



How to Improve Gender Equality within the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub

An Advisory Report for the German Toilet Organization

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Secondly, I would like to thank my internship organization, German Toilet Organization for the incredible opportunity to follow a full-time internship there and generate more experiences within the NGO field. Thanks to Manuela Fuchs for being my in-company mentor as well as Thorsten Reckerzügl and Robert Gensch for the opportunity to writing this thesis.

Thirdly, I would like to deeply thank all my participants of the interviews for their time and contribution for the topic, especially those who made it to their daily task to promote gender equality and take a stand for the equal rights for all.

Introduction

The German Toilet Organization e.V. (GTO) is located in Berlin and works in educational and awareness building projects on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) at an international level and in Germany. The work of the organization is divided into three sections: schools, capacity development as well as policy building. For schools they do workshops about school toilets and how to improve them, mostly in Berlin, occasionally also in other parts of Germany. They also do competitions at an international level about school toilets to enhance acceptance as well as improving sanitary conditions. In the field of capacity building, they do trainings for practitioners and professionals about sanitation and hygiene in different regions and topics like faecal sludge management, menstrual hygiene management and market-based programming. On the policy level the GTO tries to improve or change existing policies about WASH and raise awareness about sanitation. The purpose of the organization is to raise more awareness, break the toilet taboo and to spread more knowledge about WASH. One goal of them is to contribute to the achievement of SDG 6, clean water, sanitation and hygiene.

A team of experts from the Global WASH Cluster (GWC) came up with the idea for the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub (HSH). They worked together and created a platform for openly exchanging information about faecal sludge management, sanitation solutions as well as their implementation and planning. It aims to bundle all research and existing information about faecal sludge management in the context of disasters on one website and provide a sorted overview of all the sub-topics. It gives humanitarian WASH practitioners guidance, resources and tools to improve sanitation services.

The platform is run with many partners, amongst them the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology (eawag), The Netherlands Red Cross, BORDA, IHE Delft (Institute for Water and Education), Cawst (Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology), solidarite international and is hosted by the GTO. The HSH is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation which requires their supported programs to implement specific

values in their projects which includes sustainability and gender equality (Humanitarian Sanitation Hub, 2023). This requirement sparked the idea for the research on gender equality in the WASH sector and with it this product as an advisory report.

The objective of this report is to equip the HSH with insights on best practices and methods to enhance gender equality within their platform. This report draws upon extensive research and interviews with experienced people in the field of gender and WASH as well as NGOs within the German WASH Network. The report offers insights and recommendations on how to increase gender equality. The recommendations and insights are based the Concise Research Report on gender equality in the WASH Sector by Mona Richter, commissioned by the German Toilet Organization.

Who can benefit from this report?

This advisory report is written for the GTO and the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub project, nevertheless other organizations acting in the WASH sectors can benefit from this report as well. The Humanitarian Sanitation Hub is an online platform of the Global WASH Cluster. It is centered around knowledge on sanitation and fecal sludge management in emergencies and addresses humanitarian WASH practitioners. The hub provides topical entry points where data on specific topics is easily summarized for practitioners and provides resources.

Within this report, many recommendations can even be translated to the whole developmental cooperation and humanitarian aid sector. Overall, all sizes of organizations and NGOs within different fields can benefit from the report. Additionally, the report can be beneficial for students and researchers who are interested in gender equality and the water, sanitation and hygiene field (WASH). It also entails methods that can be used for a political change on a societal level. This report is going to provide recommendations for everyone seeking an overview on best practices and methods to enhance gender equality on organizational, societal and individual level. It needs to be mentioned that whilst this report can benefit many, it is designed for the GTO and HSH to present possible solutions and help with decision-making on the way towards more gender equality. The goal is to spark inspiration towards more gender equality and present possible tools how to further improve equality for all in a sustainable way.

