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Positive change in gender roles and relations in a Timor-Leste WASH program

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WaterAid

WRITTEN BY: DI KILSBY

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Author[1]

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Peer review

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1   Disclaimer: The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and are supported by participating organisations; they do not necessarily reflect the views of ACFID and its wider membership.

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Sight For All
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes research that assessed the gendered[2] outcomes of WaterAid's (WA) water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programming in Timor-Leste. The research was conducted in Datakolo and Manuquibia communities[3], Liquica district of Timor-Leste, in June 2010 in partnership between WaterAid Australia (WAA), WaterAid in Timor-Leste (WATL) and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA).

WASH issues, in common with any other development issue, are highly gendered by nature. WASH as an issue is central to the lives of women and girls, and the active engagement of women and girls is critical to the success and sustainability of WASH investments. However, there has been a tendency for WASH issues to be viewed as technical rather than social in nature and for a long time, WASH programming tended to overlook women as critical stakeholders.

WaterAid (WA) has increasingly invested in addressing gender issues in its work, adopting equity and inclusion as core principles of its Global Strategy. The WATL project that was the subject of this research was informed by a basic consciousness of the relevance of gender to the success of the project. Although there had been minimal specific investment in this prior to the research, there was a strong commitment to understand what it would mean to address gender systematically in its work, and to develop policy and practice that better responded to gender concerns.

As a starting point to developing this understanding, and using a strengths-based approach, this research process set out to make visible the gendered outcomes of the existing WASH program. The research also provided a learning opportunity for staff of WATL and its partner organisations, who actively participated in the research team. It also provided an opportunity for learning and dialogue between women and men in the participating communities.

The research was conducted in two communities of Liquica district, engaging groups of approximately 10 women and 10 men in each community over two days in each site. The research was primarily qualitative, but some quantification was provided through voting and ranking techniques. The methodology aimed to promote active and empowering roles for participating community members. Much of the process was conducted in the safe space of separate women's and men's groups, but with periodic opportunities for the two groups to share and discuss their findings together. While the research focused on understanding gendered outcomes, the process avoided using the term 'gender', recognising that this terminology can be confusing and can trigger misunderstanding.

Participants identified significant changes as having occurred in women's and men's lives as outcomes of the WASH program. As expected, practical outcomes, particularly time and labour saving for women, and increased ease of completing household tasks, were highlighted. Among the changes identified and valued by women and men in this research, the following could be considered 'practical gender needs'[4] of women, i.e. those that assist them within their existing gender roles:

- Improved health
- Greater ease of performing duties – water being closer to home and related benefits
- Increased cleanliness and the social benefits that go with this: personal hygiene, clean clothes and other – this was highly valued by both women and men
- Ability to grow vegetables and undertake other economic activities
- More time to do other things, such as handicrafts and attending literacy classes
- Increased income

Interestingly, while health outcomes such as reduced sickness in the family were reported, they were given less significance, particularly by women, relative to other changes highlighted. It was also interesting to note that the closeness of water to the house seemed to facilitate men taking more share in water-related domestic tasks, and that while women felt that men could still do much more to help, even a modest increase in the help they received was highly appreciated and made a difference to their daily lives.

Strikingly, areas of change that may be considered as addressing, or which could potentially address, women's 'strategic gender interests' were mentioned frequently and valued highly by women in particular, and also by men. These included:

- Changes in gender roles:
  - Men helping more at home, e.g. water collection, caring for children
  - Increased diversity of roles for women including gaining higher status roles; feeling that they are making an economic contribution; increased participation in community life; more involvement in decision-making
- Women demanding greater recognition for their contribution and its value

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2 'Gender' refers to the socially-constructed and learned differences in roles, responsibilities and relationships between men and women, boys and girls. These differences are not fixed, but vary over time and between cultures. They affect men's and women's ability to access and control resources and their life outcomes more broadly. Gender-based disadvantages intersect with and can be compounded by other factors such as ethnicity, age, (dis)ability, marital status, sexual identity, religion and geographic location.
3 Annex 3 provides brief information about the research communities.

4 The distinction between 'practical gender needs' and 'strategic gender needs or interests', first developed by Molyneux in 1985 then further by Moser in the 1990s, is frequently used in gender and development thinking. Development activities that address practical gender needs improve the situation or life conditions of women within their socially defined gender roles. Activities can have more effective and sustainable outcomes for gender justice if they advance women's 'strategic gender interests', i.e. challenge and redefine women's and men's roles and gender relations towards greater equality.

- Women's influence on men's risk-taking/anti-social behaviour (this issue, although indirectly linked with WASH issues, was strongly highlighted as a pressing concern for women)
- Women having increased voice and being listened to; men increasingly listening to and respecting women
- Women's increased well-being in terms of greater freedom (as a result of more discretionary time and opportunity for choice), dignity and happiness
- Recognition (by men and women) that women have rights
- Improved family relations and greater harmony (which may include reduced violence in the home)

Some interesting differences arose in how women and men perceived and valued different kinds of change, and the research process revealed some issues of contention and enabled them to be aired.

One such significant difference in perspectives between women and men was that 'increased harmony in the home' was the change most highly valued by women. Men spoke little of this, and even needed some explanation in order to understand what it meant to the women. The increased harmony related to women being able to achieve household tasks more quickly, thus avoiding disharmony arising when husbands' expectations were not met; and to reduced absences from home while fetching water, which in the past had given rise to distrust between husbands and wives. While the language used was ambiguous, it is possible that this change may include some positive impact on reducing gender-based violence. While men felt that there was now greater cooperation within the household, they tended to focus more on the practical level rather than on harmony per se.

Men in both communities claimed that a change in their lives was that they now help women with WASH-related chores; women did not volunteer this among the list of changes they had experienced. However, when asked to quantify the extent to which men's contribution to these tasks had changed, the women's assessment of the degree of the change was greater than the men's own assessment, indicating that women highly value this contribution even while wishing for more of it.

While both women and men mentioned that WASH-related tasks had become easier as a result of WASH improvements. Women also valued the extra time created by having easier access to clean water, including having more time for handicrafts, and being able to attend literacy classes and participate in women's meetings and activities. Women also spoke of positive changes in well-being factors such as greater dignity, freedom and happiness, while men were less likely to describe changes in this way, with the exception of appreciating the benefits of enjoying greater cleanliness.

An interesting difference in perspective emerged and was keenly debated in one of the communities, where the women identified participation in community activities as the most significant change for them at community level, ranking four such activities in first-fourth places, above their ranking for 'improved health'. The women defied urging from the men to change their rankings in order to give health a higher ranking, asserting that the community and they themselves would not have improved health without their participation in these activities.

The differences in views expressed by women and men underlined their different needs and perspectives and highlighted the importance for WASH practitioners of taking the time to hear from both women and men. Without doing so, practitioners do not have access to the full range of information that they need. The research methodology demonstrated the value of creating separate spaces for women and men at times, to allow women's voices to be heard.

Some increase in respect for women's contribution was evident, at least partly attributable to changes resulting from the WASH program. Women's participation in the research process demonstrated that women are ready to advocate for greater recognition of their rights and of the contributions they make to family and community life.

The research also attempted to unpack the factors that had enabled positive change in gender roles and relations. Project staff, during the analysis process, categorised these factors according to stakeholders most likely to have contributed to the changes. The factors mentioned by communities are summarised below.

Changes originating from the communities themselves included unity within the community; the need felt within the community to address WASH-related issues and the motivation to act in ways that might support greater sustainability of WASH outcomes, and the 'moral responsibility' on the part of the community to do so; and a degree of awareness and underlying acknowledgment that allowing women greater rights is the right thing to do.

Change resulting from actions and approach taken by WaterAid and its local NGO partners included funds and technical support from WA; having women staff working in communities; and the power of women in new roles acting as role-models for other women.

Changes that can be attributed to WaterAid, NGO partners and the communities included having access to clean water and sanitation facilities, particularly having clean water close to home, which appeared to be related to increased assistance from men in WASH-related chores; 'information', understood to include information about water and sanitation options, and perhaps also about women's rights to participate; and women's participation in meetings, which enabled change to take place both in terms of substantive issues considered, and perceptions about the value of women's participation.

Enabling factors beyond the project included the efforts of the Government of Timor-Leste and of other NGOs in promoting gender equality and gender awareness. It was also noted that some traditional values appear to provide potential for supporting change towards a more equitable sharing of responsibilities in the home.

It is important to note that many of these factors appear inter-related and it may be that a combination of them is needed to produce and reinforce the positive changes that have occurred in gender roles and relations.

The research team made follow-up visits to the communities eight months after the initial fieldwork, to validate findings and to engage communities in reflection on further change that may have occurred, and to provide feedback on the research process. The WaterAid-IWDA partnership has used the research outcomes as the basis of an ongoing program of training, mentoring and development of tools for facilitating gender equality dialogue in communities, and for assessing change in gender outcomes over time.
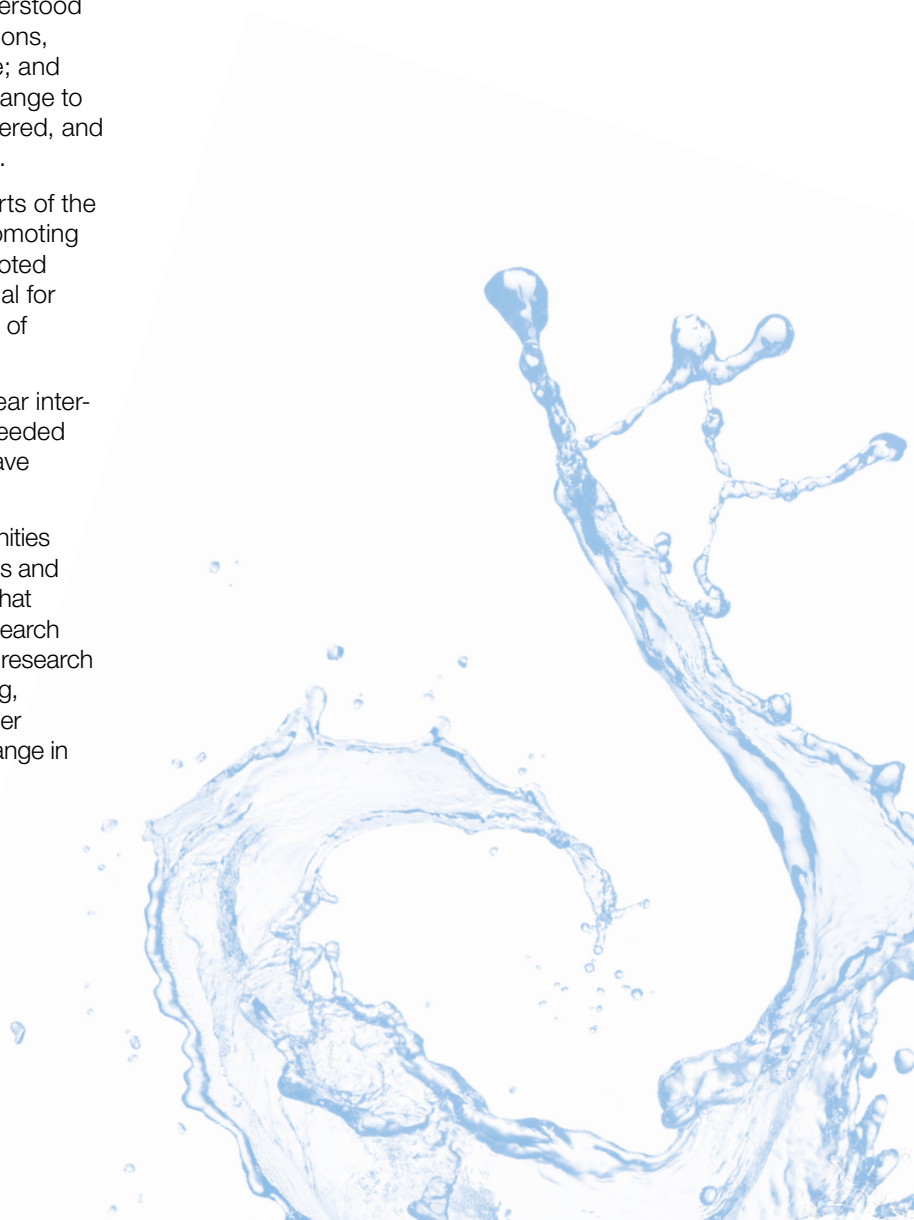
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

1.1 Introduction

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues, in common with any other development issue, are highly gendered by nature. WASH improvements can create significant changes in people's lives, which will be experienced differently by women and men because of their different roles and responsibilities. This report describes research that assesses the gendered outcomes of WaterAid's (WA) WASH programming in Timor-Leste as a basis for strengthening effective outcomes for women and men.

