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## Engaging men and boys for gender-transformative WASH

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Part 2



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## About the issue

This issue of *Frontiers of Sanitation* explores the extent to which engaging men and boys in WASH processes is leading to transformative change in gender roles, attitudes, and sustainable change in reducing gender inequalities across households, communities, organisations, and policy. This document is an update to *Frontiers Part 1* produced in 2018. In Part 1, the differing roles of men and boys were reviewed in terms of objects to change (i.e. to change sanitation or hygiene behaviours), agents of change (in promoting improved practices), and partners for change in gender-transformative WASH processes. This update reviews progress and provides practical examples of the opportunities and challenges with this endeavour. It also includes recommendations for those thinking about why and how to include engaging men and boys as part of their WASH programmes.

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## Photo credits

**Front cover:** Man doing household work with his wife in Bangladesh. "I realised that I never acknowledged the huge responsibilities my wife bears alone for our family," says Komolesh, a participant of World Vision Bangladesh's MenCare program. Water for Women is partnering with World Vision in delivering SHOMOTA - strengthening gender equality and social inclusion through WASH in Bangladesh. **Credit:** Nilima Das, Union Facilitator, SHOMOTA, Satkhira, Bangladesh

**Inside cover:** A grandfather with his granddaughter in Isabel Province, Solomon Islands. Water for Women is partnering with International WaterCentre to research safe child faeces management through a behaviour change intervention that leverages local ways-of-knowing and addresses inequitable WASH gender norms in Solomon Islands. **Credit:** International WaterCentre / Diana Gonzalez Botero

## About the authors

**Sue Cavill** is a freelancer with more than 20 years' global experience in WASH approaches, programmes, research, evaluations, and strategy development. Attention to gender equality and social inclusion has been a continuing theme throughout her work.

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*About Water for Women:* Most of the practice examples in this document are from projects funded by Water for Women, the Australian Government's flagship WASH programme. Water for Women supports civil society and research partners to deliver 20 WASH projects and 13 research initiatives in 15 countries across South Asia, South East Asia, and the Pacific. Gender equality and social inclusion are central to the fund.

## Acronyms

CFAR	Centre for Advocacy and Research
CFM	Child faeces management
CMC	Community Management Committee
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GWMT	Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool
iDE	International Development Enterprise
MHH	Menstrual health and hygiene
NGO	Non-government organisation
PHED	Public Health Engineering Department
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RHOs	Rights Holder Organisations
SGM	Sexual and Gender Minorities
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation
SWF	Single Window Forum
WASH	Water, Sanitation, Hygiene
WVV	World Vision Vanuatu



## Terminology and definitions

Below is a set of terminology and definitions used throughout this paper in relation to engaging men and boys in WASH and gender equality.

<b>Backlash</b>	Backlash is a strong negative reaction, or a more extreme or aggressive form of resistance to gender-related social change (see also: Resistance).
<b>Champions</b>	A champion is a supporter or defender of the cause for gender transformative change. The contestability of using the term 'champions' for men is recognised i.e., there is a move towards using 'partners for change' or 'allies', to ensure greater equity. Women and LGBTQ+ advocates for equality are never referred to as 'champions'.
<b>Do no harm</b>	A duty of care and responsibility to ensure no harm is caused to individuals, households, communities and others as a result of engagement with these individuals and groups.
<b>Engaging men and boys</b>	Raising men and boys' awareness and encouraging them to take action towards positive changes in gender roles and relationships, to abandon harmful stereotypes, and to challenge norms for the advancement of gender and social equality and the ending of violence.
<b>Gender</b>	Refers to the socially constructed roles, expectations, and definitions a given society considers appropriate for men and women (WHO 2007).
<b>Gender equality</b>	Refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys.
<b>Gender equity</b>	The process of being fair to men, women, and gender non-binary people. To ensure fairness, measures must often be available to compensate for historical and social disadvantages that prevent men and women from operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.
<b>Gender equality and social inclusion</b>	Improving equality and inclusion in rights, access to livelihood assets, resources, and services for all, including people who experience marginalisation based on factors of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, caste, race, location, income, and other factors causing discrimination and exclusion.
<b>Gender norms</b>	The different practices that are expected of women and girls and of men and boys. Male gender norms are the social expectations and roles of behaviour assigned to men and boys, which most people within that group accept and abide by.
<b>Gender role attitudes</b>	The views held by individuals regarding the roles men and women should play in society (e.g. the distinction between paid and unpaid work).

<b>Intersectionality</b>	Men and boys (like women and girls) are not a homogenous group and differ by age, context, social class, race and ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. The presence of combinations of these factors is known as intersectionality and also shapes gender norms.
<b>Gender-transformative WASH</b>	WASH approaches that seek to transform gender roles and promote more gender-equitable and diverse relationships between men and women. The Water for Women fund uses a 'towards transformation spectrum': harmful/unaware; aware; responsive/accommodating; transformative. Gender-transformative WASH requires changing power dynamics to bring about equality in decision-making and ensure no one is left behind.
<b>Masculinity</b>	Masculinity is socially defined across historical and cultural contexts. Power differences exist between specific versions of manhood.
<b>Resistance</b>	An active pushing back against progressive programmes, policies, and perspectives. There is a spectrum of resistance, which includes: denial of the problem, refusal to implement a change initiative, reversing a change initiative, or an aggressive, attacking response (VicHealth 2018).
<b>Sexual and gender minorities (SGM)</b>	People whose gender identity or expression can, but does not necessarily, fit into the binary 'female' or 'male' categories. Gender minorities include non-binary and trans identities and third genders. Sexual minorities are people whose sexual orientation does not align with the dominant heterosexual norm.
<b>Social norms</b>	Unwritten rules of beliefs, attitudes, and values that are considered acceptable in a particular social group or culture.
<b>Twin-track approach</b>	Combining mainstreaming and targeted activities. Considered best practice for integrating gender equality and social inclusion into policy and programming.

## Introduction

This issue of *Frontiers of Sanitation* 'Engaging men and boys for gender-transformative WASH Part 2' explores the extent to which engaging men and boys in WASH processes is leading to transformative change in gender roles, attitudes, and sustainable change in reducing gender inequalities across households, communities, organisations, and policy. This document is an update to *Frontiers Part 1* produced in 2018. In *Part 1*, the differing roles of men and boys were reviewed in terms of objects to change (i.e. to change sanitation or hygiene behaviours), agents of change (in promoting improved practices), and partners for change in gender-transformative WASH processes. This update reviews progress on engaging men and boys in WASH programming and provides practical examples of the opportunities and challenges with this endeavour. It also includes recommendations for those thinking about why and how to include engaging men and boys as part of their WASH programmes. This edition of *Frontiers of Sanitation* takes a relational perspective, integrating approaches to engage men and boys with efforts to empower women and girls. It also applies an intersectional lens to understand the complexities of men's and boys' lives, recognising that some men have more power than others as a result of their intersecting identities and/or different social inequalities. The edition explores how engaging men and boys can create opportunities to raise awareness of other inequalities and elicit the support of men and boys in addressing them. Thus, the scope of this *Frontiers of Sanitation* encompasses gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) including attention to gender-based violence and the inclusion of people with a disability and people in sexual and gender minority (SGM) communities.

