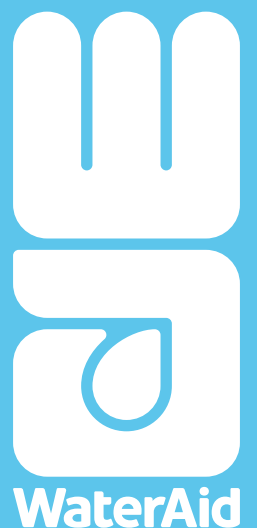


GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

**Foundations for
water, sanitation
and hygiene for all**

April 2023



Summary

We must thoroughly address the challenges that climate change and gender inequalities present to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 by 2030 so everyone, everywhere has water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

This report sets out the key interlinkages between gender equality, climate change and WASH systems; highlights three key opportunities; and identifies four approaches that can be combined to address them.

We outline three key opportunities to address the gender inequalities and climate impacts that often arise during work to expand or improve WASH services: 1) understand diverse needs and vulnerabilities to reach everyone, 2) connect fragmented silos to generate true resilience, and 3) address power imbalances for meaningful solutions. A combination of approaches is required to progress on each of the opportunities and advance progress on SDG 6. These approaches are initial multi-contextual analysis, inclusive partnerships, multi-sectoral engagement, and integration of diverse knowledge and experiences.

Gender-responsive and inclusive WASH: Solutions that ensure equal access to and benefit from WASH services for all users. An increase in women and girls' participation in decision making, and improvement in gender equality outcomes through WASH.

Climate-resilient WASH: WASH services and behaviours that continue to deliver benefits, or that are appropriately restored, within a changing climate context and despite climate induced hazards. Robust, sustainable WASH systems can improve resilience to climate change.¹

● Nur Nesa gave birth three days after a cyclone hit her community in 2019. Pregnant and breastfeeding women need more water for hygiene and also for drinking. But challenges to access safe drinking water means her family have to walk over 2km each way daily to reach a water source that is still unsafe. Satkhira, Bangladesh. February 2021.



WaterAid/DRK/Suman Paul

● Low lying areas like this settlement in Uganda are strongly affected by floods. Floods often disrupt sanitation services because trucks collecting faecal sludge from pit latrines and other sanitation facilities cannot access areas due to flooded roads. Kampala City, Uganda, December 2018.

Introduction

With less than a decade to the 2030 deadline, efforts for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 must be ramped up to meet targets of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for all. But we can only achieve this if we address the underlying issues of gender inequality that are holding progress back.² To ensure these efforts are sustainable and not temporary, WASH policies and systems must adapt to climate change impacts to ensure these services function in the face of climate change and keep communities resilient. So by 2030, gender and climate change must be fully integrated in WASH systems and expanding services if we are to get closer to our goal. This report highlights some key opportunities and approaches for applying a gender-responsive and climate-resilient lens to WASH. These insights are valuable to all those working to achieve SDG 6, from national governments to donors to development partners. We are all in this together.

