

Sector Forum on Gender-transformative Social Accountability for inclusive WASH

13 February 2020
Hotel Sarina, Dhaka



Water for Women Fund: SHOMOTA Project & Research Award

Introduction to Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH Research Award

This Sector Forum Outcome Report is part of a Research Award supported by the Water for Women Fund of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The Fund seeks to address knowledge gaps in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project delivery. The research is being undertaken over three years (2018 to 2021).

The research is being implemented through an academic-NGO partnership between: the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney (ISF-UTS); World Vision Bangladesh (WVB); World Vision Australia (WVA); and the University of Rajshahi (UoR).

The research explores the contribution of social accountability to inclusive WASH, with a focus on improving water service levels in rural Bangladesh. The research contributes to WVB's implementation of Citizen Voice and Action (CVA), a social accountability approach which mobilises and equips citizens to monitor and advocate for the improvement of government services.

The research is linked to the implementation of Strengthening Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in WASH in Bangladesh (SHOMOTA), a civil society organisation (CSO) project also funded under the Water for Women Fund. Implemented by WVB, SHOMOTA is an integrated project incorporating water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), the empowerment of women and people with disabilities, and engagement with government and the private sector. The project's primary goal is to equip key stakeholders within sub-national governments, schools, businesses and community-based organisations (CBOs) to improve gender- and disability-inclusive WASH in schools and communities.

The research award is structured across four phases.

Phase 1 - Explore the praxis of gender-transformative social accountability through literature review and case study of CVA practice in the Nobo Jatra Program (NJP)

Phase 2 – Lead and document the co-design and start-up of gender-transformative social accountability in SHOMOTA project sites

Phase 3 – Lead reflective research of of gender-transformative social accountability implementation by SHOMOTA

Phase 4 – Assess outcomes and promote learning on gender-transformative social accountability

Across all three years, the research partnership seeks to catalyse sector dialogue on gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH through discussion forums and dissemination of research findings.



Overview of Sector Forum on Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH

On 13 February 2020, a Sector Forum was held in Dhaka to share learnings from Phase 1 of the research project (Gender transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH) and inform Phase 2 co-design of gender-transformative social accountability. The event both shared information from the Project and invited discussion from sectoral actors in Bangladesh to learn from their experiences.

Attending the Forum were 29 participants from 13 organisations: WVB, Max Foundation, BBC Media Action, WaterAid Bangladesh, UST/WSSCCB, IFRC Bangladesh, DRRA, CDD, NCDW, DPHE, DORP/SWA, CBM and DFAT. ISF-UTS and University of Rajshahi supported the facilitation of the Sector Forum.

This document is a record of proceedings and discussions from the Forum, for use by the organisations which attended as well as other organisations who work in WASH, gender, social inclusion and/or good governance policy and programming. The purpose is to build momentum for learning and action in inclusive WASH, and to inform ongoing sector dialogue.

Introductory Session

We started the Sector Forum with opening remarks from a panel including: John David Berman, Senior Operations Director, World Vision Bangladesh; Chandan Z Gomes, Director Program Development and Quality Assurance, World Vision Bangladesh; Eheteshamul Russel Khan, Project Director WASH, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), Local Government Division, Dhaka; and MI Nahil, Program Manager, Australian High Commission Bangladesh.

Duncan McCullough, Second Secretary for Economic and Commercial Diplomacy at the Australian High Commission Bangladesh also gave an opening speech. He shared that in Bangladesh, the Australian government prioritises the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment through different development programs. He explained that in Bangladesh there is a burden on women and girls to collect household water, and there are particular challenges for marginalised groups including the poor, elderly and people with disabilities to access safe drinking water and sanitation.

Quoting Julie Bishop, former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr McCullough said that investing in WASH is one of the most effective ways to improve the health, self-esteem and education prospects for girls and women. Investing in WASH makes good economic sense, as increasing coverage of WASH services contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction. The Australian government's health for development strategy identifies investments in access to WASH as being essential foundation for people's health and quality of life. The Water for Women Fund responds to evidence that gendered approaches to WASH contributes to more effective, sustainable WASH as well as women and girls' wellbeing, also providing an entry point to facilitate changes in gender relations, norms and attitudes in communities. Another important consideration is that sustainable management of water requires an integrated approach, with energy, production and the environment.

Mr McCullough highlighted SHOMOTA is a leading example of what innovation in developing and testing, and what scaling high-impact projects can achieve. One of SHOMOTA's strengths is its' diverse set of actors as partners, bringing together government, private sector and civil society. He emphasised that it is important to have Forums like this one to improve the collective understanding of gender-transformative social accountability.

