

Seen but not heard?

A review of the effectiveness of gender approaches in water and sanitation service provision



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Contents

Acronyms	ii
Executive summary	iii
1. Background	1
2. NEWAH and its gender and social inclusion approach	2
3. Study objectives	4
4. Methodology and limitations	5
5. Findings	8
5.1 Participation	8
5.1.1. Opportunities to participate	9
5.1.2. Barriers to participation	12
5.1.3. Women and decision-making	15
5.2. Gender perspective of project outcome benefits	17
5.2.1. Water, sanitation and hygiene	17
5.2.2. Other project-related benefits	20
5.2.3. Impact of Gender Awareness Training (GAT)	22
5.3. Impacts on gender dynamics	23
5.3.1. Gender relations	23
5.3.2. Role and status of women	24
6. Lessons learned	27
7. Recommendations	28
8. Conclusions	30
References	32



Acronyms

CMC	Community Management Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHV	Female Health Volunteer
GAP	Gender and Poverty Approach
GAT	Gender Awareness Training
GSI	Gender and Social Inclusion
HSE	Health & Sanitation Education
KII	Key Informant Interview
NEWAH	Nepal Water for Health
NFE	Non-formal Education
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
SSI	Semi-structured Interview
VDC	Village Development Committee
WAN	WaterAid in Nepal
WSH	Water, Sanitation and Health
WSUC	Water and Sanitation User Committee



Executive summary

There is global and national recognition of the importance of involving both men and women in the management of water and sanitation services. Women are the main users and managers of water systems, using water for drinking, cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene, care of domestic animals and productive activities. However, concerted efforts are required to include women in the management of water resources. Access to improved water services has a large impact on women, providing them more time for leisure, care giving, personal improvement and income generation activities. Likewise, access to sanitation facilities helps to improve health and increases privacy and safety for women and girls and contributes to regular attendance at school.

Participation is commonly accepted as a process that is important and necessary in

the rural water and sanitation sector, and strongly associated with project efficiency. Many sector stakeholders have recognised the need to ensure women's participation, but there is a lack of qualitative data that measures how effective these measures have been. This study aims to address this gap by looking at what impact gender approaches to include women and men has had on their meaningful participation.

WAN's rural partner, NEWAH, has been a key influential agency in the drinking water and sanitation sector in addressing gender inequity and exclusion. The evolution of its Gender and Poverty (GAP) approach to a Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI) approach challenges the many obstacles that limit the degree of participation women and excluded groups face in programme activities. NEWAH policies of affirmative action, financial

support for poorest households and gender awareness training have promoted greater equality in accessing resources and services.

NEWAH's promotion of gender balanced and socially inclusive user management committees have been instrumental in ensuring excluded social groups' representation on these committees. Participation in project activities has helped increase exposure and foster greater self-confidence. However, while there has been an increase in women's participation, it has been limited in decision-making processes. Low literacy level or numeracy skills, lack of self-confidence and social norms pose challenges to the effective participation of women and excluded groups and accountability issues.

Despite the aims of participatory approaches to engage women and men in development

that affects them directly, there remain barriers that restrict their ability to do so. Short-term training can only have a limited impact. Training can only be effective if the personal experiences and views of both men and women on gender are considered and explored and follow-up support is provided. Moreover, involving and focusing on women can marginalise gender as a women's issue. There is a need to develop men's skills in this area and bring their perspective into initiatives that aim to promote a participatory approach. In promoting an inclusive approach, it is also important to understand the community-level decision-making process and local social and political context.

Only by engaging with men and women in constructive dialogue and supporting both capacity building and empowerment processes, can true participation be achieved on equal footing.



1. Background

In Nepal, gender differences in human development indicators are wide. On all accounts, men fare better in terms of social, health, economic and political participation indicators. In regards to the lack of access to clean water and sanitation, women and girls suffer disproportionately. Girls are discouraged from attending school without adequate toilet facilities, especially during menstruation; women suffer from adverse health complications such as urinary tract infections and uterus prolapse, due to bladder retention and fetching water from far distances. In Nepal, gender inequity and exclusion are major barriers to poverty reduction and need to be addressed. In the water and sanitation sector, there is the recognition that while men and women need to be involved in order to promote efficient and sustainable water and sanitation services, specific interventions are required

to ensure equitable access for women and disadvantaged groups.

WAN and its rural partner, Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH), have placed a lot of efforts to address gender inequality in their programme approaches in recent years. NEWAH, with WAN's support, has developed policies and approaches within their own organisation and for programme implementation to increase the active participation in and impact on women of their work; these include a progressive HR policy in this area and a project level Gender Awareness Training (GAT) for communities. NEWAH's focus in this area has been through a number of evolutions with the introduction of the Gender and Poverty approach and the updating of this into a Gender and Social Inclusion approach based on lessons learnt.



2. NEWAH and its gender and social inclusion approach

NEWAH is a national-level NGO that has been specialising in rural drinking water, health promotion and sanitation since 1992. Its experiences in the sector found that domination of all aspects of the project and water systems by male elites and the better-off households led to unequal access to safe drinking water between the better-off and poorest groups. In 1999, NEWAH began implementing a Gender and Poverty (GAP) approach at the programme and organisational level to address the exclusion of women and the poor in decision-making, training and other project-related benefits.

The GAP approach was initially piloted between 1999 and 2002 in five projects, one in each of the five development regions of Nepal. In 2003, a comparative post-project

evaluation of the 5 GAP and 10 non-GAP projects was carried out. The findings showed that the GAP projects performed better than the non-GAP projects by improving equal access to watsan facilities, greater percentage of poor households had latrines, more timely repairs and sustainable operation and maintenance (O&M) system, greater number of women in WSUCs and a change in gender roles. As a result, since 2003, NEWAH began mainstreaming the GAP approach throughout all its projects and organisation, which included interventions such as disaggregating data by sex, caste and ethnicity; affirmative action; gender awareness training; technical training for women, gender balanced Water and Sanitation User Committees (WSUCs); and targeted support for poorest.