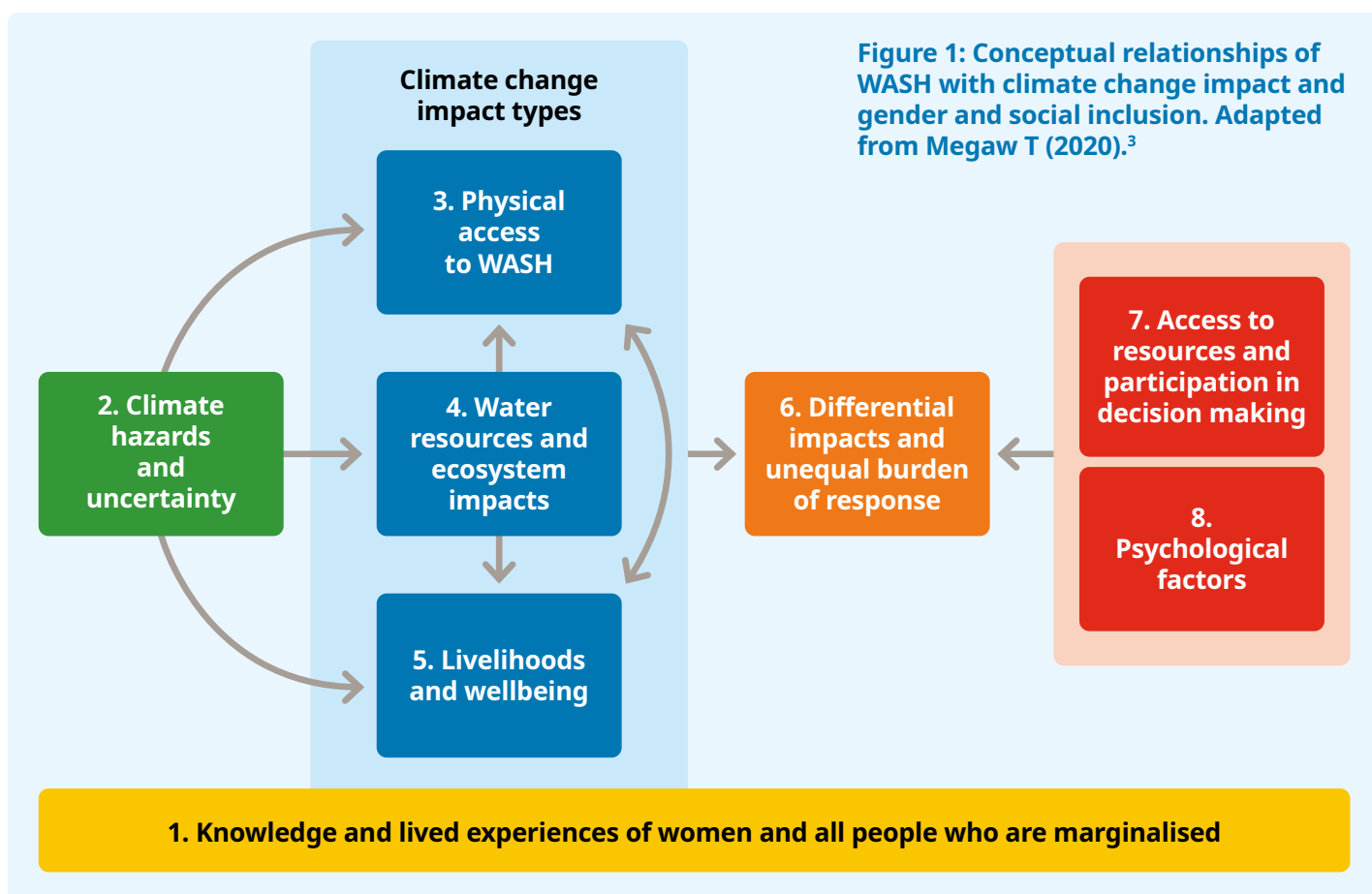


WaterAid/James Kiyimba

CLIMATE CHANGE, GENDER EQUALITY AND WASH

The first step is to identify the broad interlinkages between gender equality, climate change and WASH, and then understand how these sectors interact. Interactions will differ for each situation and location, and what is needed will further depend on whether it is a question of initial WASH services or the upgrade of services to be gender-responsive and climate-resilient. A person's need for WASH services are based on their unique identity, including age, class and gender. Context impacts each person's identity; for example, women may be marginalised in one location due to cultural beliefs around menstrual hygiene.³

Risks from climate impacts exacerbate existing inequalities – such as gender inequalities – in WASH access and provision.⁴ Men and women experience climate change differently.² For example, water scarcity impacts on WASH services often has a greater effect on women for several reasons. Women typically have higher water needs for caregiving, lactation, menstruation and pregnancy.⁵ As part of that caregiving, they are often responsible for ensuring the household has water for drinking, cooking and washing.³ When climate hazards destroy toilets, women and girls have to travel





● A Malawi community leader makes repairs on a pipe for the community damaged by recent storms. It's critical that repair work is decided inclusively. A challenge for resilience is if men, who are often the ones repairing damaged infrastructure, do not consult women and people living with marginalisation. If this step is skipped, the new infrastructure may not meet the communities' needs. Malawi. April 2022.

WaterAid/Francis Chipanda

further to find somewhere to manage their menstrual needs or relieve themselves, which increases their risk of violence and harassment.³

Climate change fosters greater inequalities through differential impacts and an unequal burden of response. Understanding the systemic connections between WASH, gender equality and climate change highlights the tensions, trade-offs and synergies working across these elements.^{6,7} Physical access to WASH is interconnected to water resources and ecosystems as well as livelihoods and wellbeing. When a climate hazard impacts any of these components, the repercussions are felt across them all.^{8,9} Figure 1 (Megaw et al. 2020) helps those working on WASH policies and programmes visualise these interactions.

When you appreciate how WASH, gender equality and climate change interact, the next question is what specific gender impacts can result from climate hazards that disrupt WASH services. The examples on [pages 6–9](#) address this question by articulating four key climate hazards, each hazard's impact on WASH, and the subsequent gender impacts.

Four climate hazards and impacts were identified in our [Programme guidance for climate resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene](#)⁶ and closely align with similar findings in recent research.^{7,10} The severity and nature of climate hazards will vary by location, and their impact on WASH and communities will depend on the full WASH system (such as institutional strength) and those communities' collective vulnerabilities. The gendered impacts are based on our practitioner experiences and research on gender, climate and WASH.^{3,5}

For example, several climate hazards increase waterborne diseases⁵ which then increase burdens of caregiving responsibilities for households – often left to women and girls – and healthcare facilities, which mostly employ women.¹¹ Addressing both the climate impacts on WASH and the gendered impacts of climate hazards is necessary for universal, sustainable and safe WASH services.

Examples of climate hazards' impacts on WASH and gender*

1. RISING GLOBAL TEMPERATURES

Examples	Impacts on WASH	Gendered impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Heatwaves● Melting and thawing of glaciers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Damage to water and sanitation infrastructure● Increase in pathogens in water leading to increase risks and incidences of diseases● Interference with the seasonality of rivers affects water availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Increased disease burden, especially for children and pregnant women, leading to increased care burden of those responsible for caring for the sick, often women and girls● Overburden on healthcare system● Men often repair damaged infrastructure and, if completed without consulting women and people living with marginalisation, the new infrastructure may not meet the communities' needs



● Sumi and her family live on a riverbank in Bangladesh, which makes them susceptible to flooding. When a cyclone destroyed all the riverside toilets, this particularly impacted the women in the community. Khulna, Bangladesh. August 2020.

*Based on climate hazards from [WaterAid's Programme guidance for climate resilient water, sanitation, and hygiene](#).

2. SEA-LEVEL RISE

Examples	Impacts on WASH	Gendered impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flooding • Saline intrusion into freshwater resources, including groundwater 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacts on water availability and quality, including hazards such as coastal flooding which affects community water supply and sanitation systems • Faecal sludge contamination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women and girls without WASH services travel further to collect water and use the toilet; increasing their physical burden and time spent when collecting water, and exposing them to dangerous situations including sexual violence • Water sources are also often of lower quality and reliability and may cause illness, increasing care responsibilities • Less water for safe hygiene practices which can increase disease and cause greater care burden for women and girls



● Teodora shows how recent floods have infiltrated the water storage tanks and the pit latrines. This has reduced her access to a toilet and means she will have to come up – at least temporarily – with a new way to access safe drinking water. Kigamboni, Tanzania. January 2020.

