

# Rapid review: Gender and sanitation

Prepared for WaterAid

**UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures**  
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**Cover photo:** Latrine sales agents and masons in rural Bangladesh, 2018.

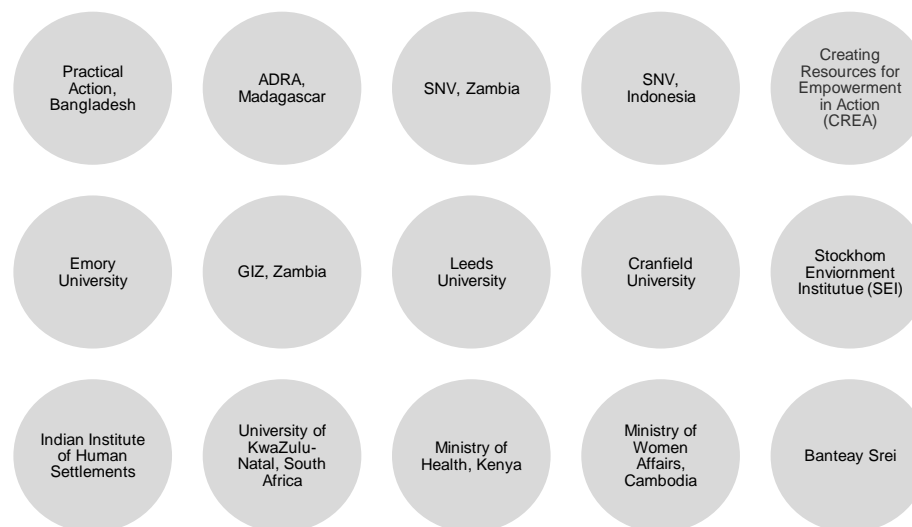
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## About the authors

The University of Technology Sydney - Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF) conducts applied research to support water and sanitation policy and practice in Asia and the Pacific. UTS-ISF provide partners with technical expertise including climate change; planning, governance and decision-making; gender equality and inclusion; public health and water resources management; monitoring; and policy and practice advice.

## Acknowledgements

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Gender equality and inclusion are key aspects of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) service provision and systems. While efforts to identify and address the specific gendered implications of WASH go back decades, this area of work has advanced considerably over recent years. Efforts to integrate gender considerations in broader developmental programming have evolved from an instrumental approach towards a more transformational approach that supports dual outcomes in WASH and in gender equality more broadly. This trend also holds for work in the sanitation subsector.

This report presents outcomes of a **rapid review on gender integration in sanitation**. Funded by WaterAid UK, the study comprised a rapid literature scan of over 100 relevant papers and documents, and engaged 17 organisations leading work on integration of gender into sanitation.

The review was guided by a conceptual framing of a gender-integration framework for WASH (MacArthur et al., forthcoming), which draws on the established spectrum of gender-insensitive to gender-transformative modes of development interventions. This framing supports different entry points for WASH practitioners, while aligning with and building on previous multi-layered frameworks.

The report describes current efforts to address gender in sanitation, mapping them to three areas of sanitation program intervention: (i) community sanitation behaviour, decisions and practices, (ii) public and private sector products and services, and (iii) strengthening sanitation service systems and the wider enabling environment. For each area, this report provides examples from across the gender-integration framework. Additionally, gender-insensitive approaches that do not consider gender and power dynamics and can inadvertently have adverse consequences for both sanitation and gender-related outcomes, have been included as potential pitfalls within each area of intervention, that should be kept in mind to do no harm.

**Community engagement** to foster changes in behaviour and practice include gender-insensitive approaches that place burden on women-led households, and can create backlash, through to transformative approaches that use sanitation as an entry point to transform gender norms through active engagement of male community members as change agents to address sensitive issues such as menstrual hygiene management.

**Sanitation service delivery** in the public and private sector included gender-insensitive approaches that are unintentionally unaware of the gender and power dynamics that shape supply chains, business models and organisational mandates,

as well as gender-sensitive design of sanitation technologies and facilities and efforts to foster an inclusive sanitation workforce. Gender-transformative service delivery models included engaging men through capacity strengthening and sensitisation initiatives, and creating an enabling environment for women staff, such as working with husband-wife businesses.

Activities to strengthen gender integration into **sanitation service systems and the wider enabling environment** included vocational programs and networking platforms for women in the sanitation workforce, use of data to shift programming concerns and addressing systemic barriers in national and subnational workforces. Partnerships with feminist organisations and addressing intersectional aspects of discrimination are common features of transformative models.

Drawing on the multitude of promising examples, the report highlighted several **characteristics of best practice for gender integration** in sanitation which can help to shape gender-transformative sanitation agendas. These included robust do-no-harm strategies, approaches to shift critical consciousness of gender perceptions within sanitation practitioners, collaborating with rights-holder organisations, and acknowledging the importance of intersectional challenges and identifying opportunities. Application of action research approaches in sanitation interventions as well as monitoring and evaluation tools and approaches that can measure changes in empowerment, norms, dynamics and structures emerged as other characteristics of good practice in gender-sanitation integration.

Lastly, the report identified **common policy changes** needed to strengthen gender integration in the sanitation sector. At the global level, setting standards for gender-disaggregated monitoring, investing in gender-integration in programming and supporting an increasing focus on gendered impact of climate change on sanitation were raised as important policy directions. National level policy changes included mandates for gender responsive budgeting, standards for inclusive facilities, formalisation of the female sanitation workforce, and coherent safeguarding policies that ensure no harm is caused. Linking gender and sanitation policies, empowering local female sanitation entrepreneurs,, promoting and scaling existing good practices and supporting localised assessments were examples of key policy changes required at the local level.

The practices and characteristics to support gender integration documented in this report, and efforts to address the required policy changes can contribute to create a more fair and just sanitation sector that both improves gender equality and sanitation outcomes.

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## 1. Introduction

The integration of gender equality and inclusion within water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) service provision is critical to ensuring sustained and equitable access. Although efforts to understand and address the gendered implications of WASH have been considered since the 1980s, this area of work has advanced considerably over recent years (MacArthur et al., 2020). In parallel to refinements in thinking within gender and development more broadly, efforts to integrate gender considerations in the WASH sector have evolved from an instrumental approach towards a more transformational approach that supports dual outcomes in WASH and in gender equality more broadly (MacArthur et al. forthcoming). This trend also holds for work in the sanitation subsector.

This report presents the results of a rapid review of gender integration in sanitation work globally through a series of workshops and a review of over 100 relevant papers and documents.

The rapid review had three broad objectives with respect to gender-sanitation integration: 1) To compile the latest evidence, thinking and practice of gender in sanitation globally, and identify important elements of good practice; 2) To identify key policy changes needed at global, national and subnational level; and 3) To clarify WaterAid's current and potential contribution. This report synthesises findings concerning the first two objectives. The overall focus and scope was sanitation systems and services, and areas such as menstrual health were included where there was a close link to sanitation practices or facilities.

A CLTS community triggering event in rural Zimbabwe.



## 2. Conceptual framework

The review was guided by a gender-integration framework for WASH (MacArthur et al., forthcoming), which draws on the established spectrum of gender-insensitive to gender-transformative modes of development interventions (see Figure 1). The framework includes a single gender-insensitive category and three categories of gender-integration: sensitive, responsive and transformative. This framing was selected as it supports different entry points for WASH practitioners, while aligning with and building on previous multi-layered frameworks of gender and development theory.

While the framework illustrates four distinct categories, programs, policy and projects may not fit neatly into a single category and the framework can be interpreted as a spectrum. Additionally, the extent of gender integration in programs on the ground may vary between geographic regions and from what is documented in reports and strategies, hence there is fluidity between categories. It is appropriate that organisations select relevant approaches based on available resources, skills, time-frames and the local context.