This edition is based on an assessment of literature, expert opinion, and programmatic experience of working with men and boys. It aims to improve how WASH actors engage men and boys to shift gendered social norms. It could also be used by those involved in specialist work with men and boys to gain new ideas on how to apply that knowledge to the WASH sector and help develop their practice further.

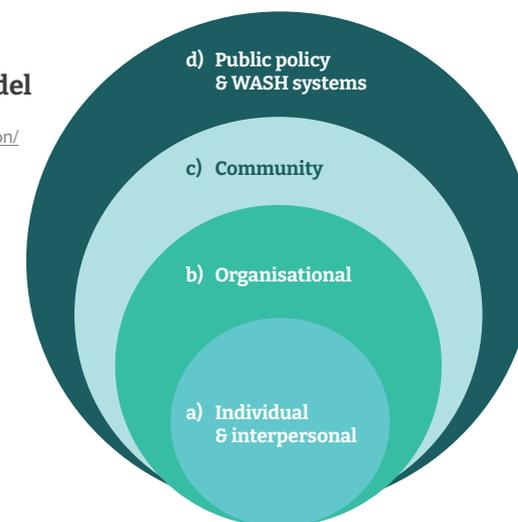
Longer versions of the practice examples referred to here can be found in the accompanying [document](#).

## Emerging practice for the engagement of men and boys in WASH

A number of good examples have been found for engaging men and boys in WASH programming. All are aligned to the four levels of the socio-ecological model: individual and interpersonal, organisational, community, and public policy/WASH systems (Figure 1). There can be a degree of overlap between the categories of the socio-ecological model. Some of the examples speak to multiple categories, but for the purposes of this document they have been aligned to the most relevant one for ease of use. In order to transform unequal gender and social outcomes, changes to roles, relationships, and norms between men, women, and gender diverse people need to happen at all these levels.

**Figure 1.**  
The socio-ecological model

Source: Author's own, adapted from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/about/social-ecologicalmodel.html>



Examples are included from Uganda, Zambia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Solomon Islands, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Vanuatu, and Nepal. Each of these examples, most of which are from Water for Women Fund projects, describe interventions that employed different gender-transformative approaches to engage with and reach men and boys, and look at their successes and challenges. The examples illustrate a twin-track approach, whereby a gender transformative approach has:

- embedded (mainstreamed) gender-sensitive and gender-transformative approaches within all WASH programme activities, and
- included targeted activities that explicitly address gender issues.

Up to now the emphasis has been on engaging men and boys at individual and community levels, but lately we've seen a shift towards increasing sector practice on this initiative at organisational, institutional and policy levels.

Table 1 (see Annex 1) refers to some of the approaches and tools that have been used to date for engaging men and boys at these different levels. These tools illustrate how policy-makers and GESI/WASH practitioners should work together to develop multi-level, in-depth programme interventions to help foster sustainable transformations in gender norms and inequalities.

## Level 1: Individual and interpersonal



The **individual** level refers to individual people's attitudes, behaviours, and skills concerning gender and WASH. The **interpersonal** level refers to a person's relationships with family, friends, networks, and so on. Both individual attitudes and interpersonal relationships are underpinned by 'gender norms' that influence self-belief, roles and relationships between women and men.

### Defining transformative change at the individual and interpersonal level

Men are often key family decision-makers and yet they are not always involved in household WASH-related tasks. Their support is necessary for improved WASH outcomes and greater gender equality. The changes here involve men and boys sharing the WASH-related workload more equally as well as challenging others in their communities and workplaces about gender and social norms that impact women and girls. Activities have engaged men to change their attitudes, behaviours, and skills and encourage their involvement in non-traditional roles. This involves taking deliberate steps to promote and support men's inclusion in WASH activities, programmes, and organisations.

#### Examples

In Northern Uganda, **Household Gender Action Planning** has been used by the Dutch non-governmental organisation (NGO) Simavi and their implementing partner JESE (Joint Effort to Save the Environment) in the WASH Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) programme. In the planning process, separate discussions are held with men and women on gender-related WASH needs before they are brought together to discuss the issues and develop an action plan. Training sessions are also held for sub-county technical and political leaders, who are mainly men, with action plans and budgets to support the integration of gender into local planning priorities at the sub-county level.

Alongside the gender action planning, JESE ran the **Men in the Kitchen campaign** and created a group of men who have agreed to help with specific tasks in and outside the home that are traditionally female roles.

The campaign is intended to create appreciation for the work women do in the kitchen and for men to support them to prepare dishes and provide nutritious meals and create an example to others in the community. Men's participation in non-paid household and care-giving activities has reportedly increased through the programme. Implementation partners report that younger men are now more involved in child rearing, fetching water, and so forth.

*Author: Rugumayo Godfrey Mulinda (JESE) and Zohre Shirafkan, (Simavi)*

family members' roles as well as gender inequities and power dynamics. Guidance and training have been provided to ante-natal, early childhood, and health practitioners so they are aware of the impact of gender norms and how they can be shifted. Male health practitioners are particular role models for other men. Fathers have reported increased involvement in childcare and feeding and helping with household tasks.

*Source: Plan Indonesia*

Fathers' groups have also been created in Sri Lanka, by a partnership between World Vision, Promundo (an NGO promoting healthy masculinity and gender equality) and MenCare (a global fatherhood campaign). The project provides **training modules for workshops with fathers and their partners** over a six-week period, covering gender equality in the home and couple communication.

*Source: Save the Children, 2014*

WaterAid's **Family Champions model** promotes families adopting WASH behaviour change as role models for their community. It emphasises gender equity messages and domestic contributions to WASH activities by both men and women are a criterion for selection. Some men have changed their perception towards domestic WASH tasks that were traditionally considered women's role. At the family level, reducing gender inequity is integral to improving women's agency over their own decisions. As women gain support from men and the community, they can act on promoting their own health and livelihoods. It is important to consider intergenerational influences within families, as each generation has a notable influence on the following generations.

*Source: WaterAid (2020)*

World Vision PNG's Water for Women project has held **training sessions with couples**, helping husbands to be more supportive of their wives' roles on WASH committees. The sessions encouraged men to support their wives with activities at home while the women are serving in committee leadership roles. Men were actively engaged as partners for change and included in the process, to avoid their feeling threatened and to reduce the potential for backlash and resistance. Furthermore, having male staff conduct most of the GESI training made a huge difference, as this challenged men to acknowledge the need to support women more if their communities were to develop. This contrasted with using female staff to talk to men about women's rights, gender roles/responsibilities, and empowerment, which may not be as well received.

*Author: Godfrey Bongomin, World Vision PNG*

In many countries, greater levels of paternal involvement in routine childcare tasks and household work have been observed. Plan Indonesia are working on early childhood development – encouraging men to play a larger role in child raising. **Fathers have been involved in parenting classes** as well as separate evening classes. The aim is to encourage more equal roles and decision-making related to parenting and household chores. Discussions are held about WASH, family communication, and

The International WaterCentre at Griffith University, Solomon Islands National University, and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, supported by Water for Women, are partnering on a research project that seeks to understand the behavioural determinants of child faeces management (CFM) practices in rural Solomon Island communities. The research is exploring what sorts of behaviour change interventions might support parents to increase their practice of safe CFM, and might help improve inequitable gender norms associated with safe CFM.