3. GREATER RAINFALL UNCERTAINTY AND DROUGHT

Examples	Impacts on WASH	Gendered impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prolonged drought ● Drier seasons that were previously rainy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduction in water for drinking, flushing or managing hygiene ● Reduced flow in rivers, less dilution/increased concentration of pollutants in water ● Reduced functionality of water-based sanitation ● Challenge in hygiene practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women and girls without WASH services travel further to collect water and use the toilet; increasing their physical burden and time spent collecting water, and exposing them to dangerous situations including sexual violence ● Water sources are also often of lower quality and reliability and may cause illness, increasing care responsibilities ● Less water for safe hygiene practices which can increase disease and cause greater care burden for women and girls. Sometimes the need to transport water from further distances means men and boys have to collect water ● Less water in households may mean women and girls don't have enough water for their hygiene needs, breastfeeding or pregnancy



● Shama gives her daughter, Dua, a bath in flood water after their home was destroyed after a monsoon. This is an example of when lower quality water sources from a climate hazard cause illness. Sindh, Pakistan. October 2022.

4. INCREASED FREQUENCY AND INTENSITY OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Examples	Impacts on WASH	Gendered impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extreme flooding ● Cyclones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pollution and inundation of water sources (e.g., wells) from flooding of toilets and drains ● Damage to water and sanitation infrastructure ● Landslides around water sources, sedimentation and turbidity ● Challenges to the sustainability of sanitation and hygiene practices and behaviour ● Increased incidence of waterborne diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reduced accessibility to sanitation facilities for women with disabilities, older women and women responsible for the care of others ● Disruption to service provision, e.g., emptying trucks can't access areas due to flooded roads ● Men often repairing damaged infrastructure and if completed without consulting women and people living with marginalisation, the new infrastructure may not meet the communities' needs ● Flooding and increased risk in collecting water mean that adults (often men) are more likely to do this ● Women may have less access to information about climate change, limiting their response ● Increased illness from contaminated water (waterborne diseases) increases the care burden of women and girls



WaterAid/DRIK/Habibul Haque

● Climate-induced hazards like cyclones or river erosion reduce the resilience for communities like this one that are already struggling with access to WASH – they have no water or hygiene facilities and only have open-air hanging toilets. Khulna, Bangladesh. August 2020.



WaterAid/DRIK/Habibul Haque

WASH CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT BROADER EFFORTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE.

When governments provide sustainable and safe WASH services in communities – particularly for groups who are marginalised, such as women and girls – this builds resilience to climate change impacts and gets systems supporting communities again after climate shocks. To create more sustainable, climate-resilient WASH, governments need to improve existing services, increase the reach of services to those without them, and expand institutional capacity, monitoring and financing. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) supports ‘making universal access to WASH a critical adaptation strategy’ and recognises improving equity for water and sanitation as a means of ensuring climate adaptation reaches those who are most vulnerable, with the least resources.⁵ WASH can give people the power to unlock other human rights – such as education, dignified and productive livelihoods, and safe healthcare – which means it is a strong tool for strengthening gender equality.¹² In other words, WASH can positively impact broader efforts for gender equality and climate resilience.

● Memory Choko stands where her house used to be before it was damaged by Cyclone Batsirai. The cyclone destroyed essential WASH infrastructure, which creates unsafe living conditions and increases the risk and exposure to diseases – exacerbating existing inequalities. Zomba, Malawi. March 2022.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Many actors in the WASH space will require a new way of working to make it universal, climate resilient and gender responsive.

As articulated in the previous section, the interactions of WASH, climate change and gender equalities are interconnected and often complex. All WASH policies and programming will need to take these complexities into account to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability.

There are three key opportunities where this can be done:

1

Understand diverse needs and vulnerabilities to reach everyone

2

Connect fragmented silos to generate true resilience

3

Address power imbalances to achieve meaningful solutions



WaterAid/Chileshe Chanda

- Beatrice from Lusaka, Zambia, educates people on the impacts of climate change through a weekly radio show. This type of work can address the challenges for gendered climate impacts by helping educate women on the realities of climate change. Zambia. February 2020.

1

Understand diverse needs and vulnerabilities to reach everyone

● Joseph in Madagascar with two of his grandchildren in his home. The broken water catchment system in his village has reduced their ability to be resilient during the recent drought. Androy Region, Madagascar. September 2021.