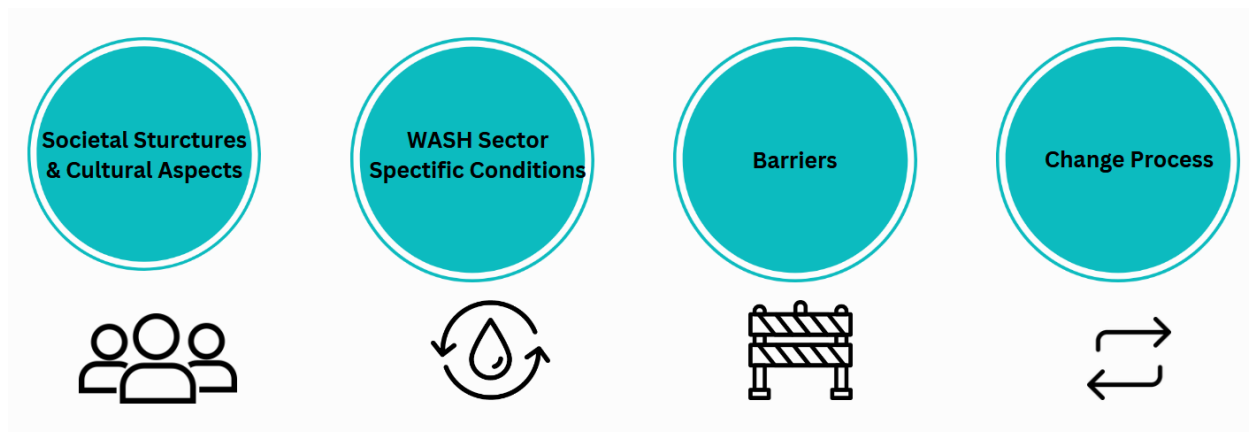
Summary of the Research

This advisory report describes the recommendations concerning gender equality enhancing measures within the WASH sector for the online platform Humanitarian Sanitation Hub. For this research, two frameworks, by Caruso et al. (2021) and Pederson et al. (2014) were chosen and combined. The goal was to identify best practices and measures which were already used and to find out more about the root causes of gender equality within the WASH sector. The empirical data was gathered by conducting qualitative interviews with three experienced people with WASH and gender equality as well as with employees of organizations which are members of the German WASH Network (Richter, 2024). Additionally, desk research on more methods and best practices were conducted. In the following sections the key findings will be shortly presented. Firstly, the reasons for gender inequality are discussed, followed by methods for promoting gender equality and lastly best practices.

Key Findings

Reasons for Gender Inequality

During data gathering, multiple causes for gender inequality in the WASH sector were identified:



Societal Structures and Cultural Aspects

Gender equality is a structural inequality through patriarchy. Gender equality is a complex

topic and is interlinked with other inequalities. The current WASH sector is mostly male-dominated and many gender roles and gender stereotypes persist within the system. Patriarchal societal structures underpin gender inequalities in the WASH sector, perpetuating male dominance, stereotypes, and traditional gender roles. Cultural beliefs and norms shape attitudes towards women's roles and participation, presenting challenges to gender mainstreaming efforts. Addressing these structural and cultural barriers is crucial for promoting gender equality.

WASH Sector Conditions

Gender equality has gained attention within the WASH sector, with some organizations incorporating it as a cross-cutting issue in projects. However, there are disparities in implementation across organizations and countries, influenced by donor requirements, governmental support, and organizational strategies. Despite efforts, the sector remains male-dominated, particularly in technical and decision-making roles, posing challenges to women's advancement.

Barriers

Numerous barriers hinder women's participation in WASH, from recruitment biases favoring male attributes to cultural norms limiting women's engagement. Gender pay gaps, security concerns, and societal expectations further impede women's progress.

Additionally, user perspectives reveal accessibility challenges and safety concerns, particularly for women. Barriers for women can be male dominance, fewer career opportunities in the WASH sector, fewer decision-making and participation opportunities, security aspects as well as job compatibility with household and childcare roles.