While the research suggested that CFM in families is primarily the responsibility of mothers and that strong gender roles in the division of household labour are present in rural villages, there was a parallel narrative that suggested there is general support for men (fathers) to care for their children, including managing their child's sanitation needs. Promoting safe CFM by fathers is a double-taboo topic in the Solomons – sanitation and gender roles. Nonetheless, the research to date suggests this is not an insurmountable issue. A safe CFM intervention that promotes active participation of parents – both mothers and fathers – offers an opportunity to improve gender inequalities relating more broadly to domestic caring duties.

*Author: Rosie Sanderson, International WaterCentre, Griffith University*

Norms relating to masculinity are a central factor in the continued pervasiveness of violence against women and girls, with expectations of unearned privilege, superiority, power, and entitlement over women seemingly influential in perceptions of what it means to be a man. There are examples in Water for Women projects of how this is being taken up and addressed through WASH programming, such as by WaterAid Timor-Leste and PNG in their development of **violence referral pathways**, which has been made more urgent by COVID-19. Other projects have developed materials and training on social protection/family harmony messaging alongside their COVID-19 hygiene messaging (World Vision PNG, IRC Pakistan, and World Vision Bangladesh). These are engaging

men in the sense that project staff, including male staff, are facilitating these messages in the communities where they are working, and the messaging is directed at men as well.

*Source: WaterAid and Water for Women*

## Level 2: Organisational

The **organisational** level refers to organisations, workplaces, schools, and other institutions. Examples of engaging men in organisations include working with them to: make space for women to lead workplace discussions, support the voices of women and people from diverse groups to be more involved in decision-making, and develop greater capacity to strengthen gender equality in programming.



## Defining transformative change at the organisational level

A step change towards quality gender programming in WASH is to walk the walk and address gender inequality within our own selves, teams, and organisations. Gender equality change starts with self-reflection and changes in our own bias, attitudes, and understanding of norms in our culture. There is now more explicit capacity building work being carried out to sensitise project staff on GESI issues and norms change. The *Towards Transformation GESI Self-Assessment Tool* (Mott et al. 2021) encourages reflective practice among WASH project staff and stakeholders and asks them to think and work in more gender and socially transformative ways – not only in their WASH programmes, but also in their organisational practice, because it is recognised that they are interdependent.

Through its Water for Women project, iDE Cambodia have been working with the husbands of the female entrepreneurs they train. **Empowering female business operators** means recognising that most businesses are family-owned and not usually solely managed by one female entrepreneur. The project's partner, SHE Investments, deliberately engages husbands and other influential family members throughout the capacity-building process, to ensure that husbands and family members are supportive of women taking on a more equal role in the business.

Source: iDE Cambodia

## Examples

In Cambodia, a **national campaign called 'Her Role'**, led by WaterAid (funded by Who Gives a Crap), aimed to promote women's leadership through skill-building, networking, and mentoring. Senior male WASH leaders from INGOs (WaterAid, East Meets West, iDE, World Vision), national NGOs, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Women Affairs, and the private sector joined an online dialogue about gender in WASH/women working in the WASH profession. Topics for discussion included gender stereotypes, gender norms, men's role in supporting gender equality, empowering female staff and colleagues, and how to create more space for women in WASH. The dialogue was informed by a gender power analysis, which found negative stereotyping about women's ability to work in the WASH sector was a key barrier to their entry or promotion. As a follow-up activity, WaterAid has set a challenge to the men who participated to make their own videos about the role of men in gender transformative change in the WASH sector and creating more female leaders in future. Further discussions are planned.

Source: WaterAid Cambodia

To regularly measure overall gender relations between men and women in community-based total sanitation (STBM GESI), through its Water for Women project, Plan Indonesia uses the Plan International Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool (GWMT). The monitored activities are attended by six different groups (young women, middle-aged women, elderly women, young men, middle-aged men, elderly men). Men's groups are facilitated by male facilitators and women's groups by female facilitators. Recent GWMT data from the project has shown that the WASH workload of middle-aged women in the household – one of the key indicators tracked by the GWMT – has been reduced. This change was confirmed by the programme Mid-Term Review (MTR):

A change in gender and social inclusion at household and community levels was also reported by the project as part of its recent mid-term review. The review results show:

- **WASH decision-making at home:** at baseline, the decision to build a toilet was made by women and men together in 44 per cent of households. At mid-term this had increased to 79 per cent, with 76 per cent of women and 78 per cent of men agreeing that men and women should make decisions about household WASH expenditure together.

- **WASH work at home:** Specific Baby WASH interventions that address women were primarily responsibility for fetching water in 70 per cent of households at baseline and 35 per cent at mid-term. In 49 per cent of households WASH work is now shared by men and women, with 46 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men agreeing that men should help with WASH work in the home.

Author: Novika Noerdiyanti, Plan International Indonesia

## Level 3: Community

Examples of engaging men at the community level include working with them to: advocate for more equal power relations; support changes to the different roles and responsibilities for men, women, people with disabilities and people in SGM communities in different paid (and informal/unpaid) jobs; and advocate for more equitable service delivery.



## Defining transformative change at the community level

In WASH programmes, project staff often facilitate communities to lead the change process and use their own capacities to attain their WASH objectives. WASH programmes can be an entry point and/or catalyst for wider social change. Men – as chiefs or other traditional authority figures, male celebrities, community leaders, men’s networks and religious leaders – can become allies in gender equality as well as acting as positive role models at the community level.

### Examples

Plan Zambia’s work with boys and men has two strategic objectives: improving behaviour change, and strengthening WASH governance. Plan Zambia uses the ‘Planting Equality’ toolkit and the ‘**Positive Masculinity Star**’ to assess gender equality. This includes scoring aspects such as: recognising and challenging sexism, toxic masculinities, valuing girls and women equally, rejecting the use of violence, and adopting healthy sexual and reproductive health rights practices. Girls and young women also score themselves on the agency star that includes issues such as self-esteem, speaking up, knowing and making decisions over my body, setting my own goals, mobility and safety, and feeling valued. Men’s and women’s networks, local leaders, and health facility staff support Plan International’s gender transformative approach.

Author: Terrence Himabala, Plan International Zambia

World Vision Vanuatu (WVV)’s Water for Women project ‘Laetem Dak Kona’ is taking a **transformative approach to break down the social and cultural norms** that prevent women from meaningfully participating in WASH committees. As part of the Drinking Water Safety Security Planning work with community leaders, WVV identifies tangible ways women and people with disabilities can be involved in these committees. Where appropriate and relevant, WVV establishes/facilitates child-friendly spaces so women

can attend training sessions and participate while their child plays safely nearby. While this has been effective to overcome participation issues, WVV is conscious that this could be seen as further ensconcing women's role and responsibilities as carers. In order to transform this, WVV includes male facilitators/childminders at the child spaces and also promotes shared care and responsibilities, especially as it relates to WASH, such as collecting water.

Through the same project, WVV is engaging men and boys to address and support menstrual health and hygiene initiatives in their community. This includes engaging and training government staff from the Department of Water Resources (DOWR), which is a male-dominated department. To date, 118 men, including 15 male staff from the DOWR, have attended the menstrual health and hygiene training. DOWR staff commented that the training was eye opening and made them consider the importance of addressing menstrual health and hygiene needs for women and girls, particularly in an emergency response context and, specifically, hygiene kit items, which previously did not address the sanitary needs of women.