WaterAid/Ernest Randriarimalala

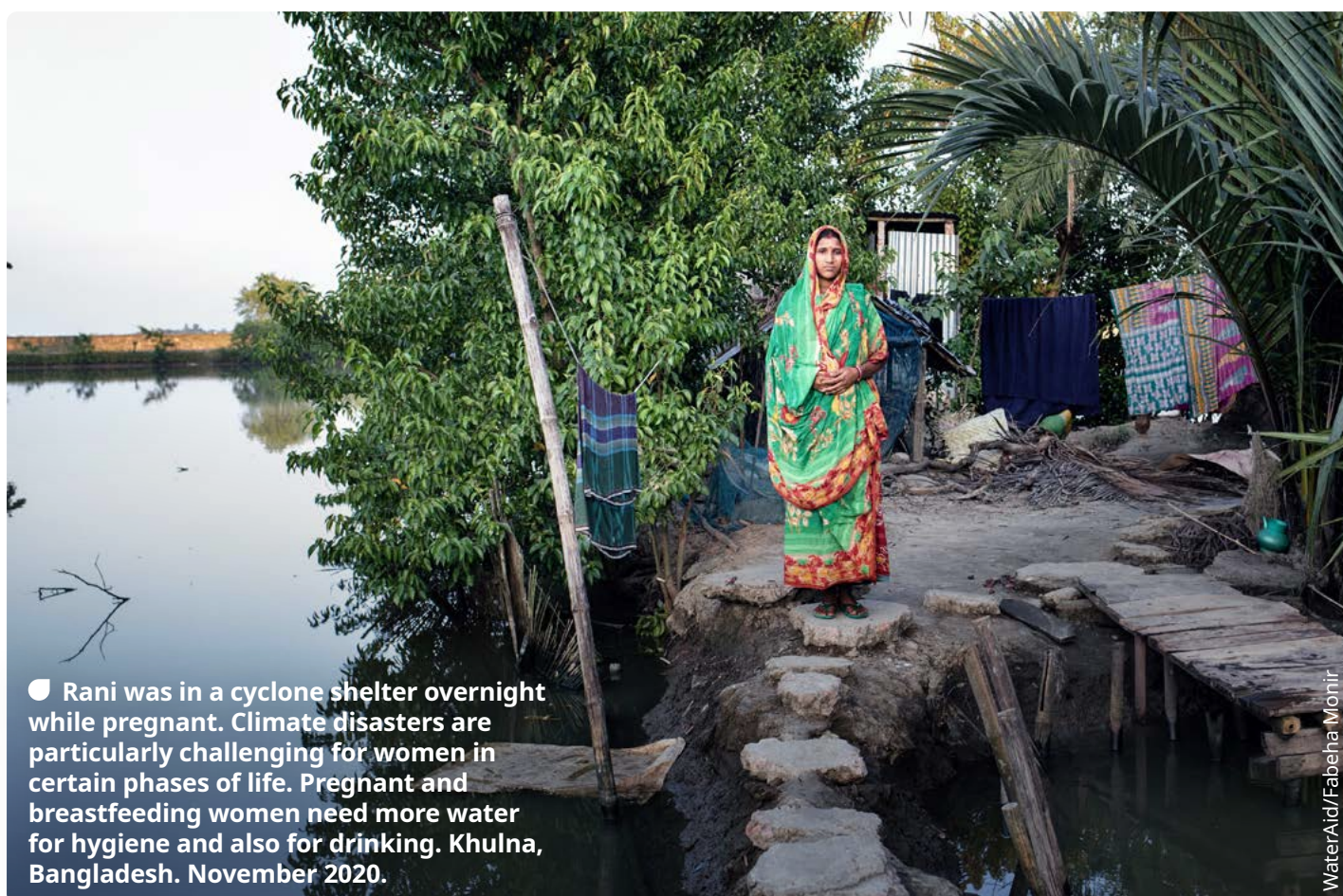
Working on climate-resilient WASH provides many opportunities to unpack the diverse needs of those in communities experiencing marginalisation.

Once these needs are understood, they can be acted upon. One illustrative example is a climate risk assessment for a WASH programme. Climate risk assessments are a critical early step for identifying potential climate impacts and the necessary adaptation actions, thus ensuring climate-resilient WASH policies and programmes. Yet they often neglect gender dimensions, specifically gender roles and dynamics based on social and cultural contexts. These participatory assessments consider climate risks as a combination of a climate hazard (slow-onset stresses like sea level rise or extreme shocks like floods) and people's intersecting vulnerabilities. Each climate hazard impacts WASH and gender roles and expectations differently ([pages 6–9](#)) and may affect some vulnerabilities more than others. For example, extreme flooding can reduce or destroy the functionality of sanitation systems, causing the spread of waterborne diseases

that affects the whole community. Increased disease will create a particular burden on healthcare facilities and household caregivers – predominantly women and girls – who are expected to provide unpaid care to those who are ill, on top of other responsibilities. They may also need more water to care for those who are ill and to maintain safe hygiene practices. In this context, women and girls as caregivers are more vulnerable to the climate risk of flooding and its impact on their WASH provision than their male counterparts.

The simple addition of gender questions to the risk assessment is not enough. Climate risk assessments that consider gender dimensions superficially do not break down the different vulnerabilities within segments of the population to understand the range of diverse needs. For example, an insufficient risk assessment might consider all women as if they have the same vulnerabilities, instead of considering intersecting identities such as age, wealth, and/or health depending on the context.¹³

How someone is impacted by climate change depends on geographical, infrastructural, economic, socio-cultural, political, any functional difficulty and gender dynamics. Each of these dimensions interacts with the others, so a group of people with similar identity descriptors can still have different experiences and needs.¹⁴ Yet despite women's diversity, the 'dominance of men's perspectives in policy and practices excludes women's knowledge and experiences'.³ Examining gender in this wider context of both WASH and climate change is necessary to understand and better address ingrained power relations and the needs of those most vulnerable to climate hazards. Any climate risk assessment for WASH requires a participatory approach to accurately capture the diversity of experience within a community and to unpack needs and vulnerabilities. Only once these aspects are understood, can the range of true challenges and solutions regarding climate-resilient WASH for that community be acted upon effectively.



● Rani was in a cyclone shelter overnight while pregnant. Climate disasters are particularly challenging for women in certain phases of life. Pregnant and breastfeeding women need more water for hygiene and also for drinking. Khulna, Bangladesh. November 2020.

WaterAid/Fabeha Monir



WaterAid/Ernest Randriamalala

Connect fragmented silos to generate true resilience

● Florine shows some half-ripe crops that have been burnt by the heat in Madagascar. When considering water supply, it is critical to think about all the users who need water and how to collectively ensure resilience. Anosy Region, Madagascar. June 2022.

Reaching universal access, tackling climate change and increasing gender equality cannot be achieved in a vacuum, so connecting the actors across these three spaces is key to making progress.

The historical divisions between water and sanitation, climate, water resources, the environment and finance at local, national and global levels make it difficult for any of these stakeholders to achieve more than a fragmented approach to climate adaptation or mitigation. Traditional siloed approaches – including financing mechanisms – stifle the ability to create adaptive, sustainable solutions that account for the range of diverse needs of communities, ecosystems and countries to achieve climate resilience and water security.

These systemic challenges compound climate impacts – such as water scarcity – by reducing the ability of governments, communities and other stakeholders to respond holistically and effectively. For example, water scarcity (which affects water, sanitation and hygiene) is often not primarily about a physical lack of water.

Instead, it often results from institutions' inability to adapt policies and systems to physical water scarcity or from social and political factors that exclude groups who are marginalised from accessing water.¹⁵ If water scarcity interventions are limited to the physical lack of water, underlying challenges for groups who are excluded from WASH access will not be considered, never mind addressed. If these underlying challenges are not addressed, this will block the achievement of water and sanitation services for all.