Change Process

Implementing gender equality measures faces challenges due to the slow nature of change, short project timelines, and limited resources. Organizational willingness, understanding, and prioritization significantly impact the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives. Structural changes, such as policy development, gender mainstreaming, and community engagement, are

essential for sustainable progress.

Methods for Promoting Gender Equality

The methods found during the research are divided into societal, institutional and implementational methods.

Societal Interventions

Advocacy

Promoting and tackling structural change is important to create a fundamental change towards more gender equality. Also, advocating for gender equality in general helps to create more awareness within society.

Policy Making

Politicians can define policies around GE which can lead to actual implementation of measures.

Supportive Conditions

Institutions need to be equipped with adequate resources so they can carry out their work. They need a budget to implement strategies, integrate accountability systems maybe even hire someone for a second opinion. Also, creating accountability and holding institutions accountable for gender transformation over a period of time is important because change takes time. Demanding more progress can help to increase gender equality due to governments high influence on some project fundings.

Institutional Interventions

Policies and guidelines

Follow national standards within your country as well as the implementing country is highly advised. Then, on an internal level create policies, guidelines, and standards around gender equality. This way gender equality can become a company value. When standards are set, it is

important to spread them within the organization and make sure everyone is familiar with them. It is recommended to regularly check and update the policies and guidelines if needed to always be up to date.

Knowledge and Awareness

The organization's team should be trained on gender equality. In terms of knowledge but also in terms of concrete measures everyone can take. It is best to provide trainings once or twice a year. Also have an assigned vocal person for gender equality to prioritize gender equality. This can help with monitoring, responsibility and ownership.

Equal conditions

Ensure gender-equal pay for all and have job advertisements which address male and female candidates. Also ensure gender separated toilets for security and menstrual hygiene needs. Flexible working hours can make a position more equal and family friendly for needs like childcare, pregnancy and breastfeeding. Also, women have different needs of security. Within the company this can mean introducing harassment management and complaint mechanisms, extra security measures for work routes and fitting working clothes and gear. Equality can also be encouraged by observing and discussing gender roles within teams. This way negative or unequal relationship dynamics within the team can be tackled.

Supporting Conditions

Check if your partners create their activities and outputs accessible for all. In case you find gaps negotiate about possible changes and try to find a suitable solution for all. Set aside enough financial resources, staff who can implement measures and enough project time. Regarding changes of other cultures than one's own be sensitive and respect cultural backgrounds and traditions. If possible, you can use a catalyst for faster change like environmental changes or group pressure. The way towards more gender equality is a time-consuming and a slow process

and an ongoing job. To help with that you can make use of tools and resources on gender equality to extend your knowledge with the resources that are already freely online and generate ideas for best implementation.

Implementational Interventions (in projects)

Policies and Guidelines

Also, within projects it is advised to have standards, policies, and guidelines for project implementation. Worldvision for example only builds toilets together with trainings how to properly take care of them and consider everyone's WASH needs. Having specifically gender-focused programs like Seecon has on MHM and Worldvision has with its ultra-pure projects can create a bigger focus on gender equality. Ideally, gender equality should be implemented within the whole project cycle.

Create Knowledge & Awareness

Working on stereotypes within the community can create a cultural shift. Here it also helps to clarify meanings of terms like gender equality, gender equity etc. and what it looks like in the WASH sector. Advocacy is important to share the word about gender equality and can help to reduce taboos. Identify the right people in a community to spread the word and make a change. Ensure that everyone benefits from your knowledge and awareness measures and that it is not solely focused on women.

Concrete Interventions

Use concrete interventions for gender equality adapted to your context. Those can be for example conducting gender analysis, implementing the use of gender equality checklists, supporting of marginalized groups and using external project evaluators. But be careful with only women focused measures. Whilst they can be effective the research also showed that they can increase the burden on women and make them responsible for the problem.

