

REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO SHARE EXPERIENCES ON GENDER INTEGRATION IN THE USAID WA-WASH PROGRAM**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The primary goal of the USAID West Africa Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (USAID WA-WASH) Program is to improve access to water and sanitation in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Niger. In Africa, women have the primary responsibility for management of household water supply and sanitation. As a result, women have accumulated considerable knowledge about water resources including location, quality, and storage methods. However, efforts to improve access to safe drinking water and management of the water resources and sanitation facilities often overlook the central role of women. Thus, to enhance the sustainability of WASH interventions, the Program developed a gender strategy that integrates the interests of men, women, and youth in the Program activities. Accordingly, CARE, the lead partner on gender issues within the Program, organized a two-day workshop on February 9 and 10, 2015 in Ouagadougou to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned on gender integration in development program activities. The workshop brought together 56 participants from the organizations that implement the USAID WA-WASH Program, community leaders and representatives from the municipalities in the Program intervention zones, the ministry of gender, and the general directorate of water resources.

The workshop aimed to: (1) provide a platform to exchange and share experiences of different partners on gender integration in the Program activities; (2) serve as a learning session on the impacts of gender equity and empowerment on women and men for sustainable WASH services; (3) highlight the achievements of the partners in gender mainstreaming; and (4) share the challenges faced by the implementing partners in their efforts to integrate gender in their activities. The experiences were shared through PowerPoint presentations, role plays, video and audio clips and testimonies from beneficiaries from the intervention villages present at the workshop. Each USAID WA-WASH implementing partner presented its gender integration efforts in the Program activities. The major themes were gender integration in the major thematic areas of the Program which include the following: community led total sanitation (CLTS) approach, multiple-use of water services (MUS) approach, household water treatment using Aquatabs, 3R approach in the Sahel region, and village and savings associations (VSLAs) approach.

The Program carried out activities to strengthen the gender mainstreaming capacity of the implementing partners, local NGOs, public institutions, and private sector through workshops at the local, national, and regional levels. First, the Program conducted a gender analysis to identify the staff capacities on gender integration among the implementing partners. As a result, the Program developed gender integration tools. In addition, the Program conducted a research on gender integration in the WASH sector in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Niger. The research results informed the advocacy strategies and policy review recommendations in the WASH sector in West Africa. Furthermore, the Program in collaboration with the community members developed the community gender action plans and promoted male gender champions.

Equitable access to land and water empowers women to address the root causes of poverty. Thus, the USAID WA-WASH program, through the MUS approach, provides water points for both domestic and irrigation purposes. The Program subsidizes water points for vulnerable women-headed households, supports women to develop income generating activities such as Moringa production and processing, and promotes representation of women in the water user's associations (WUAs) management boards. In addition, the Program engaged the traditional land chiefs in dialogue on gender equity in access to land. As a result, the gender integration in the MUS activities has improved participation of women in water resources management, income diversification, and food security through market gardening and awareness among the community members on women empowerment.

In the intervention countries, governments have limited funds for water and sanitation infrastructure needs, particularly for maintenance and repair costs. The USAID WA-WASH Program promotes the village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) and has facilitated the creation of VSLAs with over 4,000 men and women who mobilized savings worth over \$52,000 to provide loans to members in the three intervention countries. The beneficiaries have used the loans to start-up income generating activities which enables them to have a regular source of income, pay water user fees, construct latrines, and pay water points' maintenance costs. In addition, the VSLAs are used as a platform to engage community members in discussions on gender issues.

Community led total sanitation (CLTS) is an approach for mobilizing communities to eliminate open defecation. The Program facilitates communities to conduct their own appraisal and analysis of open defecation (OD) and take actions to become open-defecation free. Mainstreaming gender in CLTS Program activities aims to meet the needs and interests of different social groups in access to sanitation services. The construction of toilets through the CLTS approach contributes to the safety and privacy of women and girls who would otherwise relieve themselves in bushes at night, compromising their security. The CLTS approach encourages the contribution of both genders in the construction of latrines. The experiences of the Program in the integration of gender in the 3R approach in the Sahel region were atypical in relation to conventional gender roles. In the Sahel region, the gender norms empower women economically. However, women do not contribute to household expenditure and this assigns the male gender the role of the sole household provider. The Program rainwater harvesting activities through the 3R approach targeted both genders in the construction of impluviums. With regard to the water treatment at the household level, the Aquatabs' marketing approach targeted both men and women and particularly the male gender champions. In Ghana for example, the Program involved the traditional chiefs who positively influenced the community members on the use of Aquatabs to treat drinking water at home.

While overall, the representation and participation of women in the program activities remains low it should be noted that great results were obtained by integrating gender in program activities. The low representation is attributed to challenges such as the socio-cultural context that holds back women's decision-making powers, limited access to land by women, and misconception by men that the empowerment of women would result into loss of control among the men within the household. Other challenges are related to inadequate capacity attributed to low literacy levels, low level of experience in leadership among women resulting in reluctance to occupy positions of responsibility, low participation of women in workshops and training meetings at the community level, and low representation of women in positions of decision making within institutions and organizations involved in the WASH sector.

The workshop highlighted the Programs achievements in mainstreaming gender in the WASH sector. The sharing of the successes and the challenges experienced while mainstreaming gender allowed the participants to reflect and learn from each other. Based on the presentations and the participants' brainstorming sessions, recommendations were made to enhance gender integration and ultimately the sustainability of the WASH sector. The recommendations include building the capacity of gender resource persons (men and women) on the concept of gender. In addition, recommendations were made to the USAID WA-WASH implementing partners to strengthen the capacity of the women leaders on their roles and their responsibilities and take into account the women's activity schedule while planning Program activities to ensure they participate. The implementing partners and other stakeholders were urged to advocate gender integration in development programs supported by the local authorities and technical and financial partners.

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