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**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES BEYOND 2015:
IMPROVING ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**Gender and social inclusive
WASH planning and policy in Nepal**

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This paper provides Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Water Supply Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Sector planning, policies and its implementation. GESI has been recognized by the Government of Nepal as a critical element of equitable development. Policy documents such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper with its social inclusion pillar and the three year interim plan (2014-2017) have clearly provided a mandate for addressing gender and inclusion issues. Second Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Projects (STWSSSP) adopted a community-based demand-driven approach for project selection, development and implementation and created specific GESI guidelines for the implementation of the project under a detailed GESI Action Plan. It has introduced three key mechanisms under the project, which ensured gender and social inclusion, pro-poor service delivery and sustainable project impact with the Output Based Aid Approach (OBA) based on a public private partnership model.

Background

Nepal is one of the least urbanized countries in South Asia with a current urban population of around 19% of the total. It is estimated that by the year 2020, close to 25% of the population will be moving to urban areas in search for better economic opportunities and safer environments. According to national census data, poverty is more pronounced in certain ethnicity and caste groups. It is highest among hill indigenous ethnic groups and almost half of the dalit populations are below the poverty line. Topographical hardness; lack of information; structural issues on gender, caste, ethnicity, and regional identity-based exclusion; and traditional social practices tend to add to economic disincentives and exacerbate incidence of poverty.

Traditionally, Nepalese women are responsible for household food security, sanitation and solid waste management so they spend more time in collection and storage of water for drinking, cooking and cleaning. Poor women are more vulnerable with lack of water supply and sanitation services.

Basic infrastructure and services to the urban poor (including women and those from excluded groups) have the potential to dramatically bring changes to their lives. But the impacts of these vary significantly due to differing social, cultural, institutional, physical, and economic constraints, many of which are rooted in the systemic structural issues of the Nepalese society.

Policy and legal framework

From the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2006) onwards, the Government of Nepal has accorded high priority on inclusion. The Interim Constitution (2007) acknowledges the need to remove structural inequality and protect the rights of the disadvantaged - women, dalits, madhesis, indigenous ethnic groups, and the differently abled. Commitment of the Government of Nepal on to GESI is very encouraging as illustrated by the provisions of the Interim Constitution as well as the national development plans, policies, and programs that have followed with similar goals. Some of main GESI related WASH Sector documents are as follows:

Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Policy 2004

This policy Provides guidance on water and sanitation service provision in rural areas using community based approaches ,focus on pro-poor with participatory processes ,insure 33% representation of women in Water Users' and Sanitation Committee (WUSC) and made provision of 10% non-cash community contribution instead of 20% by poor households, families headed by women, socially disadvantaged groups.

Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Policy 2009

This policy reinforced the State's commitments for safe drinking water, sanitation and sustainable environmental condition in urban areas. The scope of urban water and sanitation services extends beyond fulfilling the basic human needs. The policy also focuses on the access of the women, poor and disadvantaged groups to both WASH services and to decision making.

National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan 2011

It ensures equality, inclusion and sustainability through participatory planning process. One of the specific objectives of master plan is to develop the mechanism for ensuring access of poor, marginalized and other socially excluded groups to toilets and other hygiene behavior. Locally managed financial support system ensure the access of poor, disadvantaged and marginalized groups to toilets in achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status in the given area. Local government allocate funds annually on hygiene and sanitation promotion as per requirement.

Directives on Operation of Water Supply Services - BS 2069

The directives clearly emphasized on equal treatment in supply of drinking water. The service provider must avail water supply services for all without any discrimination on any ground, whether caste, religion, race, sex or political affiliation. Such provisions like, the access of deprived groups to drinking water services shall be ensured and the service provider shall fix appropriate tariff for such deprived groups. The Department may carry out monitoring to ensure access of deprived groups to drinking water made available by the service provider.

GESI Operational Guidelines moving from project to institutional level

The Ministry of Urban Development (MOUD) finalized the GESI Operational Guidelines in August 2011 and created the GESI Unit as one of the permanent units in its institutional structure. One of the sectors covered under the GESI Guidelines is urban development. Hence the GESI Guideline is instrumental for GESI responsive urban planning in the country while it is also be a vehicle for sector related policy revisions to make them more inclusive.

At the central level, GESI capacity building in Ministry of Urban Development includes mainly (i) formation of structures and mechanisms for GESI mainstreaming in MOUD and its departments; (ii) operationalization of GESI Guidelines 2011 in the project cycle; (iii) preparation of GESI operational manuals, toolkits, and checklists for all sectors (water and urban development); (iv) training and exposure programs for the staff of ministry, departments, and divisional offices; (v) review and revision of policies and regulations relevant to sectors; and, (vi) setting up the GESI monitoring system The policies and guidelines are being implemented from central to decentralized levels to ensure GESI mainstreaming in all programs and projects and to achieve results.

