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# CASE STUDIES IN GENDER INTEGRATION

## Community-led Sanitation in Timor-Leste

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# INTRODUCTION

A family outside their home near Baucau. Photo: © UNMIT/Martine Perret.

Gender matters across the sanitation value chain. It influences user behaviors and levels of participation and performance in the sanitation sector, as well as uptake of sanitation product and service design. To fully understand the role gender plays in sanitation, it is important to look beyond just biological (i.e., sex) differences and consider how cultural practices, beliefs, and norms related to gender and sanitation affect men and women.

Lack of awareness about gender differences and inequalities can create barriers to effective sanitation programming. Effectively integrating a gender lens in sanitation programming, on the other hand, can reveal important differences and inequalities. It can also support more tailored approaches to ensuring sanitation outcomes are achieved for all and that gender inequalities are not perpetuated.

The interplay of gender and sanitation is bidirectional: sanitation programs can be leveraged to improve gender equality and promote women’s empowerment, and gender inequality can be addressed as a way of improving sanitation outcomes. These do not need to be in conflict with one another, and can in fact lead to improved outcomes in both dimensions. However, gender integration must be intentional in order for this synergic effect to occur.

This case study in gender and sanitation is part of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s Gender Equality Toolbox, which includes a series of case studies and other resources for

supporting Program Officers in applying a gender lens to their investments. Note that not all of these case studies are foundation-funded programs and a program’s inclusion in this series does not indicate an endorsement by the foundation.

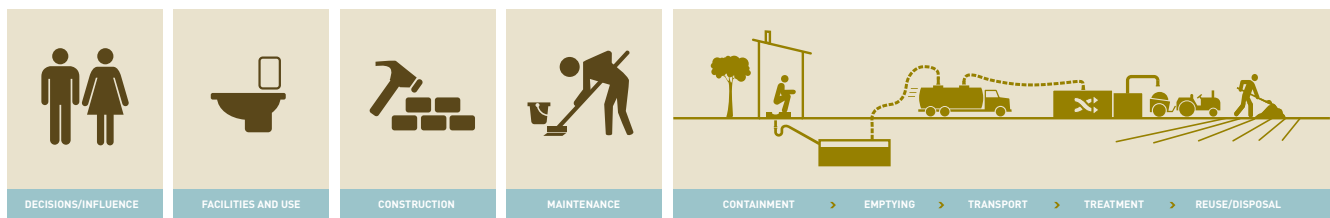
The case studies are intended to offer readers an opportunity to unpack and understand the role of gender differences in driving sanitation outcomes, how programs identify and seek to address these differences, and whether the program also promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment. The cases are not meant to be perfect examples of how gender differences are identified and managed, but are meant as a learning tool intended to:

1. Provide insight into specific areas where gender differences exist along the sanitation value chain.
2. Showcase real programs that have intentionally worked to integrate a gender lens into their delivery, whether from the outset or as a course correction.
3. Examine challenges and emerging lessons about integrating gender across programming and policy.

Each of the three sanitation sector cases focuses on different parts of the value chain to illustrate the many ways that gender impacts sanitation outcomes for men and women.

This case explores the role of gender in user decisions and behavior-change efforts in Timor-Leste (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Sanitation value chain**



**WaterAid Timor-Leste**  
 Gender in community-based sanitation programming

# OVERVIEW

This case focuses on the influence of gender on community-based sanitation programs targeting user decisions and behavior change. It analyzes a program in Timor-Leste that aimed to build the capacity of community facilitators to address gender-related issues. Specifically, the case looks at a Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) effort—a widely used participatory approach that mobilizes communities to eliminate open defecation (OD). WaterAid Timor-Leste (WATL) has been a key contributor to the reduction in national rates of OD since 2007. This case explores WATL's program in Liquica and Manufahi provinces, which aims to help communities address gender-based barriers related to sanitation at the household and community levels.<sup>1</sup>

## Program description

The CLTS process relies on structured facilitation to support communities to conduct their own assessment and analysis of the practice of OD and design an approach to becoming open defecation free (ODF). In 2014, WaterAid's evaluation data found that approximately 80% of communities that WATL supported were declared ODF and 92% of those declared ODF were still using toilets two years later.<sup>2</sup>

The WATL approach to CLTS consists of three phases:<sup>3</sup>

1. The **pre-triggering phase** focuses on an assessment of local conditions and practices and builds relationships with local change agents (local NGOs, religious leaders, community figures). The assessment covers four areas: (1) program and policy environment; (2) current conditions and practices; (3) physical conditions; and (4) social and cultural conditions (e.g., disease state, population size and homogeneity, women's mobility and voice, progressiveness of leadership).
2. During the **triggering phase**, WATL staff and partners guide community members through a participatory approach to mapping the landscape of current practices. The aim is to build a collective sense of aversion to OD and poor hygiene practices in order to catalyze communal action planning.
3. Finally, in the **post-triggering phase**, WATL and partners conduct follow-up household visits, attend community meetings, and share technical advice with local community members responsible for maintaining sanitation facilities to ensure the communities remain ODF after the program's completion.