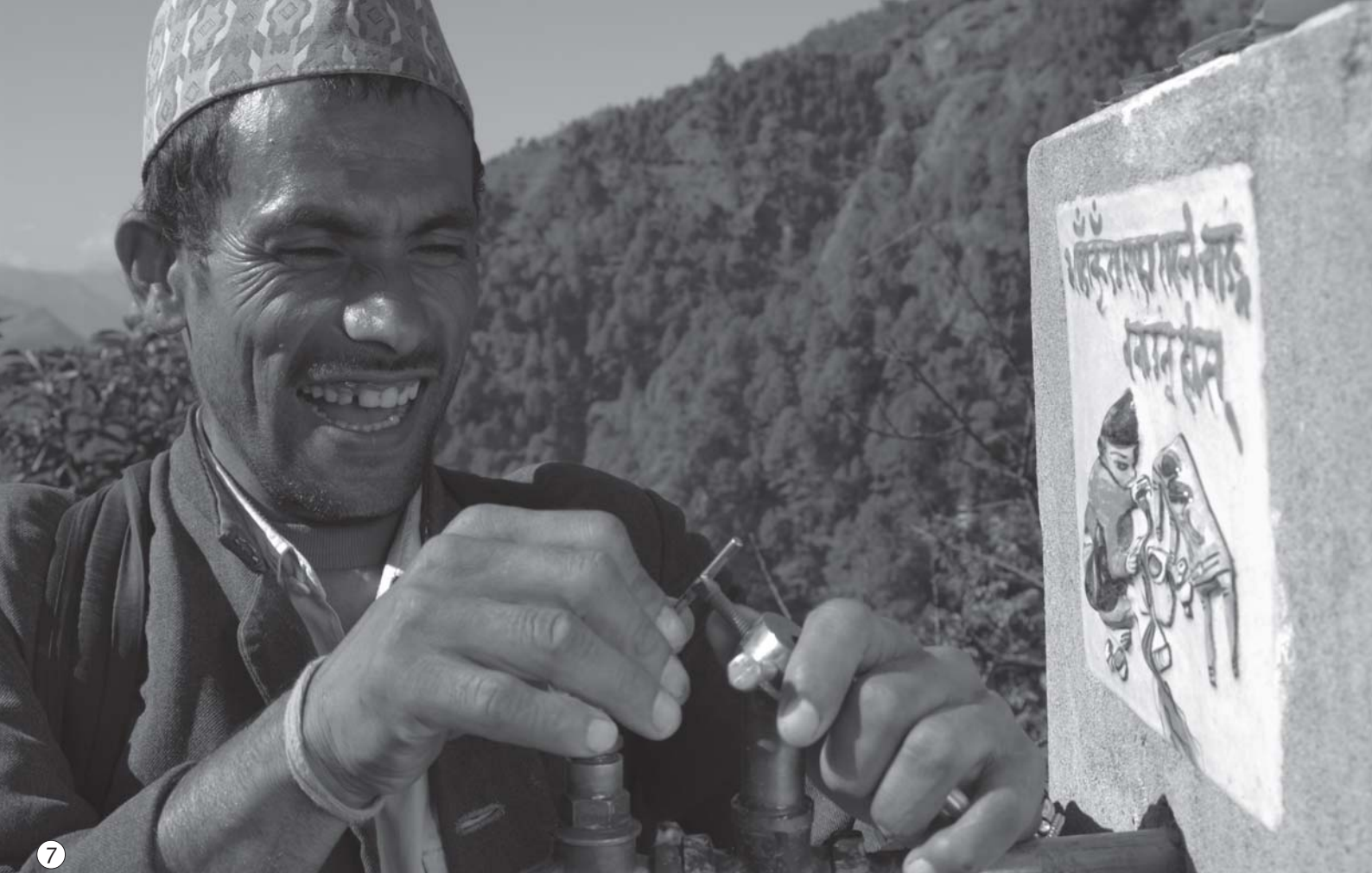
NEWAH has identified both gender inequality and social exclusion as a priority concern in its Strategic Plan (2006-2010) and recognised the need to review and strengthen its working modalities in these areas. In 2007, NEWAH developed and adopted a Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI) Strategy, which was built on its experience of implementing the GAP approach. It is based on the realisation that there are different and competing

interests within each community and that differences in sex, caste, ethnicity, and class are important determinants of an individual's ability to access resources and services and participate in decision-making processes. Moreover, NEWAH aims to address other barriers such as physical disabilities and HIV/AIDs, and aims to better target its resources to meet the needs of these different groups.

Evolution of NEWAH's GAP to GSI approach¹

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- 1999**
 - Perspective-building workshop for senior managers, regional coordinators and some field level staff to understand the rationale of gender and poverty mainstreaming in the context of NEWAH and to articulate a collective vision for gender equality and sustainable development
 - GAP Unit established to ensure that gender, caste and poverty is an integral part of changed NEWAH strategies
 - Identified GAP team members (both women and men), who had the potential to become in-house gender resource persons and to facilitate GAP sensitive programmes
 - A series of mini-workshops and reflection sessions to formulate clear and measurable goals and expected outcomes to gender/caste equality and poverty sensitivity
 - Structured training for all GAP teams to equip them with basic concepts and tools for gender analysis and gendered project planning (teams also delivered gender awareness training to other regional staff members)
 - 2000**
 - Review of all NEWAH policies, formats and procedure manuals to ensure that gender/caste biases in language and procedure are removed and gender/caste and poverty issues were highlighted
 - Perspective-building workshops for selected partners and subsequently for community people to understand NEWAH mandate and goals and the rationale of mainstreaming a GAP approach in NEWAH
 - Implementation of 5 GAP pilot projects - one in each region comprising both hill (gravity flow) and *Tarai* (tube well) projects
 - 2001**
 - Implementation of GAP pilot projects continued
 - Developed gender and poverty sensitive community self monitoring tools by GAP teams
 - Phase-in of some key GAP interventions in all NEWAH regular projects, such as well being ranking to identify who the actual poor are, free latrines to the poorest, gender balanced WSUCs, female and male health motivators, etc.
 - 2002**
 - A series of GAP teams workshops on MPA, Methodology for Participatory Assessment (later developed as NPA, NEWAH Participatory Assessment) to develop toolkits and checklists for gender and poverty sensitive community management monitoring and evaluation and for impact assessment
 - Phase II GAP team formed in the regions and trained in order to phase-in GAP interventions by 2004
 - 2003**
 - 5 GAP pilots and 10 non-GAP projects assessments using NPA methodology
 - 2006**
 - Developed its strategic plan and log frame (2006-2010) with a specific output addressing social inclusion and equity integration in all its programmes.
 - Reviewed and revised its GAP approach to address gender and social inclusion.
 - 2007**
 - Developed a Gender and Social Inclusion (GSI) Strategy to support and ensure that a gender and social inclusion responsive approach is adopted in NEWAH institutionally and programmatically.
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¹ Adapted from 'A Summary of Evaluation Findings from NEWAH's Gender and Poverty Approach Using the NEWAH Participatory Assessment', NEWAH: April 2004.



7

3. Study objectives

Currently NEWAH and WAN have been compiling good quantitative data and information on gender, in terms of the number of women in WSUCs and number of women trained in specific roles within projects, such as sanitation masons and caretakers. However, there is less qualitative information on the degree of participation that women have in project activities. This qualitative study aims to look at the effectiveness of NEWAH's approaches to address gender inequity at the project level.

Main objective of study

- To gain an increased understanding of the actual level of participation and real impact on women's lives of WAN and NEWAH's programme activities.

Specific objectives of study

- To identify the level of participation of men and women in project activities and in decision-making processes.
- To identify barriers, if any, that limit women's engagement in project activities.
- To identify what impact the GAT has had on communities' perceptions and behaviours towards tradition gender roles in relation to WASH and other areas.
- To identify whether women's engagement in project activities have had an impact on their role and status in the household and community.
- To identify whether the needs and benefits of the provision of water and sanitation services are realised equally by men and women.
- To identify recommendations to improve the delivery of gender sensitive activities.



4. Methodology and limitations

Methodology

Desk review

Documentation of the evolution of NEWAH's approaches to address gender issues and a desk review of NEWAH's existing policies and approaches.

Field study

- The study team visited 6 of WAN supported NEWAH projects that were selected based on geography and time since completion.
- Targeted group and individual semi-structured interviews with men and women to identify perceptions and attitudes of community:
- Community observations to triangulate data in regard to equal benefit and changes in household roles and behaviour.
- Case studies to represent participation and impact in communities.

Research tools

Semi-structured interviews (SII)

- Individual interviews - sample of selected respondents to obtain representative information.
- Key informant interviews (KII) - individuals in the community who may have overall good village-wise knowledge and/or particular information, insight or opinions about the topic under study.

A total of 79 semi-structured interviews were carried out, of which 21 were men and 58 were women.

These included interviews with the following individuals:

- Water and Sanitation User Committee Members
- Sanitation masons

- Caretakers
- Community Health Volunteers
- Community members

Focus group discussion (FGD)

A total of 11 focus group discussions were carried out, of which 23 of the participants were men and 78 women.

Observation

Overall, the level of participation of women and men in the SSI and FGD were good. On a few occasions, a number of individuals would be called for a FGD, but more came than expected. The researchers decided to let them join, so it became a Group Discussion rather than a FGD. It did not limit the findings, but rather helped to show the gender relations in mixed groups as to who spoke up and, more importantly, who did not.

Selection of communities

Selection of projects

The selection of projects was agreed upon with NEWAH and WAN taking into account the geographical areas and project completion dates. In order to ensure that any geographical and socio-cultural variations were represented and accounted for, the study selected the communities based on the following criteria:

Geographical

Both hills and Tarai communities were represented. For the Tarai communities, a distinction shall be made between the Madhesi in the Tarai and hill people living in the Tarai.

Diversity

The study aimed to include both homogenous and mixed communities in order to identify whether caste and ethnicity were a factor in the level of women's participation and gender roles. However, the selected communities were all mixed communities, with two of the hill projects predominately Magar.

WSUC membership

While the selected communities aimed to include WSUCs that were headed by a woman, only one of the six communities included a female chairperson.

