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Conceptualizing a Hybrid Framework to Help Improve Gender Outcomes in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Programs in India

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Gender analysis frameworks have a long history in development practice to guide strengthened gender outcomes, and opportunities exist to learn from such frameworks to support implementation of WASH programs in developing countries, including India. This paper reviews seven well-established gender analysis frameworks from the Indian WASH context vis-à-vis six key categories, viewed as critical components to gender outcomes and vital to the sustained success of WASH programs, to develop an improved compilation, referred to as the hybrid framework. The hybrid framework combines the strengths of the seven previously established frameworks for optimizing gender outcomes and aims to identify the opportunities for both men and women to shape WASH programs to meet their intended gender and equity objectives. Lastly, this newly developed framework provides a potential platform for local-level processes to use a comprehensive set of quantitative and qualitative indicators under each of the developed six categories provided further field testing and appropriate modification.

Keywords

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Source: Michael Foley, 2009

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Locating Gender in Development Programs

Widespread recognition of the importance of gender in development has led to intensifying

efforts to mainstream gender in development programs, as evidenced by the increased number of gender strategies of development actors, mainly for the purpose of increasing the priority of gender integration and tracking progress on these issues (UNICEF, 2011) (CGIAR, 2012).

Despite the paradigm shift, relevant gains have not translated into the desired outcomes of greater gender equality and inclusion in India (UNICEF, FAO, SaciWATERS, 2013; Prakash et al., 2015). A gender focus is commonly misperceived as seeing women as target beneficiaries and involving them in limited decision-making processes (Kulkarni, 2011). However, gender is not just about women, as it includes how men and women interact in a development context guided by social institutions, norms and embedded cultural values (Zwarteveen et al., 2012). Over the years, several gender frameworks have been developed with the aim of supporting development programs become more gender-sensitive and inclusive. To date, none of the frameworks relate exclusively to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programing specifics. Therefore, a WASH specific gender framework is required to ensure that aspects of both equity and equality are factored in while designing WASH interventions.

An understanding of gender in terms of social relations and hierarchical regimes of power is imperative to gain a better understanding of the social positioning of women in the gender structure. This has implications in everyday life, including division of labor (inside and outside the home), access to resources (e.g. land, credit), education and training, opportunities for professional advancement, and a voice in the policy-making processes. Unless development practices recognize and address the underlying causes of gender disparities/inequalities, transformational change is unlikely.

In the context of the WASH sector, gender differences carry important implications. For instance, across the South Asian region, water determines livelihoods and in some cases

survival. For instance, in several parts of India, women travel long distances to carry water, which places a huge burden on their health. At the same time, unequal access to water creates exclusions. For example, women may not derive any direct financial benefit from their water-related labor, as they often work on land allotted to male members of the family. Gender also intersects with other axes of social difference such as class, caste, ethnicity, age, and religion to shape water access, use, and management practices (Zwarteveen et al, 2012). As such, objectives around gendered outcomes in WASH must also take these factors into account. Given the gender inequalities that prevail in India, it is essential for WASH programs to take these issues into account by examining existing social and institutional barriers and problems related to implementation that contribute to continuous failure of gender mainstreaming. The government, for example, can take steps to orient its own officials, including engineers, to incorporate gender perspectives and communication strategies to develop a “gender understanding of WASH issues” (UNICEF, FAO, SaciWATERS, 2013).

There has been a growing effort to involve both men and women in the WASH sector to ensure equitable and sustainable development. This has come from the recognition that as a result, the delivery of WASH services can become more efficient, user-focused, financially viable, and sustainable; evident from a large scale water project evaluation across several countries, finding that effectiveness increased six to seven times when women were involved, compared to projects that did not include women (WSSCC, 2006). This evaluation also found women’s involvement increased transparency and improved financial management outcomes (WSSCC, 2006). This same work also showed that water and sanitation services are generally more effective and sustainable if women are allowed to play an active role in designing, planning, operating and maintaining WASH facilities and programs. Women play a significant role in educating their families and the community about the importance of WASH practices. Involving women in WASH programs

also empowers them and sets an example for others to follow.

Improved WASH efforts can have a significant impact on girls and women if programming is focused on transferring real responsibility to women and girls rather than assuming they will benefit. The key issue is to overcome prevailing patriarchal attitudes and social norms (Agarwal, 1994). To address such concerns, gender analyses are undertaken aimed at redressing inequalities and inequities by examining the barriers to participation, and envisioning potential outcomes of development interventions. A gender analysis is a set of tools and processes used for understanding and assessing the differences in the lives of women and men, their participation in social and economic life, and the differential impacts on their lives of policies, programs, and services. Successful development programs need a systematic approach to analyze gender that looks at the impact of gender on opportunities, social roles and interactions. The following section highlights the importance of undertaking gender analysis in WASH programs.

