Session 6
Challenges and unintended consequences in gender transformative programs

WASH and Gender Transformation
Training for practitioners
prepared for Plan Netherlands
2019
Sharing stories of challenges

Activity

In small groups discuss:

• What are some of the challenges you have experienced when implementing gender transformative activities as part of your WASH programs?
• What are some of the unintended consequences of gender transformative activities in your WASH programs?
Challenges and unintended consequences
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Example of challenge and some unintended consequences</th>
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<td><strong>Backlash from the community</strong></td>
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<td>Sometimes gender transformation activities are not welcomed by all members of the community:</td>
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<td>o A waste of time</td>
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<td>o Offensive because they feel that their own practices and beliefs are being challenged or criticised</td>
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<td>o Disempowering</td>
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<td><strong>Timeframes are too short</strong></td>
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<td>Are we setting ourselves up for failure because gender transformation can take decades or more but project timeframes are usually less than 2 years?</td>
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<td><strong>Facilitators not well-equipped</strong></td>
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<td>Can WASH practitioners be expected to be gender practitioners also?</td>
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<td><strong>Difficulties of ‘practicing what we preach’</strong></td>
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<td>In some countries, WASH project teams are often mostly male, or all-male teams – sometimes for safety reasons. This makes it difficult to:</td>
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<td>• Role model the values of gender equity that we are trying to encourage communities to embrace</td>
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<td>• Talk about issues such as menstrual hygiene management with women</td>
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<td>• Understand the specific needs of women</td>
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<td><strong>‘Gender equity’ and ‘empowerment’ looks different contexts</strong></td>
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<td>How is it possible to do gender transformation cross-culturally, especially when a donor has specific requirements? Empowerment is hard to define and hard to measure. Just having female members on a WASH committee does not mean those women have more ownership or control</td>
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<td><strong>Governments or other local officials may not support gender transformation</strong></td>
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<td>This might be because:</td>
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<td>• They oppose gender transformation activities</td>
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<td>• They don’t understand the importance of gender transformation</td>
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<td>• They don’t have time or budget to allocate to gender transformation</td>
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A few ideas for overcoming challenges and unintended consequences
Ideas for overcoming challenges and unintended consequences

• Do no harm
• Understand and challenge unequal distribution of power and privilege
• Standard Operating Procedures
• Scenario-based training and role playing
• Gender balanced WASH teams
• Working with representative organisations
• Working with partners
• Encouraging heroes/champions
• Scenario-based training and role playing
• Measuring ‘empowerment’
• Hold ourselves accountable
• Unconscious bias training
• Invest in our own GESI capacity, expertise, work and partnerships
Avoid exposing people to further harm as a result of your actions

• Avoid putting all/more responsibility onto (and risk blaming) those with the least power

• Make connections between violence, harmful social hierarchies, and harmful norms

• Understand that discriminatory norms and attitudes are harmful and need to be challenged
Understand and challenge unequal distribution of power and privilege

1. What violence related to WASH can look like & how to improve our work
2. What to do if we see violence in our work or we are approached by someone who has experienced violence
3. What to do if we experience violence ourselves or

Key categories of violence

- Psychological violence
  (Harassment, bullying or causing fear, stress or shame)
- Physical violence
  (Beating, fighting leading to injury, death)
- Sexual violence
  (Rape, assault, molestation, inappropriate touching)
- Socio-cultural violence
  (Social ostracism, discrimination, political marginalisation, social norms)
Prepare to respond to resistance and backlash

1. Developing Standard Operating Procedures
   - Documented processes on how to respond

2. An ‘exploratory walk’: Scenario-based training and role playing what would happen to someone reporting an incident.

3. ‘Participatory mapping’ of services and community resources for support
   - Only specialists should intervene in the situation.
     - Seek advice from gender-based violence specialists where gender-based violence issues arise.
     - Seek advice from child protection specialists where child protection issues arise.

4. Safe and ethical handling of information, especially those sensitive in nature such as GBV
Gender balanced teams

Make sure your project teams are gender balanced and as gender diverse as possible. This might mean you need to

• Hire 2 female staff for field trips who travel together for safety/cultural reasons.
• Give women responsibility and opportunities to build their experience e.g. stretch assignment, lateral moves, job swaps/shares
• Seek role models for women
• Pass on invitations to participate in panels or meetings to female team members
• Promote work life balance and family friendly ways of working.
• Ensure that female colleagues don’t spend too much time on non-promotional tasks
• Connect women in the WASH sector with each other
Organisations already working with women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities or chronically ill, can be asked for advice.