WASH issues are critical to the lives of women and girls, and women and girls are critical to the success and sustainability of WASH investments. Consequently, the WASH sector has enormous potential for positive impact on the lives of women and their families, not only through practical outcomes but also by addressing strategic gender interests. A 2010 study found that 'while enhancing rural people's access to clean water may not include a strategic gender agenda, this may be embedded in it' (Arku, 2010, p. 243). WASH can be a strategic entry point for working towards women's empowerment, as women already have accepted traditional roles in water, sanitation and hygiene, and there is thus potential for community acceptance of and support for women's leadership in this area. It is inevitable that gender roles and relations in families and communities will be altered by WASH programming, whether or not gender dimensions are consciously addressed, and it is a core responsibility of WASH practitioners to ensure that these changes are positive for both women and men. The research process outlined in this paper sought to reflect on the nature of such changes within one WASH program in Timor-Leste.

The research, conducted in two villages in Liquica district of Timor-Leste in June 2010, was the first major activity of a partnership between WaterAid Australia (WAA), WaterAid in Timor-Leste (WATL) and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA). This collaboration is aimed at improving the gender focus within WaterAid's (WA) programs in Timor-Leste. More specifically, the partnership aims to 'strengthen capacity in partner organisations to support community-driven gender equality through WASH programs; build an evidence base of locally-determined gender equality outcomes for both women and men in the focus communities; and document strategies and outcomes for learning and reflection by the WAA team'.

1.2 Background

Globally, the significance of WASH conditions for women's lives has long been recognised. However, there has been a tendency for WASH issues to be viewed as technical rather than social in nature and for a long time, WASH programming tended to overlook women as critical stakeholders. Gradually, there has been growing recognition of the social dimension of WASH, and that gender considerations are also central to WASH work. Nonetheless, it remains the case that 'all too often, women are not as centrally engaged in water and sanitation efforts as they should be' (WSSCC and WEDC, 2006).

Women tend to be under-represented in the workforce of the professionalised water sector (UN, 2005, p.11). Women have tended to be absent or had limited participation as advisors, community decision-makers and WASH managers. As in other highly gender-segregated areas, a combination of factors sustains this over time. Technical fields such as WASH have not traditionally been promoted as an option for women in many cultures, and have become perceived as being for men; few role models exist to enable women to imagine themselves working in WASH, and the operating culture may be unwelcoming.

At a community level, 'societal barriers continually restrict women's involvement in decisions regarding sanitation improvement programmes' (GWA and UN, 2006, p. 49). So, although surveys in 45 developing countries revealed that 72% of day-to-day responsibility for collecting and managing water in the household falls to women and girls (JMP, 2010, p. 29) women have been frequently excluded from meaningful participation in WASH processes. The result can be poor planning decisions, sub-optimal outcomes, failed projects and further marginalisation of women from decision-making over issues that profoundly affect themselves, their families and their communities.

Awareness of the need to involve women within the sector has grown. As Singh notes, 'a universal assumption behind water policy is that women constitute an important group of beneficiaries, and that their participation is promoted' (Singh, 2006). Women's 'participation' tends to be defined as consultation about decisions regarding site location, women's share in the community contribution of labour to the construction process (sometimes in a support role, such as cooking meals, if not in the construction work

itself), and efforts to include women's representation on community WASH management committees. In terms of recognition of women as beneficiaries, WASH programming often assumes that women and girls will benefit from lightened WASH-related workloads. Outcomes for women and girls are often measured quantitatively against numeric targets for women's participation on WASH committees and the amount of women's and girls' time saved as a result of WASH improvements.

Despite the increasing level of awareness of gender as a WASH issue, there has been a tendency, as Panda notes, that 'recognition of gender issues in water management policies and projects exists only on paper', with a 'lack of real on-ground efforts to effectively address gender differences and inequities in water and the absence of meaningful integration of gender questions in mainstream water analyses and discussions' (Panda, 2007, p. 324). A fuller understanding of the dynamics at work in women's lives is required to help WASH managers understand the real impacts of activities assumed to reduce women's workload, and to widen the nature and deepen the extent of benefits for women and girls within WASH programming. This would enable the WASH sector to adequately address women's situations, including mitigating any potential negative impacts. Project designs need to take into account a wide range of factors in determining what is required for women to achieve equal, rather than token, participation with men in decision-making and for women to take on non-traditional roles. The Implications section of this paper (pages 24-27) provides practitioners with strategies that have been identified as a result of this research, which may be considered and adapted in other contexts.

This research process set out to make visible the gendered outcomes of the WASH programs under investigation. The research also provided valuable insight on the extent to which women and men in the communities are aware of the concept that women have rights, and how these rights are understood. The research also provided a learning opportunity for staff of WATL and its partner organisations, who actively participated in the research team, and for women and men in participating communities, to build their knowledge and strategies regarding positive gendered outcomes.

2.1 Gender and WASH policy and practice in Timor-Leste

Gender equality is a core concept within the stated development agenda of the Timor-Leste Government. Existing mechanisms such as the Secretary of State for Promotion of Equality and the Ministerial and district Gender Working Groups are committed to provide the required leadership. However, a shift in approach within the WASH sector to one that enables the involvement of both men and women as a basic requirement and a more gender-balanced workforce, is required to give women the opportunity to participate meaningfully at all levels.

A significant AusAID-funded national WASH program, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program (RWSSP), known by its Tetum acronym BESIK, has invested in the integration of gender concerns. This has contributed to building a stronger focus on gender throughout the WASH sector in Timor-Leste. BESIK's work has included the provision of training to Master Trainers drawn from WASH NGOs, including WATL, and the sharing of gender-sensitive materials and methodologies.[5]

2.2 Women in Timor-Leste

Despite the Government's commitment to gender equality and the structures in place at national and local levels to advance its achievement, women in Timor-Leste still face many obstacles to attaining equality. More than half of all women, compared to almost 40% of men in Timor-Leste, are illiterate.[6] Educational access for girls is hampered by factors including distances to school, domestic tasks at home, and early pregnancies. Timor-Leste has a high maternal mortality rate, associated with a high fertility rate and short periods of time between pregnancies.[7] Women face higher levels of malnutrition than men. Traditional attitudes limit women's mobility, which impacts on opportunities in education, employment and participation in decision-making.

Women in Timor-Leste are subjected to high rates of gender-based violence. The 2009–2010 Demographic Health Survey indicates that almost 40% of Timorese women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence, most commonly at the hands of a current husband or partner. The Law Against Domestic Violence was passed in 2010.

Although a relatively high rate of female representation has been achieved in Parliament, and quotas have contributed to relatively high representation levels in Suco Councils, only 2% of council chiefs are women.[8]

With regard to participation in WASH management, 2008 and 2009 figures indicated low rates of participation by women in water management committees (known in Tetum as Grupo Maneija Facilidad or GMFs), but 2011 data showed that 70% of GMFs have at least 30% women membership, 10% have women leaders, 94% have women in management positions and 33% have women registered in technical roles.[9]

2.3 The work of WaterAid in Liquica District, Timor-Leste

In 2005, WAA chose Timor-Leste as the site of its first program in Asia. WA's Timor-Leste country program is shaped by the Timor-Leste Country Strategy, outlined in the WAA Business Plan and underpinned by WA's Global Strategy. WA's program focuses on field testing of WASH best practice methodologies in the Timor-Leste context and advocating for these practices to be adopted and implemented at national scale by governments, donors and other WASH sector actors.

WaterAid has been working in Liquica district since 2007 to provide safe water, improved sanitation, and hygiene to communities. WATL follows a widely proven project approach of working through local NGOs for participatory community level scheme implementation. This approach aims to ensure successful completion of initiatives and strengthen implementation capacity in the WASH sector. The approach involves partner NGOs, supported by WATL staff, providing a range of technical (hardware) and process-related (software) services to communities.

5   The 2010 Mid Term Review of BESIK identified numerous achievements in relation to the gender component of this project, noting the project's 'attention to sustainability but also its advocacy for institutional change and broader societal understanding', (AusAID, 2010).
6   http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/timor-leste/2009/11/02/1482/timor-leste_democratic_republic_of/, accessed November 2012, UNFPA, 2012.
7   Social Institutions and Gender Index, http://genderindex.org/country/timor-leste, accessed November 2012.

8   UN Women, http://www.unwomen-eseasia.org/docs/factsheets/05%20TIMOR_LESTE%20factsheet.pdf, accessed November 2012.
9   AusAID and ISF, http://www.isf.uts.edu.au/pdfs/ISF_TimorLesteWASH.pdf, accessed September 2012.

2.4 Gender in the project: WaterAid's commitment to equity and inclusion

WA has increasingly invested in addressing gender issues in its work. WA has adopted equity and inclusion as core principles of its Global Strategy, and as intrinsic to a rights-based approach. This goal aims to ensure that WA addresses issues of marginalisation and exclusion and realises its vision of a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. WA's strong policy commitment, embedded institutionally through its Equity and Inclusion Policy, has been backed up by increasingly exploring and implementing equity and the inclusion of initiatives in its international operations, including important work on menstrual hygiene.

The WATL project that was the subject of this research was informed by a basic consciousness of the relevance of gender to the success of the project, but there had been minimal specific investment in this prior to the research. WATL had developed gender guidelines and committed to the target of gender balance at all levels of staff and management, but at the time of the research there were no women in technical roles or in the Senior Management Team. The female staff of WATL's local NGO partners were employed only in hygiene promoter roles, a common role for women among WASH staff.

Staff and partners had received gender training and annual refresher training. A female Gender Focal Point (GFP) had been appointed from the WATL team but she had received only minimal support and resources. She had gained some gender training through the BESIK Master Trainer program. No Gender Focal Points had been appointed by WATL's local NGO partners at the time of the research.[10]

WATL's gender-focused activities at this time were aimed at increasing levels of participation by women in the community, in WASH-related decision-making, and in ensuring gender balance on the community WASH committees (known by the Tetum abbreviation GMF). WATL guidelines specify that GMF committees include at least 30% women. This target is in line with recently revised government Rural Water guidelines, which also promote women's participation in technical and managerial roles on the GMF, and is aligned to broader government goals for women's participation in public life.

