



Why gender equality and social inclusion?

Women and girls carry much of the burden of deficient sanitation and hygiene facilities, which affect not only their health and hygiene, but also their safety, education, dignity, livelihoods and quality of life.

Increasingly, women are being mobilised at the community level as part of sanitation campaigns and movements. Formative research conducted by the Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All (SSH4A) programme, however, highlights the importance of also targeting men on the basis that:

- Men and women prioritise sanitation differently
- Women have a disproportional responsibility for keeping toilets clean, carrying water and supporting household and child hygiene
- Men often make decisions about construction and purchases in the household.

Individuals from excluded or minority groups and those from poor and remote areas may be less able to adopt new hygiene behaviours or build improved sanitation facilities. Low literacy and limited representation in community level discussions and decision-making processes may mean that individuals from these groups remain silent, do not access incentives and do not implement the changes required to improve sanitation.

The SSH4A programme aims to achieve safe and sustainable sanitation for all. Addressing disparities between social groups and advancing gender equality are critical steps in achieving this goal.

Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All

This work on gender and social inclusion is part of the SNV/IRC Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All Programme, which has been operating since 2008. The programme aims to improve the health and quality of life of rural people in five Asian countries (Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal and Vietnam) through enhanced access to improved sanitation and hygiene practices. It has four integrated components which strengthen local capacities for a rural sanitation service delivery through a district-wide approach. An additional cross cutting regional component of the programme focuses on analysis, dissemination, and learning.





This brief explores the programme's approach to promoting gender equality and social inclusion and shares lessons drawn from experience to address these issues at scale.

Focus on gender equality and social inclusion is a key to success

The SSH4A programme aims to ensure that the needs of women and men from a range of social groups (including those typically marginalised) are taken into account, that effective participation is promoted at all levels and that gender equality is advanced. The mind-set is to use a strengths based approach in working with women and men, an approach that builds the confidence and motivation of teams and partners to address critical gender and social inclusion issues and achieve positive outcomes¹.

To date, tangible results from taking this approach include:

- Higher coverage: Marginalised groups have been targeted
- Effectiveness: Information about toilet options has been provided to both women and men, promoting informed and sustainable sanitation investments. Active participation of women and men of all socio-economic backgrounds in identifying and selecting appropriate toilet options has improved the use and cleanliness of facilities
- Improved hygiene: Using targeted hygiene promotion activities that are tailored to men and women from a range of social groups has resulted in widespread behaviour change
- Efficiency and relevance: Sanitation improvements are based on what both women and men of different groups know and do
- Strategic gender outcomes: New roles and income generation opportunities have been created for women and marginalised groups

1. This approach is discussed in Willetts, J. et al (2012), Working from strengths to assess changes in gender equality, Development in Practice.

Measuring progress on gender equality and social inclusion

SNV believes in measuring performance and impact. Regionally, harmonised monitoring tools are used to track the following gender equality and social inclusion performance indicators:

- Progress in the degree of influence that women, very poor people, and socially excluded groups have in sanitation dialogue at specified levels (community/ district /province)
- Progress of women's involvement in sanitation related enterprises
- Progress of partner agencies in taking gender sensitive approaches.



How is gender equality and social inclusion integrated in the programme?

Social inclusion and gender equality have been mainstreamed into the following core activities of the programme:

- Sanitation demand creation: ensuring adequate participation of all groups in demand creation processes including training and facilitation; identifying and reaching those in greatest need through additional activities, and; avoiding marginalising the poorest in the community through coercion, exclusion, and shaming.
- Behavioural change communication: targeting a few, select behaviours; using messages targeted to different audiences; using appropriate communication channels; avoiding stereotypes that reinforce gender inequality and social exclusion; using language and traditions of excluded groups to reinforce change, and; promoting informal discussions about menstrual hygiene and household decision making processes.
- Strengthening sanitation supply chain development: reducing construction costs for the poor; supporting the poorest and socially excluded groups to access supplies; training women and individuals from excluded groups to develop sanitation related businesses, and; supporting informed choice to meet the needs of all users, including people living with disabilities.
- Improving WASH governance and multi-stakeholder sector development: building women's influence at district level; forging strategic partnerships that provide leadership and decision making opportunities for women, and; monitoring the uptake of gender sensitive and inclusive approaches and developing pro-poor support mechanisms.

Creating demand for sanitation - triggering who?

To be effective, triggering activities from demand creation approaches such as Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) require participation of all community members. Whilst women's participation is often high, a lack of men's participation can reduce uptake of sanitation facilities in families where men control household expenditure. Monitoring the sex, class and ethnic background of participants in triggering processes and subsequent meetings has helped the programme to identify excluded parties and

adapt strategies. In Bhutan and Cambodia, for example, men who were unable to attend triggering activities were later targeted through home visits. In other areas, focus has been placed on boosting men's participation in triggering activities and monitoring men's reported knowledge of sanitation options and healthy hygiene practices.