It should also be noted that all gender-integrated approaches must be underpinned with robust do-no-harm strategies. While the negative impacts of gender insensitive approaches are more self-evident, gender-integrated approaches can also unintentionally cause harm if not conducted with proper awareness and tailored strategies to mitigate risks of redressing unequal power dynamics.

→ **Gender-insensitive** approaches **do not take into account** any gender norms, dynamics, or structures. Policies which do not consider gender dimensions are often unintentionally gender-insensitive and inadvertently cause harm. They can also be referred to as *gender-unaware* or *gender blind*<sup>1</sup>. In sanitation, gender-insensitive approaches are often associated with technology installation interventions or technology selection policies which do not conduct any gender analysis or incorporate any gender considerations.

→ **Gender-sensitive** approaches **acknowledge** and **work within** traditional or existing gender norms, dynamics and structures of a particular context. They are also referred to as *gender-aware* or *gender-inclusive*. In other terms, sensitive approaches actively aim to be inclusive and to value diversity, but they do not actively challenge social and gender norms. Such approaches may also address practical gender needs. In sanitation, gender-sensitive approaches might work with women and men based on their traditional gender roles, needs or dynamics; for example, accessing women's or other minority group's views in separate forums where they meet but without shifting dynamics of participation in wider forums, or addressing the sanitation needs of specific groups such as pregnant women. Notably, gender-sensitive approaches do not aim to empower individuals to question and change ascribed roles and dynamics or actively create inclusive enabling environments that facilitate such change. In this sense, gender-sensitive approaches are at risk of being 'tokenistic' but also may helpfully build skills and capacities within the confines of existing gender dynamics, or address practical gender needs.

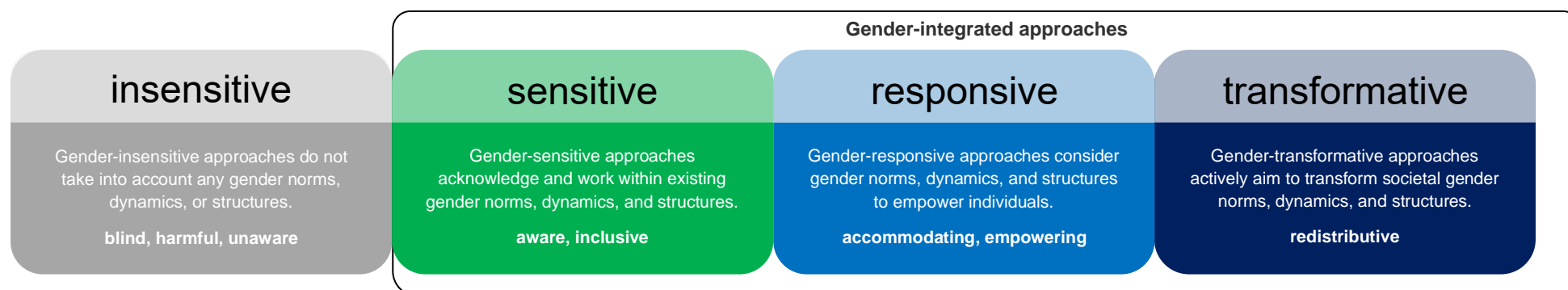


Figure 1. Gender-integration framework (adapted from MacArthur et al., forthcoming)

<sup>1</sup> The framework purposefully does not use the terminology gender-blind, as this term can be insensitive to individuals with vision impairment.

→ **Gender-responsive** approaches actively **consider** gender norms, dynamics and structures with an intention to **empower individuals**. For example, by strengthening confidence and capacity to overcome barriers or participate in activities and opportunities that assume non-traditional gender roles. However, these approaches do not aim to remove or address any systemic or structural barriers. Gender-responsive approaches are also known as *gender-accommodating* or *empowering*. Gender-responsive approaches often work with a group of same-gender individuals, but are at risk of ignoring the social and cultural structures and environment. For example, a program may work exclusively with women sanitation entrepreneurs with a goal to empower them through capacity development and networking. However, a gender-responsive program would likely not include activities related to the husbands or family members of women entrepreneurs, or wider initiatives to shift women's workload through reducing their caring and reproductive workloads. Participants in gender-responsive approaches are at risk of backlash, resistance or increased work burden as the enabling environment may not be ready to embrace transformed roles and responsibilities.

→ Lastly, **gender-transformative** approaches actively aim to **transform** the gender norms, dynamics, and structures that govern **societies**. Where gender-responsive approaches support a subset of individuals, gender-transformative approaches aim to transform systems and not just a group of individuals. In this sense, they are the most complex approach, but also have the most transformative potential. While gender-responsive approaches primarily focus on empowering a subset of individuals, gender-transformative approaches often **also** purposefully engage with gender norms, dynamics and structures and frequently work at multiple levels. In sanitation, for example, gender-transformative approaches may include partnering with rights holder organisations to help address norms. Alternatively, a transformative approach might actively engage men and boys in specific ways. Gender-transformative approaches are complex, and therefore at risk of under-monitoring potential harms and over-claiming potential transformations, and yet offer promise for long-term change that addresses causes rather than symptoms of inequality.

As indicated in these brief definitions and examples, the distinction between the categories may be blurred and a program's intentions may differ from the reality on the ground. Often a program's level of gender-integration can be identified through its theory of change, the breadth of human actors with which the program engages, and the types of outcomes that it monitors (intended and unintended, positive and negative). In explanation of the latter, while gender-sensitive approaches may track the diversity of participants through gender and age disaggregated participant lists, a gender-responsive approach may monitor the changing levels of empowerment for women in sanitation businesses. And a gender-transformative approach may monitor or evaluate wider social changes and outcomes in multiple social and relational arenas.

### Box 1. Norms, dynamics and structures

All these definitions of gender-integration use the terms 'norms', 'dynamics' and 'structures'. For clarity, this document defines these terms as follows:

- **Gender norms** are the informal rules about how individuals should be and act based on their gender (EIGE, 2016). These ideas are learned early on in life and are often portrayed through gender stereotypes (Water for Women, 2022). These are sometimes referred to as gender attitudes, stereotypes or roles.
- **Gender dynamics** are the *"relationships and interactions between and among girls, boys, women and men"* (EIGE, 2016). These are sometimes also referred to in literature and practice as gender relations.
- **Gender structures** are the economic, social, cultural and political environments that produce and sustain gender norms and dynamics (EIGE, 2016). These structures can include institutions and socialisation processes in the home, workplace and broader society.

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### 3. Approach and methods

Data collection for the rapid review was undertaken through two parallel phases – 1) a literature review; and 2) a set of three workshops and three interviews with 17 organisations.

The **literature review** comprised a rapid literature scan of over 100 relevant papers and documents focused on sanitation programs, systems and services, drawing on previous gender and WASH literature reviews (van Wijk-Sijbesma, 1985, 1998; MacArthur et al., 2020; Caruso et al., 2022) and using further snowball sampling. Historical literature was included based on its ongoing resonance with current practice and ability to highlight practices of potential harm and backlash without naming specific organisations. As published academic literature is less likely to include detailed case study descriptions, the review expanded beyond academic literature to include relevant materials from grey literature. Examples related to cross-cutting themes such as menstrual health were included if they had a close link to sanitation practices or facilities. The review sought case study examples of good practice and focused on three areas of gender integration (communities, service delivery, and enabling environment). The review also engaged with practice case studies from the Gates Foundation's gender and the sanitation value chain review (BMGF, 2018) alongside cases from the Sanitation Learning Hub, WSSCC, and Frontiers of CLTS series (Cavill et al., 2018; WSSCC, 2019; Bongomin et al., 2022). The review has been supplemented by the authors' experience as research partners within the Water for Women fund and their involvement in recent practice in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The **workshops** took a qualitative, participatory approach designed to facilitate exchange of good practice and experience to date. Participatory activities included small break-out room discussions using Airtable and Google Slides. Informed consent was sought, and notes were taken during all sessions. Qualitative data was analysed using Airtable, developing a categorisation of different types of sanitation initiatives and highlighting the specific nature of the gendered elements according to the conceptual framework. Workshop participants were identified jointly by UTS-ISF and WaterAid based on their network, organisations and individuals identified as working at the forefront of gender-sanitation integration, and gender focused organisations involved in WASH issues, and snowballing based on advice from this network. Interest to participate was also sought through an open call on the Faecal Sludge Management Alliance (FSMA) network. Participants included a varied group of government representatives, civil society organisations, women's organisations, researchers, and donors, comprising experiences from 14 countries, namely India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, Madagascar, Zambia, Ethiopia, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Cambodia, Haiti, and Scotland. A complete list of participating organisations is provided in the Acknowledgements section.