## Gender-related barriers and opportunities

Despite the focus on inclusivity and community-level engagement, the WATL staff and partner facilitators noted that women seldom held leadership roles and often lacked decision-making power on water committees. The program struggled to engage women at the same levels as men, especially in community-level decision making and leadership roles related to sanitation.<sup>4</sup> There have not been thorough evaluations unpacking the link between women's roles and participation in decision making in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) outcomes. However, comparable programs have documented positive results. For example, Plan International's CLTS programs in Niger, Zambia, and Malawi showed improved sanitation outcomes by including women in leadership roles in the CLTS process. Results like these suggest there may be a correlation between women's engagement and improved community sanitation outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

Gender differences, and gender inequalities in particular, can serve as barriers to sanitation access for women and their families. They can also perpetuate OD among women and men and limit the success of behavior change campaigns. Inability to address gender inequalities can stymie progress of CLTS efforts and, most importantly, inhibit communities from remaining ODF in the long-term.

A combination of the limited success the WATL program had in engaging women, the momentum from local civil society organizations, and the advancement in national-level policies related to gender all motivated WaterAid's investment in a gender analysis study in 2012.<sup>6</sup> The WATL team commissioned research on gender differences in target communities to identify those that influence sanitation outcomes for all.



For more information about WaterAid, visit the program's website:  
[www.wateraid.org/au/where-we-work/timor-leste](http://www.wateraid.org/au/where-we-work/timor-leste)

To elevate the issues and build buy-in for addressing gender differences within the community, the researchers identified areas where gender inequalities may be at play. This served to highlight existing ways that the CLTS program may have already started to positively shift gender dynamics and roles, and to identify more opportunities for the CLTS program to promote this shift. The research was conducted with women and men separately, creating spaces for each to share their experiences and to analyze their roles and responsibilities related to sanitation within their homes and communities. For select topics, the researchers facilitated a dialogue between the two groups, to better understand the relationships and power dynamics between men and women.

The analysis revealed key gender-related barriers and opportunities that could improve the effectiveness of CLTS programming efforts.<sup>7</sup> Chief among them were:

**Burden of care and time poverty:** Women commonly noted the burden associated with household tasks (including sanitation-related work, collecting water, and looking after the children) as barriers to their ability to engage in economic activities and attend classes outside the home. Men, however, did not mention any relationship between their household responsibilities and their ability to participate in activities outside the home. Proximity of water to the house was particularly important to women and also affected their relationships with their husbands. In fact, when points for water access were closer to the home, men were more likely to share more of the water-related domestic tasks. Even small contributions to household work by men had outsized effects on women's ability to take on other tasks within and outside the home. Yet it's still rare for men to take on household tasks. Some female interviewees mentioned that this was in part because women see specific tasks as their responsibility and do not expect men to do them.<sup>8</sup>

**Preferences and decision-making control:** Women expressed a desire to participate more in community life and make an economic contribution to their households. They also expressed a desire for more involvement in decision making within the household and recognition from men for their contributions. In particular, women wanted greater influence over men's "risk-taking" behaviors, i.e., consumption of alcohol, use of tobacco, and gambling. Women were also concerned about men's anger or negative reactions that emerged when they felt their wives did not



Photo: © UN Women/Betsy Davis Cosme

meet expectations with their household tasks. For example, the time spent fetching water is a key area of contention between men and women and leads to high levels of distrust within the household if men think women are taking too long to come home. Given the sensitivity around collecting data on violence within the home, the researchers aimed to measure tensions in the relationship by asking about differences in "harmony" within the home rather than to measure violence more directly.

**Community-level participation:** Women's participation in community water committees and other WASH-related meetings was noticeably limited, yet women expressed interest in having greater participation and influence over sanitation decisions at the community level. Women ranked "participation in community activities" as the most significant change in their lives as a result of improved WASH activities at the community level. Interestingly, the report notes that men tried to convince women to move "improved health" to the highest spot in their rankings, but women felt strongly that their participation was more important and would, in and of itself, lead to better outcomes.