Applying demand creation methodologies such as CLTS in a respectful manner is critical to avoid shaming and further marginalising poor households that cannot afford toilets. Coercion from local authorities to construct toilets can result in unhealthy sanitation solutions and lead to increased debt for the poor. It has been found that engaging leaders in careful discussion about the importance of creating genuine demand for toilets and using respectful processes to do so is essential to mitigating these risks. Providing training to implementing agencies on mapping methodologies to identify poor or marginalised households is helpful, as is the development of regular monitoring processes to ensure that these households are not excluded. Ensuring a diverse representation of social groups as mobilisers, trainers and facilitators is also a strategy.

Strengthening access to sanitation products and services

Families living in poverty need affordable yet effective toilet options. A range of sanitation options need to be developed based on consumer research that identifies users' aspirations and needs alongside local socio-economic and environmental conditions. Community support mechanisms, private sector agencies and government bodies need to be mobilised to support the poorest households and special groups such as the disabled or elderly that may lack the finance, or the access to materials or labour needed to build facilities. Visual marketing tools, such as those developed in Bhutan, support informed choice and decision making at the household level.

Providing opportunities for women, as well as men, to attend training activities for sanitation businesses (such as in masonry, management and marketing training) has had positive outcomes for women's income, their participation in the sanitation supply chain, and for gender equality. Women's involvement in sanitation businesses also appears to have resulted in an increased focus on toilets that are easily maintained and an increased willingness of sanitation businesses to discuss toilet maintenance and cleaning with

Female masons

In Vietnam in 2011, the programme trained twelve unskilled female masons in Dien Bien province with the assistance of the Women's Union. Government partners and identified candidates were sensitised to gender issues and participants were provided with mentoring and follow-up support after the training. There is now a professional female mason team in Muong Ang district that specialises in sanitary toilet construction and provides technical advice on low cost sanitary toilet options.

On the basis of this experience, in 2012, with the support of government, local leaders and women's groups, fifteen women participated in masonry, carpentry and sanitation marketing training in Pemagatshel District, Bhutan. The marketing efforts of one mason, Tshering Zangmo, led to forty nine households opting to construct improved sanitation facilities, a community led solution for three poor families unable to pay for toilet construction and support from the village head for increased women's involvement in masonry work. This success is in part due to a committed implementing team, a significant preparation phase, selecting candidates already active in the sanitation sector and providing on-going mentoring to the masons.



householders. The existence of women in the supply chain reduces barriers for other women to influence technology choices and increases the willingness of shop owners to engage in marketing activities directly with women. Our experience highlights that for women to undertake these roles, initial support, targeted training and collective work arrangements, such as in Vietnam where trained women masons formed an all-female mason's association, are often required.

Changing sanitation and hygiene behaviours through communication campaigns

SSH4A works with line agencies to identify communication messages and strategies relevant to different interest groups based on formative research. Making sanitation and hygiene the business of the whole community, instead of 'women's business', is critical to changing hygiene behaviours and promoting gender equality. Women and men of different ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, caste and ability have different sanitation and hygiene practices, beliefs and drivers of change. Men are often decision makers but can be excluded from hygiene promotion activities, which can overlook the role they play in households and the need for men to also adopt improved hygiene behaviours. At the same time, women tend to be targeted by messages focused on their role as primary caregivers, and this can reinforce gender stereotypes. It is often assumed that women are able to influence their husband's hygiene behaviour by sharing information they have learned from the programme. Experience tells us that this approach is not always very successful. Men's role in promoting safe and sustainable sanitation and hygiene can be promoted through active involvement of stakeholders and partner agencies and the use of communication channels and messages relevant to men. In Cambodia, for example, the programme has encouraged local authorities and sanitation committees to explicitly involve men and boys in community activities.

Improving WASH governance

The SSH4A programme works with partners to develop strategies to promote and monitor participation levels. The formation of strategic partnerships outside the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector is encouraged as one way to promote the participation of excluded groups. In Vietnam for example, SNV involved the Provincial Women's Union in facilitating and monitoring programme activities. This built momentum for improved sanitation and hygiene within communities and led to greater

representation of women in activities beyond village level and to the adoption of targeted strategies to respond to the different needs of women and men.

Women are often very active in sanitation and hygiene programmes at the community level, but can be excluded from processes at district levels and above. Promoting the role of women beyond the local level is critical to progressing gender equality. Institutionalising the role of women or excluded groups on committees, and their influence over budgets, planning, and decision making, is critical. Strategies are needed to ensure these roles do not become tokenistic and to make sure that participation is effective.

In Nepal, SNV advocacy and the employment of women resource persons yielded impressive programme results. The District Water Supply and Hygiene Coordination Committee set a target of at least 40% female participants in training and orientation events, prioritised women's role in district WASH committees, and allocated a specific budget line for women's groups. Overall the programme has achieved ten times the national average of communities with Open Defecation Free status. This result confirms the importance of engaging women to achieve sustainable change.

Future plans

The Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All programme will continue to promote social inclusion and gender equality. In the future it will focus on:

- Developing new approaches to promoting the role of women and marginalised people in governance processes beyond the community level
- Monitoring indicators and expected outcomes (developed and refined during phase I) to better measure progress on gender equality and social inclusion
- Making continuous efforts to support governments and other partner agencies to identify and integrate strategies that progress human rights and gender equality within SSH4A programme activities.

Links

Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All programme:

<http://www.ssh4a.org/>

<http://www.snvworld.org/en/sectors/water-sanitation-hygiene>