Additionally, the report was supplemented by inputs from WaterAid's staff based on their previous work on gender aspects of sanitation, including integration of menstrual health facilities in toilets in school and health care facilities, female-friendly public and community toilets, female sanitation entrepreneurs, and advocacy efforts to address gender-based violence in relation to sanitation and representation of women and girls in the WASH workforce and other decision-making roles.

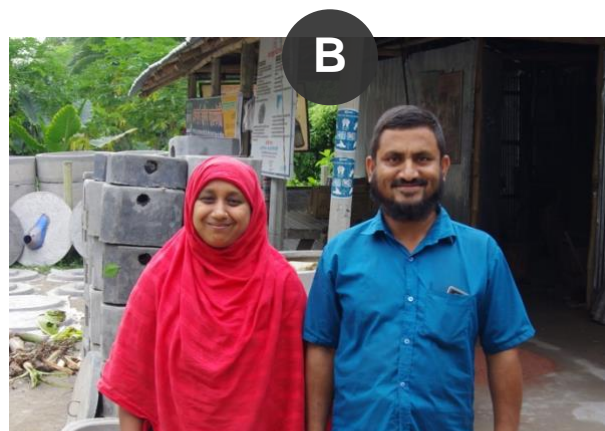
## 4. Examples of gender integration in sanitation practice

This section describes the current efforts to address gender in sanitation, mapping them to three areas of sanitation intervention: A) community sanitation behaviour, decisions and practices, B) public and private sector products and services, and C) systems strengthening at subnational and national scale in terms of the broader enabling environment. Within each area of engagement, examples of gender-sensitive, -responsive and -transformative practice are provided. Historically gender-insensitive forms of community engagement have been employed in the sanitation sector that do not consider gender and power dynamics. These have potential for adverse consequences for both the sanitation-related outcomes and gender dynamics, and thus have been included as potential pitfalls within each area of engagement, that should be considered. This rapid review is not intended to be a comprehensive assessment, but represents a snapshot of good practices by participating organisations and as identified in literature. As such, it is not appropriate to assess the dominant approaches in current practice at the time of this review, but rather, to illustrate the breadth of existing approaches to support their wider use and uptake.



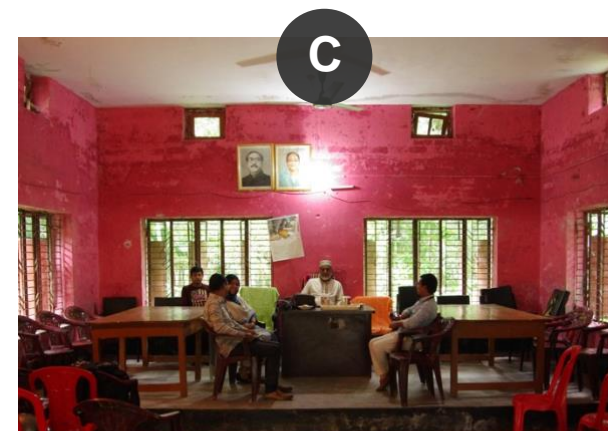
### **Community engagement in sanitation behaviour, practices and decision-making**

Demand focused activities work directly with communities to foster improved sanitation behaviour and practice. They are most closely linked to approaches such as Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST).



### **Public and private sector sanitation products, services and service delivery**

Supply focused activities include the delivery of sanitation facilities, products and services and often engage the public and private sectors. This also includes the development and design of new facilities, products, and services.



### **Strengthening sanitation service systems and the wider enabling environment**

Support focused initiatives engage with sanitation systems at sub-national, national and international levels. This includes institutions and institutional arrangements, regulations, guidelines, policies and strategies.

**Figure 2.** Three areas of sanitation intervention.



# A

## Community engagement in sanitation behaviour, practices and decision-making

Focused on community engagement to foster changes in behaviour and practice, this section explores policies and programs which leverage communication and partnership approaches to shape improved sanitation. This includes approaches such as Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), and Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation (PHAST).

### Gender-sensitive

Gender-sensitive forms of community engagement aim to foster inclusion and often adopt an intersectional perspective for the community and facilitators.

- **Inclusion of diverse voices:** In Kenya, the national government, Amref Health Africa and the former Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) created a more inclusive and equitable CLTS triggering and follow-up process. They encouraged the participation of women, girls, and people with disabilities, and ensured inclusion of diverse voices in household decision-making on toilet facility type (workshop example).
- **Gender-parity and diversity amongst facilitators:** In Nepal, a gender parity and diversity policy for CLTS facilitators helped to reduce social, cultural and linguistic barriers in the triggering process (WSSCC, 2019). However, evidence from India highlights that in some cases, women's participation was conflated with empowerment and that workloads of women are increasing in sanitation activities (Movik and Mehta, 2010).

Community sanitation-facilitator training in Zimbabwe.



## Gender-responsive

Gender-responsive forms of community engagement go beyond diverse participants and focus on empowering diverse individuals in community and household decision-making and active participation.

- **Highlighting the importance of diversity in facilitator trainings:** In Malawi, participatory training for CLTS facilitators was found to significantly raise the awareness of diverse sanitation needs including disability inclusion (Jones et al., 2016).
- **Engaging with women's groups and creating safe spaces:** In Madagascar, ADRA worked with existing gender-segregated community groups to explore WASH-related challenges and household sanitation and hygiene decision-making dynamics. The challenges were raised in larger integrated groups to identify solutions. Helping women to voice their concerns and finding collective ways to ensure those concerns are heard and acted on is a way of empowering these women (workshop example).
- **Engaging organisations for people with disabilities:** In Indonesia, SNV partnered with an association of women with disabilities to provide gender-responsive and inclusive sanitation at nine health care facilities. The process involved consultation with women's groups and organisations of people with disability to identify needs and challenges to access toilets, resulting in provision of MHM facilities in toilets alongside the addition of ramps, widening of doors, and provision of handrails in toilets. This work with a local association of women with disabilities has led to further gender equality outcomes in other locations: the city government has committed to replicate the model in seven other health care facilities and has increased the upcoming budget to provide for inclusive WASH facilities (workshop example).
- **Involving girls' clubs in schools:** In Uganda, girl's education movement (GEM) clubs have been involved in supporting school hygiene and sanitation promotion. Activities such as music and drama, the building of bathrooms and the development of education materials have helped to empower girls and shape sanitation outcomes in schools (Bitature and Barebwoha, 2005). Similar mixed-youth clubs have been leveraged in other contexts across Africa and South Asia (author's experience).

Gender-disaggregated sanitation behaviour change group using the sanitation ladder activity in Bangladesh.



## Gender-transformative

Gender-transformative forms of community engagement actively aim to shape more gender equal communities through the process of sanitation promotion and behaviour change. Transformative approaches include the use of sanitation as an entry point to transform gender norms and the active engagement of male community members as change-agents to raise community awareness on menstrual health and hygiene (MHH).