3 communities were selected in Udayapur district (hills - Eastern region) and 3 in Mahottari district (Tarai - Central region). Priority was given to neighbouring communities to minimize travel time. The selected communities included both older, completed projects and newer projects in order to assess the impact of the project and social change over a longer period of time. The research team spent between 1.5 - 2 days per community

List of selected communities:

SN	Project name	Local partner	Date of completion
Tarai - Mahottari district, Central region			
1	Ekrahiya II	Ratauli Youth Club	31st July 2007
2	Ratauli II	Ratauli Youth Club	31st March 2006
3	Dhobauli	Ratauli Youth Club	19th February 2004
Hills - Udayapur, Eastern region			
4	Bhantabari	PRDC	25th September 2006
5	Chuladhunga	Sirjanshil Youth Society	16th September 2004
6	Sandhane	Sirjanshil Youth Society	22nd June 2003

Target group

Random cluster sampling was applied to select respondents for the semi-structured interviews. Initially, the proposal suggested 50% of the total respondents were women and 50% men. However, more women were interviewed because in some communities, particularly in the Tarai, many of the men had left to work abroad and only young boys or elderly men were present. Likewise, the study aimed to achieve a balance between respondents who had received Gender Awareness Training (GAT) and those who had not. This is important for assessing whether there has been any filtration of GAT messages at the household and community level.

The sample was stratified (i.e. technique to ensure certain groups in the population are included, despite limited size of sample) to ensure that the views of various groups based on caste, ethnicity and economic status was included (see Annex 3 for List of Respondents).

Limitations

The main limitations of the study are summarised below:

Methodological limitations

- Due to the selection of the districts, it was not possible to select completely homogenous communities based on caste and ethnicity.

- The sampling for the target group had to be adjusted in some communities to address the limited number of men available for interviewing and absence of selected respondents at their homes.
- Although it is not a major limitation, it should be noted that all the selected projects, except one (Ekrahiya II, Mahattori, 'stand-alone' sanitation project) were implemented under NEWAH's GAP approach. As such, the study findings and analyses are based on the GAP approach, although GAP and GSI are used and referred to interchangeably in the report.

Operational limitations

- Due to time and resource restrictions, the study was carried out in only two districts covering the hills in the Eastern region and the Tarai in the Central region, which may not be completely representative of other project communities in other regions.
- While the study aimed to focus on WAN's rural programmes, two of the communities selected for the research were in peri-urban areas which may have had some influence on the level of awareness, participation and impact of project interventions.
- Language barriers in the Tarai limited more in-depth discussion. While the use of translators was necessary, their own interpretation of the questions and responses may have influenced the translation.



5. Findings

NEWAH's effort to having a more balanced participation of men and women in its projects has helped to achieve the goals of the project, i.e. improved access to safe water and hygienic sanitation. Its GSI approach, which includes reservation policies for user committees and paid jobs, has ensured that women are given the opportunity to participate. The Gender Awareness Training has also raised awareness of gender issues, the importance of both men and women's involvement in project activities and decision-making. However, further efforts should be given towards identifying other change agents within the communities that can advocate for and promote gender issues.

NEWAH has been successful in ensuring an inclusive approach during project implementation, however, the study found

that post-project there was less participation and inclusion of women. There are still areas of improvement in fostering real participation of women in decision-making processes. The study found some examples of positive social change on an individual level, which NEWAH's GSI approach has ignited but to sustain this requires long-term support and commitment.

5.1. Participation

Participation can have many meanings, but generally aims to achieve a more inclusive development approach. In NEWAH's context, it means promoting the involvement of people, especially those that have been traditionally excluded due to their sex, caste/ethnicity, age and economic status. The GAP approach fosters participation of these excluded groups in its projects on a number of levels:

- Labour - unpaid contribution, such as in digging and transport, to lower project costs, as well as paid jobs in construction of the Watsan schemes.
- Cost-sharing - financial contributions to show demand, promote commitment and ownership, and as payment for Operation and Maintenance (O&M).
- Management - Local management of project scheme through local user groups and committees. Responsibilities include managing finance, making payments, community mobilization, repairs, etc.
- Decision-making - decisions made by men and women in the community concerning project issues (e.g. type of technology, costs, payments, service levels, design, site selection, training inputs).

5.1.1. Opportunities to participate

In general, women have had more challenges than men in carrying out the roles that they were given in the project's implementation. Issues such as illiteracy, physical strength, low self-confidence and self-esteem and socio-cultural norms limited the ability of women to fully carry out their responsibilities. Nevertheless, the GSI approach's reservation policy and priority to women and poor for positions within the WUSC and for paid jobs has benefitted these groups by creating

opportunities to access information, services and resources, and increasing their exposure to public forums and community decision-making processes.

"Tradition can only be eliminated by two things - education and reduction in poverty." - male community member, Ekrahiya, Mahattori

Labour

The GSI approach requires one person from each household to contribute in unskilled manual labour (e.g. digging pipe trenches). In general, women stated that they found the work difficult, but they were very happy to have access to clean water and therefore they did not mind. In one case, an elderly couple could not carry out the work so they requested their daughter-in-law, who lived separately from them, to replace them. Her brother-in-law gave her gold jewellery for her work.

Some women who worked in paid technical jobs such as masons found it difficult to carry out their work due to the physical demands of the job. However, those women from poorer households had a greater

Couple sharing work

Asa Sada is a 32 year-old Dalit woman from Udayapur district. She is married to Bhola Sada who is 38 years old. She is his second wife. They do not have any children of their own, but have adopted her sister's son who is 6 years old and goes to the nearby public school.

Asa was selected as one of four masons in the WSH project, which was completed in 2006. She attended all the trainings, but once she started to work she found that the work was physically difficult and dirty as well because of the black oil that had to be used. The other female, as well as one male mason, left the job because it was too hard and dirty for them. However, Asa was quite poor and wanted to continue with the work. After discussing with her husband, Asa approached the Water and Sanitation Committee (WSUC) and NEWAH project staff to request whether her husband could help her with her duties. The WSUC and NEWAH project staff agreed and Asa worked with her husband to construct the latrine rings. Even though he had not been trained, he was able to learn how to construct them and carried out his work effectively by the help of his wife and another male mason from his community.

contd...

The couple earned NRs 16,000 by the end of the project construction phase which was the most money they had ever earned in their life. They used their earnings for mainly two major tasks, i.e. repairing the roof of their house and buying 2 oxen. They paid NRs. 5,000 for the oxen and after 1 year they sold them for NRs 13,000. With their profit of Rs.8000, they then bought a second pair for NRs 15,000 with a loan of NRs. 2,000. They again used the oxen to work in the fields and sold them a year later for NRs 15,000.

While the job was difficult for women to carry out, NEWAH project staff supported the couple's decision to work together. This job allowed this Dalit couple to earn money that they would never have been able to with this opportunity.

economic need to work and carried out their responsibilities.

Cost-sharing

NEWAH's GSI Policy aims to ensure that the poorest are not unduly burdened with financial costs that could prevent them from accessing watsan facilities. Project staff encourage the community to adopt a graded system of payment for both initial project contribution and the O&M payments for the water systems. In the hills, all 3 communities were using a flat rate user fee for the O&M. In the Tarai, after the initial contribution, there was no regular collection of funds for O&M, as they generally pay for repairs as and when required. For latrines, NEWAH provides subsidies on a graded system and free latrine components for the ultra poor.

In the case of female-headed households, they did not have difficulty in making payments because the majority of their husbands were working abroad and sending their remittances home. Women from poorer households found it hard to make the regular

O&M payments, and as a result in some cases it impacted on the equitable access to water facilities.

Despite efforts and policies to promote a more equitable system, it is very difficult to convince communities of applying such an approach. A balance needs to be achieved between ensuring that the poorest are not excluded from accessing facilities but at the same time encouraging ownership.