Supportive measures

Supportive measures which help to advance gender equality can be working together in partnerships, ensuring enough resources, and planning long term projects with the possibilities of evaluating and monitoring gender equality.

Best Practices on Gender Equality Methods and Measures

Whilst conducting the first interviews it became clear that best practices were not obvious. Best practices are mostly context-dependent and not transferable to all situations and organizations. The 11 best practices are listed below based on the number of participants who mentioned them as well as the way in which they were emphasized.

1. Set gender standards & policies for your project/organizations
2. Make standards and policies as concrete as possible with examples
3. Check project applications for gender equality
4. Plan resources for gender equality measures beforehand
5. Use a gender inclusion checklist or conduct a gender analysis
6. Conflicts on gender equality within a community are best discussed bilaterally
7. Adapt all your approaches and measures to the situation
8. Ensure gender-equal positions and career opportunities
9. Include everyone, especially more boys and men in gender equality discussions
10. Don't force change without the consent of the community
11. Work on gender equality continuously

Recommendations

Recommendations for integrating gender equality enhancing measures within the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub will be presented in this section. This information can benefit organizations like NGO's as well as other projects. The information can be used by the HSH directly or presented within their platform to present them to other users. Additionally, the recommendations can be adapted to also work for disabled, low income or otherwise marginalized people by replacing the words women with other marginalization.

First, the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub platform will be shortly explained. Tailored to the HSH platform five main problems will be mentioned with a solution and specific recommendations.

These are:

- The will is missing to make true change
- Women and girls are often not considered and their needs are not being seen
- People see gender equality as desirable but don't recognize their own involvement
- Missing knowledge and understanding of the topic
- Women often do not have access

The Missing Will to Make True Change

Create true change

Set standards around gender equality

Guidelines, and standards around gender equality. This way gender equality can become a company value. For example, in form of an ethical codex for behavior regarding equality, fairness, and inclusivity. Also, standards like agreement on behavior in specific situations can be made. A standard can be for example to always use a gender sensitivity checklist before uploading new topical entry points.

1. Define a purpose

Define the purpose why you want to make a change towards more gender equality. Understand and clarify what your intentions are and how you could work on them.

2. Get everyone on board

When standards are set, it is important to communicate them within the collaboration and make sure everyone is familiar with them. It is also helpful to set them up together so you can discuss about them with everyone involved and get input and opinions from all.

Women and Girls Are Often Not Considered, Their Needs Are Not Seen

Include women and girls and promote gender sensitive content

Make sure that all blog posts, resources and recommended tools are gender sensitive and take into account the experiences of all genders as well as those of children.

1. Decompose the user data you collect by gender

This way the percentage of users of all genders could be monitored and an increase could be seen.

2. Collect data and integrate feedback mechanisms

Integrate feedback mechanisms and disaggregate data by gender. This way you can find out if there are different needs for females within the websites and if there is something that female practitioners would like to see. This could be executed for example by having a pop-up questionnaire on the website or by segregating the data of the expert questions for gender.

3. Promote gender-disaggregated data collection with a topical entry point

Promote gender-disaggregated data collection, ideally even beyond the binary gender, including data of non-binary and trans people which is mostly not existing right now. Recommend gender analysis with this data to identify the needs and challenges from the respective groups.

4. Intervene according your data findings

If your collected data shows a limited number of female users try to engage more of them. The platform could be promoted within women network pages on social media or on events to attract more female users.

People Don't Recognize Their Own Involvement

Question your own impact

1. Check the content content you are creating

Question whether you create inclusive content for all. For example, the projects you participate in, the papers that you write, the topical entry points you create and the posts you share. Do they consider everyone you intent to consider? Be honest with yourself and identify problems. It is not important to be perfect or have everything implemented already but more to look at the problems and take first steps to create meaningful change.

2. Use existing tools

Using existing tools like gender analysis and conducting them for the project can help to increase the understanding of the roles, responsibilities and vulnerabilities and therefore different needs based on their gender identity. Doing this can help to crate inclusive WASH solutions for all.