### Utilising sanitation as an entry point to transform gender norms

- **Addressing gendered participation, decision-making, differences and opportunities:** In Vanuatu and Fiji, the resource guide ‘Working effectively with women and men in water, sanitation and hygiene programs’ (Halcrow et al., 2010) was developed to transform community gender dynamics and support improved WASH outcomes based on four principles: (i) facilitate participation and inclusion, (ii) focus on how decisions are made, (iii) see and value differences, and (iv) create opportunities for new experiences and roles (Willetts et al., 2013).
- **Transforming gender dynamics through monitoring approaches:** In Vietnam, Plan utilised the ‘Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool’ (GWMT) to transform strategic gender interests alongside the process of monitoring changes in water, sanitation and hygiene (Lee et al., 2014; Leahy et al., 2017). The tool includes eight activities to transform gender norms through community meetings including exploring gendered WASH roles and reviewing how WASH-related decisions are made in the home and community. It also has been used in Indonesia (Bongomin et al., 2022).
- In Timor-Leste, WaterAid’s **community dialogue manual** has supported communities through a collaborative WASH planning process while integrating gender awareness activities such as daily clocks, ‘who does, who decides’, and a toilet design game (WaterAid Timor-Leste, 2016). The process has led to further engagement with and acceptance of women’s participation in community meetings (Grant and Megaw, 2019).

- **Normalising third gender:** In Nepal, Practical Action and ENPHO undertook work which has normalised and affirmed recognition of third gender people. By constructing a public toilet with separated facilities for women, men and third-gender people, not only did this process address the physical needs of third-gender individuals, but it also became a “means of publicly recognizing and affirming their identity and their existence” (Boyce et al., 2018).

### Partnering with male change agents to address sensitive issues

- **Male advocates:** In Papua New Guinea, World Vision has collaborated with influential male community members to talk about sensitive issues such as the importance of MHM, and the need for husbands to support their wives and daughters in decision-making (Bongomin et al., 2022).
- **Sensitising men:** As part of a sanitation program with SNV, the local government in Dailekh district of Nepal is sensitising male members of the family about menstruation, and changing societal norms related to the criminalised practice of *chhaupadi*<sup>2</sup>. This has changed household budgets on MHM products and local government budget for training on menstrual pads production (workshop example).
- **Diverse participation in child faeces management:** In the Solomon Islands, to improve gender norms associated with safe child faeces management, a behaviour change campaign is engaging fathers, mothers, and newlywed couples, to promote more equitable division of domestic duties (Bongomin et al., 2022).
- **Engaging with couples:** In Bangladesh, the SHOMOTA project applied the MenCare approach to engage with couples in group sessions. The project increased the recognition of women’s voices in household sanitation decision-making, and reduced the stigma related to discussion on MHH (workshop example). This work built on the gender-transformative social accountability model to ensure that diverse voices have been heard in the planning for improved WASH services (Winterford et al., 2020).

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<sup>2</sup> A traditional social practice in Nepal which isolates women and girls during menstruation, forcing them to live outside their home in makeshift huts or cow sheds, with no access to a toilet.

- **Sensitising men and boys in schools:** In India, WaterAid and Vatsalya have sensitised men and boys on menstrual hygiene management (MHM) within school environments. This has led to more freedom for men and boys to speak about and support the MHM needs of women and girls including those related to sanitation facilities (Mahon et al., 2015).
- **Sensitising communities on gender-based violence:** Banteay Srei is working in rural parts of Cambodia to sensitise communities on gender-based violence resulting from household conflict on WASH issues and sexual harassment faced by women and girls using community toilets and practicing open defecation. They train community members and work with community leaders and has proven effective in maintaining sustainable outcomes (workshop example).

## Potential pitfalls

Several sources describe potentially discriminatory outcomes of community engagement approaches (Movik and Mehta, 2010; House et al., 2017; WSSCC, 2019). Specific examples of insensitive approaches and the issues these have raised are demonstrated in the following examples:

- **Stress on women-led households:** In Nepal, women-led households faced undue stress, threats and pressure was placed on marginalized communities to build a latrine with limited resources because of ambiguous subsidy policies (House et al., 2017).
- **Uneven participation and dominant views prevailing:** In India, gender and social structures left many women unable to participate in village meetings. These challenges intersected with poverty and caste, with advantaged women dominating women's clubs. Additionally, influential male leaders (such as the village headman) stopped some sanitation planning meetings as they conflicted with the cultural desire for seclusion for women (Hale, 1985).
- **Excluding men, reducing sanitation outcomes:** In Burkina Faso, a latrine promotion intervention failed when it only targeted women and did not include men, who were culturally responsible for all construction – including the construction of latrines (van Wijk-Sijbesma, 1985).
- **Tokenistic participation:** Research in Nigeria has identified that gender parity of CLTS facilitators and committee members did not always “translate to equal decision-making power” and that women's concerns were often overlooked in the committee meetings (Adenike Adeyeye, 2011).
- **Pushback on meeting women's needs:** In India, a government project in Rajasthan aimed to support improved sanitation for women and reduce unsafe practices of women holding their urine during the day. Unfortunately, many latrines were installed in household courtyards, commonly reserved for guests and men, and not women. To address this, the project began seeking diverse participation in the siting of latrines – however this was met by pushback from men who did not see the importance of including women in the planning processes (O'Reilly, 2010; BMGF, 2018). Similar experiences have been noted by practitioners in Odisha (Routray et al., 2017), Bihar (Ashraf et al., 2022), and Bangladesh (author's experience).

## B

### Public and private sector sanitation products, services and service delivery

This section investigates opportunities to strengthen gender integration within sanitation service delivery which is often supported by a blend of public and private sector roles. Both public and private sector local sanitation institutions have been historically male-dominated spaces missing opportunities to shape inclusive products, facility design and service.

#### Gender-sensitive

A significant body of work has focused on the design of **gender-sensitive sanitation technologies and facilities** (Hartmann et al., 2014; Schmitt et al., 2018; UNICEF et al., 2018). Specific examples include:

- **Gender-sensitive public and community toilets:** WaterAid, WSUP and UNICEF have developed a guide on how to ensure public and community toilets are female-friendly (UNICEF et al., 2018). This guide provides advice on how to design gender-sensitive facilities, and how to conduct a gendered analysis and planning of public and community toilet provision at city-wide scale.
- **Gendered lens on sanitation technology development:** In South Africa, researchers at KwaZulu Natal University are reviewing and testing existing sanitation technologies from a gendered lens (workshop example). In addition, a global research grant has explored gender-insights in sanitation technology development, highlighting that technology is often considered 'gender-neutral' and a lack of diverse participants in design processes (Elledge et al., 2020).
- **Addressing harassment through re-design:** In slum areas of Mumbai and Pune in India, an alliance of non-government organisations and the municipal governments sought to address harassment for women using latrines. They redesigned the latrines to ensure separate women's and men's entrances and adapting the door design for easier maintenance and cleaning (Burra et al., 2003).

- Using **human-centred design to meet gendered needs:** In Zimbabwe, PRO-WASH is exploring opportunities through human-centred design to adapt the standardised latrine design (BVIP) to be better suited to the needs of women and girls. The team is piloting motion sensor solar lights, screen doors, inside water storage and wider entry hallways (author's experience).



Human centred design for latrine design in rural Zimbabwe.



A husband-and-wife latrine business in rural Bangladesh

### Inclusion of women and other groups in sanitation workforce

Gender-sensitive service delivery has also focused on the inclusion of women and marginalised populations in the sanitation workforce.