It is well documented that within WASH, water resources and the climate sectors, gender roles and expectations have blocked women and other groups who experience or are at risk of marginalisation from access to information and decision-making.^{3,5,16} The lack of advancement towards gender equality in each of these sectors underscores the challenge of centralising this topic when bridging the traditional sector silos to build resilience. Yet, true resilience cannot be reached without including everyone in a community. Tackling these issues can begin on a small scale and then be applied in regional or national contexts. In some situations, it may be easier to address gender dimensions on a small scale through participatory, locally-led adaptation efforts. Meaningful locally-led adaptation can harness insights and knowledge

from the people who identify and understand the context related to climate and water security challenges. Local needs, knowledge and insights should be incorporated into adaptation engagement in ways that empower, not burden, local stakeholders.¹⁷ For example, community members should not be asked to develop and deliver WASH services without national and local support. At the local level, cities, rural areas and grassroots organisations can trial and innovate solutions based on a mix of scientific and traditional knowledge, and combine these with insights from climate, water resources and WASH.

Coordination on resilience is clear in national climate planning documents, such as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), but also needs to link local and national levels. The NDCs presented at COP26 in 2021 underscored the increase in recognition of the link between WASH and climate resilience. Roughly 45% contained sanitation measures and the number of governments including WASH tripled from the earlier indicated NDCs.¹⁸ The first step of including WASH in national climate planning is real progress, but the next step must be to determine ways for local work around WASH services to be climate-resilient and feed into the climate implementation. When it comes to WASH services, often the national government maintains fiscal responsibility, so maintenance



WaterAid/Apag Annankra

● **Mary and Comfort collect water at the new water point at their primary school. Local water storage solutions for times of water scarcity can help keep girls in school instead of having to spend the day going further to collect water. Ghana. December 2019.**

and other progress cannot be made at a local level without engaging national stakeholders. Conversely, local knowledge and progress needs to be fed into national level planning. Bringing together local and national stakeholders will be critical to climate-resilient WASH efforts.

Resilience measures need to be holistic, innovative, collaborative and based on system thinking. A more systemic approach not only brings in climate and water resource stakeholders and connects them to WASH issues, but also links the need for the right policies to enforce regulations. Institutions cannot effectively address these issues if they have the appropriate policies but lack the ability to implement them.^{19,20,21,22} It is critical to engage communities and groups who are vulnerable – such as women and girls – in identifying climate

hazards, WASH challenges and corresponding solutions. Recognising the need for connecting across silos, WASH development partners like WaterAid are moving towards more integrated, systemic approaches in their work. WASH services are most effective in building resilience when they connect and work with other linked systems to reduce vulnerabilities and increase responsiveness. These integrated WASH systems are the foundation of meaningful progress towards gender equality and sustainable climate resilience in communities.



● The community in Derekwa used to collect water from a local spring, but droughts meant this was drying up. Since the new water pump was installed, the community have safe water, even during extreme weather. Tiru collects money from the community to pay for any maintenance work and to provide her income. Derekwa, Ethiopia. February 2020.



Address power imbalances to achieve meaningful solutions

● Mst. Sharifa washes her face and hands in a municipal tubewell. Voices like hers need to be part of the decision-making to ensure climate-resilient solutions address challenges like the ones she faces daily. Dhaka, Bangladesh. March 2021.

To reach meaningful solutions that meet diverse needs and connect fragmented approaches to resilience, it is essential that power imbalances between stakeholders are addressed.

These power imbalances manifest in a range of situations involved in developing solutions and are different depending on each context. Including vulnerable stakeholders does not automatically give them the authority and power to make changes. In multi-sectoral coalitions, some actors can be ignored because of their limited power within the group, for example, because of their gender, ethnicity or socio-economic position. An example might be an uneducated woman from a local community or a water user that is not wealthy. Identifying and measuring imbalances are initial steps towards effectively addressing them. Fundamental work must be done to create space for vulnerable stakeholders to share their needs and insights, and to act on those insights to generate inclusive, resilient WASH solutions. This section outlines various areas in which power imbalances should be identified, measured and addressed.

● Memory Raffick, showing how the extreme weather conditions have affected her crops. Because climate impacts affect all water uses, from growing crops to livelihoods to basic human needs, broad and inclusive stakeholder processes are needed to understand all potential solutions and to address power imbalances. Nansasala Village, Zomba, Malawi. March 2022.



WaterAid/Francis Chipanda

Fragmented governance structures and the economic power of certain stakeholders can create power imbalances that limit meaningful climate-resilient solutions. The disjointed reality of different ministries handling WASH, climate and water resources, along with the different powers of these ministries can hinder the government's ability to fully assess all water demands and allocate resources accordingly. In broad stakeholder discussions regarding water allocations, for example, economically powerful water stakeholders, like agriculture, dominate the discussion with governments and others. The result is little consideration given to the fundamental water and sanitation needs of hospitals, schools and households, even if WASH stakeholders are present, because these groups do not have the same economic power. Cape Town's 'Day Zero' climate-risk experience is an excellent example of interlocking the power dynamics and political tensions that had to be negotiated to ensure fair access to WASH during a climate shock. Power imbalances were eventually managed to allow some water to be reallocated from agriculture to WASH.²³

This example demonstrates how WASH can be prioritised when power imbalances are managed and stakeholders' needs are valued. If power imbalances are not addressed, people facing marginalisation – for example because of their gender – may not be able to make their voices heard and have their needs met.

