



Case Study on Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) Assessment in Myanmar

Summary

The case study delves into the Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) Assessment conducted in Myanmar under the Accelerating Sanitation and Water for All (ASWA) - Phase II programme. The assessment revealed notable gender disparities within water user committees, with women comprising only 31% of members. Gender norms were identified as hindrances to women's involvement and decision-making power. Positive outcomes emerged, such as enhanced water access leading to time savings for women and girls in specific communities.

Responding to these findings, a GESI-responsive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting (MER) framework was developed to rectify gaps and ensure sustained scrutiny of programme implementation. Gender-responsive training was administered to partner staff, and efforts were made to incorporate gender considerations into the National Sanitation Policy draft. The study emphasised the importance to mainstream gender across all Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programmes, develop gender-specific infrastructure and services, and provide inclusive training.

The transformative potential of the GESI assessment within the WASH sector was highlighted, emphasising the integration of gender and social inclusion into national policies, institutional strengthening through training, and the inclusion of GESI analysis in project designs. The study advocates for a multi-level approach, spanning policies, institutions, and programmatic implementation, to address gender inequality effectively.

Background

Gender equality has been a key component of the Accelerating Sanitation and Water for All (ASWA) – Phase II throughout the grant. All countries completed a 'gender checklist', which was jointly developed alongside the disability checklist. In addition, a few countries carried out a gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) assessments. These assessments help to understand how gender inequality and social exclusion negatively impact the rights of women, girls and marginalised

people to access water, sanitation services and practice hygiene, as well as to participate in decisions related to the provision and management of WASH services in their communities (FCDO ASWA II – Final Report 2022).

Methodology

In Myanmar, the GESI assessment¹ was conducted by an independent team of consultants in partnership with WaterAid to understand the gender related barriers with the community in which the ASWA programme was being delivered.

The purpose of the GESI assessment was to identify qualitative based gender-related WASH barriers and bottlenecks, and to advance GESI responsive monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (MER) framework based on the assessment result.

Findings

The assessment found that gender norms restrict women's participation and leadership in the water user committee, particularly limiting their decision-making power. Women were found to be 31 per cent of water user committee members in the assessment villages. Improved access to water supply was reported by more than half of the women respondents, as was time saved. As an example, the women and girls in Kyauk Souk, Myaing Township, reported saving between 20 minutes to 4 hours due to the improved access to tapped water. During CLTS triggering activities, many of the volunteer natural leaders or sanitation champions were women.

Based on the assessment findings, a GESI responsive Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) framework² was prepared to address gaps and promote sustained scrutiny of project implementation to advance GESI.

Since 2016, Myanmar's National strategy for rural WASH, WASH in School and WASH in Health

¹ The full GESI Assessment Report can be found here: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/:b:/t/MMR-WASH/EZdBaz90bYRJtKQaju4N0BIUlr6m6kXmAVECTcEJhXgg?email=skendall@unicef.org&e=tjY0fl>

² Link to framework: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/MMR-WASH/Shared Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fteams%2FMMR%2DWASH%2FShared%20Documents%2FSanitation%20and%20Hygiene%20Team%2FWASH%20%5F%20Gender%2FGESI>

Care Facilities 2016-2030³ set to mainstreaming gender in all WASH programmes as a key priority.

BOX 1.

KEY GENDER PRINCIPLES WITHIN THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR RURAL WASH, WASH IN SCHOOL AND WASH IN HEALTH CARE FACILITIES 2016-2030

The national strategy specifies that

"During development and provision of services, including management, monitoring and evaluation, all organisations should mainstream gender. They should make women's and men's concerns an integral consideration in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and service delivery. This should cover all political, economic and social aspects so that women and men benefit equally with dignity and safety from gender based violence, and inequality is not perpetuated' it also notes that women and girls have WASH-specific needs different to men and boys, such as menstrual hygiene management and safe birthing and that Gender should be mainstreamed at a strategic level, so women and men are equally engaged in good governance and participation in decision-making for services, with capacity building to enable them to fulfil these responsibilities."

³ https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/MMR-WASH/ES4SoVG2wxVBvPIbEIIQFUsBK6h_m53lwLpofdMEjJBpW?email=skendall@unicef.org&e=BM1CgQ

³ Link to The National Rural WASH strategy https://unicef.sharepoint.com/teams/MMR-WASH/ES4SoVG2wxVBvPIbEIIQFUsBK6h_m53lwLpofdMEjJBpW?email=skendall@unicef.org&e=BM1CgQ

What were some of the key GESI related results from the assessment?

- More than half of the respondents (52%) from all the communities visited reported that fetching water, if it is required, is the primary responsibility of the women and girls in their community.
- Most of the women are housewives, staying at home so they are responsible for caring responsibilities including ensuring water in the home.
- Women are usually the primary water resource managers within the household.
- Women and girls from Shan and Magway areas said that before the ASWA intervention, they spent a significant portion of their time engaged in fetching water for their household. Some had to travel long distances to collect water, sometimes even into the night which exposed them to safety risks and gender-based violence (e.g., sexual assault).
- Inadequate access to water increased both the burden of women's daily activities, and the burden of water management had many implications on the day-to-day lives of women and girls and affected their participation in other economic and social activities.
- According to respondents, menstruation and Menstruation Hygiene Management (MHM) are rarely considered as sanitation practice in the researched communities.