- **Gender sensitive supply-chain audits:** Piloted in the Terai region of Nepal and the southern coastal areas of Bangladesh, gender-sensitive supply chain audits seek to find women in sanitation service delivery. The action research sought to identify areas in which women are already engaged in sanitation service delivery with a goal of promoting decent work and empowering opportunities, rather than shame-based or coercive engagements (author's experience).
- **Rights of informal sanitation workers:** In Bangladesh, Practical Action is working in urban slums to uphold the rights of informal sanitation workers to access female-friendly community toilets. At the community level, the intervention resulted in increased awareness among men and women about the importance of female-friendly toilets for the informal sanitation workforce (workshop example).
- **Efforts to support women latrine sales agents:** In rural Nepal, a sanitation marketing program partnered with women latrine sales agents alongside CLTS triggering activities to support access to improved latrines (iDE, 2019). As a caution, however, all these women lost their jobs once the triggering was completed, and the organisation was not able to secure funding to support transitions to more sustainable work. iDE's similar work in Bangladesh has sought to scale women latrine sales agent training and support mechanisms across 10+ districts in collaboration with local government and national private sector (author's experience).
- **Demonstrating inclusive designs:** In urban Kabwe, Zambia, SNV trained masons to construct toilets that take an inclusive design in terms of gender and disability. They also conducted demonstrations of different inclusive toilet options at the community level to promote informed choice, engaging with diverse community members. While the initiative is currently at a small-scale, the intention was to demonstrate what an inclusive toilet looks like and led to households and schools shifting their norms to undertake more inclusive processes when constructing toilets (workshop example).
- **Women's roles in subsidy allocation processes:** In Cambodia and Bangladesh, iDE has promoted the inclusion of diverse women in the local government driven smart subsidy allocation process to ensure households that are most in need are supported. This work to incorporate diverse views into the design of the subsidy resulted in a better targeted subsidy provision (MacArthur, 2018; MacArthur and Koh, 2022).


## Gender-responsive

Gender-responsive service delivery models often aim to empower an under-engaged single-gender group usually through capacity strengthening and support mechanisms.

- **Women community groups managing community toilets:** The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) and partners are working in Trichy, India to empower women community groups to manage and operate community toilets. They identified existing local women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) who have been active for more than two decades, built a rapport with these groups, and provided training on various topics including book-keeping, and safety at work. The program strengthened their leadership and management skills and has resulted in the SHGs successfully maintaining community toilets across the city (workshop example).
- **Inclusive protective equipment for workers:** In urban informal settlements of Haiti, an organisation is designing inclusive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits for sanitation workers that suit different body types. This approach is accommodating and addressing the differentiated needs of the female

workforce, in a traditionally male-dominated profession of emptying (workshop example).

- **Support to empower and enable women entrepreneurs:** In Indonesia, Plan has implemented evidence-based strategies to better support women entrepreneurs. Research identified key opportunities to strengthen the empowerment of female WASH entrepreneurs, which were increasing women entrepreneur's personal networks, their access to business support, and activities to ensure their family members were supportive of their activities (Indarti et al., 2019) and differentiating support to account for intersectional differences amongst women (Kumar et al., 2021) which were taken up by Plan in their subsequent implementation.
- **Creating a support network within the female sanitation workforce:** In northern Ghana, the sanitation social enterprise Sama Sama conducted human-centred action research to explore opportunities to strengthen women's empowerment initiatives for staff and latrine business owners. This led to the formation of a women's support network within the enterprise and a targeted mentorship program (Nydam et al., 2018).



Painted latrine slabs ready for sale in rural Bangladesh. Painting was uncovered as a hidden role of women in sanitation service delivery (see gender sensitive supply-chain audits)

## Gender-transformative

Gender-transformative service delivery models reimagine the participation and capacity of women and men – both related to what different genders *can* do, but also what they *should* do. Examples include engaging men through capacity strengthening and sensitisation initiatives, creating a more enabling environment for women staff, working with husband-wife businesses, and empowering transgender groups in FSM activities.

- **Transforming husband-wife latrine businesses:** In Cambodia, WaterSHED and iDE are working towards professionalising and transforming sanitation delivery models. The organisations both partnered with SHE Investments, a feminist organisation supporting women’s economic empowerment to provide training for husband-and-wife latrine business partnerships (Soeters et al., 2020). iDE also actively worked to remove the term ‘latrine producer’s wife’ from the team’s vocabulary, instead actively referring to these women as latrine producers (MacArthur and Koh, 2022). In Lao PDR, SNV’s Water for Women supported project works with husbands and wives who own WASH businesses to strengthen their partnerships and encourage equitable decision-making, build greater respect for women’s work, and encourage sharing of care responsibilities at home (workshop example).
- **Empowering transgender groups to become skilled sanitation professionals:** The city government of Cuttack in Odisha, India has identified and mobilised transgender individuals (who earlier used to seek alms at traffic junctions) into formal collective groups, and built their capacity to operate and manage the city’s 60 Septage Treatment Plants. While on one hand, these groups were provided technical and managerial training, on the other gender-sensitive trainings were also provided to the municipality staff which was critical to partner with transgender groups. The social recognition and appreciation of these efforts has led to positively redefining societal perceptions about transgender people. This has been a major step in integrating them into mainstream society and providing them a secure means of livelihood. (Vathanan et al., 2022).

- **Addressing barriers to leadership by women:** In Cambodia and Indonesia, EMW and Plan Indonesia respectively implemented research recommendations to address identified barriers to empowering participation and leadership of women in local level governance for water and sanitation (Grant et al., 2021; Soeters et al., 2021). In Cambodia EMW is making efforts to support family-friendly workplaces, prioritising management and leadership training and engagement of both men and women.

### Potential pitfalls

Even when care is taken, service delivery models can unintentionally be unaware of the gender and power dynamics that shape supply chains, business models and organisational mandates. Examples of insensitive actions and related pitfalls include:

- **Male-only technical training:** In Nepal, while men were trained on latrine construction, women were only trained on non-technical skills, as this was in alignment with existing gender roles. However, the women were not able to maintain and repair systems when the men travelled for work (Regmi and Fawcett, 1999).
- **Violence due to backlash on sanitation investments by women:** In south-east Asia, a sanitation marketing program partnered with microfinance institutions to reduce financial barriers for first time latrine owners. However, this led to several instances of household violence, where women made the decision to purchase a latrine without engaging their husbands. The organisation later adopted a policy which gave women several days to cancel their order without penalty (author’s experience).
- **Rejection of sanitation service:** Similarly in Kenya, Sanivation, a sanitation social enterprise, identified challenges related to men’s control over household purchases. In one case, a woman purchased the container-based service while her husband was working away. When the husband returned home, he “refused to have the toilet in the home, saying it was unsanitary” and asked the enterprise to remove the container. To address this, Sanivation created a campaign to educate men and leaders about container-based sanitation (BMGF, 2018).



## Strengthening sanitation service systems and the wider enabling environment

Public and private sector service delivery actors are situated in a wider service delivery system at sub-national, national and international level. Activities to strengthen gender integration into these systems focus on wider policy, guidance and support mechanisms. This broader 'enabling environment' includes the institutions and institutional arrangements, regulations, guidelines, policies and strategies that guide sanitation services, however gender integration across these areas is only recently emerging.

### Gender-sensitive

Gender-sensitive systems strengthening initiatives explore opportunities to create more inclusive services through national-level actors.

- **Advocacy for gender-sensitive public and community toilets:** Based on the WaterAid, WSUP and UNICEF guide, described previously, on female-friendly public and community toilets (UNICEF et al., 2018), WaterAid undertook city and town-wide assessments of public toilets in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Tanzania, and used the results to advocate local governments for improved and gender-sensitive service provision (WaterAid, 2022). In India, it influenced the Government of India advisory on public and community toilets (Government of India, 2018).
- **Improving MHH markets, access and use:** In Bangladesh, ICRC and iDE undertook a rapid action research activity on national private sector policies, to understand the challenges in sustainable, equitable and efficient access to MHH products and services throughout the country. The study aimed to explore how national private sector policies influence regional markets in both urban and rural areas, in particular the access and use of improved MHH products and services. In doing so, it reinforced the value of reviewing the wider private sector's role in a sub-sector primarily focused on last-mile manufacturing, education and subsidy provision (author's experience).
- **Adopting an inclusive CLTS methodology:** Lessons learnt from inclusive CLTS triggering by the Government of Kenya, Amref Health Africa and the WSSCC provided insights to develop Kenya's national MHM policy and strategy. There was strong political commitment by the government who led and supported the project across 11 counties in Kenya. While the project was designed as gender-sensitive at local level, its adoption at the institutional level now supports an overall gender-responsive approach by government. County governments continued to adopt inclusive CLTS triggering processes long after the project ended (workshop example).
- **Ensuring diverse teams guide sanitation risk assessment processes:** The recently updated Sanitation Safety Planning Manual contains no detailed reflections on how gender dimensions may influence system functionality (WHO, 2022). The guide does, however, recommend diversity within the safety planning team.