Management

NEWAH's GSI approach includes an affirmative action policy of 50% women in key positions has provided opportunities for women to participate (see Table 1). In many cases, it was the men who selected women for the WSUC posts. In the hills, the selection process was more transparent than in the Tarai. People mentioned that education and social status, experience, qualities of helpfulness and tolerance were some of the selection criteria. However, gender biases in education result in varying literacy rates between men and women, better-off and poor and non-Dalits and

Cost-sharing impacts poor women

In the Bhabbari project, some of the ultra-poor households from the Dalit community could not make the O&M payments on time and forfeited their access to using the water taps. The women now go to fetch water from another source which is unclean and farther away.

In the Dhobauli project, several of the women from the poor households in the Dalit clusters stated that they were unable to pay the required amount, and did not receive any latrines. They were also unaware of the subsidization for latrine components. The women mentioned that they regret not building a latrine at the time of the project construction and understand the importance of having and using latrines.

Table 1: Comparison of women's participation in WSUCs

Project name	District	No. of male members	No. of female members	Women's post
Chuladhunga	Udayapur	6	4	Vice-chair Treasurer Two members
Sandhane	Udayapur	5	4	Vice-chair Treasurer Two members
Bhantabari	Udayapur	5	4	Vice-chair Treasurer Two members
Ratauli II	Mahottari	7	2	Chairperson Member
Ekrahiya II	Mahottari	4	3	Vice-chair Treasurer Member
Dhobauli II	Mahottari	4	3	No women in post (currently)

Female chair - Influence in the private sphere, but not the public sphere

In the Ratauli project, the WSUC was headed by a woman. She was able to use the knowledge from the GAT that she received and convince her husband to help her share the housework so she could attend the meetings. However, she was less successful in the WSUC where all the decisions were made by the male members, and she had little power.

Dalits, which often excludes the latter, whom are illiterate and uneducated, from accessing these posts.

Women were found to generally be selected for vice-chair and treasurer post, but in many cases they were not fully qualified. The women were illiterate or only had basic literacy skills, and often did not have numeracy or accountancy skills. One woman

was selected only because she had citizenship and it was required for the WSUC to open up a bank account. Thus, several of the female WSUC members have been unable to fulfil their duties and responsibilities properly, and are represented in a token manner without much influence or power in decision-making processes.

Women raising voices over financial transparency

Meena Magar is a 35 year-old woman. She is the treasurer of the WSUC in her village, but she does not keep the accounts due to her lack of knowledge and skills in accounting and math. The secretary and the vice chairperson maintain the accounts of this user committee. After completion of the project, the collected funds are being used for saving and credit activities in the community. The WSUC calls a meeting once every month. There is a regular collection of funds from the community which individuals can take loans from.

Last year the vice chairperson took NRs 8,000 with the support of the chairperson. They did not consult with the other members of this committee, nor was it shared with the participants in the regular meeting. After many months, the community found out about this misuse of funds by the chairperson and vice chairperson. In the meeting, the users raised their voice and asked for this money. According to the users, at the end they requested for forgiveness and they promised to return the money. People heard that the money has been placed back into WSUC fund.

The impact of this has been a lack of transparency and accountability by both male and female WSUC key members to the other members and users in some communities

5.1.2. Barriers to participation

There is a trend of increasing participation by women and excluded groups in community-level activities and development work and a growing awareness of the benefits of attending meetings and being involved. However, a number of factors were identified

that limit or prevent the involvement of women and excluded groups:

Perceived costs and benefits: Women and men weigh the costs and benefits of participating in activities such as meetings. Burdened by housework and with minimal support from their husbands and family members, women have little time for attending meetings and participating in community work. Men, likewise, consider the costs of women's participation and recognise that more

Challenging social norms

Gita is a 45-year old woman who was selected as the Vice-Chair of the WSUC. She was an active member of the WSUC, until just recently when her term expired. She made suggestions for the monthly fees of the O&M Fund, but she was unable to convince the WSUC members.

She also questioned the WSUC as to why the authority and necessary training was not given to the female treasurer, rather than the male secretary, since they had received GAT. She argued that if the treasurer took the responsibility, then other women would be inspired to take such opportunities as well in the future. However, the treasurer did not want to take the responsibility, but was pressurised from the male members to take this post.

Women do not have influence on decision-making in the WSUC and they usually just accept the decisions made by the WSUC. The WSUC provides loans from the savings and credit fund, but she says that there is bias towards providing loans to only the better off families because the poorer households will not repay their loans.

Some members of the community were positive towards Gita and thanked her for raising her voice in the meetings. However, her husband has discouraged her from raising her voice, perhaps because it reflects on his status and he feels humiliated. Her brother-in-law is the secretary of the WSUC, and came to her house to talk to her and her husband. He says that although she makes good arguments, he cannot support her in public. This shows that although some women are trying to challenge gender roles in society, it is difficult to influence or make an impact both on men and women.

household work may fall on them if women become involved in community work.

In many cases, women were not interested to participate in the WSUC, but were selected and pressurised to participate due to the project reservation policy.

Age: The age of women influences the frequency and degree of participation in meetings. Older women have more respect and higher status in society than younger women, and are able to give their opinions more freely. In one hill community, there was a minimum age requirement of 15 years to work in digging pipe trenches.

Caste/ethnicity: Caste and ethnicity is another factor that limits women and men's ability and opportunity to participate. Dalit women and men participated less in meetings due to a combination of societal limitations and their own feeling of inferiority and lack of education. Their language style is informal and people look down on them. As a result, they feel less inclined to attend meetings. Moreover, as Dalit women are socially excluded in the public sphere on the basis of being a woman and a Dalit, they do not perceive any benefit for either themselves or their families from attending meetings. One Dalit woman mentioned that she would like to speak up in meetings, but must respect the other non-Dalits and regrets not being able to speak up. There is a fear inside them to speak up and upset the prescribed norms of caste identity and behaviour.

Janajati women in the hills tend to be more vocal than Dalit and non-Dalit women (e.g. Brahman or Chhetri), whereas in the Tarai, women generally do not speak up in meetings when men are present.

Economic status: Although there is an increasing trend of women attending meetings,

it is often women and men from the better-off households who have more free time. The poorer households do not have time to attend meetings due to the need to earn wages. There is also the perception that the poor do not have anything substantial to contribute to the meetings due to their lack of education.

Education: The gender parity in literacy rate between men and women has narrowed substantially from 0.48 in 1991 to 0.73 in 2003/4.² However, challenges remain, such as the high drop out rate of girls in secondary school. In the project communities there were positive trends of girls attending school, but still a high level of illiteracy among women. The low level of literacy and education was cited often as a reason for women not participating in meetings. Moreover, some women who held posts in the WSUCs, were unable to fulfil their duties and responsibilities fully due to their limited literacy and numeracy skills.

Intra-household and intra-family relations: Women have more influence in a nuclear household compared to a joint household where they are living with their in-laws. They are able to decide things jointly with their husbands and have more decision-making power over what to cook and what to buy, compared to if they live in a joint household.

Female-headed households were very common in the Tarai, where many of the

"Our children help us to complete household tasks. Because we are on our own and do not have any pressure from other family members, we are managing our own way. We can decide what work to do and when to do it." - Woman from female-headed household, Sandhane, Mahattori

² Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment For Nepal, Government of Nepal: Kathmandu, 2006, page 26.

The case of daughter-in-laws

One daughter-in-law was not permitted to attend meetings, so she brought her mother-in-law with her to the meeting. The mother-in-law could see that it was useful to attend and could benefit from it so she allowed her daughter-in-law to attend.

During one of the FGDs, one young Musalman woman said she had to leave when she saw that her mother-in-law had come. However, the mother-in-law said she could stay and took her grandchild with her.

However often male members of the household, specifically Father-in-laws, have obstructed female engagement in meeting. On father-in-law in Mahattori stated "I don't see other daughter-in-laws going to meetings, so why should we send ours?"

men were abroad working. The women in these households have sole responsibility of managing the economic resources. Since their husbands were absent, they were able to make decisions themselves and could attend meetings if they so desired. However, their workload was heavier and they had to manage their time and priorities.