Power imbalances often exist within procedural structures around WASH provisions and addressing them is crucial for progress. Vulnerable stakeholders may be excluded from decision-making based on certain criteria (for example, they must be a landowner) that may not initially seem to be exclusive based on gender.¹⁶ In many societies, women are less likely to have ownership of property or, higher levels of education due to social norms around education and rights to property, so these rules are not gender neutral.¹⁶ When engaging local participation and representation in WASH services decision-making and management, great care must be taken to ensure that traditional power imbalances do not continue in new pathways.²⁴ Further, that the time and

resources of communities are considered when setting up engagements and procedures.²⁵

It is vital to use the right metrics to establish whether power imbalances have been overcome. This is because simple metrics, for example counting the number of women involved in a project, does not demonstrate whether these women were able to meaningfully participate in the same way as male stakeholders. Simply having women present, without addressing power imbalances, cannot indicate real progress towards inclusivity.²⁶ While there are gender challenges across the intersection of climate change and WASH, documented examples of this within WASH situations that do not highlight climate impacts, give a flavour of the power imbalances that must be overcome. In Malawi, Water User Associations (WUAs) were created to specifically empower women in decision-making, yet women were less likely to know they could participate in WUAs as active members.¹⁶ Furthermore, women were largely hired only

as kiosk attendants, reinforcing patriarchal systems.¹⁶ These examples of gender and WASH challenges articulate structural gender-based power imbalances that can also apply to the climate change sector and underscore the need to build capacity to further empower women to be leaders within their own communities. This was achieved in a WaterAid Bangladesh project where women led the management of a new water treatment plant, subsequently building the community's resilience and changing views of women's leadership.²⁷

Across all decision-making entities, from local to international bodies, women are under-represented in decision-making platforms for WASH and climate change.^{2,16} Efforts to eradicate power imbalances must therefore work strategically and effectively with existing institutions. The process must be thoughtful and deliberate in how to engage with groups experiencing or at risk of marginalisation to ensure progress on gender-responsive, climate-resilient WASH.



● The Golap Mohila Dal project in rural Bangladesh is a great example of how women's leadership can ensure climate-resilient solutions for rural communities. Khulna Division, Bangladesh. March 2021.

APPROACHES TO SUPPORT KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Each of the opportunities highlighted above can be supported with practical tools to help create context-specific solutions for policies, advocacy and programme design and implementation. This section of the report articulates four approaches to assist in achieving sustainable, universal WASH. Each approach is valuable and may need to be applied simultaneously or considered together from the outset when working towards an opportunity.

1. Initial multi-contextual analysis
2. Inclusive partnerships
3. Integration of diverse knowledge and experiences
4. Multi-sectoral engagement

Given the complexities involved, it is no surprise that each opportunity requires a combination of approaches. Table 1 gives illustrative examples of how these four approaches come together to support each opportunity. In some situations, Opportunity 1 may require multi-sectoral engagement, but an initial multi-contextual analysis will always be required. Opportunity 2, which requires reaching well beyond a single sector or even two, requires all four approaches.

Table 1: Linking opportunities with approaches

Opportunity	Approaches
Opportunity 1: Understand diverse needs and vulnerabilities to reach everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Initial multi-contextual analysis● Inclusive partnerships● Integration of diverse knowledge and experience
Opportunity 2: Connect fragmented silos to generate true resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Initial multi-contextual analysis● Inclusive partnerships● Multi-sectoral engagement● Integration of diverse knowledge and experience
Opportunity 3: Address power imbalances for meaningful solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Initial multi-contextual analysis● Inclusive partnerships● Integration of diverse knowledge and experience



● The Participatory Ward Vulnerability Assessment is one technique WaterAid uses to have local communities conduct a multi-contextual analysis of climate vulnerabilities they face as the first step to identify solutions. Bangladesh.

1. Initial multi-contextual analysis

Assessments and analysis for achieving SDG 6 should include insights from a range of contexts: a political economic analysis (PEA) that examines power dynamics, institutions, governance, as well as equality and inclusion. Along with a climate risk assessment of hazards, vulnerabilities and barriers covering gender and social inclusion. These assessments should be done together to determine trade-offs and co-benefits among the different components. Undertaking these assessments should follow the [Principles of Locally Led Adaptation](#) to recognise the value of local stakeholders – including women and young people – in assessing and understanding the challenges and solutions to climate impacts. This analysis can then identify potential policy and implementation pathways to achieve politically viable reform, appropriate development of the design and delivery of WASH services.

This analysis is the first step proposed in our programme [guidance for climate resilient WASH](#). We have developed several sets of guidelines around how to analyse WASH systems with [climate](#) and [gender](#) lenses to inform decisions on how to strengthen the systems using collaborative and incremental problem solving. Methods of conducting these assessments include vulnerability mapping, household surveys, participatory workshops, and of course, gendered needs assessments.

2. Inclusive partnerships

Progress on SDG 6 requires inclusive partnerships to be effective on any of the three key objectives. Partnerships strategically align efforts, resources and expertise to offer realistic possibilities for the collaborative and incremental problem-solving of complex political problems. This strategic alignment can complement global efforts and avoid duplication. Pursuing inclusive partnerships means going beyond traditional WASH partners either in development organisations or within the national or local governments. These partnerships for those working in WASH could mean partners working on water resources and climate issues, as well as those working on social and gender inclusion challenges. These partners could be international or grassroots, government, civil society or private sector; each bringing unique support and insights. We worked with the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) to advocate for WASH to be included in five African countries' nationally determined contributions (NDCs). WaterAid Ethiopia collaborates with partners like the Union of Ethiopian Women and Children Associations (UEWCA) – a consortium of civil society organisations (CSOs) and grassroots organisations on women's rights and climate change – advocating for women to enhance their participation in climate negotiations with the national government.