3. Advise and promote to question own impact and outputs

Actively state that you question your own activities regarding gender equality. Spread the word and advise others to do so as well.

4. Repeat

Reaching equality is a process and cannot be addressed in one day. Continuously questioning what you put out in the world and how you interact with it is important to keep making progress towards more equality.

Missing Knowledge and Understanding of the Topic

Provide knowledge and create understanding

1. Raise gender awareness on gender topics on the HSH website

Promote gender equality with blog posts and offer training and capacity-building resources for gender mainstreaming. This can help to create a better understanding and awareness. Make sure to address everyone as this is not a women's only problem but strive for gender transformation being structural and relevant for all. For example, address gender-based violence within WASH and sanitation facilities and promote the use safety and privacy features, implement prevention measures, response mechanisms as well as awareness raising within the users. Make this more of a topic within your blogpost.

2. Raise awareness via social media

Share and promote posts on gender topics. You can also share resources you use within the platform. This can also promote the HSH platform in general.

3. Promote tools like the gender equality checklist etc.

Introduce the different tools and provide resources to access them. This can be knowledge building resources, tools for gender analysis, equality checklists etc.

5. Promote events and workshops

Promote workshops for awareness raising and sensitization around gender equality, ideally led by the communities. Goal of those workshops can be the critical discussions around gender norms and stereotypes in WASH.

Women and girls often not have access

Women's lack of participation opportunities

1. Connect and collaborate with other gender-focused networks/organizations

Through connection with them you can be inspired, get advice and it can be easier to integrate gender measures within the platform and it can be made sure that all groups are included.

2. Encourage and promote women's empowerment

Encourage equal participation of women in decision making processes as well as all other relevant areas. This can be for example with the female SaniHub experts. Also support women in decision making processes and within leading positions. This could be in form of leading positions within the team a but also via trainings, networking opportunities or mentorships you can offer or promote. Those can improve skills and confidence.

3. Promote technical WASH positions for females

The WASH sector began as a technical sector with a still high component of technical work which is the main reason why the sector is still so male dominated. Through provide or promote trainings, resources and funding opportunities as well as by improving general access women can be supported to fill in these positions. Collaborations and partnerships with universities on how to promote technical studies, open days and internship opportunities are also possible.

4. Engage everyone

Make it a challenge for all to improve gender equality and including especially men and boys. Make sure to address everyone as this is not a women's only problem but strive for gender transformation being structural and relevant for all. Here engagement could also mean campaigns,

workshops as well as educational materials that promote equal gender norms and support women's roles in decision making and participation in WASH.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this advisory report has dived into the world of gender (in)equality within the WASH sector, specifically focusing on ways to improve practices within the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub online platform. With help of an in-depth analysis of the research findings multiple key takeaways for gender equality measures within online platforms were found. These key lessons offer insightful suggestions for organizations involved in WASH.

Firstly, it is important to question your own views and to start with yourself in order to recognize what mistakes you make and where you overlook things in terms of gender equality. It is easy to denounce the lack of gender equality in others and at the same time does not change your own behavior. Doing it differently requires reflection and the courage to admit your shortcomings. But only then can problems be recognized and changed.

Secondly, a will to change must be created. Not just individually, but throughout the entire project. This is to ensure that everyone involved strives for change towards more gender equality and is aware of its importance. It is useful to define a goal and standards to emphasize the will and make the action more concrete.

And finally, everyone must be involved. If not everyone is behind greater gender equality, change is very difficult or even impossible. Inclusion of all can be achieved through knowledge and awareness of the issue, giving everyone the opportunity to participate and recognizing gender equality as a structural issue where everyone must play their part to achieve change.

In the end, it is not just about collecting those changes on paper. It is about making real, meaningful changes that benefit everyone. By taking these recommendations and taking the time

and effort to implement them, the Humanitarian Sanitation Hub can do its part of creating a more equitable WASH sector for all.