## Programming to address barriers

After seeing the results from the gender analysis, WATL leadership designed a program focused specifically on addressing gender differences across the CLTS process.<sup>9</sup> In 2013, the WATL team created a five-module gender dialogue facilitation manual (GDFM) to build WASH practitioners' capacity to identify how gender barriers might be affecting the success of the CLTS process.<sup>10</sup> The aim was to help community members think through context-specific changes that could be made to address gender inequalities at the household and community levels as they related to achieving sanitation goals. The manual was integrated throughout the existing CLTS program. Below is a description of the modules, with notes about where and how each module complements the CLTS phases of programming:

- Pre-Triggering & Facilitation Module 1:** The first module trains facilitators to integrate a gender lens in the initial goal setting and situation analysis.<sup>11</sup> The module complements existing efforts to provide explicit guidance for facilitators to document the views of women, the disabled, and other marginalized groups when facilitating discussions on water accessibility and the inequitable distribution of WASH-related labor. It also offers practical approaches (e.g., holding meetings at convenient times, using small group discussions) that CLTS facilitators can use to ensure the active participation of traditionally excluded groups.
- Triggering & Facilitation Modules 2 & 3:** The second module encourages participants to look at the household through a gender lens (e.g., toilet structures that are difficult for pregnant women or the disabled to use, women's concern of experiencing gender-based violence [GBV]). The third module provides a framework for household members to build a collective understanding of what enables their access to sanitation (e.g., sound design, proximity to the home) and identify any barriers or differences in access between male and female members of the household. The module help households identify actions they can take to change and improve access to toilets for all members of the household, especially women and girls.
- Post-Triggering & Facilitation Modules 4 & 5:** These modules were designed to raise questions specific to gender in the follow-up home visits, which aim to (1) assess the state and usage of WASH facilities, (2) check for noticeable signs of behavior change, and (3) map remaining sites of OD. These modules allow facilitators to track changes in the behaviors targeted in earlier modules and they create space for community members, especially men, to articulate the specific reasons *why* women's contributions at the household and community levels are important to sanitation outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

These modules comprise an important step toward improving how gender is factored into the facilitation of CLTS programs. However, consistency in facilitation quality has been a continued issue for WATL since its programming started in 2007.<sup>13</sup>

The process for developing the manual took four years and included intensive iteration to design the appropriate content, language, and tools.<sup>14</sup> The modules were tailored to the needs of specific communities, and WaterAid tested and simplified the language so that the modules could be used independently by community-based facilitators, without significant guidance and oversight. Village leadership provided particularly useful input for the WATL staff as they tested different activities and methods for getting both men and women more involved in sanitation efforts.

Training facilitators was also not a simple task. It required substantial time investment from WATL staff and gender consultants to be sure that the facilitators understood the concepts and relevance of gender before proceeding to facilitate activities with community members directly. The GDFM is finally complete and was set to be published in late 2017. The global WaterAid team has also released an eight-step guide<sup>15</sup> to inclusive WASH programming that has explicit goals to ensure (1) marginalized groups and individuals are aware of and recognize their rights to WASH; (2) teams make efforts to include marginalized groups and individuals in WASH management committees, activities, and decision-making, which allows them to claim their rights to WASH; and (3) staff develop tools to collect evidence on barriers to sanitation faced by marginalized groups.



## Measurement and evaluation

Despite the lack of data showing correlations between the GDFM and sanitation outcomes, the 2015 evaluation of WATL's broader program activities in Timor-Leste provides insight into shifts in gender roles and responsibilities. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that women speak out more in meetings as a result of this engagement and are more comfortable defending their opinions in the household and community.

The WATL team is now shifting its focus to building a more robust measurement and evaluation (M&E) system to evaluate the effectiveness of the tool and further integrate it into existing CLTS activities. While the team has yet to create a rigorous M&E framework to assess the direct impact of the module on changes in gender dynamics and in WASH outcomes,<sup>16</sup> they are collecting data on indicators that could provide early insight into shifts in gender dynamics. These indicators include (1) changes in women's decision-making power, (2) men's involvement in specific household chores, (3) women's involvement in leading meetings, and (4) frequency of men collecting water for the household.<sup>17</sup>

Women's opportunities for engagement increased as part of this work, but there was limited shift in their roles and decision making power within community-level WASH activities. A key aspect of the WATL Country

Strategy is focused on increasing women's participation in management and decision-making roles related to community water systems. In 2015, 62% of water committees had more than 30% of women in management roles, and 8% had women in technical roles. Yet, women more frequently take on the role of treasurer, health promoter, or secretary. Qualitative findings indicate that women felt more comfortable speaking out in meetings and defending themselves in conversations with men in the community.<sup>18</sup> Qualitative interviews also revealed that both men and women had a perception that technical roles should be held by men, which could in part explain the low number of women in these roles.<sup>19</sup>

Monitoring performance and building the capacity of partners to deliver this culturally-sensitive training is an important next step as WATL rolls this program out in the coming years. The WATL team is planning to integrate a formal M&E framework into future iterations of joint CLTS-GDFM activities. The team is aiming to leverage and/or learn from existing tools, and incorporate best practices from the WaterAid Violence, Gender, and WASH Toolkit.<sup>20-23</sup> These tools can serve as a foundation for a more rigorous measurement and learning framework for joint CLTS-GDFM implementation processes.<sup>24</sup>

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## Conclusion

The development of the manuals has helped to surface important dynamics within the household that influence sanitation outcomes for both men and women. Building a mutual understanding of tasks and care burden is an important first step, but not enough to notably shift women's roles within the household and the community at large.