GESI Institutional Framework in Department of Water Supply and Sewerage (DWSS)

DWSS realized that the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion is an integral component in WASH implementation. A GESI-related permanent section Community Mobilization Section (CMS) has been established in the department. Nine member GESI Coordination Committee (GESICC) is formed in department level. The GESICC is coordinated by Deputy Director General (DDG) who is assigned to look after Community Mobilization Section. The purpose of GESICC establishment in department is to help in mainstreaming and institutionalizing GESI in DWSS and its all structures from regional to divisional/Sub-divisional level.

The specific objectives of GESICC are:

- To coordinate the activities implemented by the sections of DWSS.

- To implement the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Operational Guidelines, 2013 in department including other institutional structures.
- To facilitate and support in collection of GESI related disaggregated data.
- Three Members GESI unit is formed in all five regional and seventy district division / sub division offices to implement GESI operational Guidelines.
- Similarly GESI units are created in SSTWSSSP, Sahalagani & Dry Area Projects under DWSS.

Second Small Town Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project

The Second Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project (SSTWSSSP) is expected to provide 24-hour quality water supply services (house or yard connections to piped water supply) to 240,000 people, and sanitation services (private latrines, public toilets, wastewater management facilities and storm water drainage) to 270,000 people (100% coverage) in 20 new towns by 2015. The three key mechanisms under SSTWSSSP which ensure gender and social inclusion, pro-poor service delivery and sustainable project impact are OBA, GESI action plan and PPMS, which are described in following paragraphs.

Output Based Aid approach for pro-poor service delivery

The OBA approach which uses performance-based grants in service delivery has been selected by the SSTWSSSP as a promising model for Public-Private-Community partnership between the Nepal Department of Water Supply and Sewerage, the Water User's Committee(WUSCs) and local Non Government Organization(NGOs) in to improve the provision of water supply and sanitation services including poor and disadvantaged households in small towns. It aims to enhance local governance and management by locally representative institutions (WUSCs) who pre-finance the construction of facilities while it also aims to improve accountability by using local NGOs to inspect and verify the successful completion of the projects before the WUSCs are reimbursed (OBA) by the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage. Moreover, participatory project activities build capacity of women and vulnerable groups through training and awareness raising activities participation in decision-making process to strengthen community demands for more accountable and affordable service delivery systems.

Formation of WUSCs and engagement of local NGOs are key mechanisms not only to develop private public partnership in service delivery but also to create accountable and gender and socially-responsive pro-poor service delivery. WUSCs create water and sanitation users' investment pool, cooperation and accountability for the sustainability of the project. The WUSCs are made up of 9 members inclusive of Dalits, indigenous groups, and religious minorities with the mandatory 33% quota for female membership with at least one woman in a decision-making position.

The selected poor households get a maximum of NPR 7,500 (US\$ 85.00) for piped household connection for water supply and NPR 10,000 (US\$ 114.00) for improved sanitation facilities on installment basis depending upon the progress. Fifty percent of the infrastructure cost NPR 3,750 (US\$ 43.00) of the water supply system is born by the government as grant. The WUSCs are required to invest the rest 50% cost of the water supply system NPR 3,750 (US \$43.00) which will be reimbursed to WUSC by water user households on installment basis in thirty months.