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10 Both local partner organisations now have designated Gender Focal Points.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Initial research process

This study utilised a research methodology developed and trialled in 2009 by the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney; the International Women's Development Agency; Live and Learn Environmental Education Fiji; and World Vision Vanuatu. The original research, funded by an AusAID Australian Development Research Awards grant, sought to investigate positive gender outcomes arising from WASH programming including both practical and strategic gender outcomes for women.[11] One product of that research was a facilitator guidebook outlining the steps in the research process,[12] which was a key resource used in the present study.[13]

The research process commenced with intensive training for the research team, selected from staff of WATL and two of its local NGO partners, Hafoun Timor-Leste (HTL) and Naroman Timor Lorosae (NTL). The training included a practical 'run-through' of the research process with staff as the informants. The findings from this step are valuable in themselves and have been utilised in this report.[14] However, the outcomes of the research process in the two communities are the main focus of this report.

The research was conducted in two communities of Liquica, Timor-Leste, in June 2010. The communities were Datakolo and Manuquibia. Village leadership identified and organised the participant group for each village. The sample size, as recommended in the Facilitators' Guide, was deliberately small: approximately 10 women and 10 men participated in each community.[15] This enabled manageable group dynamics during the research process.

The initial research in each community followed several steps over a two-day period. Storytelling in separate women's and men's groups was the starting point. This qualitative method enabled the expression of women's and men's experiences in their own words and allowed participants to discuss their perceptions of change experienced as a result of WASH program activities. It also enabled the identification of enabling factors. The separate

women's and men's groups then identified themes that had emerged from the stories into areas of change and enablers of change. Ranking and voting exercises resulted in some quantification of perceived significance and extent of change, and comparison of male and female responses. The final step of women's and men's groups first 'visioning' even better outcomes for women and men, then role-playing those changes, enabled women and men to separately imagine and then share each other's visions for a more gender-fair future. A step-by-step summary of the research process can be found at Annex 1.

Separate women's and men's groups at several steps in the process allowed both women and men to speak freely, provided a safe space particularly for women to contribute equally, and were conducive for discussing sensitive subjects. Issues discussed at each step built on those arising from the previous step. This ensured relevance, enabled each to listen to the others' perspectives, and resulted in enthusiastic engagement in the research process by both women and men. Reflection back to the mixed group of each sex-segregated group's findings at the conclusion of each step encouraged learning between women and men, as well as surfacing issues for debate and clarification.

The research was conducted in a combination of Tetum and the local language, Tocodede. Note-taking was diligently undertaken by volunteers from the National University of Timor-Leste, Technical Faculty. The full proceedings were recorded, including each of the steps and complete transcripts of discussions.

The research methodology was based on a Strengths-Based Approach (SBA), using participatory processes. The perspectives of both women and men were sought, with the

Manuquibia men in discussion
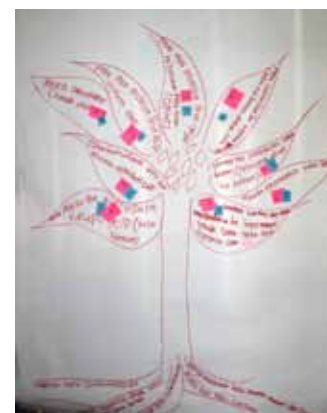
PHOTO: PRAGATI BAJRACHARYA, WATERAID

aim of promoting mutual learning for the researchers and research participants. The methodology aimed to promote active and empowering roles for research participants to address their own circumstances, rather than the mere passive provision of information to the researcher.

While the research focused on understanding gendered outcomes, the process recognised that the term 'gender' can be confusing and can trigger unhelpful associations and misunderstandings. The research team avoided using this language, preferring to speak about 'changes for women and men' and ensuring that both women's and men's perspectives were gathered and respected.

3.2 Analysis of findings

The research data was reviewed by the research team during a one-day workshop immediately following the field research in June 2010. The data was then collated and coded by the research team leader (and author of this paper) in Australia. The findings were based primarily on the direct responses from women and men during the research. Observation by the research team and notes from the broader discussions between women and men formed a second category of findings. These findings relate to women's and men's understandings of women's 'rights', women's willingness to assert these rights, and men's receptivity to this.

Preliminary findings were presented to the research team for further analysis and verification in a two-day follow-up workshop in March 2011. Analysis workshops were conducted using data sets in both English and Tetum to clarify any errors or translations open to differing interpretation.

Datakolo (left) and Manuquibia (right), women's 'trees' of changes and 'roots' or enablers of change

PHOTO: PRAGATI BAJRACHARYA, WATERAID

The analysis process was very new to the research team. While the workshop and follow-up visits to the two communities (see below) were invaluable in collective 'sense-making' of the data, the author takes full responsibility for the findings presented in this paper.

3.3 Follow-up visits

The March 2011 follow-up visit to Timor-Leste by the research team leader (and present author) included return visits to each of the two communities, which enabled further verification and elaboration of some information that arose from analysis of the findings. Informal focus group discussion was used for the second visit. Discussion questions, developed by the research team, centred on issues of interest identified during analysis of the initial findings. The topics selected included community understanding of women's rights, the extent to which men had begun to take a share of responsibility for domestic work, and the extent to which women can positively influence men to reduce risk-taking/anti-social behaviour. This second visit was an opportunity to explore the extent to which the dialogue facilitated by the research had prompted further awareness and behaviour change in the intervening period. It also provided the opportunity to present the communities with printed photo-books documenting their participation in the research.

This report utilises information shared by women and men during the return visits to elaborate on the initial findings. It also highlights the extent to which the research process itself acted as a catalyst for women and men to understand more about gender roles and relations and fostered positive change.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Overview of findings

The research process enabled women and men to clearly identify positive gendered outcomes from the project. Some of the key themes, which are explored in more detail in the next section, are summarised here.

As expected, outcomes included improvements for women in relation to practical gender needs. Time and labour saving for women and increased ease of completing household tasks were highlighted. Strikingly, changes relating to 'strategic gender interests' were mentioned frequently and valued highly, particularly by women, but also by men. Some interesting differences arose in how women and men perceived and valued different kinds of change; and the research process itself aired and highlighted some issues of contention.

A major change valued by women was increased harmony in the home. Other changes discussed could be categorised as changed or expanded gender roles for both women and men. For men, this was in the form of greater involvement in domestic tasks, a change which, though modest in scale, was appreciated by women. New or increased opportunities for women included increased participation in community roles and decision-making, more opportunity to contribute to the household economy, and more time to spend in traditional craft activities such as tais-weaving. In describing the benefits they had experienced from the changes, women referred to increased feelings of freedom and happiness.

Some increase in respect for women's contribution was evident. Interestingly, women's participation in the research process itself demonstrated that women are ready to advocate for greater recognition of their rights and of the contributions they make to family and community life. Men in the communities felt that seeing women undertake new roles creates powerful role-modelling for other women.

The issue of men's risk-taking and anti-social behaviour, although indirectly linked with WASH issues, was strongly highlighted as being a pressing concern for women.

The research also highlighted that women and men in the communities participating in the research have a growing awareness and acceptance that women have rights of various kinds, and that women seem to be increasingly willing to assert their rights to recognition and inclusion.

The section below details each of the above findings and the evidence from the data that led the research team to these conclusions.

4.2 Increased harmony in the home

For women in both communities, the most significant change they experienced within their families was increased harmony in their relationships with their husbands. This change received the highest rating of any change mentioned across all groups. Women in both communities gave this the highest score in the ranking exercise as the most significant change that they had experienced in their families.

One woman in Manuquibia commented:

> Once, when water was far away, we had to walk for long distance to get water. This situation had a negative impact on my family when I came back from the water source ... I feel this is a really helpful project that minimises our internal family problems and gives us benefits.

Some men also noted that relations in the family and with their wives had improved; however women attached greater significance to this change. Men tended to express appreciation that women and men work well together in a more practical sense, e.g. Datakolo men mentioned that women and men work hard together and that men help more with children, and Manuquibia men mentioned that women and men work together to build latrines and sell goods in the market, with the implication that this has improved as a result of project activities. Women also talked of the ways in which women and men work together in practical ways, but also placed a very high value on harmonious relationships. Men did not mention harmony in the home per se. The difference in gender perceptions on this issue was evidenced by men (in both communities) asking for clarification from the women about what they meant when they raised this issue as part of their report back to the whole group. One woman in Datakolo responded:

> In the morning when we wanted to prepare breakfast, we had to fetch water from the spring then prepare breakfast. Once when fetching water from a long distance, we came home late and our husband was angry, but now, no more – the food can be quickly and well prepared, and we feel love in the family and love for our children.

It was clear that domestic disharmony had been a common and significant experience for women in relation to their task of collecting water. One aspect, as mentioned in the quote above, was time taken away from

other domestic duties. Another aspect related to women spending periods of time away from home and out of their husband's sight and the suspicions this created:

> We did a lot of things such as spend a lot of time to collect water from a far spring. This created problems like physical fighting among us. (Manuquibia woman)

Suspicions could be mutual. One woman reflected on the changes in relationships between husbands and wives in Manuquibia:

> We suspect our husbands a bit less now – we're more trusting that they are not having affairs and men suspect their wives less too. (Manuquibia woman, follow-up visit)

It is clear from the significance given by women to the issue of household harmony, that this is critical for their daily lives and well-being.

4.3 Impact on gender-based violence

The woman quoted above referring to 'physical fighting' made one of the few explicit mentions of violence; interestingly it was a man in one community who made the most overt comment about violence during a discussion between women and men. Frequently in discussing family disharmony, the word problema was used by both women and men. For example, the woman from Manuquibia first quoted above said:

> I feel this is really a helpful project that minimises our internal family problema [problems]. (Manuquibia woman)

This term problema may or may not refer to or include physical violence. Discussion with staff confirmed that the general term problema may refer to violence but it is difficult to be sure unless there are other clues in the context or discussion. It is known that rates of gender-based violence experienced by women in Timor-Leste are high;[16] however, it is rarely openly discussed. Female project staff expressed the view that it would be difficult for women to speak about violence in public, particularly in the presence of men.[17]

The issue of violence was discussed further during the follow-up community visits; however, it was clear that this is not a comfortable topic for open discussion. One group of women, when asked to name the rights they believe women have, reacted with loud nervous laughter when one young woman mentioned 'the right to live free from violence'.

Finding ways to talk about and address gender-based violence as a constraining factor for women's full participation in development activities, including WASH activities, and as an issue of women's human rights, remains a challenge for NGOs in Timor-Leste.

By reducing problema and increasing harmony, it is possible that violence in the home was reduced within research communities. However, due to the reticence of participants to speak openly on the subject, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not, and the extent to which, this is the case.

4.4 Men helping women

Women and men expressed a general sense that men are now helping more with traditional women's roles, including collection of water, childcare (including helping to bathe), assisting in the kitchen, and general domestic tasks. Men listed this as one of the changes they had experienced during the initial story-telling step of the process, and, in both communities, ranked it as the most significant of all the changes in terms of its impact at the family level. Interestingly, women did not initially articulate men helping more with these tasks among the changes they experienced. Several women and men spoke of the close proximity of the water supply to the house resulting in men being more willing and able to help with the collection of water.

> When the clean water is close to the house, we help to collect water as well. (Datakolo man)
> This is the reality in my family; that when there is water in the community, men also help to fetch water. (Datakolo woman)

The change in men's behaviour appears to be directly related to the ease of the task, and raises a question about the extent of their willingness to assist with water collection. The views expressed seem not to reflect a deep change in men themselves in relation to wanting to help women, but rather a preparedness to help when it is easy to do so. While this is significant, it is important not to overstate the extent of the underlying change.