Gender Analysis for WASH Programs

Integrating an inclusive gender approach helps to accelerate the achievement of efficiency, equity, and equality goals, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for WASH. Gender considerations are critical in WASH as women and girls bear most of the burden of carrying, using, and managing water, including the highest adverse impacts of poor sanitation and hygiene facilities (Lala et al., 2014). As the understanding of the gender roles in WASH has strengthened, it has influenced the gender agenda in WASH (Kulkarni, 2011), which is now perceived as a prerequisite for WASH initiatives to be successful (UNICEF, FAO, SaciWATERs, 2013). This has included a conscious effort to include women not only as beneficiaries but as active participants in the life cycle of WASH programs (Kulkarni, 2011).

A gender-centric approach to WASH programming is meant to achieve gender

balance and reduce the inequalities suffered by women and girls, supporting equal distribution of men's and women's roles and responsibilities and oriented to facilitate improved implementation. This type of approach can be used at various levels to inform processes regarding the distinct impacts of WASH activities on women and men, girls and boys, and diverse communities and groups.

The interdependence of gender and WASH is now well-recognized among WASH practitioners. The importance of incorporating a gender inclusive perspective is based primarily on the following observations:

- Women and girls are most often the primary users, providers and managers of water in their households. In situations where there is lack of water or access, women are the ones known to travel long distances to meet their families' water needs (WSP, 2010).
- Sanitation and hygiene improvements are often low on the list of family/ community investments. Women and girls, especially those belonging to marginalized communities, suffer more indignity as a result, as their privacy and security are determined by ease of access to, and location of sanitation facilities. In village primary/ middle schools, toilets are often inadequate to serve the needs of girls, resulting in non-attendance during menstruation (UNICEF, 2011).
- Women and men have different roles and responsibilities, access to, and control over water resources, e.g. who draws water for household and other purposes, who owns land and, therefore, makes critical decisions with regards to how water resources (available on the land) are to be utilized. Common societal practices that determine men as property owners, heads of households, and main decision makers in the public sphere often result in marginalizing the views and preferences of women and girls. Hence, it is imperative to define and safeguard land and water rights for women if

full gender equity in resource allocation and use is to be achieved (IFAD, 2007).

- Gender stereotypes concerning abilities and interests of men and women often create non-equitable and non-representative decision-making in the WASH sector.
- Improved access to water is seen to improve families' livelihoods through cooking, keeping livestock (tasks usually undertaken by women) while supporting small businesses, and agriculture related activities including irrigation.
- Increased involvement of women can result in both improved access to water and more equitable distribution of productive resources, as well as also improved performance and sustainability of community groups e.g. Water Users Associations (WUAs) - (Meinzen-Dick and Zwarteveen, 1998; Kumar, 2010). Although women may receive training, they may be prevented from putting their new skills and knowledge into practice by cultural or social factors. For example, women belonging to underprivileged communities or castes may not even be included in training programs.

A gender inclusive approach ensures participation, particularly of women (from diverse communities), as decision makers and investors. WASH sector analyses have found that when women and men are equally involved, there is a positive correlation with improved sustainability of water supplies, and improved transparency and governance in management (Narayan, 1995) (WSP, 2010). Thus, when women and men are equally and meaningfully involved in WASH programs, the program results are more sustainable. This type of participation can also improve community and family relations, the status of women and men, the value placed on their opinion and work by other community members, and community decision-making processes.

Gender analysis in WASH programs support equitable access and ensure that interventions

do not disadvantage women or users of different groups or castes. Specifically, a gender analysis will help to acknowledge the disadvantages faced by women and girls across caste, class, age, disability, marital status, etc. by drawing attention to the interfaces between institutional, socioeconomic and cultural systems that impact their roles and positions (UNICEF, FAO, SaciWATERS, 2013). In addition, it will help women to assess their specific needs and the likely impact of policies, programs, and services on them. This helps them articulate their viewpoints and add their input, which is a critical part of policies, programs, and services. Previous studies have looked at gender frameworks and indicators for water and gender. For example, the Gender and Water Index (GWI) has been proposed at the river basin level with an international focus (Van Koppen, 2003). Additionally, Kulkarni (2012) distinguishes four main ways in which water control is contested; including resources and rights which impact income, rules and norms, the role of authorities, and access to knowledge and inputs to the related discourse. Kulkarni also outlines potential indicators for each category. This paper, building on the analysis of a number of approaches for gender analysis in the context of WASH in India (e.g. Lala et al., 2014), examines well-established gender frameworks to produce a holistic tool that may help to better capture the key desired gender outcomes over the entire WASH intervention cycle.