*Author: Elis Lee, Relvie Poilapa, and Chloe Morrison, World Vision Vanuatu*

In Jaipur, the impetus for change in the Centre for Advocacy & Research's (CFAR) Water for Women project came with the onset of COVID-19 when many men realised, especially during lockdowns, that they and their families were not ready to deal with the virus. The women leaders and members of Single Window Forum (SWF)<sup>1</sup> and Community Management Committee (CMC), with the support of CFAR, sensitised these men and boys on the need to **be aware of and to address the unsafe practices** at the household and community levels. This resulted in 107 men forming male forums. Male forum members realised the long distances women were facing in fetching water and many men started fetching water to support their wives. SWF, CMC, and male forum members lobbied the Public Health and Engineering Department to extend water pipelines and install tanks for drinking water in their areas. Men also became involved

in the care and support of the family and doing chores that they used to treat as 'women-only jobs'. In particular, the changes in the perception of women's leadership is a significant breakthrough.

*Author: Juhi Jain, CFAR India*

- 1 Single Window Forums are a consultative mechanism used by CFAR to strengthen collaboration between community, civil society networks, local authorities, service providers and stakeholders to support the delivery of inclusive WASH services for the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in urban settlements of Bhubaneswar and Jaipur, India.

The Water for Women 'SHOMOTA' project in Bangladesh applies the **MenCare approach, a group education model** working with 10 couples in group sessions over the course of six months. Sessions focus on the benefits of shared decision-making around household budgeting and investment, and the equal spousal division of caregiving and domestic tasks. The modules aim to build men's and women's active listening skills, establish and maintain respectful communication, build peaceful relationships through conflict resolution and non-violence, and to reject gender-based violence and harmful practices. In addition, courtyard sessions with men and adolescent boys aim to sensitise and mobilise these groups towards playing a positive role for promoting menstrual hygiene and health. Many of the participants involved report men now contributing more to household labour, water collection and storage, cleaning of household toilets, sweeping of court yards, and assisting children with handwashing.

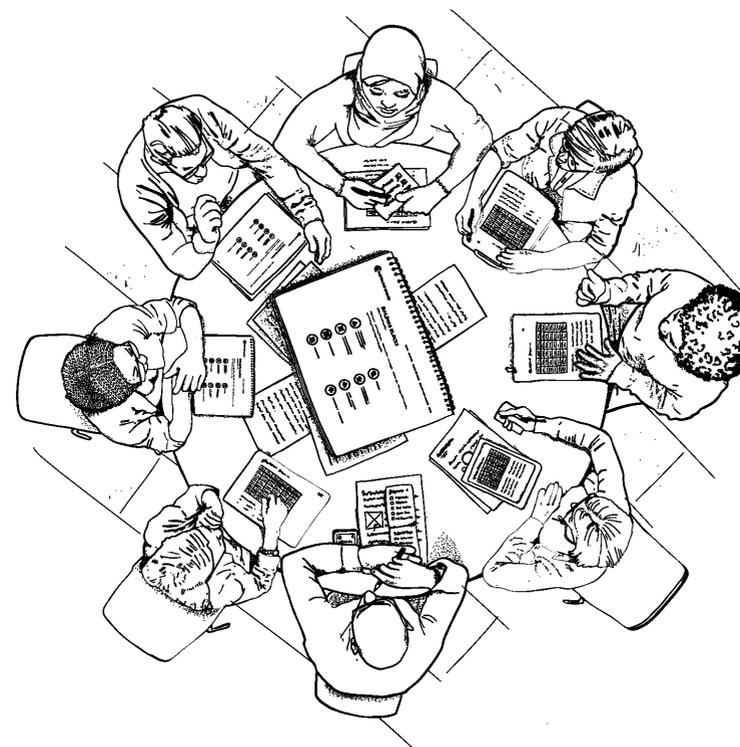
*Author: Proshanto Roy, World Vision Bangladesh*

Through its Water for Women project, a particular focus of SNV Nepal's behaviour change communication intervention in Dailekh was to establish **menstrual health management self-help groups**. Here, Chhaupadi was practised and women were not allowed to use toilets during menstruation. The self-help groups garner men's and boy's support for menstruating women and girls. While this was not easy to begin with, in time women and girls were allowed access to toilets and to live in their homes during menstruation. As a result of these efforts, male family members have been setting aside finances for the women and girls in their houses to buy menstrual health and hygiene products. Educating the younger generation of boys has been one way to influence gender and social norms. The project also worked with the local government and the Toll WASH Improvement Committee helped garner support and raise awareness as well. Kripa Ram Thapa, WASH focal person, Thantikandh Rural Municipality said, *'The rural municipality has given a high priority to menstrual health management and allocated budget for training on sanitary pad production at local level, and we have seen good progress on safe practices and management of menstrual hygiene in this rural municipality.'*

Author: Sunetra Lala, SNV Nepal

## Level 4: Public policy and WASH systems

The **public policy** level refers to the government as duty bearers for WASH services and stronger WASH systems. Examples of engaging men and boys at this level includes investing in capacity building for officials as well as integrating gender into components of the WASH system such as policies, planning, programming, budgeting and regulations at every level of government.



### Defining transformative change in public policy/WASH systems

Government capacity and leadership at all levels is central to strong gender-transformative WASH systems. Men in positions of WASH leadership and power have been targeted to provide high-profile and proactive support for gender equality and to encourage other men to play their part, including by modelling behaviour. WASH programmes are engaging with duty bearers (of whom many are men) at the institutional level to support leadership of

women and diverse groups (including people with disabilities). Attention to transformative leadership is illustrative of how gender concerns are being addressed by many duty bearers (men and women) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Bhutan, Lao PDR, and Nepal (see SNV and UTS-ISF's transformative leadership research and videos in the resources section). A focus on public policy, as part of a systems strengthening approach, can play a significant role in shaping gender norms. However, rewarding male 'heroes' or 'champions' in policy decision-making positions becomes problematic if it reinforces a gate-keeper role, or there is little accountability for men's personal behaviours. Longer term, men's efforts in challenging and assisting in the transformation of gender inequality should be normalised and made routine rather than rewarded. There has been an increasing focus on supporting engagement between duty bearers and rights holders through an intentional focus on supporting capacity building and engagement of Rights Holder Organisations to interface with WASH policy-making and policymakers, as illustrated below.

## Examples

WaterAid, iDE, and others have applied a **civic champions model** that seeks to identify and reward 'model' male political leaders or government decision-makers who practise and uphold gender transformative behaviours and improve the role of women in services.

*Source: WaterAid (2019)*

Through Water for Women, SNV Bhutan, with the University of Technology Sydney's Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF), is using the **Making Rights Real** process to work with local government champions/would be-heroes to identify how to overcome systemic challenges to the realisation of sanitation services for all. Supporting this leadership can also assist in gender-transformative change. Training male decision-makers on gender issues means they can effectively represent their constituents' sanitation issues.

*Source: Carrard et al. (2020)*

CARE International in Timor-Leste and WaterAid are working together in the Water for Women-supported project 'Beyond inclusion: Realising gender transformational change and sustainable WASH systems' to strengthen gender-equality outcomes through capacity building, mentoring, resource development, and activities to address harmful social norms and behaviours. In 2020, a training needs assessment was carried out on the needs and recommendations to strengthen the capacity of WASH actors. The assessment highlighted gaps in gender knowledge among WASH partners at the national and municipal level. Among both municipality and state administration staff only 6 per cent had received gender training, while at national level the figure was 0 per cent.