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Appendix

Letter of Recommendation

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K

Kerstin Koch

an mich ▾

Fr., 17. Mai, 13:55 (vor 4 Tagen) ☆ 😊 ↶ ⋮

Liebe Mona,

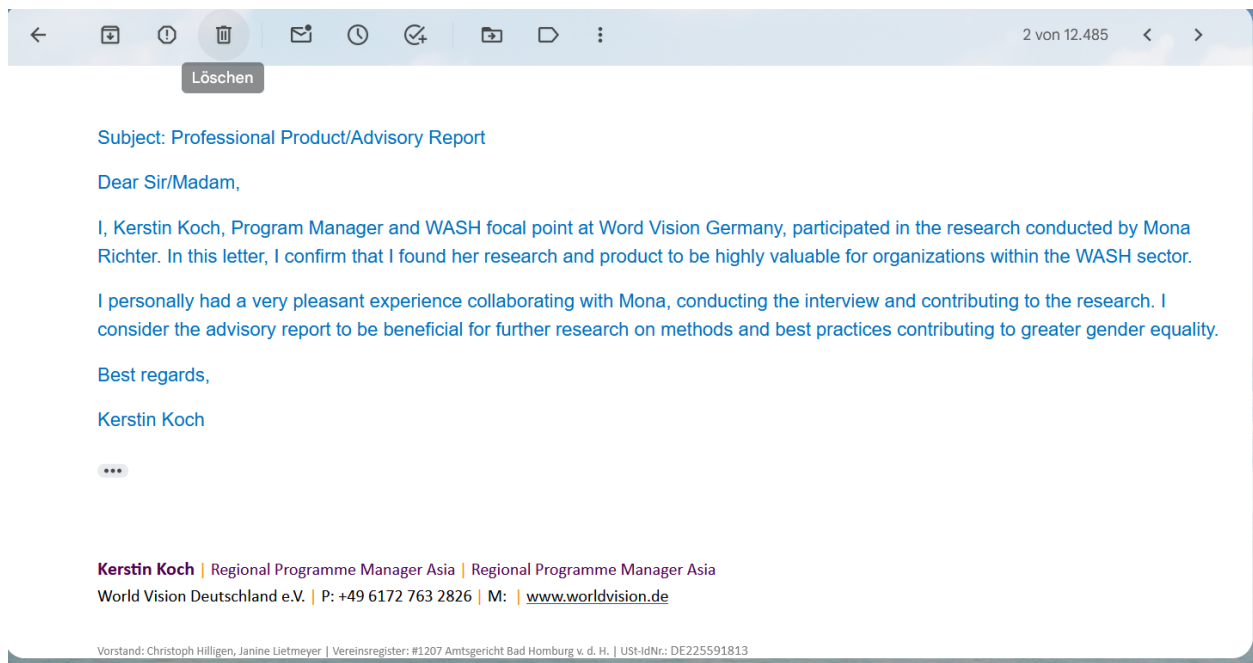
nachstehen in blau meine Empfehlung.

Alles Gute für Dein Studium und Deine weitere Zukunft.

LG Kerstin

Subject: Professional Product/Advisory Report

Dear Sir/Madam,



The image shows a screenshot of an email client interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for back, forward, search, and other functions. A "Löschen" (Delete) button is visible below the navigation bar. The email content is as follows:

Subject: Professional Product/Advisory Report

Dear Sir/Madam,

I, Kerstin Koch, Program Manager and WASH focal point at Word Vision Germany, participated in the research conducted by Mona Richter. In this letter, I confirm that I found her research and product to be highly valuable for organizations within the WASH sector.

I personally had a very pleasant experience collaborating with Mona, conducting the interview and contributing to the research. I consider the advisory report to be beneficial for further research on methods and best practices contributing to greater gender equality.

Best regards,

Kerstin Koch

...

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