Introduction to SHOMOTA Project and Research Award (Water for Women Fund) + Learning so far on Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH

After the introductory session, the Project Manager of SHOMOTA from World Vision Bangladesh, Proshanto Sharma Roy delivered a presentation about the objectives of SHOMOTA and highlighted

the achievements of their activities so far regarding improvement of gender- and disability-inclusive WASH services in schools and communities.

Next, ISF-UTS researcher Tamara Megaw presented an introduction of the Water for Women Research Award. She explained that the research seeks to address the gap of limited gender and social inclusion considerations within social accountability. She also described the ethical approach which the research partnership follows and confirmed consent from Sector Forum participants to take notes and photos from the event for the purpose of communicating the research.

Professor Pranab Panday from University of Rajshahi then presented key learnings from primary research on Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) practice in WVB's Nobo Jatra Program. This case study research was carried out to learn about past practice of CVA to inform development of a gender-transformative social accountability model. Tamara went on to share learnings from a workshop held 9-11 February 2020 in Dhaka with staff from the WVB national office and SHOMOTA field staff. This workshop focused on co-design of gender-transformative social accountability to support kick-off of CVA in SHOMOTA.

Following the presentations, Eheteshamul Russel Khan, Project Director WASH, Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) shared his reflections on the research. He stated that the Bangladesh government is committed to every citizen having access to WASH, in order to achieve SDG 6 and also country-specific objectives for WASH and gender promotion. He noted however in Bangladesh, the WASH sector has not generally considered gender-transformative issues before. SHOMOTA is a pioneer in its gender-transformative approach and aim to integrate social accountability with WASH programming. SHOMOTA's collaborative approach in incorporating a wide range of actors in the project will strengthen the achievement of gender-inclusive WASH. Mr Khan said he would take recommendations from the research to the Department of Public Health Engineering to implement all over Bangladesh, and encouraged dissemination of the research to government implementers and policy makers.

Question and Answer session on Research Learnings

Next, the Forum participants reflected on a range of topics from the presentations and the research team provided additional information.

First, the group discussed the co-design process of the gender-transformative social accountability (GTSA) model linked to WV's existing social accountability approach, Citizen Voice and Action. The research team are developing a GTSA guidance note based on learning from the Nobo Jatra experience and the co-design workshop with WVB staff. This guidance note will be made publically available and SHOMOTA will be piloting this guidance in the implementation of project activities.

Second, the next steps to be taken by the research team was discussed. During implementation of the SHOMOTA project activities, stop-and-reflect sessions will be held to see how the GTSA model has been implemented and what lessons can be gained about the implementation process. In early 2021, the research team will be carrying out an outcome assessment to document changes from the GTSA approach. The assessment will be looking at how effective the strategies and criteria have been for the inclusion of the different groups such as people living with a disability, sexual minorities, and disadvantaged groups.

Third, the group discussed indicators used in the research to measure how change has occurred in informal sphere. Indicators include: to what extent women and men listened to each other; women's access to information; women's level of confidence to participate in CVA activities; women's ability to speak up and voice opinions in the CVA activities; and women's participation in decision-making. Key informant interviews, Focus Group Discussions and pocket voting were the main research instruments used in the study.

Fourth, the group discussed one of SHOMOTA's proposed strategies for inclusive WASH, the Men Care approach. SHOMOTA Project Manager, Proshanto Sharma Roy, explained that while social

accountability encourages women to take part in the decision-making, it is important to engage men in allowing women's leadership. Community facilitators are leading the facilitation process with men to promote women's participation in decision-making.

Small Group Reflections

To discuss thematic areas in more detail, three small groups were formed comprised of both external participants and SHOMOTA project staff and researchers. They were focused on three themes of: 1. strengthening WASH governance; 2. encouraging community leaders to be champions of inclusive social accountability; and 3. strengthening decision-making capacity and leadership role of women and enabling environment for gender equality. Below is a summary of each group's key reflections:

Group One: Strengthening WASH governance – especially at Union levels-inclusive of gender and social inclusion considerations).

Key reflections from your practice that connect and disconnect with learning about gender transformative social accountability:

- Social accountability tools are not enough, we need to add the provision for inclusion of women and marginalised groups into the social accountability tools to make it more inclusive.
- Women's participation should be ensured at all stages in the program activities like representation, entitlement, decision-making process, community engagement, etc.

What do you think are the key considerations for strengthening WASH governance - especially at Union levels, inclusive of gender and social inclusion considerations?

- Putting women in decision-making process
- Women-friendly budget provision
- Engagement of women in Project Management Committee (PMC)
- Involving women in scheme selection
- Activation of WATSAN Committee
- Participatory budgets

What opportunities are there for continued sector dialogue on gender-transformative social accountability?