## Gender-responsive

Support mechanisms for gender-responsive sanitation systems focus on the empowerment of women in the broader sanitation workforce. These can include networks, vocational programs and networking, use of data to shift programming concerns and addressing systemic barriers in national and subnational workforces.

- **International peer-learning and networking:** SuSanA and GIZ are facilitating peer-learning and networking events (Stockholm WWW 2019 and 2022) as well as online meetings to bring together women working in sanitation. Women can access peer-mentoring and are given the opportunity to build their own professional networks with other women and collectively find solutions to the common barriers they face in their workplaces (workshop example).
- **Vocational training programs for women:** In Zambia, strategies to attract and mentor young female WASH professionals has led to the development of the African Women Sanitation professionals network Zambia chapter and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to support upskilling for women in the WASH workforce (workshop example).
- **Using data to shift urban sanitation programming to prioritise women's concerns:** Validated in eight cities across South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa as part of the MUSE (Measures of Urban Sanitation and Empowerment) project. Emory University developed the ARISE scales to support local stakeholder assessment of sanitation-related empowerment. The ARISE (Agency, Resources, and Institutional Structures for Sanitation-related Empowerment) scales assess 16 sub-domains of empowerment, allowing stakeholders to use the resulting data to prioritise practice and policy changes. For instance, the Kampala Capital City Authority in Uganda have used the data to inform their programming, guided by women's concerns and issues (workshop example).
- **Including women's voice in sanitation budgeting and strategy:** In Bangladesh, provision of female-friendly community toilets resulted in increased involvement of female sanitation service providers in decision-making with the municipal authorities, for instance by including their voice in annual sanitation budgeting processes. Moreover, institutional efforts, including a national policy addressing sanitation issues and a national MHM strategy, provided an enabling environment to ensure sanitation workers have access to female-friendly toilets (workshop example).
- **Addressing barriers to women's participation and leadership in government sanitation workforce:** In Indonesia, Plan have taken health centres as an entry point that values female workers in sanitation to adjust conditions, facilities and practices to better meet their needs, and have increased their engagement with men on workplace gender issues including on barriers that undermine women's leadership. These efforts were made on the basis of research that explored how 'gendered structures' influenced national and subnational WASH government institutions and ways to strengthen women's participation and engagement in the WASH workforce (Soeters et al., 2021).
- **Training to address understandings of inclusion at national and local level:** In Timor Leste, Care International and WaterAid conducted an action research assessment to improve the capacity of WASH actors at national and municipal levels related to gender equality and diversity. Only 6% of municipality and state administration staff and 0% of national level staff had received gender training prior to the intervention (Bongomin et al., 2022). To address this, Care has implemented a training program to improve WASH staff understanding on gender, disability, social inclusion, and gender-based violence.

## Gender-transformative

Gender-transformative modes of system strengthening are as concerned with improving societal gender structures as with encouraging sustainable sanitation systems. Partnerships with feminist organisations and addressing intersectional aspects of discrimination are common features of transformative models. At this point in time, there are limited examples of transformative approaches to address the diverse dimensions of systems strengthening.

### Working in partnership with feminist organisations

- In India, the feminist rights-based organisation, Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA) uses a **gender-transformative approach to provide technical support to various government and non-governmental organisations**. It conducts capacity-building workshops, and provides technical inputs in state sanitation policies within Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS) programs across six states in India, raising awareness and sensitivity about the sanitation needs of women, gender-diverse individuals, people with disabilities, and sanitation workers' rights to ensure these are recognised in government policies and programs and gender lens is assimilated in the perspectives and policies. Established as a "Centre of Excellence (CoE)" for gender integration within urban sanitation, CREA is a knowledge hub which partners with other regional networks, contributing to gender-transformative approaches at an institutional level by shifting norms, breaking stereotypes and building feminist leadership (workshop example).
- In Timor-Leste and Indonesia, WaterAid and Plan have shifted their partnership practice with **women's and gender equality and inclusion organisations** on the basis of research evidence (Grant, 2022a, 2022b). Actions to support productive transformative partnerships include setting shared vision, create open partnership practices such as process check-ins, investing in partnership training, and explicitly building partner capacity and a shared understanding of gender equality by different organisations in the partnership.

### Addressing intersectional discrimination

- In Scotland, aiming to reduce period poverty and realising products can be barriers to participation, the **government passed a law which guarantees menstrual products are freely accessible to all citizens**, regardless of their gender. These products are made available through government and educational institutions, provided in female, all gender, male and visitor toilets, including sanitary disposal units within or outside relevant toilets. It is an inclusive scheme that recognises the menstrual needs of women in all their diversity, including transgender and non-binary people, who have historically been marginalised in such programs around the world. The national level mandate contributes to destigmatising menstruation and the people who experience it (workshop example).
- In India, the approach mentioned earlier by the Cuttack city government to provide sustainable and inclusive sanitation through **engagement with transgender groups** has provided demonstration of how norms, roles and expectations can be changed within government institutions responsible for service delivery. This model of a municipal government providing safe and sustainable sanitation through inclusive community partnerships, and creating livelihood opportunities is being replicated in several cities in India (Vathanan et al., 2022).
- In India and Bangladesh, WSSCC, in partnership with FANSA, conducted **consultations with marginalised and underheard voices** including transgender people and conveyed an advocacy-focused action summit. "Our voices can help create acceptance, unity, togetherness and inclusivity of marginalized groups without stigma, discrimination and harassment" (WSSCC, 2016; Boyce et al., 2018). Similarly, in India, CFAR has been systematically engaging with transgender people by involving them as key advocacy partners helping to shape program objectives and outcomes. CFAR partners with sexual and gender minority organisation to best engage within communities (Water for Women Fund et al., 2020).

### Potential pitfalls

Gender-insensitive sanitation service systems and their related institutions are unaware of the gender norms, dynamics, and structures that influence how gender equality plays out amongst specific sanitation actors (both public and private) and at the community level. In many countries this is the status quo, and the relevant institutions, and guiding policies and strategies are typically gender-insensitive.

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## 5. Characteristics of good practice

Drawing on the case studies above, several characteristics of good practice can be highlighted to shape sanitation and gender integration efforts. These characteristics are applicable to efforts that are gender sensitive, gender responsive and gender transformative. It is proposed that organisations should select approaches across this continuum that match the available resources and capacities, noting that adopting the below characteristics is likely to support an overall shift towards more transformative practice. For each characteristic, we provide illustration from the above case studies in Section 4 above (A, B and C)

- **Recognition that change begins within.** It is important that sanitation practitioners begin by addressing harmful gender norms, dynamics and structures within their own selves and teams (Cavill et al., 2020). Critical consciousness of (gender) inequalities is a dynamic process of critical reflection and critical action. For this reason, many organisations leading sanitation work are expanding training and capacity building on gender equality and inclusion amongst their staff. In sanitation community mobilisation, examples include ensuring diversity amongst CLTS or other facilitators and ensuring they are equipped with relevant gender-related perspectives and skills. For sanitation service delivery, the relevant staff to sensitise include public sector staff delivering behaviour change and masons such that they gain commitment to ensure inclusive design for gender and disability. For service systems and the enabling environment, processes such as WHO Sanitation Safety Planning recommend diverse teams, who would ideally need to be sensitised, and in some countries efforts have been made to implement training for WASH actors at national and municipal level on disability, social inclusion and gender-based violence.