GESI Action Plan

Under the GESI-inclusive water supply and sanitation sector policy framework, the SSTWSSSP aimed to ensure the participation of all users by economic status, gender, caste and ethnicity in project design, implementation, operation and maintenance. The Project adopted a community-based demand-driven approach for project selection, development and implementation and created specific GESI guidelines for the implementation of the Project under a detailed GESI Action Plan. The project aims to reduce time for fetching water to zero in all towns by 2015 which is expected to increase girls' attendance in school and women's productive activities. The component-wise GESI Action Plan is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. GESI Action Plan
<p>Output 1. Developing Efficient, Effective and Accountable Urban - Water Supply and Sanitation (WSS)</p> <p>Setting gender-responsive and socially-inclusive WSS standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of GESI approaches in the implementation of existing laws/regulations: GESI in Urban WSS Policy • Formulation of new laws, policies, and guidelines (Water Supply & Sanitation Umbrella Act)
<p>Output 2. Developing WSS Facilities/Improved Participation of Women and Marginalized Groups</p> <p>Selection of project service areas using participatory approaches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collection of data disaggregated by sex, caste, and ethnicity during socioeconomic surveys • Awareness raising on project approaches and participation for women and vulnerable groups <p>Pro-poor and gender sensitive approaches in WUSC operations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include women and vulnerable groups in training, decision-making. • Effective implementation of OBA: 75% poor households connected to piped water supply and sanitation systems • 12,000 Households targeted through OBA for water supply and sanitation connections <p>Ensure representation of women and vulnerable groups in WUSCs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WUSCs with 33% women members and at least one woman in a key position; marginalized groups appropriately represented <p>Select local NGOs with inclusive staff composition for: social mobilization & capacity development. Provide equal employment opportunity to poor women/men in construction works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal wage paid for equal work • 50% women and vulnerable groups in sanitation and solid waste management programs
<p>Output 3. Strengthening Governance and Capacity for Project Management and Operations</p> <p>Strengthening Gender-responsive Governance and Institutional Gender Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint GESI Officer in DWSS/PMO • Develop GESI training manual/guidelines • Develop PPMS that includes sex, caste, and ethnicity disaggregated data and information • Develop GESI implementation plan for each town project

Project Performance Monitoring System (PPMS) with gender disaggregated data

The project PPMS system has been developed with a disaggregated baseline data and indicators which enable monitoring implementation progress of the GESI Action Plan and gender-equality results. Disaggregated PPMS system maintains accountability on the project's GESI-based objectives and results as shown below:

21 town projects are selected through a participatory approach including:

- Janajatis : 31%, Dalits :10%, Brahmans/Chhetris: 59%, (38% Female and 62% Male)

WUSC composition in 21 Town projects (188 members) including 66% male & 34% female :

- Janajatis: 23%; Dalits : 4%; Others: 6%, Brahmans/Chhetris: 67%
 - One female social mobilizer is deployed in each PISU office.
 - Key Professionals in NGO: Males: 88%; Females :12%
 - Community mobilizer: Males: 45%; Females: 55%
 - WUSC Orientation training: Females: 30%; Males: 70%
 - Total 2613 participants including 1218 (47%) male and 1394 (53%) female attended.
 - Total 95 numbers of training were conducted in eighteen town projects.

In each town, two days OBA Implementation training/workshop was conducted and total of 686 people participated including 25% (169) male and 75% (517) female. About 7124 households have been selected for OBA service from 19 town project so far.

Altogether 2299 numbers of permanent Household Latrines has been constructed so far through OBA in different towns. Similarly, 1048 numbers of tap has been connected so far. In almost of the town projects, construction activities through OBA have been rapidly going on and expected to be completed as per target explained in the action plan.



Photograph 1. Women participating in a training program

(Source: ADB, Nepal)



Photograph 2. Mass meeting with stakeholders in project design

(Source: ADB, Nepal)

Lessons learned on promoting GESI-responsive governance and service delivery

The project is currently under implementation phase, the period is till the end of 2015, but it has already provided important lessons on how to promote GESI responsive governance and service delivery in water supply and sanitation sector. Some of the key lessons learnt so far during project design and implementation phases include:

- GESI inclusive Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Policy provides an enabling framework for GESI Action Plans under urban infrastructure projects.
- GESI Action Plan prepared at the project level provides a roadmap for implementation and monitoring GESI objectives and targets.
- Ensuring representation of women and vulnerable groups in WUSCs with disaggregated targets is important for developing GESI-responsive local governance
- Establishing PPMS with disaggregated data collection (by sex, caste and ethnicity) is essential for proper monitoring and accountability for GESI-inclusive service delivery.
- Appointing GESI Officers in DWSS, Project Management Office (PMO) and Water Supply and Sanitation Division Offices (WSSDOs) with gender capacity building programs planned at all levels at different stages of project implementation is critical to institutionalize GESI-responsive governance and service delivery.

Conclusion

The policy and legal framework on GESI in the WASH sector has evolved over time in Nepal providing the basis for institutional and operational changes. Given the social, cultural, and historical context of the country, there has been increased realization for the need to focus on GESI in order to achieve poverty reduction goals.

Despite some of positive results observed in the project, the Project faces challenges that need to be addressed for sustainable impact. The participation of the poor in project activities and in WUSCs after conducting awareness raising programs without offering any remuneration is a key barrier to their involvement. They cannot afford to join meetings without allowance because they need to work on construction sites every day to ensure their family's survival and livelihood. Translating the policy provision into action is another challenge. For the overcoming of this challenges there, should be a provision of post construction support activities and effective follow up with monitoring activities need to be strengthened.

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