In response to the assessment recommendations, CARE designed a series of **'Gender equality and social inclusion and engaging men and boys' training modules**. They applied a facilitated process through which individuals explored and challenged the social norms, beliefs, and practices that shape their lives. Modules in the three-day training include topics such as exploring power and privilege; understanding unpaid work; sexual identities; stereotype; and addressing gender-based violence. By the end of the training, both government WASH staff and WASH partner staff had increased their skills in incorporating gender and social inclusion into planning for WASH facilities.

*Author: Alison Darcy, CARE Timor-Leste.*

### 3. Summary of key learnings and challenges

Across these programme examples, men and boys are specifically being targeted to increase awareness and understanding of the burden placed on women and girls from socially prescribed WASH roles and the challenges women and girls face in managing menstruation. Programmes are raising awareness of how these practical challenges, as well as gendered power dynamics, negatively impact on women's and girl's opportunities to co-lead WASH decision-making.

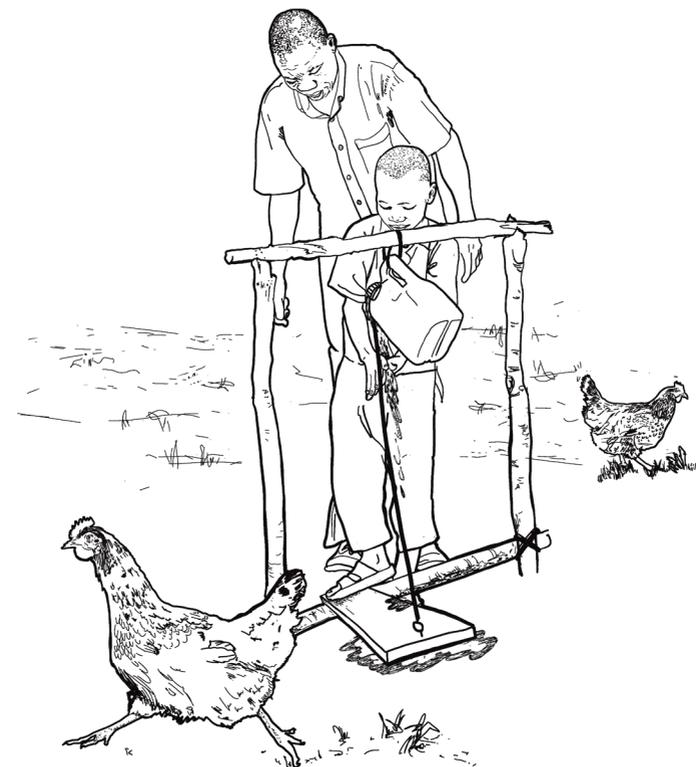
The following section returns to the framework outlined in *Frontiers Part 1* to review progress on the differing roles of men and boys as objects to change (i.e. to change sanitation or hygiene behaviours), agents of change (in promoting improved practices), and partners for change in gender-transformative WASH processes. The following summarises new learning based on the recent examples presented above.

#### Men as objects to change

Men can be resistant to behaviour change promoted through WASH programmes. Men and boys are often framed as obstacles to achieving open-defecation free communities, or objects to be changed for the purpose of becoming open-defecation free.<sup>2</sup>

- A greater understanding of the importance of WASH issues, such as hygiene behaviours and access to sanitation facilities, has led some men to a realisation of the burden placed on women and girls to manage most WASH-related tasks in the household.
- This can increase support for men taking on a care role in the household and a supportive environment for fathers to further strengthen support for recommended practices.

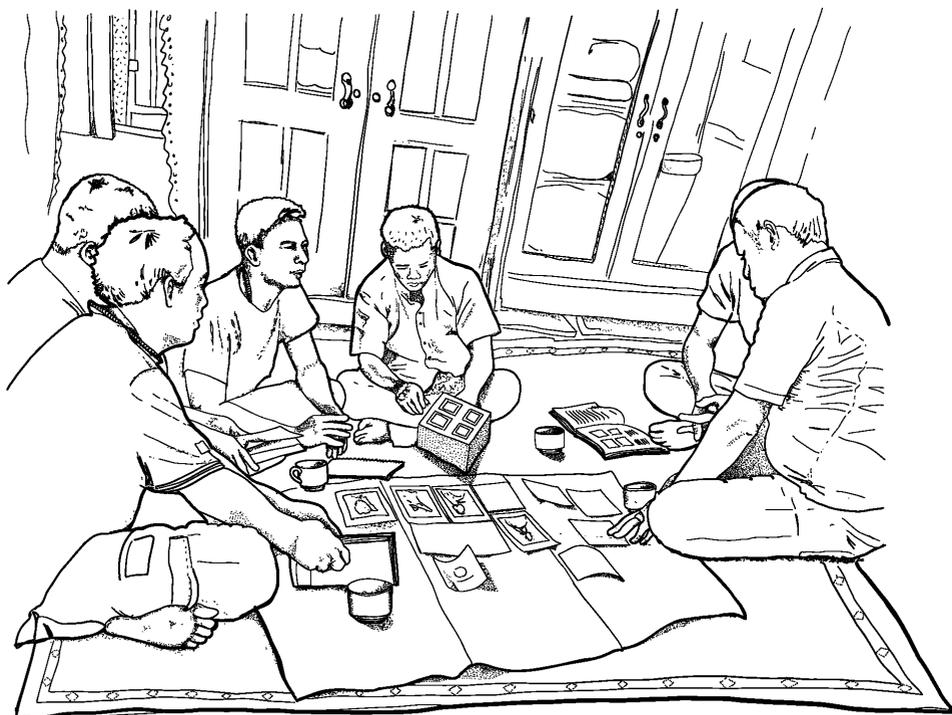
<sup>2</sup> The term 'object' is purposely here used as a critique of the sanitation and hygiene literature that refers to men and boys instrumentally.



#### Men as agents of change

There are examples of men and boys as agents of change in promoting improved WASH practices.

- Men have increased understanding that improving gendered and social power dynamics also affects and is beneficial to men, and the community as a whole.
- Men's groups are important vehicles for experience sharing and reflection. Supportive community spaces can give men opportunities to explore issues around gender, masculinity, relationships, sexuality, violence, health, and wellbeing.