This is not to suggest that the change is not valued. It was clear that women appreciated the assistance from men and that it made a significant difference to their daily lives. This is indicated by the extent of change perceived

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16 The 2009–10 Timor-Leste Demographic and Health Study (NSD, Ministry of Finance and ICF Macro, 2010) found that 38% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical gender-based violence since the age of 15. Rates varied across districts, with Liquica slightly below the average, at 34.5%. Of particular concern for WATL is the fact that the other district in which it operates, Manufahi, had the highest incidence of any district, with 75.6% of women reporting having experienced violence.
17 Perhaps not surprisingly, male staff seemed less acutely aware of the barriers to women speaking openly about violence.

by women as compared to men when both groups were asked to vote on it. In Datakolo, 100% of women felt there had been a 'quite big' or 'very big' change in men's contribution to water collection, compared to only 50% of Datakolo men.

Similarly, women reported a higher level of perceived change compared to men in the extent to which general management of the household has become more of a shared responsibility. 100% of Datakolo women, compared to 70% of Datakolo men, felt that this had changed 'quite a lot' or 'a lot'.[18] This indicates that even a moderate amount of help from men in the domestic sphere makes a significant difference in women's daily lives. However, this does not mean that women are satisfied with the amount of help they receive from men. In discussion, particularly during the follow-up visits, women contested the extent to which men actually contribute to household work, and clearly wanted greater involvement. When challenged, one man in Datakolo said:

> We can only cook if women are sick, not cook for parties, not for big numbers. We put up the tent.

This man is acknowledging that men have changed a little, particularly when a specific need arises, but that there are clear limits to this change and, in other contexts, men are still adhering to the traditional gendered task allocation.

Women and men agreed that some men contribute more and others contribute little. A man in Manuquibia during the initial research observed that:

> Some men are concerned to help women but some others never help women. Men and women have different ideas. (Manuquibia man)

Men in both communities ranked their increased contribution to domestic tasks as significant for both their families and communities.

4.5 New and increased opportunities for women

Women in particular, but also men, talked about a range of roles and opportunities that have opened up to women as a result of the WASH program. These included greater participation in community decision-making processes regarding WASH, and more time and opportunity for other valued traditional and new activities. Both are discussed further below.

4.5.1 Participation in community decision-making processes such as WASH Management Committee

Women's increased participation in a variety of community structures and processes, including actively participating in decision-making, was ranked as highly significant by both women and men.

Women in both Datakolo and Manuquibia rated opportunities to participate in the GMF and other community groups as the most significant change for them at community level. As well as giving this top ranking (in terms of the significance of desired outcomes achieved), women in both communities named and ranked highly their increased opportunity to participate, including their role in decision-making within specific community structures and processes. These were ranked as highly significant changes for their families as well as for their communities.

Manuquibia women identified the most significant changes for them at the community level as participation in the following spaces, listed in rank order: (1) GMF; (2) literacy classes; (3) women's organisations; and (4) women's group activities. This was subject to intense debate when they shared their rankings with the men's group. Manuquibia men argued that the women should surely rate improved health of the community as more significant, on the grounds that they would be unable to participate without good health. The women strongly countered that the community and they themselves would not have good health without their participation in these activities.

Datakolo women also ranked their opportunities to participate in meetings as the most significant change for them at community level, and unanimously voted this as a very big change. In the voting, 100% of Datakolo women also voted that having more time to attend meetings was a 'quite big' (10% of women) or a 'very big' (90% of women) change. Some Datakolo women expressed strong appreciation to both their families and communities for giving them support to participate in community groups and decision-making.

Men also ranked women's increased participation as a highly significant change at both community and family levels. Men in Manuquibia ranked women's participation in the planning processes and contributions to decision-making at meetings respectively as the most and second most significant changes at community level and the second most significant at family level. Datakolo men ranked women contributing to decision-making at meetings as the second most significant change at the

community level. Some men expressed their appreciation for the contributions women make to planning processes.

However, it was noted that opportunities for participation in meetings are still far from equitable, particularly in relation to meetings beyond the aldeia [hamlet or sub-village]. In Manuquibia, 21% of women considered that increased opportunities for some women to attend meetings outside the aldeia had been a very big change, and 79% felt that this had changed quite a bit. Manuquibia men, however, felt that women's opportunities for participation in meetings had changed less. 56% assessed that this had changed little or not at all, while only 33% felt that there had been quite a change and 11% a very big change. The differences in perspective between the sexes here may relate to women being more aware than men of what other women in the community are doing, or to women feeling that opening up even a small number of opportunities for such participation is a very big change.[19]

While there is evidence of some increased willingness among men to support women's active participation in decision-making, other barriers continue to constrain their involvement. During the follow-up visit, one woman in Manuquibia said:

> Men don't stop us from coming to meetings; we just have too much to do. We have to wait for our husband to come and take the kids; we couldn't come until he does that.

This quote shows that even when women do not feel constrained by men's attitudes to their participation in community life, they are still in a practical sense dependent on men's support to enable them to take up the opportunity. Another woman mentioned money as a prohibiting factor, saying that if they could afford to, they would pay someone to mind their kids so they could attend meetings.

The issue of women's opportunities to take on leadership roles figured prominently in the 'visioning positive gender change' role-playing exercise at the end of the research activities. Women's and men's groups in both communities role-played scenarios of women taking on leadership roles and participating in community decision-making processes, sometimes instead of men, with men staying home to mind the children. In principle at least, men as well as women appear to see value in women having an increased role in decision-making, even if in practice women's equal participation is a long way from being realised.

4.5.2 More time and opportunity for other valued traditional and new activities

As well as participating in meetings and decision-making processes, women specifically mentioned several other activities for which they now have increased time and opportunity. These included making tais and doing other sewing and craft activities, attending literacy classes and participating in the women's organisation. These were valued as new or increased opportunities available as a result of improved WASH conditions.

One Manuquibia woman said:

> In the past, women did not access women's activities, because we had to go a long distance to collect water. But now there is a big change. We have good access to clean water, our children are healthy and free from sickness and we have time to attend meetings and get involved in many women's activities.

Women, in particular, spoke about their contribution to the WASH construction process. Men at first acknowledged women only for their contribution to cooking during construction. During the plenary discussions, women firmly stated that they had also contributed to the carting of sand and stones. While this may be part of women's traditional role, the women's insistence that they should be recognised for this contribution seems new. It is unclear whether or not the research discussion was the first opportunity for women to make this point.

Both men and women noted the important role that women can play in notifying the GMF of maintenance issues needing attention, given that they spend more time using the WASH facilities than men. One man said that:

> Women have an interest in providing information on the maintenance of the water system. They can provide information on broken or leaking pipes or broken taps. (Manuquibia man)

In general, maintenance issues are reported by the GMF to the WATL technician with responsibility for post-construction monitoring. This person assists the GMF to perform the repairs if they are able, or if the community is remote, the technician supports the community by accessing parts, paid for with funds collected from the community. The research findings indicate that while maintenance issues may once have been seen as a technical matter and therefore the domain of men, there is increasing awareness that women are well placed to ensure that maintenance issues are quickly attended to.[20]

19 Similarly, men also quantified change as less significant than women did when staff voted on the extent to which women and men felt that women acting as role models was resulting in more opportunities for women to take on new roles in the organisation and in the community. See footnote at 4.4.

20 More recently, subsequent to the research, WATL staff have reported Manuquibia men stating that now some women attempt some repairs themselves, before asking for assistance from WATL.

Women and men also mentioned that women contribute to the family economy by growing vegetables and selling them at market. While growing vegetables is a traditional activity for women, with water now closer to hand and more time available, this has become much easier, so women are able to grow more. This was an area in which a strong sense of increased cooperation between women and men emerged. One Manuquibia man said, 'Since water is close, we now plant vegetables together'. The ability to grow vegetables close to the house, near tap-stands and bathrooms, was valued by women. Sharing of tasks required for the family to sell at market was discussed and a general sense emerged that men were showing a greater willingness to allow women to take more of a role in this, with men supporting them by taking on some household tasks so that women could go to market, or in other supportive ways.

Interestingly, while growing vegetables and going to the market were mentioned frequently in the research, and contributing to the household economy was mentioned several times, these were rated as only moderately significant changes, perhaps because these things are not new.

While it was clear from discussions during both visits that women still have limited time and a greater burden of duties than men, it was also obvious that women placed a high value on having more time and opportunity to undertake a wider range of activities.

4.6 Women taking on new roles act as positive role models for other women

In the communities, men spoke of valuing the fact that women can act as positive role models to encourage other women to take on new roles. Men in Datakolo saw this as especially positive, ranking this as the most significant gendered change that they had observed at community level and the second most significant at family level. One Datakolo man said:

> Women can be a good role model or good example for other women to contribute to this country.

Interestingly, women did not identify the role-model effect as a significant change.[21] However, both men and women project staff, when they were respondents in the research process at the trial stage, identified and valued the role modelling effect that women in new roles can have for other women.[22]

4.7 Women's increased sense of well-being in terms of dignity, freedom and happiness

Recurrent in women's responses was a theme of experiencing a greater sense of freedom and opportunity, and many expressed greater happiness. This related to having their work burdens alleviated, having more peaceful relationships at home, and being able to participate in a wider range of activities, particularly those beyond the home. This seems significant. While time savings for women is often seen as a gender-sensitive indicator for measuring the success of WASH programs, less attention seems to have been given to the implications of having time freed up, for example, in terms of women's own sense of well-being.[23]

One Manuquibia woman said:

> Once when we had no water and no latrines we did not have enough information on good health. We suffered from many sicknesses. We also did not have access to information. We used traditional medicine because the clinic is far from us. Now we feel free from those things because we can access clean water and information on health. This is the change we have so far. Now, the number of people who get sick is reduced. We the women lead to control daily activities.

Another Manuquibia woman said:

> Now we have water it makes us happy. Our children are happy to go to school and we feel a little bit free at home.

While women mostly spoke of time savings being used for productive activities and few mentioned having increased leisure time, one woman in Datakolo said:

21 It would have been interesting to ask for women's views on the significance of this, for example, via a voting question on it. However, the research process involved each step building on previous steps, so if a group did not raise an issue themselves, it was generally not the subject of further discussion in the later stages of the process; thus as women in the communities did not mention role-modelling in the earlier stages of the process, they were not asked about it at later stages.
22 Women staff felt strongly that women in both the organisation and the community were greatly enabled to take on important roles by other women acting as positive role models, and that this was a very big change. Male staff agreed, but less strongly, that this was the case for women in the organisation, but felt that there had been little change in this regard for women at the community level. In a protracted and heated discussion, male staff broadened the issue to opportunities for women at national level, lamenting how few positions were held by women even now, and arguing that there is still a long way to go. Women agreed, but argued vehemently that even a few women in important public roles was a huge change from when they were growing up, when there were few or no examples of women in leadership and little or no expectation of such for themselves. In this context, staff women argued, even a small change is enormously significant to them.
23 Arku, F, 2010, 'Time savings from easy access to clean water: Implications for rural men's and women's well-being', in *Progress in Development Studies*, 10:233.

Once we had no water and our husbands did not allow us to go to the parties. But now they allow us to take part in the neighbours' parties.

Overall, women expressed a sense of having their burdens of work and worry relieved and of enjoying a greater sense of agency in their own lives. Through being freer to participate more broadly in family and community

life, instead of spending long periods of time collecting water, women felt that they enjoyed more respect and acknowledgement from men in the community and, for some, also at home:

Nowadays water is close. Now women can feel like respected adults. Women can take a bath, look after children and have time to rest, and make handicraft; before, women did not have time to talk to their children; most of their time was just for activity. (Manuquibia woman)

It is significant that this woman equates the specific changes that have occurred in women's lives with women now being seen as 'adults'. This indicates that this woman, at least, feels a greater sense of standing as a result of small but significant gains, such as the ability to keep clean and presentable, and having greater options about how she spends her time. More free time enables her to do things that are important to her, such as offering more support to her children.

