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**EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE WASH SERVICES:
FUTURE CHALLENGES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD**

**Gender Equity and social inclusion responsive planning
integration of gender action planning in household
clustering**

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Introduction

JESE with support of Simavi under the WASH SDG Programme in Uganda is using the integrated clustering household concept to work on improved access to sanitation and hygiene in Agago District. The clustering household approach is used in existing government structures where cluster heads are assigned responsibility of following up their cluster group members on their status and therefore reporting to the area zone village health teams. The cluster group heads' reports feed into the Health Management Information system as the WASH section report is always updated. And later, the Village Health teams recommend cluster groups that have fulfilled all the WASH requirements of a model household to receive a stamp on the group listed households by the parish chief. As a strategy to work on gender equity and social inclusion in planning and decision making in WASH investments on household level, JESE adopted household gender action planning. This approach is being implemented in over 33 villages from 10 sub-counties in Agago district in Northern Uganda.

The problem

In Uganda, the key driver that fosters social exclusion particularly on women and girls is a patriarchal system in which males hold primary power, are predominant in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property in community and household level. In Agago district, there are several manifestations of gender inequity and social exclusion that occur at several levels, of the family, community, and work places, and institutions. Women, poor household, and marginalized groups disproportionately experience the impacts of inadequate WASH partly because they are more likely to have limited access to services (Stevenson, *et al.*, 2012). The existing WASH services and facilities in Agago are not designed to meet the needs of women and girls, including those with disabilities, such as adequate sanitation/ provision for Menstrual Health and also the existing WASH facilities at community and household levels do not help prevent gender-based violence, e.g. sex-segregated toilets, adequate lighting and privacy. Many marginalized groups also have less say, both within the household and in their community, in decision-making processes and governance of resources relating to WASH (Routray, *et al.*, 2017). Women and children who are mainly responsible for water collection are negatively impacted by the current modes of access to and governance of water resources. At household level, men's reluctance to pay repair fees and women's inadequate access to money, a major determinant of functionality of "improved" WASH resources, increases the troubles that women and children face in accessing WASH facilities (Asaba, *et al.*, 2014). These all refer to the importance of interpersonal factors, particularly women's ability to influence WASH related decisions in the household (Hirai, *et al.*, 2016).

The solution

To increase the voice of women, girls and socially marginalised groups in decision making at household level, JESE is using the strategy of household gender action planning. A household gender action plan (GAP) is a gender mainstreaming tool for ensuring gender-inclusive plans are developed and implemented at a level of a household. A gender action plan help assesses the differences in the role of women and men, girls and boys and the relationships between and amongst them. GAPs helps to generate targets, activities, and strategies to address gender-equality issues to facilitate women's involvement in and participation of women, girls and the socially marginalised in decision making. In developing a GAP, all members of the household (men, women, boys, girls, the elderly, the disabled) are involved into a dialogue to discuss the key barriers gender equality and together come up with tangible actions to improving the situation. Household cluster heads take responsibility at village level helps to ensure that the individual households have developed and implementing their gender action plans to improve their WASH situations.

Entry point to inclusive GESI action planning

Under the WASH SDG Programme in Uganda, JESE is formatting and training household clusters to foster inclusive Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) planning. Furthermore, local leaders and community extension workers are trained in GESI to influence in planning and prioritising GESI issues in the local government in rural water and sanitation supply. JESE conducted massive awareness on gender equity and social inclusion to reduce gender and disability stereotypes and prejudices and promote awareness of the needs and capacities of the socially excluded groups. To further work on reducing gender differences, JESE has worked with women and men separately. For example role model men and boys have been identified and trained as key ambassadors to support inclusive GESI planning at community and household levels.

Key highlights and results

The increased involvement of women in management structures and men in participating in maintainance of household and community water supply facilities is resulting in more effective management and functioning of water supply facilities. Secondly, women are participating more in the design and management of WASH facilities. In the communities where JESE is working, a reduction in open defecation and improvement of hygiene at households is observed. Furthermore, an increased role of men and boys in collecting water for household use is observed. Lastly, there is increased response from men and boys to support the girl child in accessing menstrual hygiene information and products.

Conclusions and recommendations

Gender action planning is an important concept in water access, sanitation and hygiene because women often have the primary responsibility for facilities and practices in the household. As a result, they often experience a significant extra burden. Yet women's voices and participation in community decision making are often marginalized which impacts on their ability to influence decisions around sanitation and hygiene facilities and services. There is a relatively widespread discourse arguing that women's empowerment is necessary for more sustainable sanitation and hygiene solutions for both sexes. Therefore in order to plan, design and implement an effective WASH project, women, girls and other maginalised groups need to be intentionally included. There is need to facilitate the participation and inclusion of men and women as well as marginalised groups to gain their different opinions and preferences while implemementing. Practical actions should actively seek to minimize gender related power imbalances and restrictions.

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