These are often small organisations, run by volunteers and should be paid for their time and expertise.
Working with partners

• Bring gender transformative values (and training) into our partnerships, alliances, networks and consortia with government bodies, civil society organisations, NGOs, community-based organisations, academic institutions, donors, networks, media, and the private sector and so on.

https://washmatters.wateraid.org/publications/partnership-framework
Working to create allies and champions who feel personally committed to providing services to local people e.g. through the Making Rights Real approach.

Encouraging heroes/champions

Super hero
“I can make things better!”
... as a highly motivated player, the superhero is aware of its role and has a high interest in taking things forward. She is dedicated to positive change and open to new ideas and concepts, even if she is not an actual decision maker.
"... I want to help my community"
"... I want to get things done"
"... I want to be seen as a good person"

Would-be hero
“I want to see first that it works out!”
... as a passive onlooker, this player needs leadership and guidance as a framework for actions. He believes in rules and hierarchies and is scared of doing something wrong. Because hierarchical structures matter to him, he follows directions and rules. To his mind, human rights are too abstract and a far away concept.
"... I want to report success"
"... I want to please everyone"
"... doing nothing is safer than acting"

Laggard
“I am not responsible for that!”
... as a person who doesn’t feel responsible for any change process, she wants to keep existing structures and hierarchies which she follows consistently. Furthermore, external factors are easily holding her back from acting, especially from a “too abstract and far away concept” as human rights.
"... I only follow rules"
"... I don’t want any trouble"

Persistent objector
“I don’t want any change!”
... as a person who doesn’t want any change process, he simply refuses to act. He takes advantage of his power situation by doing nothing and just keeping the status quo. Due to his lack of motivation, it seems pointless to be dealing with him.
"... I want to have a pleasant time"
"... My rules, my priorities"

https://www.rural-water-supply.net/en/resources/details/840
Institutional triggering for gender transformative attitudes

• Can you adapt the institutional triggering for CLTS to mobilize local government commitment and action for gender transformative change?

• As a tangible sign of their commitment, each local authority leader could sign a pledge or ‘statement of commitment’?
Measuring ‘empowerment’

The Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), measures women’s empowerment in (1) decisions about agricultural production; (2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources; (3) control over use of income; (4) leadership in the community; and (5) time use. The tool also measures women’s empowerment relative to men within their households.

http://weai.ifpri.info/
Hold ourselves accountable

Tips for All
- Challenge and change our own attitudes, cultures and behaviours – individually and collectively.
- Reflect on your own biases that harm women and take steps to change such behavior and attitudes
- Develop more realistic expectations of colleagues
- Highlight male role models who have combined career with childcare and family responsibilities

For female colleagues
- Work on ways to overcome deep conditioning on gender norms
- Take on counter-stereotypical roles
- Ask for mentoring. This could be women mentoring women (esp. younger women).
- Tell their stories and inspire others – at webinars, through intranet blogs and staff networks.

For male colleagues
- Be more inclusive in your behaviour/attitudes in the work place
- Promote the achievement of female colleagues, amplify the voices of your female colleagues in meetings, don’t take credit for others work
- Take turns in doing the office housework (admin, organising preparing rooms for meetings or note taking)

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Invest in our own GESI capacity, expertise, work and partnerships.
Unconscious bias training

**Project Implicit** is a long-term research project based at Harvard University that aims to measure people's preferences for certain social groups over others.

https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
Closing note

This issue can sometimes feel a bit overwhelming ...remember:

1. We don’t have to respond on our own – there are other experts out there who can help work out ways forward (gender, GBV, protection specialists and others)

2. We can’t alone solve the wider issue – but we can take small steps... which contribute to reducing some vulnerabilities.. and in turn contribute to the overall process of transformative change

3. Many good practices are what we do or are meant to do already – it's just a matter of not forgetting to do them or slightly modifying them to also to consider ‘feelings of safety’ related to WASH during assessments, participatory processes and monitoring
Final Activity:

• Reflect on lessons learnt
• Develop CONCRETE actions
• Prioritise actions – immediate, planned long-term, potentially longer term
• Additional support you may need from Plan Netherlands?
• Put on flip chart and present back!