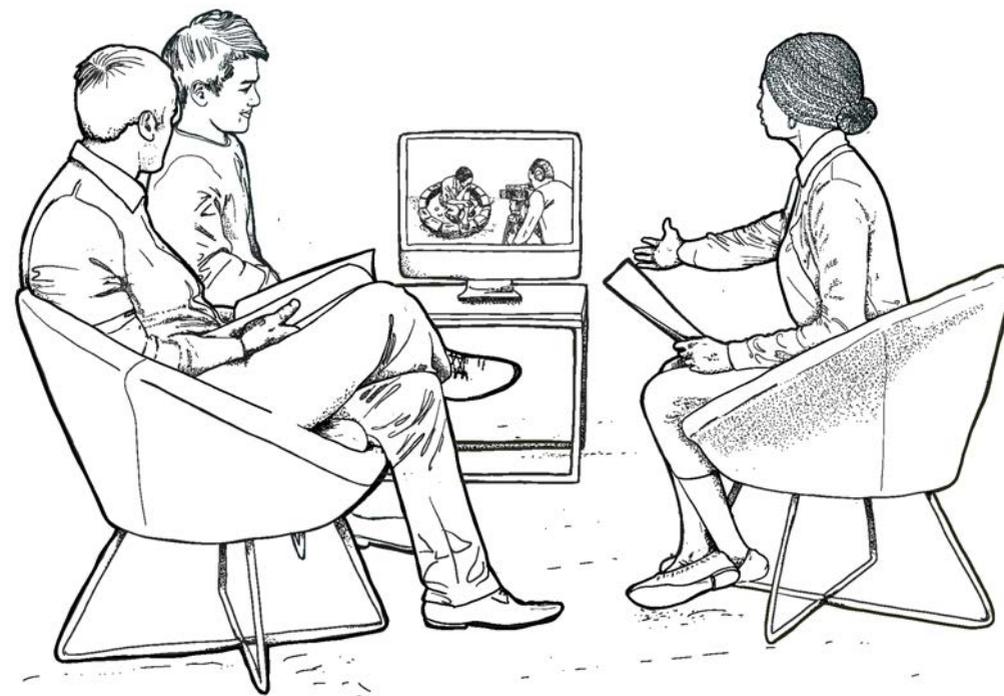
### Men as partners for change

Men have also acted as partners who work with women for change in WASH programmes. Behaviours, attitudes, or intentions connected to WASH-related activities may promote broader gender relations and norms. Men might be involved in long-term patterns of greater involvement in childcare and household work.

- There are examples where men have helped to improve gender parity in responsibility for WASH (in the workplace, household, or community), supported women to be leaders in WASH, or otherwise advanced consideration of gender in WASH movements.
- In some of the examples, men noted that their increased awareness of gender-transformative WASH issues had changed their attitudes towards women in their families and communities, increasing their respect towards them and the roles they play.

- There has been a broad increase in the sharing of WASH-related chores and tasks, including dealing with children’s hygiene and sanitation. In some contexts, a lifting of the stigma associated with menstruation has been reported.

In Part 1 of the *Frontiers* (2018), more examples of engaging men and boys were found around the ‘objects’ and ‘agents’ aspects. Since the first *Frontiers*, we have noted somewhat of a shift towards men being ‘partners for change’ at the institutional level as in (male) duty bearers and their engagement with Rights Holder Organisations (RHOs) in policy and planning work. At the organisational level there has also been attention to capacity building/sensitisation on a range of gender equity and social inclusion issues for staff to strengthen understanding of norms change through WASH programming. This is reflective of the wider shift towards gender-transformative practice in WASH programming. Nonetheless, there are still comparatively more examples of engaging men and boys on gendered inequalities in and through WASH at household and community levels.



## Emerging challenges and remaining gaps include:

### 1. It's not clear what success looks like.

- A better understanding is needed of the ways in which boys and men benefit from improvements to women's status, care role, workforce participation, and physical security through WASH programming.
- There is a range of innovative and impactful work being done with men and boys and on gender norms in WASH programming; however, it is currently quite fragmented and could be more strategically developed.
- Those men and boys who are more willing to learn or join in with gender activities in the first place are more likely to then take action, compared to those who were reluctant to even join to start with. Some programmes note that the degree to which the workload in the household is shared among women, girls, men, and boys has been slow to change. So, more attention is needed on how to include those most resistant to change such as engaging older men (grandfathers, fathers, fathers in law), since younger men seem more willing to change their behaviour and challenge stereotypes.
- Despite some evidence of changing norms around parenthood globally, many WASH behaviour change campaigns focus on the attitudes, intentions, and behaviours of the mother, which can have the effect of placing further burdens on women (Cavill and Huggett 2020). There is only limited research that specifically considers the father's role, attitudes, and influence.

### 2. There will likely be resistance to change.

- Although we are seeing positive changes in many communities, it is still the case that women (as well as some men) who do not conform to their gender roles are likely to experience backlash and resistance from both men and women.
- In many settings, men are generally not directly involved, either as caregivers of young children or in sanitation and hygiene activities. Men that help their partners and share responsibilities go against traditional norms, and could experience some ridicule/backlash (from both men and women).

- Some women are concerned about greater men's involvement in what are considered to be women's activities, fearful that this may lead to men further controlling their spaces and autonomy.
- More focus is needed on the potential unintended risks to the safety of girls and women by boys and men when engaging with male colleagues, and the manner in which it is done, due to resistance and the potential for retribution or punishment.

### 3. The capacity and partnerships of WASH implementers underpin success.

- WASH-sector actors need to find common cause with others to understand how to assess the needs of men and boys and how the approach to delivering services could be revised to better support men's and boys' involvement.
- Some WASH agencies have been slow to partner with the RHOs that could help to promote gender-transformative change, such as pro-feminist men's, women's, and SGM organisations, as well as organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). The relevance and benefits of such partnerships are becoming more prominent to the WASH sector, with partnerships and collaborations becoming more established.

### 4. Continued monitoring and further learning is required.

- A common problem in gender-based research and evaluation is that evidence of change is difficult to accurately establish due to the over-reliance of self-reporting by boys and men and often a reluctance for girls and women to disclose, especially in the presence of male family members. Thus, there may be some difficulties in obtaining truly accurate data reflecting positive change (that is not based on self-reporting) that ultimately supports outcomes for girls' and women's increased autonomy and safety.
- More learning is needed on when it is important to involve men and boys (and when not to) as well as when working solely with men or men and women together is more useful and effective.

## 4. Steps to accelerate transformative change in WASH programmes

In response to these gaps, we suggest the following steps that practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers can take to accelerate the sustained engagement of men and boys for transformative change in WASH programming and service delivery. These steps<sup>3</sup> would be in addition to more traditional WASH processes and draw on more experiences of engaging men and boys than available at the time of writing *Frontiers Part 1*.

### Step 1 – Define success

A number of gender frameworks have been developed (including those by Water for Women and WaterAid) that define what success looks like in terms of inclusive, empowering, and transformative outcomes. The frameworks outline how/why engaging women and men to shift roles, relationships, and responsibilities can improve gender outcomes. An illustrative example of what a journey towards delivering more empowering or transformative outcomes might look like is provided by the Gender Equality Continuum Tool (WaterAid 2021) or the Water for Women continuum,<sup>4</sup> shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
Water for Women Towards Transformation continuum



Source: Water for Women, <https://wfw.fund/TTcontinuum>

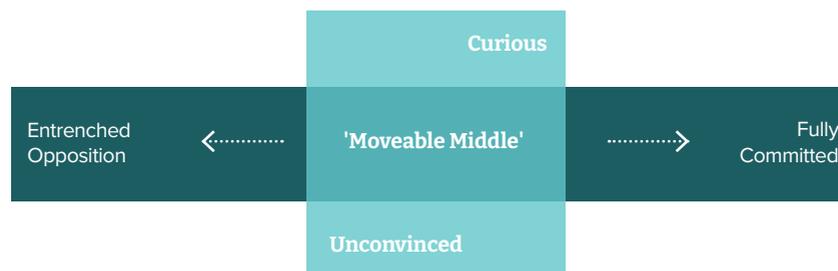
<sup>3</sup> Steps adapted from Kohlitz, J.; Carrard, N. and Willetts, J. (2019)

<sup>4</sup> The development of the Water for Women Towards Transformation Continuum was informed by the Interagency Gender Working Group (2013): *A Practical Guide to Managing and Conducting Gender Assessments in the Health Sector* and adapted from CARE USA's (2019) *Gender Marker Guidance*.

