

## Gender Issues in Water and Sanitation Programmes: Lessons from India

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The shortcomings of water and sanitation programmes in India are well-known: despite national efforts to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, the coverage of rural households with latrines is as low as 31% (Government of India, 2012). This leads to an estimated national economic loss of 6.4% of India's GDP in 2006 (2.44 trillion INR, according to the World Bank, 2010). What have been the gaps between policy and programme intentions on one hand, and the implementation practices and actual benefits for local communities on the other? The authors of this book provide evidence on how a gender-sensitive approach to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) can improve equal access to water and sanitation facilities. This gender lens entails a better understanding of practical approaches to increase meaningful participation of women in planning, designing and implementing WASH interventions. Acknowledging a lack of sex-disaggregated data in the WASH sector, as well as limited gender analyses on women and men's differential needs and roles in WASH, this edited volume is an important milestone in documenting failures and success stories of gender outcomes in water and sanitation programmes. 16 chapters provide evidence and learnings for WASH practitioners, researchers, policy makers and students.

In the book, analytical frameworks, policies, intervention programmes and education, and capacity building initiatives focusing on water and sanitation are reviewed from a gendered perspective. Case studies present barriers and opportunities for a gender-sensitive programme design in different rural contexts of India, covering states such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Haryana. The book's title of "Gender Issues" might evoke negative connotations, but the case studies focus on solutions

and recommendations useful to policy makers and practitioners. Issues addressed tackle dominant technologically driven, gender-blind and sectorial WASH interventions detached from ground realities. Bottlenecks such as the important role of water professionals and practitioners, the need for more women in these positions, and water education and training approaches are examined on the basis of gender-sensitivity. Contributors advocate and provide evidence for participatory principles and community-led, capacity building intervention approaches to involve women in the decision-making at local, district and state level.

The book is divided into four sections. Section 1 provides conceptual underpinnings, section 2 discusses water case studies, section 3 talks about sanitation case studies, and section 4 gives a conclusion. In section 1, Lala et al. review seven gender analysis frameworks on their value to the Indian WASH sector by examining how they address participation, access to services, control over water, land and household decisions, benefits to women, governance and operation, maintenance, and management. By developing a hybrid approach from selected concepts of these established frameworks, women's participation in intervention phases of planning, capacity building, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation can be assessed. Kabir et al. develop a household-level Multiple Use Water Systems (MUWS) vulnerability index covering gender-relevant aspects such as an indicator to measure the distance to fetch water and water quality. The index was applied in three villages in Maharashtra to assess both domestic and productive water needs of vulnerable households based on family occupation, social profile, institutional linkages, water resource endowment, climate and drought susceptibility, and financial stability. Prakash and Goodrich present evidence of how few

women professionals are in the water sector. They emphasize the effect of stereotyping and resentment of women in leadership roles, as public speaking and greater mobility is not in line with expected gendered behavior. Furthermore, they identify barriers such as absent sanitation facilities for women and the lack of financial and structural support such as study and research fellowships for women, childcare support and maternity leave. The authors demonstrate a success story of gender-sensitive Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) education and research: through the Crossing Boundary Project Initiative, techno-centric water resource engineering curricula were reshaped through an interdisciplinary approach in which new teaching modules on gender and water, field research methodology, and IWRM were introduced.

The chapter by Sinha identifies limited effectiveness of capacity building programmes, curricula and training material. She critically reviews capacity building initiatives of the Government of India, NGOs and international agencies and presents evidence for gender mainstreaming failures in WASH, e.g. in the National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP), the India's Total Sanitation Campaign (1999-2011), and its successor, Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA). Representation of women as low as 6.9% in the Swajaldhara and Total Sanitation Campaign in 2005 demonstrates the need for gender balance of water bureaucracy staff. She advises capacity building needs assessments, resource persons, and monitoring and evaluation of trainings. She recommends to review training materials on their inclusion of separate sections on water- and sanitation-related issues for women, as well as revisiting whether gender stereotyping and patriarchal norms are not reinforced.

In the second section on water case studies, the case study on integrating gender in watershed management in Andhra Pradesh by Wani et al. demonstrates that needs assessments, participatory methods, and policy support have to go hand-in-hand to promote collective action and strong female leadership. The chapter by Bastola provides an in-depth gender analysis by critically examining the effectiveness of the Jalswarajya Project in Maharashtra. He identifies how project interventions bypassed and reproduced the patriarchal norms and local power relations based on class and caste discrimination. The author convincingly criticizes

the over-emphasis on women's representation through "non-negotiable principles", e.g. 50% participation in Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSC), which is often channeled through influential husbands without women being aware of their membership. In practice, the 50% women's representation requirement was merged with the 30% marginalized caste representation, leading to the caste category being represented only by women. Women could voice practical, reproductive water needs, as these do not challenge patriarchal power structures to the extent that strategic needs and gaining more influence in decision-making would.