The position of women in a household will also influence the degree of participation. In general, women will not talk in meetings if their mother-in-law or father-in-law is present, although this is changing in the hills. On the other hand, in the Tarai, daughter-in-laws have restricted mobility and are not allowed to leave the house, let alone participate in public forums, although changes are occurring. Unmarried daughters or married daughters who return to their natal home have more mobility and opportunities to attend meetings. While selecting female candidates for the WSUC, it was hard to convince people and they had to visit the households many times. The parents and in-laws of the candidates were asked for permission first before selecting the female candidate.

"We have pressure from society in remaining silent". - Woman, Mahattori

"Men do not like women who talk a lot." - Man, Chuladhunga, Udayapur

Socio-cultural norms: Socially prescribed norms of men and women's role and character that are based on a patriarchal system restrict women from participating and voicing their opinions. While lack of interest was noted as a reason for low participation, other women said they were interested in what happened in meetings, but they are pressurised not to raise their voice in society.

Another reason was the fear of backbiting from both men and women. The gender division of labour constrains women to the household sphere, and when they attempt to extend their presence and activity in the public sphere, they are looked down upon.

Cultural, religious and social norms shape men and women's views of gender relations in the Tarai. In women's understanding, women should be confined to the private sphere and men should work outside the home. This implies that these women did not want to challenge the status quo and believed it was a woman's duty - not her husband's - to do housework. The women

Men attempting social change

One man in the Ekrahiya project in the Terai, had gone to the hills to work. When he returned home he tried to apply what he experienced in the hills, where he noticed more equitable sharing of work between men and women. He helped his wife cook meals, but other people in the village told him he should not do that because it is not a man's role.

also felt that their housework was not that hard compared to the work outside the home that their husbands did. The household chores are not detrimental to their physical health, while work outside the home was much harder and suitable for only men.

The women said, "We are aware of gender relations in our private sphere". For example, in their cultural, religious and social norms, women have the responsibilities of handling the household chores. Men on the other hand, respect them as devi (deity) no matter whether they are their mothers or wives. Similarly, women also give respect to their father and husband as deuta (deity). The women also stated that their husbands give their entire earnings either to their mothers or to their wives. However, this may be more symbolic and not illustrative of women having control over household resources, as the women give the money back to the men when they require it.

Despite the above understanding, the women found that they benefited less from the project in comparison to the men. According to some women, the watsan project helped them engage in the public sphere. They also said that being engaged outside the home would be easier if they were educated and literate. There has been an increase in the participation of women in the public sphere, but in the case of poor families or groups like the Musahar, it was still difficult for them

"I have not been informed of any meetings, but if I am informed, then I am ready to go."

- Dalit woman of female-headed household, Ekrahiya II, Mahattori

to participate in the public sphere because of time constraints.

Access to information: Women were often not notified of meetings. There was a lack of sharing information between men and women and amongst women.

Qualities needed for participation in WSUC:

Communities identified the following qualities and characteristics that were needed to engage constructively and influence decision-making processes with WSUCs:

- Familiarity with community
- Educated
- Free time
- Interest
- Listening skills
- Public speaking skills
- Tolerance
- Trustworthy
- Residence in village

5.1.3. Women and decision-making

NEWAH's GSI approach recognises the need for women to be involved in decision-making processes, as they are the main users and managers of water. NEWAH tries to ensure that there is effective participation of women on the user committees through its reservation policy and motivating the communities about the benefits of gender balanced user committees.

NEWAH implements its WSH projects in partnership with District level NGOs. The partners facilitate and provide support to the communities. This includes providing different community level trainings, health and sanitation promotion activities and monitoring. NEWAH's partners stated that in the beginning it was difficult to motivate women to come to meetings. Initially, they would arrive late, but after the social

mobilization process they started coming on time. Women tend to be more vocal in the beginning about the project implementation and management issues, however, post-project they are not as vocal and attend meetings less.

Women were invited and participated during the initial project discussions about the location of the tap stands and tube wells. This is very important in order to address issues of privacy for women and equal accessibility for all households. In the hill projects, most of the women stated that they were involved in deciding where to place the tap stands. In the Tarai, the situation was quite different. In many cases, women attended the meetings to discuss the location

of the tube wells, but were not involved in deciding where to place them and were not notified later of the decision. The poorer households often had no influence in the location of the tube well because they lacked their own land. These households used whatever land and location the landowners would provide to install the tube wells.

While there is an increasing trend of women participating in meetings and other project activities, women in general have little influence or power over decision-making processes. However, in the hills women have greater voice and fewer inhibitions to speak up in meetings compared to women in the Tarai. In the case of Tarai Dalit women,

Equal access? The privatization of tube wells

In the Terai, in the Dhobauli project in Mahattori, the poorer - particularly the Dalit households had restricted access to the tube wells. Several of the tube wells, which were placed on land that was donated by the landowners, had been enclosed with bamboo or brick walls. The argument was that women needed privacy, which is relevant enough in the Terai, and in Muslim clusters. However, further questioning found that initially, the households had full access to the tube well, but over time after the tube well was enclosed some women were only permitted to use it for drinking purposes. For washing clothes, pots and utensils and bathing, women have to go to the other water sources, such as ponds. The research also found that the local elites and landowners bribed the poorer households in deciding the location of the tube wells by inviting the men for alcohol and eating meat.

Voice but no influence

There are positive examples of women raising their voice in the community and in the WSUCs, yet they are still finding it difficult to influence the decision-making processes.

One female WSUC member suggested to the WSUC to place one tube well near one old man's house so it would be easier for him, but the members did not agree with her. Another woman, from the same community, suggested collecting NRS 15 for the O&M due to her positive experience with 'Chimeki' Bank (a women's savings & credit bank). However, the WSUC decided to collect NRS 10 instead.

NEWAH encourages and promotes the WSUCs to use the initial household and regular contributions to create a savings and credit scheme. The female WSUC advisor recommended that the funds should be available for everyone to take a loan, but the male members did not agree and gave loans to their own relatives.

factors such as fear of speaking in front of their employers and moneylenders prevent them from expressing their opinions. One Dalit woman in Ekrahiya II, Mahottari stated, "I am indebted to the moneylender of this village, so I can not speak in front of him."

Although women do not have a strong role in project and community decision-making processes, they are still benefiting in other ways from their attendance in community or user group meetings. They have access to information, exposure to public forums, increased visibility and mobility and access to paid work, training and learning opportunities - all which contribute towards increasing women's awareness and self-confidence.

"Now that we have access to water nearby we no longer have to rely on our wives, and can bathe whenever we like."

- Male, community member, Chuladhunga

5.2. Gender perspective of project outcome benefits

5.2.1. Water, sanitation and hygiene

Drinking water

Overall, women perceived more benefits than men with access to water services. Some of the benefits that women, men and children have are the following:

In the hills, only the better off households benefited from kitchen gardening and were able to increase their income by selling the surplus vegetables. Other households had small kitchen gardens for their own

Table 2. Gender perspective of benefits of water services

Perceived benefits of water services		
Women	Men	Children
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ more free time ■ close proximity ■ more sleep ■ bathing is easier and more thorough ■ use time for cooking ■ spend time with children ■ less physical work ■ saved income from kitchen gardening ■ clean environment ■ saved income on medicine purchases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ more frequent bathing ■ able to take bath on own time schedule ■ less dependence on women to fetch water ■ easy for personal hygiene ■ saved income from kitchen gardening ■ clean environment ■ able to irrigate fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ girls arrive to school on time ■ improved personal hygiene ■ clothes cleaner ■ increased safety from animals and insects ■ do not have to carry heavy jugs far ■ HSE teaching more applicable because can relate to reality ■ Safe from the risk of falling in a lake and ponds while fetching water

consumption. The Brahman and Chhetri families were more skilled than the Magars in the hills at maximizing the opportunity to increase their income. The Magars have sufficient land, but a lack of knowledge of market access. In the Tarai, nearly all households did not have kitchen gardens due to the lack of land. Thus, only the better off households had kitchen gardens and were benefiting from the possible new livelihood opportunities increased water access offered.