## Step 2 – Addressing challenges to engaging men and boys in WASH

Any WASH programme can potentially result in negative consequences, particularly for women and marginalised people, who may (inadvertently) be exposed to increased stigmatisation or reprisals by men (for instance if men feel shamed or angered by women talking openly about gender issues). There is a risk of interventions inadvertently creating harm such as backlash against women's leadership and decision-making (especially if the women are from marginalised communities). Resistance is most likely to come from the people (men or women) who are advantaged by the status quo. This makes it imperative to consider issues of harm and resistance. Undertaking a gender and power analysis at inception will help to inform programming, so that resistance and backlash can be pre-empted, prevented, and/or mitigated. VicHealth (2018) recommends that change can most effectively begin by identifying allies (those advantaged by the status quo but who are committed to equality) with whom to work closely, and then focusing on the 'moveable middle'. The intention is that eventually the 'entrenched opposition' will start to change.

**Figure 3**  
The spectrum of resistance



Source: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). Source material available [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/Encountering-Resistance-Gender-Equality.pdf](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/Encountering-Resistance-Gender-Equality.pdf) Further information on the Terms of Use, in particular the Copyright statement, can be found here.

### Step 3 – Build organisational capacity and strengthen partnerships

Ideas for developing capacity within the WASH sector as well as partnerships are presented below.

#### Examples

##### Examples of capacity building and staff personal transformation:

- WASH staff should be encouraged to challenge and change their own attitudes, cultures, and behaviours – individually and collectively – such that men and women reflect on their own biases that are potentially unhelpful to women and people in SGM communities (as colleagues, community members, and family members) and take steps to change such behaviour and attitudes. Male role models include those who combine career with family responsibilities, promote the achievements of female colleagues, and amplify the voices of women and diverse people in the workplace.
- A process for GESI-reflective practice and dialogue is required at both programme and organisational levels. The *Towards Transformation in WASH GESI self-assessment tool* co-developed by Water for Women and the Sanitation Learning Hub (2021) enables participants to reflect on how they work in more transformative ways at both programmatic and organisational levels.
- Male facilitators in community sessions are also important role models for households and communities. Building staff capacity in facilitation skills can also enable gender-transformative dialogue and monitoring equality outcomes.

##### Examples of partnerships:

- It is important to work with – and be guided by – national RHOs such as women’s rights organisations, pro-feminist men’s organisations, and those specialised in safeguarding, OPDs, and minority rights groups. Examples of male networks include the Caribbean Male Action Network (*CariMan*), which advocates and intervenes in spaces such as ‘men as caregivers’ as well as ‘creating a space for men and their concerns in the context of gender equality’. The Water for Women and Sanitation Learning Hub *self-assessment tool* has a systems/institutional change domain, and key to that is the extent that projects are supporting RHOs to engage with WASH duty bearers.
- Men’s networks for advancing gender equality are an important and effective mechanism for norms change. But it is equally important that they are guided by women’s rights groups and agendas. Akhila Sivadas, executive director of CFAR India, notes: *‘From the inception, we ensured that male involvement is facilitated by structures set up by women. This helped the Single Window Forum members to involve men and boys regularly and do so on agendas set and driven by the women. The male engagement was made more meaningful by strengthening their contribution to building a supportive eco-system for issues like menstrual health and hygiene, sexual and reproductive healthcare, and assertion of identities impacting gender intersectionalities in different ways.’*
- Global partnership is another way to help WASH agencies to consistently engage men and boys at scale across countries and programmes. *‘In 2017 the NGO Concern International partnered with Sonke Gender Justice, a South African NGO specialising in gender equality, prevention of gender-based violence. The partnership aims to transform staff attitudes to be more gender equitable by identifying and practicing positive changes in their own lives. Following this shift, Concern aims to achieve an organisational shift towards gender transformative programming by creating a more equitable workplace and build capacity in gender programming’* (Fox 2020).
- It is also important to bring gender transformative and feminist values (and training) into existing partnerships with alliances, networks and consortia, government bodies, civil society organisations, NGOs, community-based organisations, academic institutions, donors, networks, media, the private sector, and so on.

## Step 4 – Set up monitoring systems that track progress towards objectives

Measures to monitor the engagement of men and boys and women’s empowerment include:

- The **Gender Role Attitude Scale** used by Sonke Gender Justice and Concern as a pre and post indicator to assess their interventions. At one end of the scale are those who would agree with a traditional division of labour between men and women, and those who want a more equal division of labour are at the other end.
- The **Gender Equitable Men’s Scale** (Singh et al. 2013), which has been used in multiple contexts and is supplemented by qualitative interviews, focus groups, and local expert review to monitor change.
- The **Gender Marker**, a tool that has been used by CARE and Plan International to help project staff review the extent to which programming or influencing work has the potential to transform prevailing gender roles and responsibilities.

Measures for WASH services include:

- Plan International’s **Gender and WASH Monitoring Tool**, which has been used for monitoring changes in gender relations. The tool can be used by project staff and government partners with communities. Facilitators are given tips on how to run inclusive sessions with men from different age groups. Changes might include access to – and decision-making power over – services; female leadership roles in the community; changes in men’s attitudes and understanding about gender inequality; men taking on more household WASH work; women’s empowerment relative to men within the household; and time use.
- The **WASH-Gender Equality Measure (WASH-GEM)** developed by UTS-ISF, with SNV Nepal and iDE Cambodia through Water for Women research, which is a quantitative tool designed to reveal intended and unintended gender equality changes associated with WASH programmes.

Any information disclosed verbally by men on shifts in gender roles/ contributions to domestic duties as a result of training and other interventions should be supplemented with more objective evaluations. Separating women and men (and ideally by age) in monitoring and other follow-up sessions is an effective way to make sure you hear the different perspectives of women and men about changes in gender roles, such as household work. It can allow women and men to speak more freely, honestly, and privately if not overheard by participants of the other gender or other household members.

Using qualitative methods for monitoring is particularly important, as it draws upon the voices of those with lived experience and of the marginalised, which is essential to improving sustainable WASH access for all. Water for Women’s **‘Qualkit’** tool developed by UTS-ISF provides a menu of qualitative monitoring methods that practitioners can draw on to monitor transformative change, including capturing unintended consequences.

## Step 5 – Set up processes for knowledge sharing and learning

At the organisational level, this step includes:

- Sharing of practice through WASH working groups or other mechanisms, and bringing gender actors into those groups (and vice versa).
- Sector learning workshops with government and non-government actors across both WASH and gender topics.
- Action research to enable community-based and institutional learning and knowledge sharing on gender-transformative WASH programming.
- Dialogue with men and boys (on gender norms and masculinity) as an effective approach for creating change within communities.
- Documentation of learning, changes, and impacts to capture and build the evidence base of what works in addressing gender equality through WASH.
- Reflective practice with partners, such as through workshops and self-assessments, to learn from and improve programme approaches.