- Enhance horizontal learning
- Reformation of WASH Committees
- National level advocacy/policy dialogue
- Further research and knowledge management, updates

Group Two: Encouraging community leaders to be champions of inclusive social accountability (Citizen participation-state accountability) for marginalised people.

Key reflections from your practice that connect and disconnect with learning about gender transformative social accountability:

- Include women and people with disabilities in different structure
- Capacity building and sensitisation
- Promote the concept of 'nothing about us without us'
- Promote the abilities of people with disabilities
- Promote the champions
- Create enabling environments of champions

What do you think are the key considerations for encouraging community leaders to be champions of inclusive social accountability (citizen participation-state accountability) for marginalized people?

- Disability friendly infrastructure
- Knowledge of social accountability and social inclusion
- Willingness of service providers to contribute
- Inclusive and disability friendly approach
- Representation of PWDs in different groups

What opportunities are there for continued sector dialogue on gender-transformative social accountability?

- Law and structure for PWDs
- Vibrant DPOs at different level
- Representation of women in local government
- Provision of including PWDs in Ward WATSAN committees
- Commitment of top level political leaders
- Organisations interested in and would benefit from participation include:
 - Disability alliance
 - Women's Forum
 - SDG Alliance
 - WASH Network
 - Teachers
 - NGO Forum

Group Three: Strengthening decision-making capacity and leadership role of women and enabling environment for gender equality.

Key reflections from your practice that connect and disconnect with learning about gender transformative social accountability

- Representation of women and gender transformation are different – understanding of GTSA needs to be clear
- Empowerment starts from within, so important to boost women's self-belief
- Max Foundation: encourages leadership of women by recognising their capacity to be entrepreneurs (for affordable sanitary products), make decisions and gain support of family
- BBC: gender project to reduce early marriage/school dropout includes strategies such as targeting girls & boys to respect and support family members, target parents to encourage potential of children and outreach to deal with sensitive issues in the community
- Need to identify gaps related to gender equality at Union Parishad level, through scan of the social and political context

What do you think are the key considerations for strengthening decision-making capacity and leadership role of women and enabling environment for gender equality?

- Recognise women's skill to be an entrepreneur (identification and encouragement)
- Engage more women representative considering present structure of WATSAN committee (quota should be increased from 30% to 50% women). At Ward level the CVA group is open so should have 50/50 representation. School management committee is currently male-dominated, so need to increase number of women representatives
- Sensitise men to encourage women in the committee to be in key positions (lead, co-lead) and take decisions (men's care approach is effective to enact gender transformation)
- Understanding local context and mindset, taboo, perception, social norms regarding gender
- Identify connection/change makers/positive actors/legal documents/regulations, policies to be able to advocate for better engagement in the present structure.
- Consider gender-related issues in the national curriculum at the school level.

What opportunities are there for continued sector dialogue on gender-transformative social accountability?

- Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Platform
- WASH Cluster (Experience Sharing, Success Story)
- Electronic/Mass/ Social Media
- National Gender Committee
- Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) Forum (Policy Dialogue)
- Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA)

Following the discussions, the small groups shared the key points of their discussions with each other. All groups agreed there were many opportunities for continued sector dialogue on gender-transformative social accountability and would like to stay in touch.

Closing Reflections

We closed the Sector Forum with remarks from Chandon Z Gomes, Director Program Development and Quality Assurance, World Vision Bangladesh. He noted that the gender-transformative social accountability approach will be valuable in order to strengthen the sustainability of WASH outcomes from SHOMOTA. He will encourage the national advocacy team from WVB to leverage learning from SHOMOTA to influence changes in the government system.

Next steps

This Sector Forum was an important step to greater collaboration between non-government organisations, government partners and World Vision Bangladesh in sharing learning about inclusive WASH. In the first half of 2020, the research team will complete the guidance note on the gender-transformative social accountability model and support the SHOMOTA team in its implementation of the CVA process. In the second half of 2020, stop-and-reflect sessions will be done by the research team to see how the guideline has been implemented so far and what are the lessons that WVB have learned during the process of implementation. Further opportunities will be sought to continue dialogue and learn from the experiences of the inclusive WASH sector in Bangladesh.

To stay updated about the research award, Gender-transformative social accountability for inclusive WASH, please see <https://waterforwomen.uts.edu.au/social-accountability/>

For more information on the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney please see <https://www.uts.edu.au/research-and-teaching/our-research/institute-sustainable-futures/our-research/international>.

For more information about the Water for Women Fund, please see <https://www.waterforwomenfund.org/en/index.aspx>