Not all households have been able to benefit equally in a sustainable manner. In one case, two households who belonged to the ultra poor category were unable to pay their monthly contribution to the O&M fund on time. After not paying for some time, the WSUC threatened that they had to start paying or they should stop using the tap stand. The two Musahar (Dalit) households have stopped using the tap stand and are now fetching water from an unclean source. It is debatable whether they were unable to meet the financial demands or whether they could meet it but just not on the scheduled timeframe.

The degree of influence by women in the decision-making processes during project implementation impacted the project benefits and outcomes. The perceived lack of

decision-making power limited the maximum benefits that women could have had from the project. As mentioned above, in some of the Tarai projects, women's inability to voice their needs and preferences regarding, for example, tube well placement and latrine construction has impacted the degree of access to and control over regarding water and sanitation facilities.

Sanitation and hygiene

There is greater awareness of hygiene and most households in the hills had their water pots covered. In the hills, most people mentioned that there has been a decrease in the frequency of water-borne illnesses such as diarrhoea. In the Tarai, they mentioned a decrease in diarrhoea and skin, eye and ear infections (see Table 3). There is increased safety, particularly for children who faced the risk of drowning when bathing in the ponds and bites from animals and insects such as snakes and leeches. Women save time now from using their latrines instead of going to the fields. They are also less at risk of illnesses such as bladder infections that can result from infrequent urination. In the Tarai,

"If women receive training in hygiene and sanitation, then they should maintain cleaning the tap stands."

- Man, Sandhane, Udayapur

Table 3. Gender perspective of benefits of latrines

Perceived benefits of latrine facilities	
Women	Men
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ decrease in diarrhoea ■ easier now during pregnancy b/c before had to hold it in until night time (Tarai) ■ decrease in health problems such as constipation from abstaining (Tarai) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ decrease in diarrhoea ■ decrease in skin infections ■ decrease in eye/ear infections

since daughter-in-laws are generally confined to the household, they have benefitted greatly from access to latrines, especially during pregnancy. Despite the benefits that women have gained from sanitation facilities, there is still the attitude that sanitation and hygiene are women's responsibility.

In most Dalit clusters in both the hills and Tarai, there was a marked absence of latrines. In the Tarai, the lack of sufficient land to build latrines was one reason, but not the only. Social beliefs such as the fear

that the pan would be filled up and overflow prevent even those with a little land to build latrines. Several Dalit households were found to have a latrine pan installed but with no superstructure. Many of the poorest households stated that they would like to build a permanent latrine, but they lacked sufficient finance.

Schooling and menstrual hygiene management

The respondents stated that there has been a reduction in gender discrimination between

Challenges to sanitation impact women

One Dalit woman from a poor household wanted to build a latrine, but her son got sick and she had to take him to the hospital. She was unable to deposit the required amount for the latrine so she requested some time from the WSUC, but they did not agree and she was unable to build a latrine.

Women from one cluster, who had not built latrines, say that they now understand the importance of using latrines and wished they had built one during the project.

In one hill project, one Dalit man had sold all the latrine components that were provided for the poorest households to other people.

In some villages, the hardware was installed, but a lack of superstructure prevents women from privacy and leads to the transmission of diseases.



boys and girls, in for example, feeding practices and sending girls to school. Since the schools had latrines and tube wells in

"If the Musahar and Chamar children study, who will work in the fields?"
- Sada woman, Mahottari

the schools, there is regular attendance of girls in class.

In the Tarai, there has been an increase in Dalit girls and boys registering for school, in hope of receiving a scholarship. However, they do not attend regularly, especially during the peak agricultural periods because the better off households depend on the labour of the Dalits.

Access to water and latrines has also increased the regular attendance of girls in secondary school. Some of the girls mentioned that their elder sisters used to miss school during their menstruation, but these days school absenteeism due to menstruation has decreased and the girls are attending school even during their menstruation. Women have also benefitted from access to water and latrines. They mentioned that it is easier to wash their cloths more frequently.

5.2.2. Other project-related benefits

Paid jobs

During the project, both men and women were able to have training and paid job opportunities. This allowed poorer households to increase their income and provided women a chance to break out of traditional roles by taking on technical work. Post-project completion, the women were

Women and technical work

In the Chuladhunga project, there was one woman and man selected as caretakers. Both worked during the project construction phase, but after the project was completed the community only wanted to pay the salary for the male caretaker. People argued that the female caretaker could not do her job properly and sent her husband to do the work.

unable to benefit equally. Generally, the male caretakers were provided with work, even though the female caretakers wanted to work as well. In the Tarai, the situation is different. During project implementation, both male and female caretakers received training and were able to work. However, after the project was completed, they did not have work because most household clusters stated that the tube wells are easy to fix themselves.

Income generation

Access to safe water sources that are nearby have benefitted men, the educated and the better off households more than woman and the landless households in regards to income generation. The better off households are able to grow vegetables and sell the surplus. They have more awareness of market access. In the hill projects, the men have more experience and knowledge due to their mobility and familiarity with market access, which they could apply to their income-generation activities. In another case, a woman from a better-off household took a loan and opened up a small shop.

Access to resources

Dalit households have less access to resources. In one Dalit cluster in Chuldhunga, the tap stand was broken, but the caretaker did not repair it until the Dalit households went to the WSUC and threatened to ask for

their money that they had contributed to the WSUC fund.

In the studied projects, all households paid an equal amount for the fund collection of installing tube wells and tap stands. This fund, which is meant to be used for the operation and maintenance and income generating activities, was generally more transparent in the hills than in the Tarai. In the hills projects, there was more effective use and management of the funds for savings and credit than in the Tarai. They utilized the funds for providing loans and in the Sandhane project some individuals were able to increase their income through setting up a small shop or buying tools for a small business. In the Tarai, the WSUCs were only active during the project implementation. The WSUC used the collected funds to buy tools and spare parts for the tube wells since they are not readily available in the local markets. However, most people were not aware of this and used local materials to fix their tube wells.

Dalit women have restricted access to resources such as credit. In Chuladhunga, the other female members of the WSUC did not believe she could repay the loan and demanded a guarantee from her husband that the loan would be repaid. Poor households have also been unable to benefit from loans in comparison to the better off households. In some projects, there was bias from the WSUC in providing loans to their family members and better off households. There is the belief that the poorer households will not be able to repay their loans. In some cases, the women were not even aware that loans were available to them through the WSUC. Some women tried to

voice their opinion on how the funds were used, but were not successful.

Access to information

NEWAH has had a positive impact on women's participation in project meetings. Women want to attend meetings because it

"Now we women understand the importance of community work. If we attend meetings we have an opportunity to learn something. We try to manage our time because we can benefit from going to the meetings."

- Janajati woman of female-headed household, Ekrahiya, Mahattori

provides them an opportunity to access information, knowledge and learning. In the hills, there was more information sharing between women than in the Tarai. This can be contributed to the fact that women have more mobility in the hills, but also because the communities were smaller and homogenous than in the Tarai, leading to a more cohesive and co-operative environment. In the Tarai, the clusters were more scattered and there was a marked lack of co-operation and sharing between women from different castes and ethnicities.

"Though I am Dalit and uneducated, the community people selected me as a WSUC member. In the training I learnt about the rights of both men and women in terms of labour and decision-making. Now I can help people with these issues regardless of their education or economic status, which I couldn't do before."

- Female WSUC member, Mahattori

Gender awareness training

NEWAH provides a 2-day Gender Awareness Training to its Partners and individuals in its project communities who are members of the WUSC and hold other job posts. These include the sanitation masons, caretakers and CHVs. The aim of the GAT is to orient and raise awareness for both men and women on gender and how it impacts on participation and how it can improve project efficiency.

The GAT includes the following topics:

- Gender & sex
- Social origin of the gender
- Women in Development (WID) & Gender and Development (GAD)
- Gender analysis relation
- Gender division of labor
- Access of control
- Gender need
- Equity and equality

5.2.3. Impact of GAT

NEWAH provides a 2-day Gender Awareness Training (GAT) to the communities through its field staff. The GAT has probably had the strongest impact on those individuals who received the training. It has raised awareness of unequal gender relations, women's heavy workload responsibilities and the importance and necessity to involve both men and women in project activities to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability. Women are more aware of their rights and some say it has helped to break traditional roles.