Gender Analysis Frameworks – A Review

A review was completed of seven well-known framework analyses that originated between the mid-1980s and mid-1990s, (March et al., 1999) including the Harvard Analytical Framework (Overholt et al, 1985); People Oriented Planning (POP) Framework (Anderson et al, 1992); Moser Framework (Moser, 1993); Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM) (Parker, 1993); Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis Framework (Anderson et al, 1989); Women's Empowerment Framework (Longwe, 1991); and the Social Relations Framework (Kabeer, 1994).

These seven frameworks have influenced the emergence of subsequent frameworks

for assessing gender issues such as the Gender Equality Framework (USAID, 2008); Performance Assessment Framework (AusAid, 2005); Good Practices Framework (CARE, 2012); and the Gender Analysis Tool (Status of Women Canada, 2013). These are important gender mainstreaming and programming tools that can help guide practitioners to undertake a systematic analysis of gender relations and related issues in their program areas and have been commonly used for designing development interventions.

The seven frameworks are analyzed while keeping important WASH indicators in mind as applied to the Indian context. Six broad categories were identified to capture key issues: Participation, Access to Services, Control over Resources, Benefits/Outcomes, Governance/ Decision-Making, and Operation and Management (O&M). Each of the six categories (Table 1) is further divided into sub-categories to highlight the specific determinants of that category, and a cross-comparison is carried out against the seven frameworks reviewed. For example, in a WASH program, participation is a key category under which there is a need to gauge participation in terms of: quality of process (i.e. there is a gender balance in participation); planning process (i.e. gender balance has also resulted in gender-sensitive decisions); enabling networks (i.e. women have access to formal or informal networks/groups); ensuring inclusion (i.e. different user groups in a community are included in WASH program without any discrimination); and community power dynamics (i.e. it does not stand to disadvantage women or any other marginalized groups).

Each of the frameworks presents a focus on factors that influence or perpetuate gender differences. Specifically, some frameworks focus more on the impact of structures, institutions, or service delivery in terms of gender, while some pay more attention to gender roles within the family, and others concentrate on women's empowerment and transforming unequal gender relations.

For instance, the Harvard Analytical Framework focuses on the socio-economic activity profile of women and men in terms of who does what, when, where, and for how long. It also focuses on the access and control profile, i.e. who has access and control over resources and benefits (Overholt et al, 1985). In addition, it focuses on the influencing factors (i.e. what enables or facilitates the socio-economic profile as well as the access and control profile).

The POP Framework (Anderson et al, 1992) is based on three major components: determinants analysis, activity analysis, and use and control of resources analysis (which is geared towards understanding equal distribution of goods and services). This framework focuses on the “who-where-when” questions, including how resources are utilized, and places a strong emphasis on understanding control of assets to ensure derived benefits are equitably accrued by both men and women.

The Moser Framework uses two main tools for the purpose of gender analysis. These are gender roles identification in terms of women's triple role: productive, reproductive, and community; and gender needs (or interests met) assessment in terms of practical gender needs and strategic gender interests. In this regard, the framework primarily captures the control over resources and touches briefly upon benefits and participation (Moser, 1993).

The Gender Analysis Matrix is an analytical approach that helps communities themselves to analyze gender issues and is built upon a participatory methodology. Each project objective is analyzed at four levels of society: women, men, household, and community, by various groups of stakeholders. The analysis is carried out by discussing each project objective in terms of how it impacts men's and women's labor practices, time, resources, and other socio-cultural factors, such as changes in social roles and status (Parker, 1993).

The Capacities and Vulnerabilities Framework (CVF), aimed at humanitarian emergency

intervention, is built on two core concepts, ability and vulnerability. While vulnerability is linked to how people can be affected by a disaster, ability is more allied to their capabilities in terms of resources (e.g. material, physical or social). CVF includes control over resources and some governance aspects but it does not pay sufficient attention to benefits (Anderson et al, 1989).

