inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the process.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors participated in the project design, data collection and data analysis. They produced and approved the final submitted manuscript.

REFERENCES

- Ahrari S, Smits S, Stolk M, Remmers J, Uytewaal E, Deshmukh R. 2018. *Socially Inclusive WASH Programming*. SIMAVI: Amsterdam.
- IPA. 2015. PPI Uganda. IPA, Uganda. <https://www.povertyindex.org/country/uganda>
- MWE. 2019. Water and environment sector performance report. MWE, Government of Uganda, Kampala.
- Ofumbi M. 2018. *GESI assessment of the Netherlands WASH SDG Programme in Uganda: Agago final assessment report*. IconAfrika Consult Limited: Kampala.
- SIMAVI. 2018. Baseline report final. SIMAVI, Amsterdam- Netherlands.
- The World Bank. 2019. Social Inclusion. The World Bank, Washington-USA. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion>.
- UN. 2015. Sustainable development goals knowledge platform: 230 Agenda for sustainable development. UN, New York, United Nations. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworldStandard>
- UN. 2018. The sustainable development goals report. UN, New York, United Nations.
- White S, Kuper H, Itimu AP, Holm R, Brian A. 2016. Qualitative study of barrier to accessing water, sanitation and hygiene for the disabled people in Malawi. *PLoS ONE*, **11**(5): e0155043. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0155043>.