The GAT has raised awareness about the importance of education and more families are sending their children to school, especially Dalits. This is perhaps more applicable in the hills than in the Tarai, where

"Though this project taught us about gender issues and the empowerment of both women and men, the male members of committee do not listen to us women, give us the chance to do economic activities, nor to make any kinds of decisions." - Female vice-chair of WSUC, Udayapur

most Dalit children must help their families during the peak agricultural season.

Social mobilization and persistent facilitation by the project staff are also other important contributing factors that have encouraged women to attend meetings and participate in the project activities. However, there was little evidence that the GAT has had a trickle-down effect on the communities in sustaining change in gender roles and relations at both the household and community level. While providing GAT is necessary, it is not sufficient to address long-term social change, but this may be beyond NEWAH's mandate.

There was minimal sharing of GAT knowledge from people who received the training and most did not remember the content. Men are aware of gender discrimination, and small changes are evident. Now men are contributing to household work such as fetching water, cooking and washing clothes, although this is the exception rather than the rule. One reason that more men are fetching water is because the water is close by now. Having said that, GAT is still relevant and important, especially during the initial phase to promote and ensure that women and other excluded

groups have the opportunity to access project benefits, services and decision-making processes.

5.3. Impacts on gender dynamics

5.3.1. Gender relations

In general, more equal gender relations exist between Janajati groups in the hills compared to other caste groups in both the hills and Tarai. In the hill projects, particularly Sandhane, many of the men were ex- or retired army men. Their exposure, experience and knowledge from outside their village provided them with a broader perspective and worldview. This seems to have contributed to the more effective implementation and management of the project and WSUCs, and the more equal gender relations in society and increased participation of women in social and community work.

In the hills, there is visibly greater sharing of household tasks and decision-making between men and women in the household. Men were involved in household tasks such as cooking, but their participation in the public sphere (e.g. fetching water/fodder/firewood and washing clothes) is still limited. Boys also helped with chores such as fetching water, working in the kitchen garden,

fetching firewood and fodder, but sometimes it was due to the absence of daughters in the household. Daughter-in-laws could not speak in front of their father-in-laws before, but now they can during meetings. On the

Advancement of women constrained by gender roles

One woman from a WSH project in Udayapur, who was a FHV and WSUC treasurer, said that she noticed a change in gender relations after the project. Her husband respects her work, but requests her to stop so she can spend more time with the family and on housework. Even though her husband values her social contribution to the community, societal norms prevent him from breaking traditional gender roles within the household.

other hand, in the Tarai communities, daughter-in-laws tend to be secluded within the household and cannot speak in front of either their mother or father-in-laws.

Women from female-headed households whose husbands were working outside the village or abroad had more decision-making within their household. In particular, those women who lived in a nuclear household had a heavy workload and required more support from their children to help with the domestic work. However, they were able to manage their time as they liked concerning



(Photos: Chuladhunga and Sandhane Projects, Udayapur)

Men promoting social change in community

There are positive cases of men who are advocating for social change in the communities.

Bhim Burja Magar is 58 years old. He returned to his village in Sandhane, Udyapur after retiring from the Indian Army. The exposure, experience and knowledge he gained from outside his village provided him with a broader perspective and worldview. NEWAH's GAT training was another factor in adding to his experiences.

He returned to Nepal to educate his children and has been a role model for sending all the children to school from that community. Similarly, he has also been volunteering as a facilitator and motivator in his community. Villagers say that he is a strong supporter of women and encourages them to participate in social work. He contributed ideas and information for the improved management and implementation of the project as well. He hopes all the villagers will learn from his own behaviour, not only by his words.

Panch Bishwokarma, is a 32 year-old Dalit. He went to Kathmandu to earn money, but due to a lack of education he had to do manual labour. The income was not sufficient to support his wife and three children, so he returned back to his village and started the traditional occupation of blacksmith.

He says that he has experienced many things and wants to change the traditional concept of dominating women in society. He helps his wife in all the household tasks such as cleaning, washing, cooking and feeding the children. He also involves his wife in decision-making concerning household issues. Similarly, he started sending his wife, Sakila B.K to attend the meetings conducted by the WSUC. He believes that meetings are a source of new knowledge and information. Although his wife was not interested in attending the meetings at first, now she goes. After the meetings, they both share the information and whatever they learnt from the meeting with each other. Now he has become active in sending women from the Dalit community to the meetings.

People such as these two men should be identified and provided with training. They can act as social change agents in advocating for change and influencing communities.

their housework and participation in meetings or other community work

Providing GAT has raised awareness on gender issues and has helped some women and men to make changes in their households, but challenges remain to change the prescribed social roles of men and women. Even if women request their husbands to help with the housework, the neighbours would start to backbite about

both the woman and her husband. In the Musahar and Dom (Dalits) communities in the Tarai, if the woman must leave for some days then she will ask her relatives to come and cook for her husband while she is gone, or give food to the neighbours to cook.

5.3.2. Role and status of women

The GSI approach has had a positive impact on women's participation and representation. Without its reservation policy for women and

Training: source of skill, money and prestige for Women

Sunita Magar, is a female mason from one of the WSH projects, supported by WAN and NEWAH in Udayapur. Through her role as a mason she was able to learn technical skills and earn money and social prestige even though she only has a primary-level education.

Sunita was 18 years old when she was selected as a mason and received training in making smokeless stoves. After her training, she was able to work in her village making 65 smokeless stoves. She charged NRs 145-150 per stove to the better-off households, and provided some discounts to the poorer houses as well. She spent the money she earned for household purposes and educating the younger children in her household because she was the sole jobholder in the house.

In the beginning, nobody believed that she could do the job, but later when she started earning money, her status increased as the other women were impressed by her work. She said that although she is a woman she could easily accomplish the task she was assigned.

Now Sunita is married to a man from the nearby village. Even though she is a daughter-in-law of that village she has been able to use her skills to make smokeless stoves in her husband's village and earn money. Due to her income-earning status she does not have face any problem or barriers from her in-laws.

The technical training provided by NEWAH has created opportunities for women to learn non-traditional skills, provided a source of income and increased their status within their households and in the community.

excluded groups, there would be little opportunity otherwise for them to participate on the WSUCs.

Women's position in these key job posts such as WSUC members or female health volunteers (FHVs) has had a positive impact on their status at both the household and community level. There is status and prestige attached to having skills training and job opportunities. The Magar women believe that if Brahman and Chhetri women would also be involved in similar work, this would increase the status of other women in that position even more.

Some women have been able to have a strong influence in mobilizing the community and other women to participate in community development activities and raising awareness on water, sanitation and health issues. There is greater social cohesion in the hills and this is evident in how women have mobilized their resources and are contributing to social work. For example, in the Sandhane project, Udayapur, the women took a loan to buy drums, cooking pots and loudspeaker to carry out 'deusi bhailo' and used the money they raised to help build a wooden bridge in the village. NEWAH's project intervention has had a positive impact on increasing women's confidence to organise and mobilise themselves.

Female health motivator brings about change

Ambika Mishra is a Health Motivator. She used to spend all her time serving her in-laws and daughters in the home before she became the health motivator. The NEWAH project changed that. Now she often visits every household in the community and observes the health situation. Similarly, she suggests people to send both boys and girls to school. Now, she is involved in discussion of women's issues and problems that are raised in the community. She gets full support from her in-laws and other women as well. Both men and women give her as an example when questioning them about the benefits that women received from the project.

Women's status has increased somewhat within their own ethnic/caste group in the community due to their positions on the WSUC and in technical positions such as masons and caretakers. They have increased mobility, opportunities to speak in public and exposure to other environments. Nevertheless, societal norms and perceptions of gendered roles continue to limit women's operational space to maximise their full capacity. There is still stigma attached to women in decision-making positions (e.g. key WSUC posts), with the view by other women that these women are proud.