4.8 Women can positively influence men's awareness about men's risk-taking and anti-social behaviour

Women and men in both communities[24] discussed the extent to which women are able to influence men's risk-taking and anti-social behaviour, and the extent to which men, under women's influence, are moderating these behaviours. Although the link between this issue and the WASH program was not explicitly made, it may be that the time and money that men spend on alcohol, tobacco and gambling, and the impact of drunken and abusive behaviour on women and children, can detract from the positive outcomes that were reported as a result of

WASH activities, such as levels of harmony in the home and balancing the household economy.[25] It may reflect recognition that such resource-depleting behaviours are undermining the impact of expanded vegetable growing and marketing activities on family finances. A further link may be that while women reported an increased sense of being listened to and respected, the continuation of men's risk-taking behaviours despite women's advocacy for moderation shows the limits of this change. Conversely, it may be that as women's standing in the family and community gradually increases, their willingness to tolerate such behaviours in silence reduces. These behaviours by men appear to be significant in ongoing processes of asserting and bargaining for power between women and men in the family. Whatever the reason, these issues were subject to much discussion in the communities during the research process. They also featured strongly in the role-plays.[26] What was clear is that women are having little success in influencing men to modify these behaviours. When put to the vote, 80% of men in Datakolo conceded that there had been little change, while a more generous 40% of women felt there had been a quite big or a very big change.[27]

The issue of these behaviours was also hotly debated during the follow-up visit to the two communities.

While women and men agreed that women's influence has resulted in little change in relation to risk-taking and anti-social behaviours, a few men did acknowledge that they listen more to women in general and that there has been an increase in the valuing of women's views, at least in relation to WASH planning and decision-making. Some men may also listen to women on issues of behaviour that has consequences for family welfare:

It also depends on our income, so we have to be smart. Who will pay school fees if we don't listen to them? We value women's rights. (Datakolo man)

This quote suggests that some men realise that women have the broader interests of the family in mind when advocating for men to modify their behaviour.

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24 Also staff: the issue of risk-taking and anti-social behaviour by male staff was also an issue raised by staff when they were the informants during the practice run.

25 It should also be noted that while an increased capacity to contribute to the household economy was noted as a change for women, the question of whether women have increased control over family income was not mentioned by either women or men.
26 These are significant issues, reflecting power, well-being and gender norms, and are not limited to Timor-Leste. Sylvia Chant's work in the Gambia, the Philippines and Costa Rica has highlighted the persistent difficulties that women experience in negotiating gendered obligations and entitlements in the household, even as they take on more responsibility: 'Despite women's progressive advance to the frontline of coping with poverty, they do not seem to have gained any ground for negotiating greater inputs to household incomes or labour on the part of men, let alone reductions in resource-depleting activities [such as gambling and drinking] which are in part driven by normative ideals of masculinity'. Chant, S, 'The "feminisation of poverty" – a contested concept in need of better gender and poverty indices: reflections from comparative research in the Gambia, Philippines And Costa Rica', paper for a workshop on *Needs, Development and Gender Equity*, University of Oslo, 12-15 March 2009.
27 The opposite views were expressed among staff, with 75% of men feeling that there had been quite significant change, compared to only 25% of women; and 75% of women feeling that there had been little change. There was a clear sense that these kinds of behaviour impacted on women staff because women and men staff spend periods of time staying overnight in the communities; also because it was felt by women in particular that anti-social behaviour involved a reputational risk to the organisation and risked the respect needed from the community to succeed in their work.

4.9 Further observations

Two further findings came less directly from women's and men's own responses to the research questions, but were strong themes observed by the research team in the content and dynamics of discussions between women and men during the research process, and agreed on during the analysis process to be significant. These relate to the level of knowledge of 'women's rights' among women and men, the acknowledged gap between women having rights in theory and being able to realise those rights, and women's willingness to assert their rights, particularly their determination to be acknowledged for what they do. Understanding these issues is important for WASH programmers wishing to address gender inequality and track progress over time.

4.9.1 Both women and men have an emerging awareness that women have rights

A general overall awareness that women have rights appeared to exist in the communities at the time of the research. Several women and men mentioned women's right to participate in different activities including in decision-making, and the right to be heard.

This theme was further discussed during the follow-up visit, in order to better understand how well women's rights were understood and the sources of information that women and men had previously accessed. When asked to list rights they believe women to have, both men and women were able to name a range of rights that they understood women to hold.[28] Men in Datakolo cited the following sources of information from which they have gained an understanding of women's rights: radio, television and printed media; influence from local elite such as teachers; and the research process itself. They also noted that change had been happening gradually for some time.

Discussion during the follow-up visits indicated that participating in the research process itself had helped to further raise women's and men's awareness of women's rights. Although others mentioned the above sources of information, perhaps for some, at least, the research process brought the message home in a new way:

Now men know and understand about women's rights; before the research there was no information about this. (Datakolo man)

Interestingly, when women and men were asked what they believed the obstacles were to women achieving their rights, all the obstacles listed by men related to men limiting women's freedoms.[29] While some men say they are beginning to change their behaviours, the men in this discussion felt that many men are still far from relinquishing power in order for women to realise their rights.

A further observation can be made that while women and men have some awareness of the concept of women's rights and gender equality, at least one man expressed that it is difficult to imagine how things might be different. The same man commented that the role-plays had been valuable as a vehicle for enabling the men to imagine positive alternative ways of organising their family and community lives.

4.9.2 Women, given the opportunity, are willing to assert their right to be acknowledged

A further observation during the research visits was how strongly women wanted to, and were able to, assert their right to be acknowledged for their contributions. An example of this was women's insistence during plenary discussions in both communities on being recognised for contributing to the WASH construction process not only by cooking for the men but also by carting stones and sand.

A further case in which women asserted their right to recognition was in relation to participation in meetings. In Datakolo, when a question was raised about the extent to which women are able to attend meetings, one woman stated emphatically:

Women attend all the meetings. If you don't believe us, check the Minutes. You will see all of our names there!

On the same issue, during a discussion as part of the follow-up visit to Datakolo, both women and men stated that women have a right to participate in decision-making

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28 Women across the two communities reported that they believed they had the following rights: to participate, speak up and be heard; to good health; to make decisions; to choose their husband; to freedom; to live free from domestic violence. Men reported that they believed women had the following rights: to attend meetings; to go anywhere they wish; to make their own decisions, by themselves if they wish, without others influencing them; to undertake a range of roles including xefe de suco (elected village chief), administrator, member of parliament, teacher, army, police, driver, pilot; to build a house; to work in the garden, do physical work like men, play all kinds of sport.

29 The men in these discussion groups listed the following obstacles to women realising their rights: Men don't give opportunity to women to attend meetings or visit people outside the village; some men still strongly hold the attitude that females cannot go to school; some men bar women from doing 'men's activities' (but this varies from family to family); because of culture 'men kill women's rights', with some men still believing that women must do all the household work.

processes. When one man queried whether women are actually accessing that right, one woman said:

> Yes, I was asked to participate and I participate. I'm on the GMF.

Another area in which women asserted their contribution was in relation to household labour, particularly in the context of discussing the extent to which men now share in this work. During the follow-up visit to Manuquibia, there was considerable discussion over attempts to quantify how much behavioural change had occurred in terms of women taking up roles traditionally done by men, such as community decision-making, and men taking up roles traditionally undertaken by women in the domestic realm. This was an interesting discussion. Men had initially claimed that a great deal of change in gender roles had occurred and that they themselves had changed considerably (while noting that the extent of change was inadequate). At the end of a long discussion, due to women's insistence, men agreed to modify their claim, attributing most of the change to the women and little to themselves. One man conceded:

> If we think about the things that men specifically change, then we should say the change is 50% from women, 25% from men.

This was greeted by much laughter and applause by the women, who were willing to accept this. This would seem to indicate that women have, if anything, taken on additional responsibility on top of their previous roles, whereas men have taken on little that is new.[30]

The research team observed a degree of impatience among some women during these exchanges. There appeared to be a level of frustration that although they are indeed 'participating', in fact by taking on increasing responsibility, women sometimes feel that they continue to be judged as not 'participating' or 'not participating enough'.

30 This is consistent with Sylvia Chant's findings of a growing feminisation of responsibility: women may increasingly be able to take on new roles and responsibilities but they struggle to share their existing responsibilities, or to have power and control over the use of expanded family resources. Chant, S, 2007, *Gender, generation, and poverty: Exploring the 'Feminisation of Poverty' in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK.

The research process asked women and men to identify factors that they believe enabled positive change for women and men to occur. During the research analysis, project staff categorised these factors as those instigated by the community itself; those instigated by WA and its partners; and those relating to external factors. Some of the enabling factors were considered a contribution to positive gender outcomes specifically, while other factors seemed to encourage change more broadly.

Some enabling factors appear inter-related and build upon each other. Opportunities created by the project gave women voice and an active role, which then led to further change. External factors such as raising awareness of gender via other NGOs and the government also supported and reinforced the changes.

Below are the enabling factors as grouped by project staff according to actors at different levels.

5.1 Changes originating from the communities themselves

Women in both communities felt that **'unity within the community'** was an enabling factor for change. This is understood to refer at least partly to the willingness of community members to support one another. In relation to women being able to take up new or expanded opportunities, Manuquibia women expressed strong appreciation for being given 'support from the community' and 'support from the family'.[31] More broadly, 'unity in the community' is understood to mean the willingness of community members to pull together to solve their own problems, perhaps particularly when an opportunity arises such as the WATL project.

Datakolo men stated that the community had changed due to **need**, again perhaps indicating that necessity had driven women and men to work together in the ways mentioned above to solve pressing problems. This would suggest that the WASH project was seen as relevant to the communities' needs and thus the communities were willing to organise themselves to participate in the way that they saw best to gain the benefits. In the discussion, there was a sense from men that the project and perhaps other factors too had led them to realise that change was necessary. Datakolo men may have had something similar in mind when they attributed change to **moral responsibility**. This is understood to mean that the men felt a responsibility to act, and perhaps change traditional ways of doing things, for the betterment of the community when opportunities arise.

Men in Manuquibia stated that **women have reasons and right**. The research team understood this to indicate that women and men in the community had insight and acceptance that women have rights and knowledge, and that gender roles may need to change in order to facilitate development in the community. It was unclear the extent to which this recognition arose from the project approach or whether it predated the project. Manuquibia men also recognised that women's active participation in WASH matters was appropriate as 'it's their role'. Again, it is unclear whether this recognition resulted from a pre-existing awareness that women should be involved in community WASH activities, or from a conscious effort on the part of the project. However, it is likely that this awareness was influenced by the efforts made by the NGO.

Interestingly, Manuquibia men specifically referred to '**motivation** so that the water system will last longer' as a factor contributing to change. This appears to be a recognition of the centrality of water issues to women's lives as well as the benefit of involving women in WASH activities and in decision-making. For example, as reported elsewhere, during the discussion in this community, men and women commented that women are best placed to report maintenance issues as they are the daily users of the water system.

Finally, Manuquibia men stated that gendered change had resulted from **community awareness**. Awareness of gender issues and women's rights is likely to have derived over time from a variety of sources, as discussed below.

5.2 Change resulting from actions and approach taken by WaterAid and its local NGO partners

Some changes were believed to have directly resulted from the project itself. Datakolo women mentioned **funds from WA** and the **support of the local NGO technician** as factors that had enabled change. Combined with factors mentioned above at community level, it may be surmised that the relevance of the project to felt needs created fertile ground for the project to not only address practical WASH needs, but also to begin to address issues of gender roles and relations.