→ The Water for Women Fund has developed a self-assessment tool to support organisations to consider internal workplace conditions, culture and understandings of inclusion (Water for Women, 2021).

- **Acknowledgment of intersectional challenges and opportunities.** Best practice also recognises that gender is one of many forms of discrimination related to historical forms of oppression. It is therefore important to recognise and address inter-connected aspects related to gender identities, life stages, disability and other forms of marginalisation (Hulland et al., 2015; Sahoo et al., 2015; Boyce et al., 2018; Wilbur et al., 2021). For community mobilisation, diverse facilitators equipped to engage with diverse community members can ensure intersectional perspectives and challenges are raised. For service delivery, there are opportunities to engage groups such as transgender groups in service provision. In addressing the enabling environment, cases demonstrated how awareness-raising among government and non-governmental organisations on sanitation needs of women, gender-diverse individuals, people with disabilities, and sanitation workers' rights can ensure these are recognised in government policies and programs.
- **Working across scales.** One strategy to increase impact and generate wider change in gender equality dynamics, is to combine work in specific contexts with complementary work at the system level. As demonstrated in examples in the above sections, localised work on community mobilisation or service delivery can provide demonstration, innovation and set new norms that can be promulgated at other levels in the broader enabling environment, through wider efforts in engagement, capacity building and strategies aimed at wider system change.
- **Integration of robust do-no-harm strategies.** Women, girls and minorities are often at risk of gender-based violence when using latrines (Sommer et al., 2015). Additionally, there are inherent risks in conducting gender-related interventions such as violence, backlash and resistance (SNV Bhutan, 2019; Bongomin et al., 2022), as is clear from the earlier sections of this report and the various 'pitfalls'. Robust do-no-harm policies which build connections with feminist organisations are important to reduce potential risks. Whether implementing gender-sensitive, gender-responsive or gender transformative approaches, harm is a possible outcome that must be proactively considered and mitigated. In each of the sections above, examples are outlined of how community mobilisation, service delivery or efforts to address dynamics in the enabling environment have potential to result in harm, and hence this imperative.

- **Collaboration and working in partnership.** Emerging good practice has highlighted the value and importance of partnering with existing community organisations such as women’s collectives, disabled people’s organisations, sexual and gender minority organisations, and rights-holder organisations (Bongomin et al., 2022; Grant, 2022a, 2022b). These organisations bring a different and complementary perspective to sanitation-focused organisations. For community mobilisation, this has been done through working with girls’ clubs in schools, or partnering with local DPOs/OPDs to provide gender-responsive and inclusive sanitation at health care facilities. In service delivery, an example is collaboration with local government and national private sector that has been used to scale women latrine sales agent training and support mechanisms. For efforts to address the enabling environment, partnerships with sexual and gender minority organisations have contributed to joint advocacy efforts.
- **Adoption of gender-synchronisation strategies.** Gender-synchronisation involves working purposefully with individuals of different genders separately and together (Greene and Levack, 2010). For example, this could include coaching women latrine producers to strengthen confidence and capacity, while working with both women and men to transform broader gender dynamics. For gender transformative approaches, gender synchronisation also denotes working on structural changes in parallel with addressing the needs and dynamics for specific groups. For community mobilisation, working with influential male community members and leaders, at the same time as sensitising male family members to address gendered norms is an example of this type of approach. An example combining efforts in sanitation service delivery and the enabling environment, is working with local feminist organisations with skills in women’s economic empowerment to provide training for husband-and-wife latrine business partnerships at the same time as addressing wider market constraints for women.
- **Proactively combining research and practice.** Integration of gender into sanitation practice can be supported by adopting approaches that blend assessment and intervention within an action research cycle, or closely connect research and practice. Such strategies include processes of rapid appraisal, human-centred design, and participatory engagement (MacArthur et al., 2022a, 2022b). Embedding research processes in sanitation interventions is an important strategy for in-depth understanding of context and engagement with the complexity of gender transformative change in

sanitation services and systems. For community mobilisation, integrating research to understand the extent of meaningful engagement can strengthen approaches to gender and inclusion. For service delivery, examples include the use of human-centred action research to strengthen empowerment and identify and address barriers for female latrine business owners. For the enabling environment, use of tested, standardised tools and measures (e.g MUSE) provide robust data to shift sanitation programming to prioritise women’s concerns.

- **Utilisation of appropriate forms of monitoring and evaluation.** Lastly, gender integration sanitation requires new tools and approaches to measure changes, including intended and non-intended changes. It is particularly important to ensure unintended outcomes are identified and if necessary mitigated, given the potential for resistance, harm and backlash. In addition, for responsive and transformative approaches, measures are needed to examine changes in empowerment and changing norms, dynamics and structures. In community mobilisation, tools such as the GWMT can strengthen attention to strategic gender interests through monitoring gender dimensions. In service delivery, monitoring focused on the gender mix in sanitation businesses and experiences of entrepreneurs can provide feedback loops, including to avoid harm. For the enabling environment, tracking gender parity in relevant government institutions and adopting tools such as ARISE or WASH-GEM to measure and raise awareness on gendered dimensions of sanitation can support new insights, recognition of gaps and new strategies to support gender integration.

→ The WASH-GEM is a novel quantitative measure designed to assist practitioners and researchers in exploring gender outcomes associated with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programs for women and men (Carrard et al., 2022; Gonzalez et al., 2022).

→ The ARISE tool can assess women’s sanitation-related empowerment, at the individual, household and community levels (Sinharoy et al., 2023).

→ The qualKit is a qualitative toolbox focused on exploring gender equality and social inclusion outcomes in WASH programs.

Latrine transport in rural Bangladesh.



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## 6. Policy priorities at global, national and local levels

The review identified common policy changes needed to strengthen gender integration in the sanitation sector. These were put forward by participants in this study, and do not represent a comprehensive view of all policy changes needed, but those that participants identified as important. These policy changes also included inputs from WaterAid staff and are presented as efforts that can be taken at a global level, national level, and sub-national level. It should also be noted that points that were raised in the context of one level may also hold relevance at other levels.

### Global level

At the global level, setting standards for monitoring systems, investing in gender-transformative programming and supporting an increasing focus on climate change were raised as important policy directions.

→ **Collecting at a minimum gender-disaggregated monitoring data:** A key area that can influence policy across different levels is monitoring data on access to and use of sanitation services. Often, global and national level monitoring data is gender-insensitive, and there is widespread recognition that monitoring of SDG6 to date using household data does not provide a nuanced view of intra-household inequalities (Caruso et al. 2021). Policies should mandate deliberate efforts to collect gender-disaggregated data at the least, and ideally disaggregation based on other intersectional aspects such as age, disability, etc., which can provide useful evidence for making decisions for targeted interventions. Complementing household surveys with targeted studies of intrahousehold differences is one way this area could be addressed, and another is to add additional gender-specific questions to existing household surveys and census data collection processes. Various resources and a toolkit have also been developed to promote action to address data gaps on gender in the sector (e.g. [en.unesco.org/wwap/water-gender](https://en.unesco.org/wwap/water-gender)).

→ **Funding support to gender integration in sanitation:** International development policy and multilateral organisations with a focus on WASH should mandate requirements for gender integration as part of funding agreements, such that program cycles explicitly integrate gender considerations in their activities, outputs, outcomes and reporting and stipulate aims to progress gender transformation. The Australian government's Water for Women fund and USAID pro-WASH are examples of such funding, both of which include a focus on gender transformative engagement.

→ **Addressing the gendered impact of climate hazards on sanitation:** With the increasing reality of climate change, and evidence demonstrating disproportionate impacts on women (Iyer and Pare Toe, 2022; Megaw et al., 2020.), there is a need for global actors to engage in climate policy to bring sanitation concerns to the table, and to advocate that at the national level, these differential impacts are taken into account and resources allocated to ensure fair and just outcomes.