Men noted that women do attend meetings, but in low numbers due to their illiteracy. Men perceive that women are uneducated and cannot contribute to meetings and decision-making. They have the perception that women are interested in savings and credit and only attend meetings in order to access loans. The men argued that women are interested in

discussing their own problems at the meetings, rather than issues related to the community. Women who do speak up are viewed negatively and this prevents them from voicing their opinions in meetings. One Magar woman in Udayapur observed, "We are illiterate so we hesitate to speak at meetings."

In the past, there were negative perceptions of women attending meetings. People would say: "Srimanle hal jotne, srimati meeting gaera kura jotne" ("The husband ploughs in the field, while the wife goes to the meetings to talk"). However it was observed that the GAT and other components of the GSI approach are starting to change men and women's perception and attitude towards women attending meetings. A female treasurer from a project in Mahattori stated, "Due to the opportunity to be a member of the WSUC, I can go easily outside my home. It has given me confidence and increased my status in the community."



6. Lessons learned

- Short-term training has limited impact - training can only be effective if the personal experiences and views on gender are considered and explored and follow-up support is provided.
- Participation tends to benefit the better off than the poorest, especially women. Addressing inclusion of marginalized groups is a process that requires a demand on time, staff and costs, which has to be done through more concentrated approach and focus placed on addressing barrier, use of affirmative action and regular monitoring.
- The attitudes and conduct of facilitators are a factor in the success of participatory and inclusive approaches.
- To build the confidence of women and marginalized groups to participation requires sensitivity and time.
- Enabling women to have a voice in the WSUC does not sufficiently contribute to transforming gender relations.
- Level of success in addressing gender relations and a more inclusive approach varies depending on the location, socio-economic status and cultural traditions and beliefs.
- Although a project may be inclusive during implementation, it does not necessarily remain so.
- In promoting an inclusive approach, it is important to understand the community-level decision-making processes and local social and political context.



7. Recommendations

Capacity building

- Provide GSI awareness training follow-up support and refresher trainings for both partner organisations and communities.
- Review GSI training content and include approaches that explore how both men and women can address gender issues together; an understanding of what the benefits of participation are.
- Support the development of advocacy skills of local organisations, federations and, associations that are committed to gender equality.
- Target women for training and capacity building, which is essential for sustainability of watsan initiatives, especially in technical and managerial roles to ensure their involvement in decision-making process (e.g. leadership, management, public speaking).
- Provide necessary training (e.g. numeracy and accountancy skills) to female members of WSUC to enable them to take up their roles in the project effectively.
- Provide project training to interested candidates who show willingness to use acquired skills, experience and knowledge - and consider married women rather than single women to ensure sustainability.
- Provide context-specific approach to address GSI issues. For example, in the Tarai, the GSI orientation and training could be given to mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws together and husbands and wives together.

Behaviour change

- Carry out social assessment during baseline survey to understand the local perceptions, traditions and beliefs

concerning gender relations, social relations and traditional knowledge and practice on resource use and management. This can include PRA tools, such as role-play, histograms and trend analysis.

- Identify key social change agents in the community and local level that have influence and are sensitive to gender and social inclusion. Identify leaders and change makers, and provide GSI training and advocacy training to these individuals who can advocate for change in the community.
- Initiate an advocacy and awareness raising campaign before initiating project on gender issues and importance of involving both men and women in project activities.
- Identify decision makers in the household. Involve and work with mother-in-laws, to promote younger women's participation.
- Work extensively with men to advocate and raise awareness on GSI issues.
- Promote participation by linking it with benefits that women and families can have access to by participating.
- Increase transfer and sharing of knowledge, information and skills between men and women and within women. Promote a circle of learning through Tole groups, whereby women who attend meetings must report back to the other

women who could not attend and provide an update.

- Follow-up support - maintain open communication between NEWAH, partners and communities to address and respond to issues that are identified and emerge.

Organisational

- Gender in annual planning - use the annual planning exercise to reflect how its programmes affect women and men and how to improve and support gender equality.
- Identify follow-up mechanism to ensure targeting and allocation of sanitation subsidies is implemented properly.
- Work with local communities groups, organisations and clubs that can support sanitation promotion.
- Identify and work with partners who support and implement a gender and inclusion approach in their programmes and organisation.
- Identify and create alliances across sectors to generate new collaborations/partnerships and bring new competences to the organisation and staff.
- Develop men's skills to gender-balanced teams and bring men's views into the gender and inclusion debate.
- Provide support to female staff to promote their development and leadership skills within the organisation.



8. Conclusion

NEWAH has been a key influential agency in the drinking water and sanitation sector in addressing gender inequity and exclusion. The evolution of its GAP approach to a GSI approach, with the support of WAN, challenges many barriers that limit the degree of participation women and excluded groups face in programme activities. Its policies of affirmative action, financial support for poorest households and gender awareness training have promoted greater equality in accessing resources and services.

The promotion of gender balanced WSUCs are instrumental in ensuring women's representation on these committees. Participation in project activities has helped increase exposure and foster greater self-confidence, but it has not led to sustainable social change. While there has been an increase in women's participation, it has been limited in decision-making processes.

Issues of literacy level or numeracy skills, capability and social norms pose challenges to the effectiveness of participation of women and excluded groups and transparency and accountability issues.

Training and job opportunities for women have helped to increase their confidence, visibility and status to a certain degree. The GAT has raised awareness about unequal gender relations and increased understanding of women's workload that prevents them from participating. Changes in traditional gender roles were evident, but there were differences in the level of accepting new gender roles and relations between the different ethnic groups and based on geographical location. Including women is necessary for social change, but not sufficient if it keeps women in traditional areas and does not offer operational space for change towards real gender equality.

NEWAH has been successful in ensuring a more inclusive approach during its implementation phase of supported WAN's programmes. Given the shared goal of both NEWAH and WAN to improved access to safe water and hygienic sanitation, they have also succeeded but further efforts are needed to address access to sanitation for the ultra-poor. Achieving real gender balance should include capacity building and empowerment measures. Considering

WAN and NEWAH's mandate, they can ignite awareness and social change, but sustainable change has to come from the people themselves. As long as women, the poor and other excluded groups remain involved and organised only through project activities, rather than based on common interests and through organised forums which allow for their interests and needs to be voiced, any form of participation cannot be sustained long-term.



13

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Image details

Caption

- ① Dev Bahadur Puri, father and Kausila Puri, mother from Tangmang, Baglung they have 7 children and one daughter is married. **(Cover)**
- ② A boy cooking rice at Sandhane, Udayapur district **(Content)**
- ③ Dom (untouchable caste) children, no water at Bhandabari, Morang **(Acronyms)**
- ④ Anuka Koirala from Bijanbari, Udayapur district washing utensils standing front to the drying rack (Executive summary)
- ⑤ Krishna Maya Luintel from Bijanbari, Udayapur district collecting water **(Chapter 1)**
- ⑥ A girl at work at Sandhane, Udayapur district **(Chapter 2)**
- ⑦ Shiva Datta Sharma, a caretaker from Tangmang, Baglung district **(Chapter 3)**
- ⑧ Gender Awareness Training Focus Group Discussion in Ratauli, Mahottari district **(Chapter 4)**
- ⑨ Sagar B. K. from Mahendra school near Pokhara in Kaski district **(Chapter 5)**
- ⑩ 14 Years old Sangita Kamat at the Arunodaya Primary school in Morang **(Chapter 6)**
- ⑪ The Malik (dalit) family from Beli, Siraha district **(Chapter 7)**
- ⑫ Girls in line at Simle school in Dhading district **(Chapter 8)**
- ⑬ Moti Kumari from Tangmang VDC in Baglung district **(References)**

Image

1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 **(WaterAid/Marco Betti)**

2, 3 and 6 **(Jennifer Appave)**

Seen but not heard?

This study aims to look beyond the simple inclusion of women in village institutions and meetings, and understand whether the approaches being promoted by WaterAid and NEWAH are actually resulting to equity in influence over decisions made in water and sanitation. In addition, the study has tried to assess the benefits and impacts on men and women from improved access to water and sanitation services.



WaterAid transforms lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities. We work with partners and influence decision makers to maximize our impact.

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