The value of having **women staff working in communities** was demonstrated by the success of the separate women's and men's discussion groups during the research itself. Having the availability of skilled female facilitators on staff assisted the ability to conduct sex-segregated groups. Female project staff may provide positive role models for men and women

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31 Staff women also attributed their own ability to take on new roles to having received support from their families, and they appreciated having been given opportunities by their families that are not always given to women; women staff members also acknowledged opportunities given to them by their organisations.

in the communities to consider the possibility and value of new and expanded roles for women. As recorded in the findings, men in one community strongly felt that **women taking on new roles act as role-models for other women**, enabling further change in gender roles and relations. WA's deliberate policy of striving for greater gender balance on staff in a traditionally male-dominated field has contributed to the role-modelling effect by demonstrating the value to be gained by everyone from women's expanded roles, and by women demonstrating their competence in new roles.

5.3 Changes that can be attributed to WaterAid, NGO partners and the communities

Having **access to clean water and sanitation facilities** as a result of the WASH program was mentioned by women and men in Datakolo as factors that enabled change. Some of the positive changes noted in the findings were linked directly to the simple fact of having water close to home, for example, the willingness of men to share in WASH-related household tasks, and time savings for women that opened up other opportunities for them.

Manuquibia women also specified that '**information** from dear brothers and sisters' had enabled change; this was understood to have included information from the project staff and others within the community, for example, about water and sanitation options, and perhaps women's rights to participate.

Manuquibia men mentioned that **women's participation in meetings** had led to change. This was understood to mean that women's vocal involvement at meetings had enabled change to take place, both in terms of substantive issues considered and perceptions about the value of women's participation. This can be attributed at least partly to the policies and practice of WaterAid which promote equitable participation, as well as to women and men in the communities themselves for their willingness to participate.[32]

5.4 Enabling factors beyond the project

Women and men in the communities noted the efforts of the **Government of Timor-Leste and of other NGOs** in promoting gender equality and gender awareness. During the follow-up visits, men in Manuquibia said that they had not been aware of women's rights during the Indonesian time but there had been much talk of it from the government and from NGOs since Independence. A few community members, mostly women but some men,

said they had had some kind of gender training which was understood to have been from NGOs. During the follow-up visits, in particular, it was evident that young women demonstrated a clear understanding of, and willingness to claim, their rights. This is perhaps a generational change evident among younger women who have lived more of their lives in the environment of an independent country with a government relatively committed to promoting gender equality.

Some traditional values also appear to provide potential for supporting change towards more equitable sharing of responsibilities in the home. This was discussed during the follow-up visits, when participants shared their views on the extent to which different influences, such as values taught by parents, have contributed to men's willingness to change.

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32 The author observed during visits to communities that women seem sometimes torn at being detained from other duties by participating in workshops. Yet the women always demonstrated absolute commitment to participate fully to the end of any process, even at the risk of putting themselves behind with other duties.

The findings from the research point to ways in which WaterAid and other WASH practitioners could strengthen both the achievement of traditional WASH programming outcomes, and the contribution of WASH programming to advancing the rights of women. The findings provide insight into the kinds of change that are most valued by women and men as a result of WASH programming. This may assist in designing WASH interventions and strategies more relevant to women's and men's needs and increasing the likelihood of sustainable change. In particular, the findings provide an insight into women's perspectives and values. They challenge WASH practitioners to think beyond the practical changes that WASH improvements may make in women's lives, to consider more strategic benefits for women including issues often regarded as 'private' and beyond the WASH practitioner's remit.

6.1 What motivates and enables change?

Understanding more about women's and men's perceptions of change and the value they place on different kinds of change is instructive for WASH practitioners. Unless practitioners comprehend what matters most to communities, they are unlikely to achieve sustainable change. Increasingly, the evidence suggests that the health-related benefits traditionally utilised as a rationale for WASH programming are less significant as motivating factors for change in communities than has been presumed.[33]

This research was designed specifically to capture change relating to the gendered roles and relations as identified by women and men. While this influenced the relative emphasis on particular kinds of change that emerged, it is nonetheless interesting to note that health outcomes, while clearly important, were seen as less significant than other changes. In the ranking exercise, improved health tended to be rated below other, gender-equality-related changes. For example, of eight changes identified by Manuquibia women, the women ranked improved health as second at family level, and seventh at community level. Datakolo men ranked 'good health' as sixth at both family and community level, out of the eight changes that they had identified.

Hygiene improvements were mostly valued in terms of increased cleanliness, which was mentioned frequently by both women and men. While not the subject of ranking, cleanliness was a recurring theme, and highly valued by both women and men. References included women

and men being able to bathe themselves and have clean clothes to attend meetings, and the ease of washing dishes, hand-washing and cleaning teeth. It seemed clear from the context of these comments that the benefits of cleanliness related directly to removing shame and resulting in increased self-confidence to go to and be active in public events. Also significant was the specific mention of the impact of increased cleanliness for children, for example, that they could bathe themselves and go to school clean. WASH programmers may underestimate the value of simply feeling clean and presentable as a motivator for change. For women, the combination of being given opportunities to participate in community decision-making processes and having the dignity of being clean seemed a particularly compelling combination of factors.

6.2 Responding to what women value

6.2.1 Giving women their due: recognition of women's contribution

There are lessons from this research for WASH practitioners concerning the ongoing invisibility of women's contributions and the fact that women had to remind men about the work they (the women) do. Gender blindness remains a common affliction in families and communities, among development practitioners and organisations and beyond, reinforced by formal approaches to measuring economic activity that focus on paid work and largely fail to take account of unpaid household and care work in any systematic way.[34] Women's contribution tends to be taken for granted to the point of being invisible. In the context of women's increasing participation in globalised economic systems and pressure to contribute to family incomes, this is resulting in what Sylvia Chant refers to as the 'feminisation of obligation' (Chant, 2006). Simple tools can be used to build awareness of women's contributions and burdens among staff and communities alike.[35] This awareness is important for designing interventions that are respectful of women and do not simply add further to their load.

Further, more recognition needs to be given to women as actors rather than as a vulnerable group requiring help. Crow et al (2009) note that 'despite women's widespread lack of political voice, there is considerable evidence of women's organising around water'.[36] Failing to see women as a powerful force for change can have the effect of

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33 Val Curtis gave an evidence-based overview of the factors known to prompt behaviour change in WASH as a key-note address at the WASH 2011 Conference held in Brisbane (Curtis, 2011).

34 While time-use studies and some comprehensive household surveys assess hours spent in paid and unpaid work, and both international and national statistical bodies are working on methodologies for better capturing household and care work, this has yet to translate into national accounting systems in more than a limited way.

35 An example is the '24-hour clock' exercise, described in Halcrow et al (2010) and elsewhere. WATL is now also using another tool ('Three Kinds of Work') developed with IWDA support. This facilitates communities to understand the different kinds of labour, paid and unpaid, that women and men are responsible for, and how essential many taken-for-granted women's tasks are to family and community welfare.

36 Their paper goes on to cite numerous cases world-wide of women's success in bringing about change in WASH conditions for their own benefit and for the benefit of their families.

patronising and infantilising women, or locating them as victims to be 'helped'. This risks missing the opportunity for families, communities and organisations to benefit from women's ability to be agents for positive change.

6.2.2 Seeing and understanding women's 'participation'

Women continue to be told by men in communities and by WASH practitioners that they are somehow 'failing to participate' or participate fully, when in fact substantial barriers to such participation remain but are invisible to those making the assessment. During the research process and the follow-up visits, on a number of occasions male community members and staff criticised women for not speaking up. This generally, and understandably, had the counterproductive effect of dampening women's participation. There is a need for practitioners to reflect on both the ways in which they encourage women's participation and the forms that women's participation may take. Initiatives need to actively enable participation by both women and men,[37] and this includes considering whether male bias in dominant communication styles may mean that the ways in which women contribute – which may be different from how men do – are invisible or undervalued.

It is instructive to observe that women in the research communities felt the need to insist on being granted recognition for their contributions, such as attending meetings and active participation in community processes, especially since women make these contributions despite significant obstacles. Lessons for practitioners include the following: firstly, to notice and acknowledge the contributions women make, rather than making assumptions or generalisations about women being 'shy' or not participating; secondly, if at times women seem quiet and reticent about speaking up, practitioners may consider whether their own strategies for encouraging participation are effective. It is counterproductive to blame (or allow, without intervention, powerful leaders in the community to blame) women for failing to take up opportunities to participate.

A study in India reported by Nandita Singh observed that women are not totally constrained from exercising decision-making power, but rather, that attempts to foster their participation in village meetings with men may be misplaced and may indeed violate norms and potentially place women at risk. She notes that women's freedom

to participate in community activities may be 'bound by factors such as age, seniority and charisma', with the implication that different approaches need to be devised taking contextual realities into account (Singh, 2006 pp. 353–4). Panda further observes 'constraints within the household need to be critically examined and explored [in order] for any collective action to take place beyond the household' (Panda, 2007, p. 331).

Factors that practitioners might consider include: Are women being given adequate safe space for expressing their views? Is it safer for views to be expressed through the anonymity of small group discussion followed by reporting back to the men, rather than by individual women being put on the spot to respond to questions in a mixed group, which could feel threatening for some women? Might there be repercussions for speaking up? Might such repercussions be feared? What more can be done to enable women to participate safely?

WASH practitioners need to give particular attention to enabling women to safely participate. Special efforts may be vital to provide appropriate space for women's participation, and to give women the opportunity to develop strength and confidence in exercising their voices. Panda notes that gender mainstreaming is often misunderstood to mean achieving 'some sort of gender balance in any intervention, meaning an equal representation of women and men and not any women-specific project or components'; she notes that gender mainstreaming is 'not about getting rid of the focus on women. There is a need to centre-stage women's concerns' (Panda 2007, p. 331).

Further, consideration needs to be given to working strategically with men in organisations and in communities. Providing space for women's participation may need to include activities to help men understand what it feels like to be a woman who has never before spoken in a public forum. Role-playing may be a useful tool to assist men to understand and develop empathy in this regard; materials from WA's Equity and Inclusion training package could also be used or adapted to achieve this.

It should be noted that the processes recommended above depend very much on very strong community facilitation skills and sufficient knowledge, confidence and commitment to gender equality to be able to sensitively facilitate sometimes challenging conversations between

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37 And if they do not do so, initiatives should not be regarded as participatory, inclusive or effective. If the context is not conducive to enabling the participation of women, it is failing a very significant proportion of those who need to contribute to and benefit from WASH initiatives. Halcrow et al (2010) provides practical guidance on ways to enable participation of both women and men in community WASH activities.

women and men in a way that allows women the safety to speak up. Building these skills requires a substantial investment in capacity development of facilitators and active promotion of women taking community facilitation roles alongside men. This in turn underlines the importance of gender-responsive budgeting, without which the above cannot be achieved.

6.2.3 Moving beyond practical gender needs to support women's strategic gender interests

WASH programs tend to focus primarily on freeing up women's time, which is assumed to benefit women in a range of ways. This research finds that WASH programs can indeed free up women's time. However, it is not the time itself but the range of opportunities that this opens up that is valued by women. In particular, this research indicates the potential for positive gender outcomes from WASH initiatives to go beyond meeting practical gender needs and contribute towards advancing strategic gender interests.

