

## EXPLORING LINKS BETWEEN GENDER EQUITY AND WASH SUSTAINABILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN NORTHERN GHANA

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to UNICEF and World Health Organization Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation, 780 million people in the world do not have access to clean water. In Africa, it is estimated that 345 million do not have access to clean water. In Ghana, between 24 % and 37 % of the population does not have access to clean water according to the Ministry of Water Resources, Works, and Housing (MWRWH, 2013). Literature on water and sanitation programs shows that inadequate access to clean water is a gender issue that affects female sanitation, impedes women's economic activities, girls' school activities, and their physical development.

Water collection is a gender-biased activity, and the inability to access water tends to affect women more than it affects men (Khosla, 2004). Women and girls spend between two and eight hours per day collecting water (Khosla, 2004). The time and distance spent carrying water has multiple negative implications for women and girls. Carrying a heavy load for a long distance is hazardous to the health of pregnant and developing women according to United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA, 2005). The time spent collecting water reduces the amount of time that girls spend in school and on schoolwork (Porter et al., 2011) and the reduced time spent in school and on homework affects the female literacy rate in Ghana (MWRWH, 2013). In addition, because women spend so much time collecting water, they do not have time for income generating activities (MWRWH, 2013; WaterAid, 2009). Further, inadequate sanitation facilities affect women and girls uniquely. Girls are more likely to miss school due to poor sanitation facilities on the school's campus. Women and girls experience a higher prevalence of violence when relieving themselves at night if there is no latrine close by (UNDESA, 2005).

Studies show that water and sanitation projects that incorporate gender have positive impacts on sustainability. For instance, the village, savings and loan associations (VSLA) in Tanzania, facilitated financing and maintenance of water points (CARE, 2012). In Eastern Africa, governance from trained committees contributed to increased water point functionality and sustainability (CARE, 2013). Governance in communities improves when women are included in the governance structure as they play a major role in water collection. Including both men and women in the discussion about water access and governance has the potential to improve sustainability and gender equity (Khosla, 2004). Although gender is an important aspect of water and sanitation, it is often not integrated into program development and implementation (UNDESA, 2005).

The present research was conducted in May and June 2013 in the Upper West region of Ghana by CARE as part of the USAID WA-WASH program. The goals of the research was to: (1) determine a baseline measurement of functionality, sanitation sustainability, management of water points, financing and accountability using the governance-into-functionality tool (GiFT); and (2) determine gender equity in WASH in the communities using the gender analysis snapshot (GAS). The GiFT tool evaluated the level of governance of water points in the communities.

The study used a survey and focus group discussions to look into the correlation between stronger empowerment approaches and increased water and sanitation functionality and sustainability. A sample size of 289 people from 10 communities of Nandowlo-Kaleo, Lawra, and Nandom districts participated in this study. Both the survey and the focus group discussions were conducted in the Dagaare language and translated immediately into English during the data collection process. The qualitative data was recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed along with data from the focus group discussions.

The study findings showed that two of the communities had low water functionality scores, four communities had average scores, and four communities had high scores. Five of the communities had low sanitation sustainability scores and the other five communities had high scores. When the water functionality and sanitation sustainability scores were combined, two communities had low scores, three communities had average scores, and five communities had high scores. In terms of finance, five communities scored low, two communities scored average and three communities scored high. On management, four communities scored low and the other six communities scored high. In regard to accountability scores, four communities scored low, three communities scored average, and three communities scored high. In terms of governance scores (combination of the finance, accountability and management scores), four communities scored low, four communities scored average and two communities scored high.

Sanitation sustainability and water functionality was significantly associated with accountability, preventive maintenance, management and regular water meetings. The presence of women on water committees was significantly associated with governance, management, accountability, water point functionality, sanitation sustainability and the combination of water point functionality and sanitation sustainability. However, analysis of variance tests, bivariate tests and independent t-test that compared the total GAS score with water point functionality, sanitation sustainability, accountability and governance were insignificant.

The quantitative results showed an association among the four elements of water functionality, sanitation sustainability, finance and governance. The results also showed a correlation between finance and governance. However, there was no association between the four elements measured in the GiFT tool (water functionality, sanitation sustainability, finance and governance) and gender equity as assessed by the GAS tool. These results contrast the results from other studies that show that gender integration in WASH programs improves functionality and sustainability (Kholosa, 2004; CARE, 2012). Discussions during focus groups centered on water collection, access, and gender equality. The discussions revealed that women were dominant in water collection. This is entrenched in the cultural norms of the communities.

With regards to access to water, both gender had access to water for domestic and productive purposes irrespective of their socio-economic status in the community. However, men were given priority to access water at water points as a sign of respect. Gender equity was expressed in terms of participation in community meetings. The empowered women in the community contributed during community meetings. However, men would sometimes not allow their wives to lead in community committees, which potentially decreased the perception of women on equality and empowerment. Further, the results from qualitative data confirmed the results of previous studies that showed that the functionality of the water infrastructure and sanitation sustainability was associated with aspects of governance.

Based on the findings of the study, education and reinforcement of water point committees on their roles is recommended as water point functionality and sanitation sustainability are strongly linked to good governance. The major limitation of the study was the small sample size of the survey participants who were conveniently selected. This may have had an influence in the study results.

*The full report is available (in English) upon request via our website. For more details about our program activities and other reports please visit <http://wawash.fiu.edu/>.*