With the example of Samyukta Mahila Samiti (SMS), a component within the Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) in Maharashtra, Kale and Zade demonstrate how an institutional space for women with financial autonomy, capacity building opportunities and well-defined decision-making processes strengthen women's bargaining position in watershed communities, as compared to nominal participation in Village Development Committees (VDCs) and self-help groups (SHGs). Additionally, at the institutional level, Prasad et al. identified that a strong functional relation between Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and VWSCs increased women's participation in groundwater management.

From Mehta and Saxena we learn how women and men's knowledge, choice and use of water sources differ in the water-scarce region of Mewat in Haryana. Because men are primarily involved in the decision making on the construction, maintenance and use of water resources, they have the advantage of more knowledge, e.g. of the number of water tanks and ponds in the village. This affects the source type and effort women spend in procuring water. Preferences of water sources also differ: men prioritize sources with greater water quantity and closer distance; women prioritize water quality and accept longer walks for better quality. In some cases, women reported physical abuse by their husbands, if they walked to a source further away. Men's decisions on water sources of lower quality, however, lead to higher incidences of water-borne diseases. The tendency of women suffering from higher rates of water-borne disease is evidenced by the study of Chakma et al. in Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh, which demonstrates greater prevalence of fluorosis for women. The authors suggest an integrated

fluoride mitigation approach linked to safe drinking water and nutritional supplement.

The third section of the book covers case studies in the field of sanitation. Learning from the criticism of the Total Sanitation Campaign, Medeazza et al. present a new approach to address open-defecation. The Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) focuses on collective behavior change, rather than solely constructing toilets. The study emphasizes the involvement of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and Anganwadi workers, the importance of demand generation for toilets, the monitoring of toilets used, and not the number of toilets constructed, and a post-incentive for Open-Defecation-Free (ODF) communities.

Similarly addressing the gaps of the NBA (former Total Sanitation Campaign), Saxena et al. present an innovative and comprehensive WASH awareness raising approach based on behavioral change communication. As previous trainings were often off-site in a classroom, not adapted to the participants' learning capacities, knowledge and work schedule, the "Pan in the Van" approach engages a team of women travelling by van to villages to mobilize the communities' interests in WASH issues through visual material and interactive games. The activities are locally conducted at convenient times, to wage laborers, for example, with women-centric topics, e.g. on household chores, and an approach that also targets school children and the physically challenged. Important for success, as mentioned in many studies, are follow-up activities.

Similar principles are mentioned in the study by Mehrotra and Singh, who highlight in a case study of an ASHA worker in Uttar Pradesh how demonstration of a latrine and awareness raising on the hygiene, health, convenience, social stress and safety impacts of open defecation can lead to a cascading effect. The authors stress the overlaps between sanitation and health, and the need to institutionalize sanitation trainings and to make material such as pictorial booklets available in local languages. Successful training and community engagement approaches are also presented in the chapter by Mani et al. These involve women in technical data collection by offering trainings to couples, husband and wife, and include gender trainings for men, and ensure that data is made available to the users in real-time.

Finally, the editors of the volume conclude by stressing the need for documenting evidence on the quality, scalability and sustainability of programme interventions addressing the gender-WASH-nexus.

This edited volume addresses in convincing detail the contradiction of women being responsible for WASH without being involved in its decision-making: on the one hand, studies demonstrate the heavy burden on women for fetching water, often at the expense of health, education, income-generating activities and social, cultural and political involvement. On the other hand, studies highlight key opportunities to involve women as change agents through participatory processes and capacity building on WASH. Particularly the strong focus on education, communication and bottom-up planning and monitoring of intervention approaches should truly convince the last skeptic to place gender at the core of the WASH agenda.

Several contributions focusing on women's participation reflect the difficulty of applying gender theory in practice. Despite stressing the importance of gender intersecting with class, caste and other social discriminations, and introducing Moser's definition of gender as a social construct and a socially relational concept (1993) in the introduction, some authors run the risk of falling back to generalized statements on "women". Specifically, there are instances of grouping women without disaggregating according to other social divides such as age, caste, class, disabilities etc. Similarly, limiting "gender issues" on women may enforce their depictions as victims, and, if overcoming their situation, as heroes. This entails essential notions ascribing gender traits and roles without engaging with wider patriarchal structures and complex power relations, which need to be addressed for social change. A relational analysis, as done in the chapter by Bastola, helps focus on gender norms and power relations shaped by social discrimination. This is important, as water and sanitation interventions are embedded within these, and need to be linked for effective WASH interventions. The criticism of water education and research being a masculine field with mostly male water professionals, is also reflected in the contributors of the book: of 37 authors, only 8 are female, and only 6 of 16 chapters have a female author. This, however, underlines the message of the book: promoting women's active involvement in

education, research, intervention planning, and monitoring and evaluation. In conclusion, “Gender Issues in Water and Sanitation Programmes” presents a rich collection of lessons from India in the form of facts, case studies and examples of how gender in WASH interventions at community level, and in education and research can have both intended and unintended consequences.

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