Among the changes identified and valued by women and men in this research, the following could be considered 'practical gender needs' of women, i.e. those that assist them within their existing gender roles:

- Improved health
- Greater ease of performing duties – water being closer to home and related benefits
- Increased cleanliness and the social benefits that go with this: personal hygiene, clean clothes and other; this was highly valued by both women and men
- Ability to grow vegetables and undertake other economic activities
- More time (to do other things)
- Increased income

Beyond this, other positive changes were identified that might be considered 'strategic gender interests' or to have potential to be 'strategic', These include:

- Changes in gender roles:
  Men helping more at home, e.g. with water collection, caring for children
  Increased diversity of roles for women including gaining higher status roles; feeling that they are making an

economic contribution; increased participation in community life and more involvement in decision-making

- Women demanding greater recognition for their contribution and its value
- Women's influence on men's risk-taking/anti-social behaviour
- Women having increased voice and being listened to; men increasingly listening to and respecting women
- Women's increased freedom (as a result of more discretionary time and opportunity for choice)
- Recognition (by men and women) that women have rights
- Improved family relations and greater harmony (which may include reduced violence in the home)

WASH programming offers potential for improving and changing women's lives in a wider range of ways than has traditionally been considered. Gains in terms of 'practical' gender needs can relatively easily be built on in order to support strategic gender outcomes, but it requires conscious effort.

6.2.4 Beyond traditional WASH territory: the 'private' realm of the household

One level at which strategic gender interests arise is in the household, an area often considered 'private' and therefore 'off-limits' for WASH and other development programmers.[38] This research demonstrates clearly that WASH programs affect personal and intimate relationships. At the most basic practical level, 'private' issues impact on programs, and on women's availability and ability to 'participate' in WASH activities. WASH practitioners need to recognise this in order to ensure that these impacts are positive, not negative, particularly for women, who often have less power relative to men in their relationships and in the home.[39]

For example, it is significant that both men and women in this research focused so much on issues of men's risk-taking behaviour. These are clearly pressing issues for women and impact greatly on their daily lives. It is important to understand the realities/dynamics of women's lives if positive change is to occur.

38 A 2011 research study by IWDA and ANU on NGO workers' experiences in addressing gender issues in their work found that for most respondents 'working on gender issues in the "private" space of the household was very difficult, and it was only when issues spilled over in the "public" space that there was some legitimacy in dealing with them' (Kilby and Crawford, 2011). This discomfort reflects a long-standing separation between 'public' and 'private' spaces, a dichotomy which feminists have long challenged.

39 Indeed, there is substantial evidence that achieving change at household level is more difficult, and new opportunities and confidence in community spaces or at an individual level may not translate into positive changes in gender relations in the household. See, for example, Hunt J, Kasynathan N et al, 2009, *Breaking the shackles: Women's empowerment in Oxfam Australia's Sri Lanka program*, Oxfam Occasional Paper 3. This highlights the importance of assessing changes in strategic gender interests at multiple levels – individual, family/household, community and institutional.

Women from Datakolo having fun during IWDA/WaterAid Australia/WaterAid in Timor-Leste research on gender outcomes of WaterAid's Water, sanitation and hygiene programming in Timor-Leste

PHOTO: PRAGATI BAJRACHARYA, WATERAID

WASH programs have the potential to achieve positive changes towards a more equitable division of labour in the home. This research indicates that under certain circumstances, such as when water is closer to the house, when women are sick, or when women go to the market to bring in some income, men are willing to take on a share of household and child-raising work. However, women in this research clearly wished for greater everyday support from men with those responsibilities. Gender evaluations frequently demonstrate that change within households can be the most difficult to achieve (Panda, 2007, p. 331; Hunt et al, 2009). WASH programs are well placed to make deliberate efforts to encourage more routine sharing of this household and caring work, freeing up more of women's time and energy for other things, not only for productive activities but also for leisure and relaxation. This represents a significant opportunity to amplify the benefits that WASH programming delivers.

While WASH and other development practitioners may feel uncomfortable intervening in the 'private' realm of the home, it is important to understand that all development activities will have gendered outcomes, intended or otherwise. It is a fundamental responsibility of development practitioners to 'do no harm'. To know whether or not harm is inflicted requires some understanding about what goes on inside the household. More generally, and separate from feminist arguments about a false dichotomy, the distinction between 'private' and 'public' is unhelpful in understanding the complexity of women's contexts and the variety of factors that influence family well-being.

7.1 Limitations of the research methodology

The research team limited participation to 10 women and 10 men in each community to maximise space for engagement, but relied on partner organisations to organise the selection of research participants. It is not known how representative the selected participants were of the wider community. Since the focus of the research was primarily qualitative, the sample size was small. A larger sample would be needed to generate statistically significant findings.[40]

As noted previously, the research process was conducted across three languages. Not all of the note-takers understood Tocodede. Some notes were translated from Tocodede to Tetum and then into English. Notes were cross-checked when there was doubt about the translation, and some points were re-checked with the original notes during the writing of this report. However, there was scope for some mistranslation or misunderstanding.

Because subjects for ranking and voting were identified from the concerns raised during the previous steps, issues raised were not standard across the two communities and thus provided limited scope for comparison or generalisation. To gain a fuller picture of the extent of change experienced, some follow-up of issues raised by participants but not explored in depth via voting could be considered. For example, it may be worthwhile to use common or similar voting questions for both women and men, to gain insights into similarities and differences in women's and men's perceptions. It might also be useful to structure some voting or other quantitative method to gain an understanding of how much change has occurred relative to the amount of change desired, for example, in relation to an expanded role for men in completing domestic tasks, or the level of women's participation in the decision-making processes. Some issues of interest could be further explored by WATL by conducting specific voting exercises during ongoing monitoring visits.

Understanding differences in the perspectives of women and men of different ages would also be useful. This would require exploring understandings of 'youth' and 'adulthood' in the cultural context. A larger sample would be needed to gain an understanding of age-related differences.

A further issue that may be worth exploring would be any consequences or reprisals arising for those who spoke up about sensitive issues, particularly women, some of whom expressed some strong views. While the SBA-based methodology appears to provide a safe environment for these issues, the possibility exists of repercussions after the research team has left;[41] where possible, follow-up would enable identification of unintended consequences, positive and negative.

7.2 Research as change strategy

The research approach proved a valuable tool for learning about gendered outcomes and for opening up dialogue between women and men in the communities on issues of gender equality. A particularly productive and powerful method was the strategy of giving women and men separate space for discussion and a structure through which to report individual opinions anonymously to the mixed group. The role-playing activity was particularly influential, providing an opportunity for imagining alternative gender roles and relations. One man commented that some men and women in his community had previously had gender training and gained some understanding about gender inequality, but had struggled to imagine how they might change. The process of physically acting out possible scenarios seemed to enable men in particular to develop a sense of how things might change for the better and what change would look like.

During the follow-up visit, the research team attempted to ascertain whether and to what extent any change in gendered practices had occurred in the seven months since the research took place, and if so, to what degree the research process itself had contributed to that change. There was a sense that participation in the research had fostered some change for individuals and perhaps brought increased collective consciousness to the issues raised. One man in Datakolo said:

> After the research we talked about these things a lot, so it has influenced me to change.

It was difficult to determine the extent to which change can be attributed to the research process itself. But some comments clearly demonstrated that the research process had stimulated valuable thinking and dialogue and may have contributed, at a minimum, to prompting changes in awareness, and possibly to a degree of behaviour change. One man in Manuquibia said:

> The research helps us to see things better. The water made a change, and the research, the role-play and other things we did. Really helped us to see and understand.

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40 However, as the research methodology has now been used in three locations, the original two studies in Vanuatu and Fiji and this one in Timor-Leste, it may be possible to draw out some common trends.

41 Some attempt has been made since the research to ascertain whether women have experienced any repercussions, and whether the research and follow-up discussions facilitated by WATL had opened up further opportunities for discussion in the family or community. Informal discussions with women in Manuquibia in January 2012 indicate that immediately following the facilitated discussions, women felt enabled to discuss with their husbands some sensitive issues that had arisen, but they did not continue to raise these issues for long, as they felt there was a risk of making their husbands angry. No negative repercussions for speaking up were reported.

Another Manuquibia man said:

> Last time you came and did these things – it's been good for the family. Husbands have shifted – when we come home, there is more happiness, less conflict and less violence in the house. We're happy. We like it.

There was discussion in Manuquibia about where men learned that they should help their wives. One man speculated that their parents had taught them this, but one young man said:

> Our parents didn't teach us completely about this. You came here, grouping men and women together, and helped us to understand.

When asked whether it is unusual for people to discuss these kinds of topics, women told us that 'yes, women talk about these things'. It is an opportunity for men to reflect on the topics and to be confronted in a safe environment by women's views and experiences that is more unusual and valuable for both women and men. When asked at the end of both the initial research visits and the follow-up visits whether the discussions had been interesting and useful, both women and men responded without hesitation that it had been. At the end of the Datakolo follow-up visit, there was a loud response from both women and men that the discussions were:

> Important! They help us to change our future for the next generation.

Participation in the research process was highly valued by project staff, most of whom had no previous research experience. In particular, staff valued the opportunity to learn new skills and ways of thinking about their work through their participation in analysis workshops to consider the findings. Staff also commented that:

> This training has prepared us to understand the base that we are working with and to spread information about gender.

The research has provided a solid foundation for future programs to build skills, knowledge, materials and strategies for ensuring that WATL supports improved gender-equality outcomes.
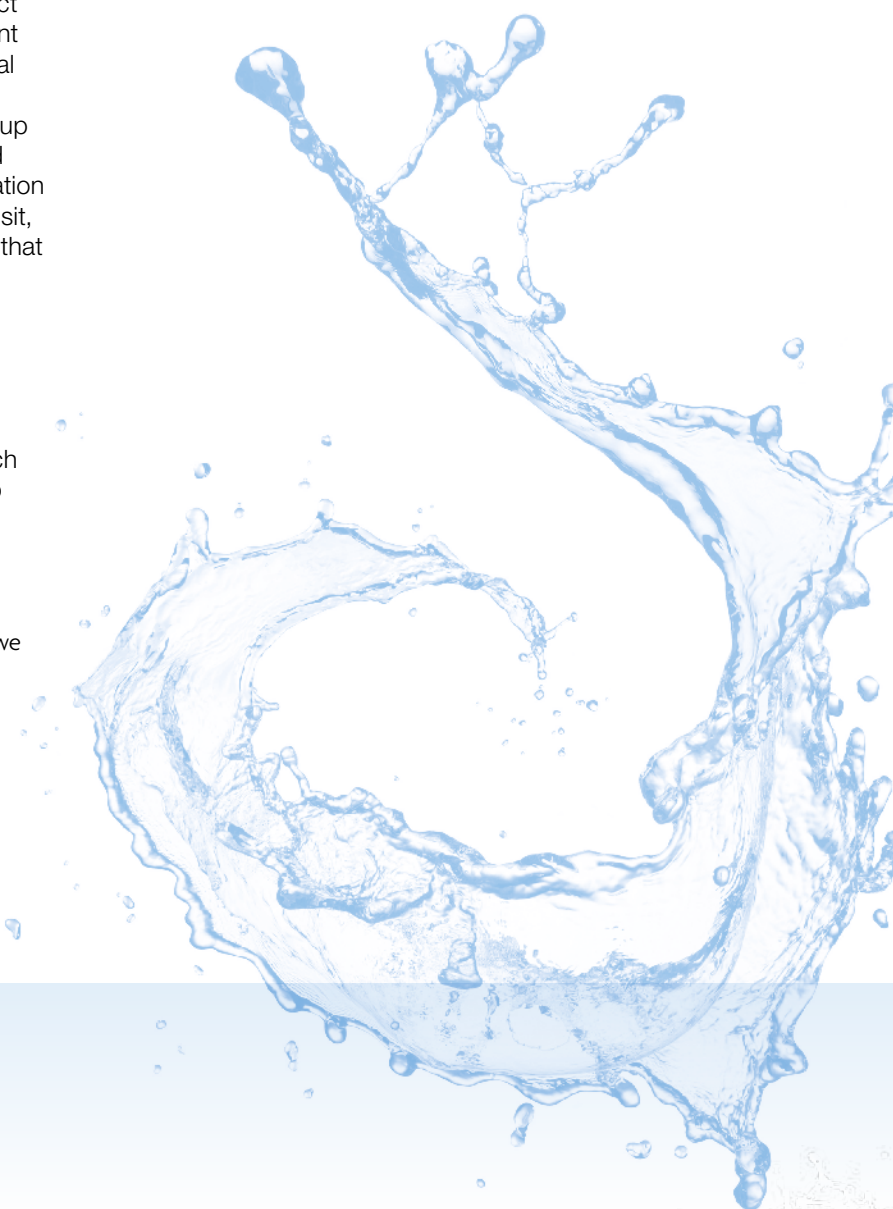
AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

More work should be done to test and build evidence of causal links between the changes identified and valued by the community, and the factors identified as enabling these changes. At a 2011 gender training for staff from WaterAid Timor-Leste and its partners, great scepticism was expressed by some (mostly male) staff who had not been involved in the research process about the links between the project activities and the changes reported by communities. This may indicate that the links should be further explored; alternatively, it may simply demonstrate that changes in gender roles and relations that the community, particularly the women, value, are beyond the usual radar of WASH practitioners, and that the link between WASH and the kinds of changes discussed here remain unclear to technically-focused practitioners without explicit exploration through an activity such as the research.