## National level

As part of a wider shift towards viewing sanitation as a public service, national level stakeholders should consider the gendered dimensions of service provision when designing programmes and allocating budget to support improved service delivery. This includes attention to gender integration in institutional facilities including health care facilities, schools, and public places.

→ **Integrate policies:** In many contexts, it may firstly be necessary to strengthen the evidence to justify the need for targeted gender integration in the sanitation sector. This is due to deep-seated social norms that permeate decision-making and decision-makers in patriarchal contexts. Arguments may be made from a human rights perspective and 'leaving no one behind', from a practical gender needs perspective and, importantly, from a broader gender equality and empowerment perspective. While the current policies in many countries, such as India, consider gender inclusion in relation to participation, efforts can move further to ensure the rights, voice and empowerment of women and other minority groups. In particular, a policy environment is needed that enables partnering with and supporting various Rights Holder Organisations (RHOs) to engage on sanitation, as well as including their voice in policy consultations on sanitation at the national and sub-national levels.

→ **Promote gender responsive budgeting:** Policies that mandate gender budgeting can provide dedicated financial and human resources to ensure gender specific sanitation needs are met and inclusive processes are followed, to achieve equitable sanitation outcomes. Implementation of gender budgeting can also support other policy changes (suggested in this section), by translating ideas to actions that are properly resourced.

→ **Promote national monitoring of gendered integration in subnational sanitation implementation:** Ensuring that key indicators demonstrating gender inclusion (and ideally transformation) can support subnational governments to maintain focus on inclusive processes in sanitation planning and meeting diverse needs. Mandates for sub-national governments to follow a gender inclusive checklist while monitoring and reporting on programme outcomes and status of facilities in schools, healthcare facilities, and public spaces is likely to support accountability to ensure these areas are given attention and visibility.

→ **Adopt national standards for inclusive public and institutional facilities:** In many countries there is a critical gap in terms of standards for sanitation facilities in schools, health care facilities, public spaces, and communities without household toilets. Aspects such as good lighting, paid facility managers, locked doors, MHM facilities, etc. all need to be included. The design and management of public and community toilets should take into account gender dimensions, as well as the needs of other vulnerable groups. Policy should build on the aspects of female-friendly toilets of safety, privacy, accessibility, affordability, well managed, catering for menstrual hygiene management and meeting the needs of caregivers (UNICEF et al., 2018). Implementing such standards to other public places such as schools, and health care facilities, that generally have existing budget lines for construction and long-term management, can be a useful first step in this direction.

→ **Support equal employment opportunities and formalised sanitation roles for women:** Identifying and addressing the systemic barriers to women working in the sanitation workforce which can range from provision of safe transport, child care, parental leave, male-dominated workplace culture, bias in recruitment and promotion, etc. can increase the ability of women and diverse individuals to take up employment opportunities, closing the gender gap in this workforce. There is a need for policies to support mechanisms for an equal participation of women in the sanitation workforce, in both the public and private sector, and recognise them as professionals, rather than viewing their contribution merely as a solution to gender participation. The recently released WHO research agenda for sanitation workers can provide inspiration. It identifies the gendered aspects of the sanitation workforce as a key priority theme, highlighting the gendered nature of certain sanitation work such as toilet cleaning, which is commonly done by women compared to emptying, transport and treatment roles done by men (WHO, 2022).

→ **Clarify do-no-harm support pathways and national safeguarding policies:** In many countries, processes and policies to support women, children and marginalised individuals in cases of abuse or potential are opaque. Gender-integrated sanitation (and other gender-integrated development work) requires these types of policies to ensure a robust do-no-harm process. This can, for example include nationally applicable help-lines, connections with rights-holders organisations, or clearer instructions for teams confronted with potential abuse.



## Subnational level

Key policy actors at local level include city and district leaders and officials, who hold influence over local decisions and processes. Policy direction at the local level can play a key role in shifting social norms towards inclusion of diverse voices in decision-making on sanitation issues. Shifting such norms may also require the involvement of traditional leaders, religious leaders and organisations to create more gender transformative social norms. This is in line with principles of 'Do No Harm' which should be embedded in all sanitation policies and programmes.

→ **Connect gender and sanitation policies at local level:** There is often a disconnect between sanitation and gender policy. While this can be a sensitive issue at sub-national levels, having a single point of contact (SPOC) for gender in all government related systems, procedures and reporting, can be one way to lead to a coordinated response. Local city-level assessments and gender audits of female-friendly sanitation facilities (WaterAid, 2022) can be another way to inform local strategy, advocate for policy changes at a municipal level, and provide practical suggestions for immediate adjustments to facilities.

→ **Foster multi-stakeholder partnerships and coordination:** Strengthening the coordination between local government (municipality/city corporation), non-governmental organisations (including gender and women's rights organisations), religious organisations and traditional leaders, and communities can support wider integration of gender concerns into sanitation program implementation. This will help to create more gender transformative social norms. Water for Women (2022) offers guidance on fostering effective partnerships between WASH sector organisations and RHOs, including practical recommendations on how to begin, build or strengthen partnerships to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

→ **Demonstrate, replicate and scale good practices:** Learning from the agricultural development sector, there is also scope to create 'spaces of excellence and good practice'. For example, opportunities to demonstrate inclusive latrine designs in schools, health care facilities and public spaces, which are usually under the authority of local governments. Similarly, good practice approaches in gender-inclusive behaviour change and demand creation can be developed, standardised and replicated. Such demonstrations and evolution in practice can support effective cross-learning between different locations.

→ **Promote appropriate subnational assessments:** Beyond the need for gender-disaggregated sanitation data, there is also a need to support localised assessments and audits to inform local action. These localised evaluations can include action research and blending processes of research and implementation (see characteristics of good practice). Such assessments provide in-depth understanding of the social-cultural gender dynamics that cannot be aggregated to a national level. Involvement of local officials in such assessments can provide a useful basis to shift perspectives and motivate change.

→ **Prioritise organisational self-assessments and gender training:** As gender-transformative change begins within organisations including those in the public and private sectors, self-assessments, and policies to increase and promote gender-training can build needed critical consciousness to overcome inequalities. Self-assessments, including the example by Water for Women, help organisations reflect on their own perspectives, and training programs such as those offered by UN Women can support learning and knowledge ([portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org](https://portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org)).

→ **Empower local female sanitation entrepreneurs:** Local government strategies can play a role in ensuring an enabling environment for inclusive private sector involvement in their locality. For example, recruiting women of diverse backgrounds in WASH entrepreneurship training programs, and including aspects of disability inclusion in the content of such programs (Kumar et al., 2021). Women sanitation entrepreneurs can be further supported through incentives, development of micro-finance groups, and establishing linkages of entrepreneurs with local financial institutions, cooperatives, credit unions, and other microfinance institutions. Gender-synchronisation strategies (see characteristics of good practice) which support women and men separately and together can address gender inequalities while also supporting women entrepreneurs.

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## 7. Conclusion

This report provides a view on the rapidly advancing area of gender integration in sanitation. By highlighting the breadth of current practice, and analysing this across the various level of gender-integration, it provides a view into different entry points for WASH practitioners. While gender-transformative approaches might seem like a goal that the sector should aspire towards, at the same time, gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approaches may be appropriate in certain contexts or based on program resource constraints. The characteristics of good practice highlighted in this report should be considered alongside all types of gender-integration, particularly to ensure efforts to address gender 'do no harm'. To this end, the gender-integration framework and the characteristics of good practice complement one another. While the framework is helpful to consider the extent of gender-integration in sanitation programming, the characteristics offer specific strategies that are useful across all levels of gender integration described in the framework.

Going forward, this area of work will benefit from a structured strategy to progress towards gender-transformation in the sanitation sector at national and local level. The report identifies common policy changes needed to strengthen gender integration in the sanitation sector, which can be an inspiration for key sector organisations to influence and shift support towards gender transformative approaches.

Latrines for women and men in rural Zimbabwe.



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