The Women's Empowerment Framework puts forward five levels of equality including control, participation, conscientisation (i.e. attaining equal understanding of gender roles and a gender division of labor that is fair and agreeable), access (i.e. equal access to the factors of production by removing discriminatory provisions in the laws), and welfare (i.e. having equal access to material welfare--food, income, medical care). The Women's Empowerment Framework, like other frameworks, captures control over resources and resultant benefits but, more importantly, it captures governance issues (Longwe, 1991).

Finally, the Social Relations Framework analyses existing gender inequalities in the distribution of resources, responsibilities, and power. This helps to evaluate relationships between people, their relationship to resources and activities, and how the relationships are reworked through institutions, to emphasize human well being as the final goal of development. The Social Relations Framework is one of the most comprehensive frameworks that take social relations and power dynamics into account to explain how social relations and power dynamics play a significant role in highlighting gender aspects (Kabeer, 1994).

Analyzing the Gender Frameworks

An analysis of the seven frameworks vis-à-vis the six categories (Table 1) provides insight into both the positive and negative attributes of each framework. Accordingly, the Harvard Analytical Framework appears weak on participation and governance indicators. The POP Framework does not take quality of process, quality of representation, and household decision-making

into account. The Gender Analysis Matrix (GAM) does not capture access to services, although it partially looks at participation and benefits. The Capacities and Vulnerabilities Framework does not pay sufficient attention to benefits; similarly, the Moser Framework partially covers benefits, but has missed important indicators such as access and participation.

While most of the frameworks appear to touch upon an important category of WASH i.e. Operation and Management, they do not give prominence to contribution, maintenance, and monitoring aspects. These are key indicators that make programs gender-inclusive (Zwarteveen et al., 2012). Further, intra-household decision-making (e.g. who collects, stores, utilizes, and manages water for domestic activities), an important unit of inquiry, is reflected only under Moser, GAM and the Social Relations Framework.

Frameworks such as the Moser and the Social Relations help to address issues of gender balance in participation. Most existing frameworks also help to understand the inclusiveness of the program by looking into different demographic compositions as well as the social capital aspects (e.g. networks, women's groups) that enhance women's engagement in community activities. However, what is lacking in most of the frameworks is a focus on participation in terms of representation leading to gender-sensitive decision-making.

All the frameworks include indicators such as control over land and water sources, but to understand the intra-household management and distribution of water, the Moser, GAM and the Social Relations Framework provide the most insight. The POP and the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Framework are useful in drawing attention to various aspects of access to services in terms of hardware access, coverage, and the distance covered to avail the services. All of the frameworks, except for the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Framework, help to draw a benefits checklist in terms of health, livelihoods, etc. Of all the frameworks, the Social Relations best draws attention to institutions (at different levels) and how they influence or govern gender

relations.

It is evident from Table 1 that none of the frameworks reviewed comprehensively capture all of the important aspects of the six identified categories for WASH programs.

Proposing a Hybrid Framework for WASH in India

Each of the reviewed frameworks were developed at a particular point in time with specific development objectives/programs in mind. Therefore, they do not necessarily reflect or capture the complex and often location-specific gender dynamics in a WASH program, especially in the Indian context. Thus, standing alone, the individual frameworks may not be fully adequate to analyze the gender inclusiveness of WASH programs in India. Therefore, a new framework is proposed to best capture the important components of all six categories. A composite approach, inspired by multiple frameworks, has been developed and is referred to as a hybrid framework (Table 2).

The hybrid framework is inclusive of the six components and attempts to cover several aspects of the typical WASH program. To help make a WASH program more gender-inclusive at field levels, a number of indicators – both quantitative and qualitative – have been identified. These indicators are specific to men and women, within households and at the community level, and act as a check-list to ensure the gender sensitivity and inclusiveness of a WASH program.

Table 2 provides an overview of the determinants, which can ensure gender sensitivity of a WASH intervention. This table shows progress in terms of remaining gender inclusive through various stages. It also draws attention to the required interventions if the program deviates from its goals of equity and equality.

The hybrid framework is a structured approach to gender and equity in WASH programs, and can potentially lead to improved outcomes by

assessing inclusion and exclusion parameters to explore the underlying connections between exclusion and gender. The framework helps to understand the complexity of gender relations in the context of social relations, and how this constrains or provides opportunities for addressing gender inequalities in WASH. It helps in identifying who has access to and control over resources, assets, and benefits, and in understanding the barriers and constraints to women and men participating in and benefiting equally from WASH programs.