## Example

Various projects have created community videos showing people who have overcome gender-based challenges. The videos help the community to analyse their lives and communities. After a showing of the video, a facilitated discussion gives participants an opportunity to critically examine gender norms and roles and to redefine those that are harmful or no longer useful. The community can then decide on actions to transform gender norms. In Niger, SPRING/Digital Green created a community video titled '[Help your wives for the benefit of all](#)' and another on '[Men supporting handwashing](#)'. It is important to share promising examples, to open dialogue with other organisations and in communities, to hold events for key stakeholders, to conduct research, and to share relevant materials online.

## 5. Concluding statement

Engaging men and boys is an exciting development in the WASH space; for too long our efforts to transform gender inequality focused too narrowly on women and girls. Limiting ourselves to half the possible number of allies, partners for change, innovators, and leaders to address this issue held back progress, and also placed the 'burden for change' squarely on women's shoulders. We are now starting to look at the problem holistically; engaging men and boys increases our avenues to create change and shares the responsibility across all genders. But at the same time, we must be forever mindful that it should be women, girls and people of diverse genders that are front and centre of decisions relating to change processes, as it is mostly about shifting power and privilege, while ensuring their safety. Initiatives aimed at gender norms change need to support men and boys to be allies and partners for change

Social norms and gender inequality are deeply embedded in any context and thus in any WASH intervention, however these can be slowly shifted through positively engaging men and boys and their

learning of inequality issues. The examples provided here indicate that, with intentional support and investments, men and boys can and do change their attitudes and behaviour related to WASH and care in the household. Just as we are accustomed to community-led total sanitation 'triggering' creating powerful, lasting changes in sanitation behaviours and attitudes, we can aim to trigger powerful, lasting gender norms change through our WASH approaches. WASH agencies are showing increasing courage in tackling gender-related stigma and taboos and engaging men and boys in the process of transformation.

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## Annex 1

**Table 1: Approaches for engaging men and boys at different levels**

APPROACH	EXAMPLE
<b>HOUSEHOLD/INDIVIDUAL</b>	
<b>Household Gender Action Planning (GAP)</b>	Intended to involve men and boys in household WASH-related tasks as well as care of infants and young children. <sup>6</sup>
<b>Household follow-ups</b>	Reaching and engaging men and boys through household follow-ups by partners and community leaders.
<b>Father and parenting classes</b>	Parenting classes with fathers discuss equal roles and decision-making related to parenting and household chores, facilitated by trained midwives and health cadres, among whom are men.
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	
<b>Gender needs assessment</b>	Gender profiling in communities, including gender needs assessment.
<b>Training community and action planning</b>	Creating awareness on WASH and engaging men and boys through training for the community and Water User Committees. Action planning with community members can enhance the engagement of men and boys including older people, youth, and people with disabilities.
<b>CLTS triggering – ‘leaving no one behind’ approach</b>	A ‘leaving no one behind’ approach during CLTS triggering, community sanitation mapping, and household clustering can help to engage men and boys (Verma and Shukla, 2021).
<b>Community conversation</b>	Community conversation is an interactive process that brings people together and engages communities to discuss and explore a range of topics.
<b>Community dialogues</b>	Community dialogues have been widely used as a method for community engagement and participation in a broad range of areas. Community dialogues can create awareness on WASH needs and rights of women and socially marginalised groups. They can help identify gender barriers towards access to WASH services.
<b>Community leader engagement</b>	Engaging leaders, especially cultural leaders, to promote the involvement of women and socially excluded groups in decision-making in leadership at community level. Religious leaders/gate keepers engaged to uphold norms and patriarchy restrictions. Awareness raising on how to integrate and mainstream gender
<b>Gender-inclusive BCC/ IEC materials</b>	Creating information, education, and communication materials that show men engaged in transformative activities. Developing IEC materials on gender mainstreaming in WASH service provision; promoting gender awareness through radio talk-shows and spot messages.
<b>Positive Masculinities Star</b>	The Positive Masculinity Star is a tool from the Planting Equality toolkit. The activity is used to facilitate recognising and challenging sexism; toxic masculinities; supporting boys to reject toxic masculinities; valuing girls and women equally; strengthening girls’ and young women’s agency; rejecting the use of violence; and adopting healthy sexual reproduction and health practices.

APPROACH	EXAMPLE
<b>ORGANISATIONAL</b>	
<b>Champions of Change</b>	Champions of Change is a global programme that aims to empower girls and engage boys to identify and challenge harmful, negative masculinities that perpetuate discrimination and inequality.
<b>Gender training in schools/WASH clubs</b>	WASH clubs incentivise boys to take on household roles and decisions around WASH and as leaders within their schools; training female teachers to empower women leadership.
<b>Gender equality and social inclusion self-assessment tool</b>	GESI self-assessment tools co-developed by the Water for Women Fund and the Sanitation Learning Hub.
<b>Training implementing staff and partners</b>	Training to partners’ staff on gender; making partners’ plans gender sensitive; learning and sharing on gender. Gender action plans that are regularly reviewed to see which activities have been carried out and to hear about challenges and progress.
<b>POLICY</b>	
<b>Institutional triggering for gender-transformative attitudes</b>	Institutional triggering for CLTS can be adapted to mobilise local government commitment and action for gender-transformative change. As a tangible sign of their commitment, each local authority leader could sign a pledge or ‘statement of commitment’.
<b>Gender budget tracking</b>	Budget tracking and analysis, including ministry, district, and sub-county level.
<b>Training government staff</b>	Training of government technical staff, women leaders, and key district staff, raising voices in decision-making bodies.
<b>Making Rights Real</b>	Using the Making Rights Real approach to foster local practices that create allies and champions who feel personally committed to a gender-transformative approach (WASH United et al., 2016).

## About The Sanitation Learning Hub

For over ten years, IDS's Sanitation Learning Hub (SLH, previously the CLTS Knowledge Hub) has been supporting learning and sharing across the international sanitation and hygiene (S&H) sector. The SLH uses innovative participatory approaches to engage with both practitioners, policy-makers and the communities they wish to serve.

We believe that achieving safely managed sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030 requires timely, relevant and actionable learning. The speed of implementation and change needed means that rapidly learning about what is needed, what works and what does not, filling gaps in knowledge, and finding answers that provide practical ideas for policy and practice, can have exceptionally widespread impacts.

Our mission is to enable the S&H sector to innovate, adapt and collaborate in a rapidly evolving landscape, feeding learning into policies and practice. Our vision is that everyone is able to realise their right to safely managed sanitation and hygiene, making sure no one is left behind in the drive to end open defecation for good.



## Engaging men and boys for gender-transformative WASH

This issue of *Frontiers of Sanitation* explores the extent to which engaging men and boys in WASH processes is leading to transformative change in gender roles, attitudes, and sustainable change in reducing gender inequalities across households, communities, organisations, and policy. This document is an update to [Frontiers Part 1](#) produced in 2018. In Part 1, the differing roles of men and boys were reviewed in terms of objects to change (i.e. to change sanitation or hygiene behaviours), agents of change (in promoting improved practices), and partners for change in gender-transformative WASH processes. This update reviews progress and provides practical examples of the opportunities and challenges with this endeavour. It also includes recommendations for those thinking about why and how to include engaging men and boys as part of their WASH programmes.

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