

PROMISING PRACTICE FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATION IN WASH PROGRAMMING

The following toolkits and approaches have been developed by WaterAid and others to work towards challenging gender inequalities in our work.

Gender based violence

Why it's important:

The evidence on the links between a lack of WASH and violence against women is growing. For example, research carried out in an urban township in Cape Town revealed that 635 sexual assaults of women travelling to and from toilets were reported between 2003 and 2012ⁱ. The study stated that in providing sanitation in South Africa's townships could reduce sexual violence by up to 30%.

A lack of lights on the path to communal latrine blocks and at the blocks themselves, a lack of locks on the doors and gender-segregated toilets can all contribute to feelings of insecurity or experiences of violence. Likewise, the long walk to collect water that millions of women and girls must take every day can put them in isolated situations; the path to and from places like school or the toilets has been cited in several studies as insecure, making these public spaces, including the walk for water, of critical importance in efforts to address violence against women.

Nearly one billion people practice open defecation on a daily basisⁱⁱ. This practice can be especially degrading and dangerous for girls and women and presents a particular challenge for the global community in ending violence against women.

Coping mechanisms used by many women and girls include limiting the consumption of food and drink to limit the need to relieve themselves, and wait until nightfall to retain modesty. Both coping mechanisms have health implications and expose them to the risk of violenceⁱⁱⁱ.

Irrespective of the threat of violence, the shame, indignity and stigma of defecating in the open can perpetuate a culture of negative self-esteem for women, as does the lack of water for washing clothes and personal hygiene.

Violence, gender and WASH toolkit (<http://violence-wash.lboro.ac.uk/>)

This toolkit has been developed in response to an acknowledgement that although the lack of access to appropriate WASH is not the root cause of violence, it can lead to increased vulnerabilities to violence of varying forms. Incidences have been reported from a wide range of contexts, often anecdotally but with regular occurrence, with a number of targeted studies confirming the same.

By recognising both the risks of violence associated with WASH and the potential benefits of WASH, this toolkit aims to shine a light on this problem and encourage practitioners to recognise their capacity to make WASH safer and more effective. Effectively considering gender in the process of establishing sustainable WASH services can also contribute to the process of longer-term change in attitudes and

relationships between men and women. This in turn can contribute to a transformative process that can help reduce vulnerabilities to violence. However, for WASH actors, particularly for those working in the longer-term developmental contexts, there has been a lack of clarity on the practical steps that can be taken so that they can contribute to reducing vulnerabilities through improved policy and programming. This toolkit aims to fill this gap.

Menstrual hygiene management

Why it's important:

Good menstrual hygiene management is fundamental to the health, dignity and well-being of women worldwide. Affecting between 300-800 million women and girls on any given day, i.e. more than the entire population of the EU, it is staggering then that it is such a neglected issue. Many women and girls who want to lead normal daily lives during their menstrual cycle are hampered by a lack of available and safe sanitary products and a proper means to change and dispose of them discreetly and clean water with which to wash themselves, and the social stigma and discriminated associated with it. One of the underlying reasons why menstrual hygiene has been neglected is gender inequality. Unequal power relations between men and women result in women's and girls' voices not being heard in decision-making within households, communities, and development programmes. A failure by national governments to realise and protect this essential part of the human right to water and sanitation weighs heavily on menstruating women and girls and carries huge costs for the rest of society.

Menstrual hygiene matters toolkit

[Menstrual hygiene matters](#) is an essential resource for improving menstrual hygiene for women and girls in lower and middle-income countries. Nine modules and toolkits cover key aspects of menstrual hygiene in different settings, including communities, schools and emergencies. This comprehensive resource:

- Brings together examples of good menstrual hygiene practice from around the world
- Provides guidance on building competence and confidence to break the silence surrounding the issue
- Encourages increased engagement in advocacy on menstrual hygiene

Intersectional inequalities

Why it's important:

Disabled people in poor communities often lack WASH services because 1) facilities are not inclusive, 2) there is a serious lack of accessible information available on low-cost, low-tech adaptations for WASH facilities, 3) negative attitudes lead to exclusion, and 4) they are rarely meaningfully consulted or involved in decisions about WASH policy and programmes. Being a woman or girl with a disability increases the barriers. Due to these intersectional inequalities WaterAid has developed the Compendium of Accessible WASH technologies to reduce barriers to access for disabled people, older people, pregnant women, young children or people with a debilitating illness.

The Compendium of Accessible WASH technologies (www.wateraid.org/accessibleWASHtechnologies)

This Compendium of low-cost technologies to improve the accessibility of household WASH facilities is designed for use by staff, such as health workers and community volunteers, working directly with communities in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa. A few examples of technologies are presented that families can adapt to suit their needs and budgets. Many more options are possible. Most of the ideas are suitable for disabled and older people, but are suitable for anyone who may have difficulty using standard facilities. The main focus is on household facilities, not institutional facilities, although some ideas might also be useful in these settings.

The compendium can be used in various ways:

- As a starting point for discussion with households
- As a way of encouraging communities to consider design options
- By disabled people's organisations, and older peoples' associations
- As flashcards - images can be enlarged and stuck on card
- As posters - images can be printed and used for group discussions

ⁱ Gonsalves, G., Kaplan, E., Paltiel, A., (2015) *Reducing Sexual Violence by Increasing the Supply of Toilets in Khayelitsha, South Africa: A Mathematical Model*. PLOS ONE. Available at <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0122244>

ⁱⁱ UN (nd.), *End Open Defecation. Breaking the silence on open defecation*. Available at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/endopendefecation.shtml>

ⁱⁱⁱ House, S., Ferron, S., Dr Sommer, M., Dr Cavill, S. (2014) *Violence, Gender and WASH: A practitioner's toolkit*. Available at <http://violence-wash.lboro.ac.uk/>