The hybrid framework collects sex-disaggregated data relevant to WASH programs and evaluates gender division of labor and patterns of decision-making. Monitoring participation, benefits, the effectiveness of gender equality strategies, and changes in gender relations, while also assessing the gender-sensitive aspects of WASH programs are all areas, which may be strengthened by the framework. In addition, the framework helps build capacity and strengthen networks for women.

The indicators that the hybrid framework proposes under different categories are likely to enable program and field staff involved in the design, implementation and/or evaluation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs to work effectively with both women and men. More importantly, analyzing a WASH program through a gender lens with these indicators is more likely to yield the following key outcomes:

- Participatory decision making wherein women and men make meaningful contributions to discussions and decision-making relating to WASH in their communities
- Empowering women through increased voice in the community and participation in WASH management
- Protecting dignity of young girls and women by recognizing their needs and making possible improved water access and quality, sanitation, and hygiene
- Improving community relationships, not only between men and women of the community, but also between program staff and the

community, as well as between different members of the community

- Improving accountability and transparency in all aspects of the program, leading to better technical design and planning of WASH programs
- Efficient and sustainable programs due to better operation and management based on community participation, contribution, maintenance, and monitoring
- Increased awareness around best water, sanitation and hygienic practices, thereby helping ensure improved health in communities

The hybrid framework may be populated via focus group discussion, spatial mapping, secondary information from government sources, and field observations (Kulkarni, 2012). This may be achieved at each of the three stages of the WASH intervention; the first stage, Planning & Institutional (Capacity) Building, is particularly important (Lala et al. 2014). Specifics of the local area and the aims of the WASH intervention may allow further refinement and consolidation of the hybrid framework to balance data collection practicalities with need for data. The expectation is that practitioners will further develop and modify the hybrid framework for gender analysis in WASH programs to lead to improved gender outcomes.

To date, the hybrid framework has not been field-tested and requires further dialogue with those implementing both government and civil society WASH programs. Current efforts are underway around Gender Budgeting (MoF, 2007) and structured approaches to WASH in India (e.g. Biswas, 2012) to complement such efforts. The tool, in conjunction with a structured process for gendered outcomes (e.g. Lala et al. 2014), can help strengthen understanding of gender interventions in the Indian WASH context, while recognizing that it is still at the conceptual level and would require adaptation for application, depending on context specific issues.

Conclusions

Effective gender-sensitive WASH programming requires the use of gender-inclusive participatory tools that have been designed to engage both women and men. This includes a conscious effort to ensure the inclusion of women not just as beneficiaries, but as active participants in various stages of WASH programs. Currently, there is little evidence to suggest that such participatory and holistic tools are widespread in the Indian context. A hybrid framework has been developed by drawing upon seven well-established general gender frameworks in development practice to structure desired outcomes under six key categories.

The resulting framework has developed indicators (quantitative and qualitative) to help assess differences in participation, benefits, and impacts of WASH programs on men and women, including the progress towards gender equality and changes in gender relations. The hybrid framework is conceptual, but potentially a dynamic tool to help assess changes in WASH over time, as it also can take into account process and representation and opens up a scope for active women's participation across different communities and social classes.

In addition, the hybrid framework has the advantage of including community dynamics and networks from the very beginning of the process. It also makes a clear distinction between two kinds of decision-making processes, within the household and at the institutional level, both of which are important to facilitate women's empowerment. The framework helps to identify priority areas for action to promote equality between women and men, and most importantly, it can enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of WASH programs. The tool, however, needs field validation in order to maximize its utility and ensure its practical implementation. The hybrid framework not only draws from the seven development frameworks described above, but also includes specific factors essential for equitable WASH programming. Such a framework for the WASH sector is currently missing, and thus may serve

as an important tool for WASH interventions with further refinement based on field level application and learning.

Accompanying tables and figures can be viewed [here](#).



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Malika Basu holds a **PhD in Development Studies** from the **Institute of Social Studies, The Hague**. A **social development specialist and gender analyst**, she has over **18 years of experience in research, evaluation and policy analysis** covering rural, social and gender issues. Starting with **MARG**, a **Delhi-based NGO**, she later worked in project support and advisory roles for national and international organisations on issues of participation and inclusion of marginalised communities, women's empowerment, self-help groups, livelihoods, development-induced displacement and related problems. In 2008, she joined the **Solution Exchange initiative of the UN Country Team in India** to head the **Gender Community of Practice**, undertaking knowledge management to provide knowledge-based services to development organisations and practitioners.

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