

## **Strengthening evidence of gender outcomes in WASH: A review of methodologies for gender evaluation**

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The centrality of women's interest in WASH and the role of WASH in influencing gender equality and empowerment are well established. At the programming level, strong evaluation is key to understanding gender outcomes arising from WASH interventions and to ensure activities contribute to – and don't inadvertently undermine – increased gender equality. There is an opportunity to learn from the breadth of disciplines and approaches used in gender research and evaluation in order to strengthen evidence about the impacts of WASH on women and gender equality.

To distill knowledge about current gender research and evaluation approaches, we conducted a systematic review of development-related academic literature; seeking empirical examples of gender focused research and evaluation. The search interrogated the breadth of disciplines driving gender research and evaluation approaches, such as anthropology, development, economics, geography, gender studies, psychology, and sociology. It also identified the relative prevalence of different sectors where gender research and evaluation has been undertaken, including agriculture, education, governance, and public health. We then analyzed these studies according to their theoretical foundations, methodology(ies) and domains of inquiry.

Our review found two main clusters of typical research and evaluation within the literature. The first cluster had a strong emphasis on analyzing the factors which could classify a woman as empowered. These studies typically relied on quantitative analysis of secondary data, and therefore are centered on readily measurable and available insights into women's lives. The second cluster reported how women were empowered through participation in a particular activity. These primarily qualitative studies reported a range of research approaches, though less explicitly articulated their methodological foundations. Additionally, we found that programs with an indirect application of gender commonly had a limited conceptual framing of gender equality. Narrowing in on unique and outlying cases beyond these two clusters, we identified and analyzed innovative concepts and approaches most relevant to the WASH sector. These included innovative methodologies such as those addressing intra-household inequality and those with a focus on strengths through appreciative inquiry. We also identified new ideas for domains of inquiry, such as physical space, agency within and beyond the household, and the ability to critically analyze one's place in society.

Insights from the systematic review – in terms of both evaluation approaches and domains of inquiry – can inform strengthened evidence of the ways in which WASH programs influence gender equality. These research findings will be useful to design rigorous, relevant and practical evaluation approaches for WASH sector programs, particularly those seeking to generate transformative gender equality outcomes.

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This presentation has **two learning objectives**: 1) exploring the breadth of methodologies and domains of inquiry that have been applied to evaluate gender outcomes in international development programming; and 2) examining the relevance of these methodologies for strengthening the **evidence** of both positive and negative impacts on women in WASH.

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- **Reason for writing:** What is the importance of the research? Why would a reader be interested in the larger work?
  - o WASH and gender are deeply connected
  - o Evaluation is the root of evidence
- **Problem:** What problem does this work attempt to solve? What is the scope of the project? What is the main argument, thesis or claim?
  - o Methodologies to explore gender outcomes in WASH are nascent
  - o Tension between evaluation approaches and lack of clarity
  - o Evaluation for the impacts of WASH programs is nascent
- **Methodology:** An abstract of a scientific work may include specific models or approaches used in the larger study. Other abstracts may describe the types of evidence used in the research.
  - o Systematic literature review of empirical examples of gender focused evidence or evaluation from published literature
  - o Focused on the methodologies used across a breadth of disciplines and sectors
- **Results:** An abstract of a scientific work may include specific data that indicates the results of the project. Other abstracts may discuss the findings in a more general way.
  - o Limited breadth of approaches with a strong emphasis on theory-based evaluation
  - o Emerging concepts of gendered-space and access to space is new with specific relation to
- **Implications:** How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic? Are there any practical or theoretical applications from your findings or implications for future research?
  - o Applications for the exploration of gender outcomes in WASH programs
  - o Moving beyond gender-blind WASH towards gender-transformative

UNC Abstract

- Evidence Based WaSH
- o All abstracts are limited to 500 words.
- o All abstract titles are limited to 15 words.
- o All submissions must include key learning objectives for your presentation. Please include key learning objectives in the 'Full Abstract Submission' question on the form.
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- Water Quality
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- Other: