

## Social Inclusion and Gender for Sustainability in WRM & WASH at grassroots level – Kajiado County Experience

### Executive summary

Many of the water and sanitation projects that have failed have largely been attributed to the fact that there was poor stakeholder participation in their planning and implementation. “There is low community involvement and inclusion in planning and management for sanitation and water provision projects in the county which is one of the main reasons behind the increase in unsustainable projects and lack of ownership of the projects by the community.” Says Mr. Kimata the Oloitokitok sub-county water officer.

As practitioners, development partners and policy makers, the questions that starts to linger in our minds are:

(i) How does issues of gender and social inclusion affect sustainability of WRM and WASH projects? (ii) What are the barriers that women, youths and socially excluded groups experience while seeking to participate in decision making?

Literature review on gender and social inclusion in Kenya indicates that there are a number of socially excluded groups whose voice is not heard in decision making process. A baseline survey on the status of community participation in WRM and WASH projects in Kajiado County, conducted in 2017 by two Watershed empowering citizen program implementing partner organizations, Neighbours Initiative Alliance (NIA) and Centre for Social Planning and Administrative Development (CESPAD), established that there are a number of factors that hinder social inclusion and gender mainstreaming efforts at the grassroots level in the county. This briefing paper seeks to highlight the findings of the survey with key emphasis on the challenges that the citizens are experiencing with regards to WASH services; barriers that hinder them from taking part in WRM and WASH projects in the county and recommendations for improving social inclusion and gender.

### Introduction

In Kajiado County, a large proportion of rural and urban populations have limited access to safe and clean drinking water in adequate quantities. Citizens are dissatisfied by water services provision but lack an organized voice for collective action for oversight and redress. This is despite the fact that as a country, Kenya has been in the forefront to spearhead water sector reforms that envisaged improved water services delivery and a participatory approach in water resources management involving various stakeholders since 2009 (Republic of Kenya, 2012). The Water Resources Management Rules 2007 (Republic of Kenya, 2007) outline a clear delineation of roles among the various actors involved in water resources management. The Constitution of Kenya (CoK) 2010 and Water Act 2016 give emphasis on public participation and stakeholder involvement in decision making. Kenya is a signatory to the Human Rights Declaration on Water and Sanitation that seeks to give equal rights to access water by all. More recently, the UN General Assembly endorsed a stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for water SDG 6 “Clean water and sanitation for all” to which Kenya is party to.

Lack of sustainability of WRM and WASH projects has always been a stumbling block towards realization of the right to clean adequate water and sanitation in Kenya. The Earth Charter definition of sustainability includes the idea of a global society “founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” While social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights (UN, 2016), gender is the relations between men and

women, both perceptual and material. It is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially (FAO, 1997).

In this brief, social inclusion refers to the process of improving the terms of participation in a society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, gender, disability, HIV status, economic or other status, through enhancing opportunities, access to water resources and WASH services, voice and respect for their rights to clean, safe drinking water and sanitation. Sustainability refers to the ability of implemented WRM and WASH projects to continue being functional indefinitely even after the implementers have left. It is premised that this can happen if the community fully owns the projects and were involved from the onset.

It is against this background that CESPAD and NIA in collaboration with other Watershed partners in Kenya conducted a baseline survey on the status of community participation in WRM and WASH in Kajiado County to understand the level of gender mainstreaming and social inclusion on WASH and WRM interventions in the county. This paper shares the findings of the baseline survey. It examines who in the community is excluded and why they are excluded, gives an in-depth reflection on the factors that affect social inclusion and gender in WRM and WASH subsectors and highlight possible policy responses to address these challenges to practitioners, policy makers and CSOs for inclusive and sustainable WASH and WRM projects.

## Approach and Findings

A baseline survey on the status of community participation in WRM/WASH in Kenya conducted in 2017 shows that the level of inclusive participation in decision making, planning, management and implementation of WRM and WASH projects is generally low. This was attributed to many factors including the vastness of the area which makes it difficult to have all key stakeholders meeting at a central place. Other issues identified were lack of a common forum, lack of information, community's negative attitude, political interference, lack of resources, culture and practice, conflicts.

The survey was conducted in Kajiado County and covered ten sub-catchments targeting Water Resources Users Associations (WRUAs) in Kajiado County. These WRUAs were used as the entry point to the community and included: Kipa, Morgo, Isinya Kiserian, Oldonyo-Orok, Nalepo, Entara, Esoitpus, Nolturesh, Elkisonko and Maparasha.

From the baseline survey it was noted that duty bearer's commitment to ensure social inclusion at grassroots is minimal, resulting in lack of community involvement in planning and management of WASH and WRM projects. This makes sustainability and ownership of WRM and WASH projects in the county almost impossible. Eighty percent (80%) of respondent indicated strongly that community participation in WRM and WASH projects was very low. This was attributed to:

1. Strong belief in the Maasai Culture that prohibits youths and women to take part in decision making. 60 % of the respondents reported that youths do not actively take part in WRM and WASH projects being implemented in the county. The Maasai Culture does not allow youths to closely interact with their seniors (decision makers). 62% of the respondents reported that women are excluded since they are not allowed to talk in public where men are.
2. Poor people are perceived to lack knowledge and capacity to contribute in the interventions hence excluded from decision making process. 44% of the respondents reported that the poor are partially involved and do not actively take part in the water related issues.
3. Persons with disability (PWDs) are viewed as less important in the society and their ideas are not considered in decision making on issues concerning their access to water, sanitation and hygiene. This was based on the fact that over the years the Maasai Culture believed that disability was brought about by a curse and hence many of the PWDs were hidden from the public. This has resulted into a situation where PWDs' voices are not heard and their interest not taken into consideration. Most of the sanitation facilities are not user friendly for PWDs. It was noted that there is no attempt to give special attention on ensuring that this particular group of persons get access to clean water and sanitation facilities.
4. 57% of the respondents reported that persons with HIV are either not fully involved in the WRM/WASH projects or they are not actively involved at all. This was attributed to the fact that some of them do not come out to share their status. This indicates that the people with HIV experience stigma.
5. Poor knowledge sharing mechanisms, lack of awareness creation as well as weak use of social accountability tools by the stakeholders in the county are some of the factors that have contributed to minimal public participation at the grassroots. 49% of the respondents reported to mainly depend on information from neighbours and in most instances they do not get information in time.

Other factors that hinder social inclusion in Kajiado county are the large geographical area, lack of a common forum, negative attitude of the people, political interference, poverty, conflicts and high illiteracy levels.

## Conclusion

This briefing paper strongly advocates that for sustainability and improved inclusive services delivery in WRM and WASH projects, the government, development partners and community members have a critical role to play. In as much as it is the role of the government to enact appropriate legislations/ frameworks; provide opportunities and conducive environment to encourage social inclusion, citizens have a big role to play. They should have a voice in planning, implementation and decision making processes.

Lack of information about what is happening, who is responsible and the importance of all stakeholders taking part in WRM and WASH projects being undertaken in the county is a big hindrance to social inclusion. Information is either not received or it could come late hence not being useful to the people. This coupled with high levels of ignorance of the community members who are not interested in knowing what is being done to improve their life style and do not bother to ask or even hold duty bearers accountable to provide for platforms for them to take part in development worsens the situation. Women, youths, PWDs, and the poor are therefore continuously excluded and have less ability to contribute in key developmental agendas to ensure sustainability of WRM and WASH projects.

Generally, there is some level of involvement of the community members more specifically men. There is need to improve the involvement of women, youth, elderly and PWDs in decision making. WASH and WRM projects implementers should provide opportunities for all community members (without discrimination) to take part in the projects being undertaken in the county to facilitate project ownership and sustainability. Implementation of

these projects should be approached from a human rights perspective rather than from a cultural perspective.

## Recommendations

1. Everybody's voice counts! Mainstream gender in all decision making process in county planning on matters related to WRM, WASH and any other issue that affect human well-being. In addition, adopt social inclusion as the cornerstone for ownership and sustainability of WRM and WASH projects and interventions being undertaken in the county.
2. The county government should make gender and social inclusion key principles in the county's development agenda and interventions including policies. Awareness creation and training of stakeholders, and for mainstreaming gender equality issues in all aspects of water resources management should be made a priority by all development actors.
3. The county government and all development partners should place greater emphasis on WRM/WASH integration, linking WRM to WASH and how they impact each other, recognizing water as a social and economic good, promoting cost-effective interventions and the fact that each actor has a role to play. Community-based action in planning, allocation, and monitoring of water use is very important to achieve sustainable WASH services. Historically different communities have an intimate relationship with the catchment and their experiences can be integrated into the more scientific approaches to provide strategies for sustainable water resources management and improved WASH service delivery for all.

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