3. Integration of diverse knowledge and experiences

Knowledge comes in various forms: scientific data, local knowledge and traditional knowledge to name a few. When tackling complexities like gender-climate-WASH interlinkages, it is crucial to collect and incorporate all types of knowledge for a holistic understanding of the context and the best solutions. The variability of gender norms and climate change impacts within societies means that solutions and interventions must be adaptive and context-specific, with a focus on local knowledge. Meaningful participation of people experiencing marginalisation and vulnerability are critical to incorporating these diverse insights and to address power inequalities. Interventions should aim to supplement and complement beneficial existing local practices. With the aim of encouraging the participation of underrepresented groups that matter – those experiencing marginalisation and those who are vulnerable – targeted interventions should work to creatively identify mechanisms for diminishing the burden on these groups, while capturing their critical insights on identifying challenges and solutions. The three case studies highlighted in this report all merge a range of knowledge and experiences including those from women at the community level.

4. Multi-sector engagement

The systemic nature of climate resilience and water sustainability necessitates that WASH stakeholders engage with the wider dynamics of water security, which means engaging with industry, agriculture and other water users – as well as those working on nature, environmental and climate issues. Case study 2 offers an example of the value of multi-sectoral engagement in furthering climate resilience for all water users. Bringing in a wider range of stakeholders also means social and gender inclusion remain central to assessments and broader engagement within each sector.

● Justine records the latest reading from the rain gauge – one way her community helps measure rainfall and better plan and respond to changes in the water supply because of climate change. Women play a key role in supporting community climate resilience for WASH. Centre-North region, Burkina Faso, July 2021.



The following three case studies illustrate how the approaches work for each of the opportunities.

Case study on Opportunity 1

1

Understand diverse needs and vulnerabilities to reach everyone in India

● Part of the multi-contextual analysis is understanding how the water is being used. Here for the Jal Chaupel work, different ways water is being used are recorded.

कार्य	मात्रा प्रति परिवार प्रतिदिन लीटर में
आलाय	5 लीटर X 5 = 25 लीटर X 2 = 50 लीटर
हाना	20 लीटर
ना पीना	15 लीटर
वर्तन घोना	25 लीटर
कूलर	50 लीटर लीन बा...
घर व गाड़ी धोने हेतु	
के लिये	

In India, Jal Chaupel builds water security and climate resilience at the local level by understanding diverse needs and vulnerabilities to reach everyone. This work applies the three approaches discussed of initial multi-contextual analysis, inclusive partnerships, and integration of diverse knowledge and experience. It involves participatory assessment of water and climate threats/vulnerabilities with a particular focus on gender inequalities. In addition to a gender-based needs assessment, the process considers how to increase women's participation in water resource-related decision-making. Threats and vulnerabilities are monitored over time to determine the best course of action to address them. With a wide range of individuals, citizens, experts, practitioners and academics working on, or interested in water issues, it ensures that diverse knowledge and experience is applied to the analysis and the resulting work. Inclusive partnerships ensure the initial work in India involved 35,000 citizens, practitioners, academics and experts working on water issues. Inclusive partnerships ensure the focus is wider than just WASH: it looks at all key water use across sectors like agriculture, livelihoods and household needs. It can generate information that could be shared upwards to regional and national levels to better understand broader climate impacts and potential solutions for national climate planning.

Case study on Opportunity 2



Connect fragmented silos to generate true resilience in Timor-Leste

● Sensors, produced by Similie, are installed in the water storage tank in Lautekas in Guguleur village, Maubara sub-district. Sensors are one way communities can better monitor water levels. November 2019

Through the Who Gives a Crap fund, WaterAid Australia has been working in Timor-Leste to create climate-resilient WASH systems through community planning for locally-led adaptation. To connect fragmented silos and generate true resilience, this work encompasses all four approaches in Table 1.

The first step is to assess the community's risk to climate change through wide stakeholder participation. This step critically draws out which parts of the community will have different risks from climate change based on their situation. The community then creates adaptive climate change solutions that look at the whole system – not just the infrastructure. This integrates diverse knowledge and experience into a multi-contextual analysis for planning and implementation that can lead to inclusive partnerships. For example, as part of the planning for water scarcity, communities are able to digitally track water supply levels, with future plans to strengthen the capacity of local managers to alert community members during times of need – such as when the supply dips below a certain level from a drought, overuse within the community or when infrastructure is damaged from climate shocks. Thus communities can work with local authorities to co-develop plans resilient to climate impacts on water resources, and ensure the people most vulnerable to its impacts become resilient.

Inclusive partnerships and multi-sector engagement are critical components of this programme. With the support of the Australian Water Partnership, WaterAid Australia is bringing together key WASH and integrated water resource management stakeholders to create a joint water management plan that will adapt to climate change and build community resilience for all water users. Localised climate planning needs information on community water usage behaviours and monitoring data related to seasonal and annual changes to water availability. This programme is able to bring that data on water usage and weather impacts on water availability to a broad range of stakeholders. This final step of branching out and ensuring multi-sector engagement – and feeding WASH data into climate planning – is how fragmented silos can generate true resilience.

Multi-country case study on Opportunity 3

Address power imbalances for meaningful solutions

● Workshop participants assess the strength of the WASH system from a gender perspective in Kampong Chhnang Province, Cambodia.



The SusWASH programme (2017–2022) funded by H&M Foundation and implemented by WaterAid in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Uganda and Pakistan, provides a good example of climate-resilient, gender-responsive WASH system strengthening that addresses power imbalances. This programme involved a wide consortium of expertise through partners, like WaterAid, to form inclusive partnerships.

The programme centred on our system strengthening approach, which has a strong focus on community engagement for diverse knowledge and multi-contextual analysis. The work began with the participatory identification of systemic barriers to inclusive and sustainable WASH at scale – which included gender and socio-cultural norms, and identified the collective action needed to tackle them. These barriers existed at multiple levels; barriers that hinder local progress often have their origins at the provincial or national level. Tackling these barriers required inclusive partnerships of coordinated and complementary efforts across administrative levels. The resulting interventions were meaningful solutions that addressed harmful socio-cultural norms and power imbalances as well as strengthened government and service provider planning, budgeting and monitoring of WASH services. In Uganda, efforts included increasing participation of women in decision-making.