Qualitative assessments of household dynamics and gender differences conducted in 2017 revealed some improvements in shared household responsibilities between men and women. Notably, women said they felt more able to defend themselves

when men pressured them about their household work and could speak up when their daily workload became too much.

As the WaterAid team continues to use the modules and monitor opportunities for impact, it will be interesting to explore whether and how the household dialogues and greater engagement between men and women on household roles and responsibilities influence other aspects of women's lives outside of sanitation.

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Use the discussion questions below to guide your analysis of this case study on gender and sanitation. Consider what seems to have been done well, and what might have been done differently to improve how gender was identified and addressed in product and service design and execution:

1. **Which gender differences identified in the gender analysis were most relevant to sanitation outcomes? What additional information would help you better understand gender dynamics relevant to the project?**
2. **What was notable about the researchers' approach to the gender analysis? What additional data would help you better understand the experiences of men and women at the household and community level? How could that inform programming?**
3. **Which gender-based barriers do you think the program addressed well? Which ones were not addressed or might have seen more success if addressed differently?**

## END NOTES

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5. Ibid.
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7. Di Kilsby, interview with FSG (Ebele Anidi & Alexandra Geertz), April 2017.
8. "Developing a Facilitators Guide to Gender: Moving towards gender transformative WASH," WaterAid, April 2017 (internal document).
9. WaterAid, *Developing a Facilitators Guide to Gender: Moving towards gender transformative WASH*, April 2017.
10. WaterAid, *WATL Gender Dialogue Manual Dec 2016 Draft*, internal document.
11. BESIK, *The CLTS Manual for Timor-Leste: A Facilitator's Manual for Community Sanitation and Hygiene Planning*, 2016.
12. Note: *Women's and Men's Contributions to Family and Household* (GDFM Module 4) is a three hour series of exercises aimed at helping participants build a greater appreciation for the contributions women already make to maintain local WASH resources. *Reminder on women's and human rights* (GDFM Module 5) is one of three reflection exercises meant to remind community members of key messages from past gender discussions and encourage continued progress towards gender equity.
13. WaterAid, Timor-Leste, <http://www.wateraid.org/au/where-we-work/page/timor-leste>.
14. Gender & Development Network, *Achieving Gender Equality Through WASH*, Gender & Development Network Briefings, April 2016, 2016.
15. Note: The eight step guide is a high-level set of guidelines that are applicable at the global level, and include few specifics about how to implement inclusive WASH programming at the local level.
16. Jan Willem Roosenboom, interview with FSG (Ebele Anidi & Alexandra Geertz), May 2017.
17. Edmund Weking, interview with FSG, April 2017.
18. Edmund Weking, interview with FSG, April 2017.
19. Clark, Keryn, Meredith Hickman, Alex Grumbley, Jyoti Bhushan, Justino da Silva, and Francisca Sarmento. "WaterAid Timor-Leste Country Programme 2010 – 2015 Evaluation" WaterAid Timor-Leste, April 2015.
20. Note: Plan international has developed a tool for project implementation for staff and partners as part of its community sanitation WASH fund project in Vietnam. The tool aims to 1) develop understanding of gender analyses, 2) utilize practical skills for gender monitoring, and 3) collect sex-disaggregated data.
21. Note: WaterAid currently utilizes this toolkit to raise the capacity of WASH practitioners to minimize vulnerabilities to violence linked to poor access to WASH. Given the high prevalence of GBV in Timor-Leste, the WATL team hopes to incorporate GBV trainings for facilitators. The WATL team could leverage an adapted version of this tool to incorporate gender-intentional M&E of relevant changes in women's agency, ownership, and decision-making power in relation to changes in GBV at the household level, as well as how these changes impact women's access to and experiences with WASH resources.
22. Chelsea Huggett, interview with FSG (Ebele Anidi & Alexandra Geertz), May 2017.
23. WaterAid, "Violence , Gender, and WASH Toolkit," 2017, <http://www.wateraid.org/what-we-do/our-approach/research-and-publications/view-publication?id=5cfb752f-1929-41f9-9aa7-a69409bbad71> (accessed on May 2, 2017).
24. WaterAid, *Steps to Inclusive Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene* (WASH).