



# Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in WASH

## The challenge

Universal access to clean water and adequate sanitation are prerequisites for healthy and prosperous societies. Without these, people are exposed to public health risks and ecosystem degradation. People become less prepared to manage the impacts of climate change, disease outbreaks and anti-microbial resistance. Inequalities are exacerbated.

Governments are the duty bearers of the human right to water and sanitation in their jurisdiction. Yet, 3 in 10 people lack access to safely managed drinking water services, and 6 in 10 people lack access to safely managed sanitation. Women and girls – specifically those who live in poverty and/or with disability – are most affected when basic water and sanitation systems fail.

They carry the bulk of the responsibility for collecting water and are exposed to the risks of harassment and violence. Walking long distances for water and/or to defecate in the open also put them at risk.

High rates of school drop-outs and absenteeism among girls are linked to inadequate or failing WASH systems. Deficient WASH facilities in maternal clinics increase the risk of infections and maternal mortality rates. People with disability face enormous difficulties to practise basic hygiene without appropriate WASH facilities.

*The interplay between gender, poverty, and disability adds further layers of disadvantage to specific groups.*

Exclusion, low literacy, stigma and limited representation across all levels of governance, management and decision-making means that people do not get their needs heard, nor are their needs addressed sufficiently, neither do they gain professionally and economically from growth in the WASH sector.



## Our ambition

Our ambition is for governments and private sector to mainstream gender equality and social inclusion in WASH service delivery to enable the rights of all to safe water and sanitation; in alignment with the SDGs. And for people of all genders and backgrounds to gain the capacity to engage in and make use of these spaces and improvements: participating, voicing their views and enjoying lasting access to services.

## The opportunity

Investment in WASH has an enormous potential to contribute to greater equality and address discrimination on the basis of gender, disability or social groups. Decisions around (investment) priorities, design features, tariffs, processes, all influence outcomes for people. These go far beyond the household level.

*Access to WASH services is a pre-condition for social and economic participation.*

For women and girls, WASH services are essential in realising their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Responsive and inclusive WASH services remove barriers for people of all backgrounds, and facilitate their right to an education, health care, and their participation in communities and broader public spaces.

## GESI in WASH

SNV's GESI approach is rights based. The approach introduces gender- and socially inclusive structural changes in service delivery systems. These changes are complemented by targeted interventions that strengthen voice, networks and leadership in the political and public spheres of WASH decision-making.

Accordingly, targeted interventions also encourage men and women from different backgrounds to reflect on social change and norms in their society, and examine their perceptions about their own identities, and those of others.

GESI is mainstreamed within each of SNV's WASH intervention strategies in rural and urban settings.

## SNV WASH approaches

In rural settings, **Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All (SSH4A)** focuses on achieving area-wide sanitation access in households, schools and health facilities. The strategy includes creating demand for sanitation services, developing sanitation supply chains in rural areas, building capacity for behaviour change, and strengthening WASH governance systems.

**Area-wide Rural Water Supply Services (ARWSS)** work with local authorities and private sector to develop water supply services that are economically viable and responsive to the diverse needs of communities, across entire

districts. Appropriate management models and economies of scale are introduced to address continuity of services, water quality, affordability, ensuring post-construction sustainability and asset management.

**Urban Sanitation & Hygiene for Health and Development (USHHD)** aims to realise citywide inclusive sanitation services for all, changing the way in which human waste is being managed

along the sanitation service delivery chain. This includes addressing the needs of diverse populations, including socially excluded groups such as people living in slums and informal sanitation workers.

SNV also contributes to professionalising water supply services to meet increasing demand in small and medium towns.

Progress towards (or increased) gender equality and social inclusion within WASH systems and services.



**Political influence and voice in the public space**

Increase voice, influence and leadership of women and under-represented groups at different levels, and within the workplace and institutions.

Build capacity, networks and access relevant evidence.

Facilitate strategic partnerships, active participation and exposure in the political sphere.

**Realising rights to basic services for all**

Ensure equitable and universal access to and use of WASH services, and the adoption of hygienic practices, including menstrual hygiene management.

Strengthen data and accountability for equitable services delivery.

Strengthen support mechanisms using a range of tools.

**Inclusive service delivery systems**

Improve WASH service delivery and private sector capacity, processes and systems, making these more effective, inclusive, transformative, and devoid of stereotypes.

Facilitate multi-stakeholder platforms that include rights holder groups and private sector.

Ensure 'Do no harm approach' practices to reduce WASH-related risks of violence, assault and harm.

Aim to capture unintended harm in monitoring systems.

**Positive identities in changing societies**

Strengthen reflection and individual capacities in relation to self-awareness, ability, gender equality, femininity and masculinity among men and women, and boys and girls of diverse backgrounds.

Promote capacity to negotiate for more equitable decision making, division of workloads, responsibility and accountability.



SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We focus on three sectors and have a long-term, local presence in over 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our team of more than 1,300 staff is the backbone of SNV.

[www.snv.org](http://www.snv.org)

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