Similar to the research in this report, SusWASH found that socio-cultural norms and barriers made it difficult to ensure women were included in decision-making in Cambodia, Ethiopia and Pakistan. Despite this challenge, the programme results did benefit the women in these contexts. For example, women and girls in the Ethiopia project reported spending less time collecting water after the WASH improvements were made. Thus, they were able to use that time for something else and their bodies were not physically bearing heavy loads for long distances. Future work will look at other ways to increase women's participation in decision-making in these situations and thus further address power imbalances. The work continues.

CONCLUSION

The complex realities of the interlinkages between gender equality, climate change and WASH means that the goal of SDG 6 cannot be achieved without ensuring WASH is both gender-responsive and climate-resilient. WASH stakeholders from governments to development partners can use the four approaches outlined (multi-sectoral analysis, inclusive partnerships, multi-sectoral engagement, and integration of

diverse knowledge and experiences) to generate better progress towards WASH for all. Applying these approaches to the identified opportunities (understanding diverse needs and vulnerabilities, to reach everyone, connecting fragmented silos to generate true resilience, and addressing power imbalances for meaningful solutions) will ensure progress of SDG 6 and we get closer to reaching our goal, once and for all.



● Women Water Heroes at WaterAid's Water and Climate Summit in 2020 remind all of us of the critical role that women's leadership can play in strengthening climate resilience for communities and beyond. March 2020.

ADDITIONAL WATERAID RESOURCES

Here are some of our resources
for gender, climate and WASH.

● Cissy is a women's representative on the Upper Mpologoma Sub-Catchment Management Committee. Women in decision-making roles that can impact how resources are dedicated to responding to climate change are critical for inclusive solutions. Namutumba District, Uganda. April 2022.



WaterAid/James Kiyimba

Global/General resources

Programme guidance for climate resilient water, sanitation and hygiene

This guidance explains how to embed climate resilience across WASH programmes based on our practical experiences of implementing climate-resilient WASH.

→ [View resource](#)

System strengthening for inclusive, lasting WASH that transforms people's lives: practical experiences from the SusWASH programme

This learning report shares our experiences and lessons learned across five years of implementing a system strengthening programme for more inclusive and sustainable WASH in Cambodia, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Uganda.

→ [View resource](#)

Water security framework

This framework for community-level water security provides a generic set of concepts, approaches and commitments that our country programmes can modify to fit their national contexts. It is also intended to inform supporters and donors about our efforts to safeguard the water supplies of communities facing marginalisation and living in poverty.

→ [View resource](#)

Integrating climate resilience with WASH system strengthening

This document focuses on an approach to analysing the WASH system through a climate lens as an entry point to guide programming and policy decision-making. It helps integrate climate resilient WASH into established system strengthening ways of working and can complement other contextual analysis, including analyses of political economies, stakeholders and gender equality.

→ [View resource](#)

Practical guidance to address gender equality while strengthening water, sanitation and hygiene systems

This practical guidance articulates how to use system strengthening tools to empower women and shift harmful gender norms, while achieving more sustainable WASH services. This guidance is designed to be used alongside our full gender equality guidance and the Equity, inclusion and rights framework.

→ [View resource](#)

Equality, inclusion and rights framework

This framework sets out our position, approach and programme standards for our work on equality, inclusion and human rights as we tackle inequalities in access, resource distribution and decision-making in WASH. Supplemented by the 2022 Terminology guidelines to support WaterAid's equality, inclusion and rights framework.

→ [View resource](#)

Integrating gender equality into community water, sanitation and hygiene projects – guidance note

A set of guidance notes from companies and implementing partners about why and how to turn strategic commitments about gender and WASH into integrated projects.

→ [View resource](#)

Water, sanitation and hygiene: the foundation for building resilience in climate-vulnerable communities

This report includes case studies from a variety of countries demonstrating what must be done now to improve WASH services and address current challenges, in order to increase community resilience to climate change.

→ [View resource](#)

Regional/Country resources

The Gender, WASH and Climate Change Nexus: Summary of Policy briefs

This summary policy brief by WaterAid Ethiopia highlights the status of the Ethiopian government in bringing together gender, climate and WASH.

→ [View resource](#)

Climate Change Response for Inclusive WASH: A guidance note for WaterAid Timor-Leste

Tailored to WaterAid's Timor-Leste programme, this guidance note demonstrates the relevance of gender and social inclusion in responding to climate change impacts on WASH and is particularly key for rural water service programming.

→ [View resource](#)

Implementing inclusive WASH for the people of Wewak, Papua New Guinea

Working with the Water for Women Fund, we worked on a project called 'Inclusive WASH for WeWak' to support improvements to government-led WASH services delivery through an adaptive planning approach.

→ [View resource](#)

The impact of climate change on sanitation in Mozambique

This report examines the climate impacts on sanitation in Mozambique with specific focus on both the rural and urban contexts; impacts on sanitation and the sanitation service chain; policy framework relating to sanitation or climate change; and climate-resilient sanitation adaptation measures.

→ [View resource](#)

Climate change and resilient WASH in South Asia

This policy brief analyses four South Asia countries – Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan – and provides recommendations on how to build climate-resilient WASH services.

→ [View resource](#)

Climate change and water security in West Africa – Niger and Burkina Faso

This work by WaterAid West Africa includes an advocacy brief and full brief on climate change and water security challenges for Burkina Faso and Niger. It articulates the key challenges of WASH and climate change for these countries.

→ [View resource](#)

No climate resilience without WASH: a call to action

This briefing note makes recommendations for policymakers and experts on how to focus on climate-resilient WASH in West Africa – specifically Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger.

→ [View resource](#)

The Golap Mohila Dal's Moricchap Drinking Water Plant

This chapter within a book on locally-led adaptation details a WaterAid Bangladesh project that empowered women through a new drinking water plant to combat water security and WASH challenges due to climate change.

→ [View resource](#)

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**WaterAid is an international not-for-profit,
determined to make clean water, decent
toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone,
everywhere within a generation.**