What are the programme outcomes?

- Two major outcomes of the programme include the GESI assessment report and the Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) framework
- GESI training was provided by WaterAid to 20 partner staff at Myanmar Health Assistant Association (MHAA) who implement sanitation and hygiene programmes in 3 Townships of Magway under ASWA II fund.

Training material can be found here: WASH-Gender training material

- Gender to be included in National Sanitation Policy (Draft). Since 2019, the National Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Policy (2021-2030) was developed through collaborating with government departments, consultation with UNs and NGOs. (After military coup, the launch was suspended).
- This assessment suggestions and recommendation are used as evidence generated advocacy tools – part G, J, K, L – policy context, targets, principles, policy elements, etc and can be applied in policy enforcement process (after policy enacted).
- Since 2016, the National strategy for rural WASH, WASH in School and WASH in Health Care Facilities 2016-2030 set to be the gender mainstreaming WASH programme as a principle. (National strategy already endorsed to be Gender mainstream WASH programme). This assessment highlighted the need to understand, in greater depth, the

BOX 2.

IMPORTANCE OF GENDER IN ASWA II

The Accelerated Sanitation and Water for All project - Phase-2 (ASWA-II) programme recognised that effective gender-responsiveness programming in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector can contribute to progress towards gender equality and important WASH results. A key outcome of the programme is:

“Sustained use of safe water supplies and sanitation services, and sustained adoption of hygiene practices, by poor and vulnerable people in targeted areas, especially by women and girls”.

WASH and gender gaps – in order to mainstream gender into WASH programmes.

2024 update

- Included gender contents as specific agenda on WASH related training (WASH in Emergency training, making climate resilient sanitation product training, WASH Interpersonal Communication training)
- Gender mainstreaming – gender components (woman, man, girl, man) are appended in each stage of WASH program implementation (preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Gender specific information such as gender disaggregated by age group were collected in baseline data collection and KAP surveys to be gender responsive WASH programming.
- According to current situation of Myanmar (under military coup), system strengthening such as national level policy development could not be done. Gender mainstreamed WASH intervention implemented at programmatic level.

BOX 3.

HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

GESI analysis is being used as an advocacy document to promote gender mainstreaming in WASH programming (to promote gender equality in WASH), including as a specific agenda on WASH in Emergency training to

How can this assessment be transformative for WASH in Myanmar?

Myanmar CO plan to work at various levels to ensure greater impact:

- Policy level: Advocate to policy makers to add gender and social inclusion aspects in WASH related national policies (National Sanitation Policy, Climate Change Strategy, National WASH strategy etc.)
- Institutional level: Provide gender responsive WASH programming training to Implementing partners and counterpart government department staff to strengthen capacity to plan and deliver quality WASH services and meet the needs of women, girls and excluded groups.
- Programmatic level: Include GESI analysis, including capacity and stakeholder analysis in project concept notes and project design documents.

This case study underscores the transformative potential of the GESI assessment within the

BOX 4.

CHANGE STRATEGIES OF GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMING: BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT GENDER

Work at all levels - policies and laws, systems, services, communities, families and individual. When gender inequality is addressed at all these levels, actions can be mutually supportive, can contribute to impact at scale and to sustainability.

WASH sector in Myanmar. It highlights the critical role of integrating gender and social inclusion aspects into national policies, amplifying institutional capacity through comprehensive training, and integrating GESI analysis into project designs. The realisation of gender-transformative programming is contingent on actions at multiple levels, spanning policies, institutions, and programmatic delivery.

Conclusion

The case study focuses on the Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) Assessment conducted in Myanmar as part of the Accelerating Sanitation and Water for All (ASWA) - Phase II programme.

The GESI assessment in Myanmar revealed several findings. It highlighted gender disparities and social exclusion in water user committees, where women accounted for only 31% of the members. Gender norms were identified as a barrier to women's participation and decision-making power. Improved access to water supply resulted in time savings for women and girls in certain communities.

Based on the assessment findings, a GESI responsive monitoring, evaluation, and reporting (MER) framework was developed to address gaps and promote sustained scrutiny of project implementation. Gender-responsive training was provided to partner staff, and gender was included in the National Sanitation Policy draft. The assessment emphasized the need to mainstream gender across all WASH programs, develop gender-specific infrastructure and services, and provide gender-inclusive training.

The case study underscores the transformative potential of the GESI assessment in the WASH sector. It highlights the importance of incorporating gender and social inclusion aspects into national policies, strengthening institutional capacity through training, and integrating GESI analysis into project designs. To achieve gender-transformative programming, the case study suggests working at various levels, including policies, institutions, and programmatic implementation. By addressing gender inequality, actions can be mutually supportive, leading to impactful and sustainable change.

References

1. UNICEF Gender-Responsive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Key elements for effective WASH programming
2. FCDO ASWA II – Final Report 2022

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UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) country teams work inclusively with governments, civil society partners and donors, to improve WASH services for children and adolescents, and the families and caregivers who support them. UNICEF works in over 100 countries worldwide to improve water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices. This publication is part of the UNICEF WASH Learning Series, designed to contribute to knowledge of good practice across UNICEF's WASH programming. In this series:

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