A specific area for further exploration would be the causal factors or enablers for women to assert their rights and be recognised for the contributions that they make. In each of the two communities, the most outspoken individual among the women was the village representative on the local women's association. However, given the opportunity during the research, many other women claimed space within the mixed group to speak up. Research on factors that can most support women's ability to be more assertive would be valuable.

Another useful area for exploration would be a comparative analysis of the relative benefits of using an SBA as compared to a more overtly rights-based approach. The initial research process followed an SBA and allowed the surfacing of sensitive and contentious issues. Return visits enabled clarification on rights-related topics through more overtly directed conversation. In both cases, discussion was good-natured but at times heated. It may be that using SBA methodology provided a vehicle for these discussions in a way that enabled further dialogue at a later time. However, there may be limitations in strictly applying only the SBA, particularly the risk that important problems may not surface.[42] The benefit of using the SBA is that it is an empowering approach that enables researchers to engage in dialogue from a basis of, and to gain an understanding of, communities' own understandings of 'gender' issues. However, a disadvantage may be that findings are limited to some extent by the parameters of what communities already know and feel sufficiently comfortable to talk about.

42 On this point, it is interesting that issues of menstrual hygiene were not raised, even (to the author's knowledge) in the separate women's discussion groups. There may have been other issues that were considered taboo or for other reasons were not mentioned, that the research failed to uncover: Donald Rumsfeld 's (in)famous 'unknown unknowns'.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this research indicate that with just a little conscious effort, WASH programs may achieve not only positive practical outcomes for women, but also small but significant changes for women's strategic gender interests. The benefits of this are felt by both women and men but are more deeply valued by women. With a more conscious focus on gendered outcomes, much more can be achieved for women and men from WASH programming. This will allow more constructive gender roles and relations to evolve so that women's rights are advanced and all contributions in the community are available, visible and valued. Further, resources and benefits will be more equally shared. This ultimately creates stronger and more sustained WASH outcomes for the community.

The benefits most frequently mentioned by women are improvements in family harmony. This is rarely if ever an outcome that WASH programs deliberately set out to achieve or to measure, yet for the women in the two research communities, this is the most significant change the program has brought to their lives. Increased cooperation between women and men, facilitated consciously by the project but also achieved through the goodwill of community members, is also appreciated by men. It provides a means for households to take greater advantage of opportunities to improve their situations. This and other findings challenge WASH practitioners to look beyond the traditional health and time-savings strategies, targets and indicators that underpin much WASH programming, and to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of women's and men's lives. The outcomes of this research demonstrate that a strengths-based approach can be a constructive strategy for undertaking such potentially sensitive dialogue on gender issues, and that the SBA dialogue processes themselves can potentially contribute in a small way to transforming gender roles and relations in participating communities.

Women in the communities remain overburdened by work responsibilities. They acutely feel the burden of men's risk-taking and anti-social behaviours, which negatively impact upon family life. While these have traditionally been considered 'private' matters and outside the remit of WASH programming, such behaviours are very significant in the lives of women and for the well-being of families and communities. They are counterproductive, limiting the potential impact of other development efforts. It is significant that both women and men raised these issues within the context of discussion about WASH programming. Clearly these issues impact upon women, who carry the bulk of responsibility for WASH-related duties. Increasingly WASH practitioners realise the importance of women's participation to successful and sustainable WASH programs. This research demonstrates that for women, 'private' issues in the household, particularly the extent to which household and caring responsibilities are shared and family relations are harmonious, have a very significant bearing on other parts of their lives, which can impact directly on their ability to 'participate', and affect the quality of their lives more broadly. The 'private' space of the household, then, is very properly a development concern, not just as a contextual factor, but as a substantive focus.

The research process provided opportunities for women and men in communities to engage in dialogue on these issues, and opportunities for the communities and for WaterAid to build upon what has already been achieved. WaterAid is currently utilising the learning from the research in its program planning strategies. The results have also formed a basis for WATL to develop its internal capacity to understand, discuss and develop strategies to achieve greater gender equality as a deliberate outcome of its work.

The challenge remains for WASH practitioners not only to build their understanding of how their interventions impact on the multiple dimensions of women's and men's lives, but also to build on the positive changes already being achieved and to target WASH programming that contributes to greater transformation of women's and men's lives.

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Annex 1: Research methodology

The research sought to answer the following questions:
- What kinds of gender outcomes are being achieved?
- What are the strengths of WaterAid's approach for integrating gender?
- What strategies, steps and activities work well to promote gender equality?
- What enabling contextual and cultural factors support the identified positive gendered outcomes?

The research:
- Used a strengths-based approach
- Used participatory processes
- Sought the perspectives of women and men within communities engaged in WASH initiatives

Key guiding principles
- Context is critical in shaping ideas about gender and gender equality
- Focus on strengths and appreciation
- Inquiry as an empowering process

Features of the research approach:
- Where issues are identified, seeking to find solutions
- Evolving methodology – flexibility
- Mutual learning
- Qualitative and quantitative

Steps in the research process

A. Planning workshop and preparation including developing the research methodology and organising logistics

B. Conducting the research in two communities, using the following steps:

Activity 1: Introducing the process and setting the context

Activity 2: Telling stories about positive experiences (sex-segregated groups)

Activity 3: 'Growing trees' – identifying the key changes revealed through the stories and placing them on a 'tree', with 'enablers' of the changes drawn as the roots of the tree (sex-segregated groups)

Activity 4: Ranking important gender outcomes from the tree (sex-segregated groups)

Activity 5: Sharing positive outcomes – men and women together

Activity 6: Quantifying the most important outcomes through pocket-chart voting (sex-segregated groups)

Activity 7: Dreaming even better gender outcomes (role-plays devised in sex-segregated groups, performed for the whole group)

C. Analysis and planning

The research steps above replicate the methodology developed by Halcrow, et al (2010). The methodology, which had been used in Fiji and Vanuatu, was felt to be appropriate to the context, and developed a further base of evidence that might be cross-analysed against the original for learning on commonalities beyond country or regional levels.

Further to the process outlined above, the research team conducted follow-up visits to the two research field sites in February 2011 to clarify some key issues emerging from the analysis, and to assess whether the research process itself had influenced change among men and women in the communities.

Annex 2: Research team

Research team, June 2010

Team leader/facilitator

- Di Kilsby, Gender and Training Advisor, International Women's Development Agency

Research team members:

- Delfina da Silva, Community Mobiliser and Gender Focal Point; Jose Rui Olivera, Management and Maintenance Supervisor; Gertrudis (Novi) Mau, Hygiene promoter; and Tofik Rochman, Program Manager, of WaterAid Timor-Leste

- Antonio Pereria dos Santos, Technician; and Augustina da Santos, Hygiene Promoter, Naroman Timor Lorosae (NTL)

- Delfina Do Carno, Hygiene Promoter, Hafoun Timor-Leste (HTL)

- Rosie Wheen, International Program and Grant Funding and Equity and Inclusion Focal Point, WaterAid Australia

Interpreter

Julio dos Santos

Translator for documentation

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Logistics support person

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Additional support from

Dinesh Bajracharya, Country Representative, WaterAid Australia in Timor-Leste; Jose Mott, Gender Advisor, RWSSP; Glenda Lasslett, Program Manager Timor-Leste, International Women's Development Agency

Team for return visits, February 2011

Delfina da Silva, Gertrudis (Novi) Mau and Tofik Rochman of WaterAid Timor-Leste; Delfina Do Carno, HTL; Antonio Pereria dos Santos and Augustina da Santos, NTF; Rosie Wheen, International Program and Grant Funding and Equity and Inclusion, WaterAid Australia; Di Kilsby, Gender and Training Advisor, International Women's Development Agency

Annex 3: Brief background information on research locations

Manuquibia and Datakolo

Baseline (before the project): Datakolo and Manuquibia are two small villages located in the steep mountains that characterise the Maubara sub-district in Liquica. Prior to WaterAid's projects, the two communities accessed their water from unprotected streams located approximately 600m–1km away from the village. Access to the water sources involved walking along sheer and slippery embankments. Each trip would take around 40 minutes and often people needed to make multiple trips per day to collect sufficient water for their household. Households typically used very little water per day (50 litres per household) for drinking and cooking, and often children would forego bathing rather than make the long walk to the stream.

In both communities the majority of people practised open defecation. Hand washing at critical times (after defecation, before eating, before preparing food) was rarely practised, and never involved the use of soap. These behaviours contributed to widespread diarrhoeal disease (the second biggest killer of children under 5 years old) and intestinal worms.

Manuquibia	
District	Liquica
Sub-district	Maubara
Population	273
Households	37
Number of men	131
Number of women	142

Datakolo	
District	Liquica
Sub-district	Maubara
Population	234
Households	45
Number of men	112
Number of women	122

Project activities

WaterAid worked in Manuquibia in 2008 and in Datakolo in 2009. In Datakolo, a gravity-fed water supply was built to channel water from the water source to the community and 16 water tap stands were built around the village to service the 45 households. Ten tap stands were built or repaired in Manuquibia to bring water to the doorstep of the 37 households.

Both communities also committed to addressing the problem of open defecation, and almost all households built new latrines or upgraded existing facilities over the course of the project.

A WASH Committee (known in Timor-Leste by the Tetum abbreviation GMF) was set up in both communities. Among other things, the GMF was tasked with collecting a maintenance fee from all households (typically the equivalent of AUD$0.25 per month) and overseeing the upkeep of the water supply system.

Sustainability of water supply systems

In 2011, WaterAid returned to these two villages to evaluate the functionality of the water supply systems and the performance of the GMF. In Datakolo, the GMF had managed to collect AUD$135 in fees from the community members. The GMF Chief was conducting regular maintenance services such as cleaning the tanks, water source area and tap stands. All tap stands were still functioning as designed. In Manuquibia, the GMF had refused to repair three broken tap stands as a response to the failure of certain community members to contribute to the maintenance fund. WaterAid and the GMF were supporting the community to resolve this dispute.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

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