Module 2: Gender-transformative WASH

The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene - Gender Equality Measure

Learning Objectives	1. Learn about different types of WASH programs with relation to gender equality.
	2. Explore key definitions of gender equality practices.
	3. Consider how WASH can contribute to gender equality.

1. What are the different types of WASH programs?

We can think about WASH programs in terms of a spectrum of approaches. When a program does not aim to be transformative, we can miss opportunities to address inequalities through WASH. Remember that WASH is a great entry point for equality, because so much of the traditional responsibilities for WASH fall on women.

Type	Definition
Gender-insensitive	Sometimes (problematically) referred to as gender blind, gender insensitive programming **does not consider any gender dimensions.** Often associated with technology transfer programs.
Gender-instrumental	Gender instrumental programs utilise traditional gender roles to progress programmatic objectives – such as using women to target children's hand-washing practices. To see if your program is accidentally instrumental, think about what words you use. Do you talk about **using women** for other gains?
Gender-specific	Gender-specific programs **target a single gender**. For example, only engaging with women. Even on women-centred challenges such as menstruation, engagement with men is critical to breaking down the structures that perpetuate inequalities.
Gender-sensitive	Gender-sensitive programs **take into account gender dynamics** in the development of interventions but **do not aim to address** any inequalities through the program.
Gender-transformative	Sometimes referred to as gender-responsive or gender-redistributive programming, gender-transformative approaches **actively seek to transform the structures** which perpetuate inequalities. We describe some ways to explore transformative programming in section 3 of this worksheet.

This spectrum is derived from the foundational work on gender and development by Kabeer (1994).

Words matter. The words we use (in any language) can have a big impact on how we think and act. In particular, prepositions (the short words that show direction) and verbs (action words) can help determine how transformative our programming is. **What words does your program use when thinking about women and men?**

Transformative language	*Insensitive or instrumental language*
Do you partner **with**? Work **alongside**? Support? Foster? Encourage? Include?	Do you intervene **to**? **Use** for? Work through **so that**? Leverage people? To improve sustainability/efficiency?

2 . What is gender equality anyways?

- The global goal towards gender equality was defined and agreed upon in 1995 during the Beijing Platform for Action.
- **189 countries** signed the agreement, which helped create a unified objective to transform gender inequalities.
- 25+ years on, we have made some progress, but still have a long way to go.

Gender equality	The status of equal valuing of, opportunities for and responsibilities of all peoples regardless of gender. Gender equality is a human right and fundamental to a flourishing society.
Gender	Gender is a socio-cultural construct that distinguishes women from men (and other genders). Gender is not the same thing as being male and female, which are biological categories, also referred to as 'sex'. Gender is often closely aligned with customary values, opportunities, roles, and responsibilities defined by masculine and feminine ideals.
Women's empowerment	One tool in the equality toolbox, women's empowerment, is the promotion of women's 1) power and control of their own lives, 2) opportunities to determine their own choices, and 3) ability to influence social change. This tool has become the 'go-to' approach for many organisations, but by only focusing on women, we can place yet another burden on their shoulders.
Gender equity	Gender equity is the process of ensuring equal outcomes for people of all genders. Another definition is being fair to people of all genders. We might measure this by ensuring that both women and men have equal access to improved water or sanitation. Equity is another great tool in the equality toolbox.
Gender parity	Gender parity is a policy used by many organsiations to promote the hiring of women into leadership positions. It aims to have a 50/50 split between male and female staff. Parity is a useful tool in the equality toolbox.

Learn more through the UN Women's UN Women's online glossary and the European Institute for Gender Equality.

3. How can WASH contribute to gender equality?

WASH programs are a great entry point towards equality but require us to approach our programming in a transformative manner.

Motivation **Why?**	- *What is the motivation behind the programming?* Transformative WASH programs have two parallel goals: improvements in WASH and improvements in equality. Both are necessary for human flourishing.
Approaches **How?**	- *What are the ways in which activities and assessments are conducted?* Transformative WASH-programs are often participatory and engage women and men throughout the process. They 'come alongside' and 'work with' instead of 'delivering to' or 'using so that'.
Levers **Where?**	- *Where are activities and assessments conducted?* Transformative WASH-programs recognize that only addressing household level concerns can't create structural change. They often work with the public and private sectors at different levels.
Voices **Who?**	- *Whose voices are heard?* Transformative WASH-programs work to listen to a diversity of voices who are impacted by the programming. This includes diversity in gender, but also in caste/class, age, ethnicity and educational status. In particular, transformative programs don't just listen to women.

- Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed realities: gender hierarchies in development thought*. Verso. [Summarised in Kabeer, N., & Subramanian, R. (1996). *Institutions, relations and outcomes: Framework and tools for gender-aware planning*. Institute of Development Studies.]

- UN Women Training Center. This training centre has great online resources and courses for staff members interested in learning more about gender equality and development. Many courses are free and online.

- MacArthur et al. 2023. Gender equality approaches in water, sanitation, and hygiene programs: Towards gender-transformative practice. *Frontiers in Water.* https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/water/articles/10.3389/frwa.2023.1090002/full

- MacArthur et al. 2022. Gender-transformative approaches in international development: A brief history and five uniting principles. *Women's Studies International Forum.* https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102635