

Climate impacts on gender equality in WASH: A photovoice assessment

December 2022



Background

Project background	<p>As part of the Australian Government’s Water for Women Fund, SNV is currently wrapping up a collaboration with the governments of Nepal, Bhutan and Lao PDR, and the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF). The partnership has sought equitable and universal access to safely-managed sanitation and hygiene in seven districts in Bhutan and Lao PDR, and to sustain rural water supply services in a further two districts in Nepal; setting in place the mechanisms needed to look “Beyond the Finish Line.”</p> <p>In Bhutan, SNV has been supporting the Ministry of Health’s national Rural Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene Programme (RSAHP) since 2008. Focused on four underserved districts, the program has aimed to strengthen government and our partners’ focus on quality and attention to disadvantaged groups in leveraging political commitments, and introducing decentralised and cost-sharing mechanisms. Responding to emerging issues, RSAHP looks beyond the finish line by safely managing sanitation services and universal access for all, strengthening emerging civil society organisations’ (CSOs) capacity in the WASH sector, and investing in women’s leadership and institutional change.</p>
Study background	<p>This study was a partnership between SNV Bhutan and the Institute for Sustainable Futures (ISF) at the University of Technology Sydney, funded by the Water for Women fund. It sought to adapt tools found in the online quaKit to explore climate change aspects in WASH programs. The qualKit is an online toolkit of qualitative assessment tools for projects exploring gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in WASH interventions.</p>
Study approach	<p>The study conducted an adapted photovoice activity with eight participants from Tashiding, Dagan in rural Bhutan.</p>
Study objective	<p>To investigate the connections between the nexus of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)2) climate change (CC)3) gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) <p>in order to strengthen the next phase of the program.</p>
Prompt	<p>Prompt: Please make and share five images related to the impact of climate on WASH for yourself and your community.</p>



Photovoice participants

Approach

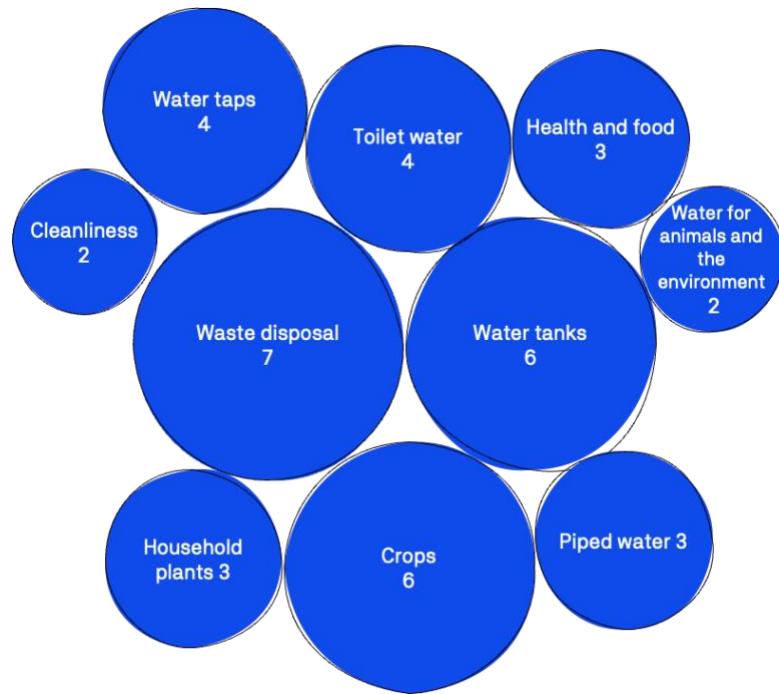
Participant Selection	<p>Ten potential participants were selected by local community leaders who shared these names with the SNV program team. All ten potential participants were invited to the workshop and eight people opted in. Potential participants were from a variety of local villages with different levels of water and sanitation access.</p> <p>The participants included two men and six women. One man was a local plumber who provided rich insights on the status of the water systems in the area. The other man was a local monk who provided spiritual descriptions on the impacts of climate. One of the women was the mother of a disabled child. Other women participants included a single mother and a mother with two children.</p>
Research Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jigme Choden (SNV) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of the study approach ○ Lead facilitator of the photovoice workshops and captioning interviews ○ Participant in the collaborative thematic analysis ● Kencho Wangdi (SNV) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Overall guidance ● Jess MacArthur (ISF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of the study approach ○ Data entry and curation ○ Participant in the collaborative thematic analysis ● Juliet Willetts (ISF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of the study approach
Data Collection Modality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential participants were first invited to a one-day workshop (November 25, 2022) where the process was explained and participants could decide if they wanted to participate. 2. In a workshop setting, participants were introduced to basic smartphone photography skills and ethical considerations. A small demonstration of tablet and phone usage was given. Extra phones and tablets were provided to participants who didn't have their own and wished to use the technology. Others were provided with pen and paper. While none of the final photos included people, ethical discussions on how to best include people in images was discussed. 3. Next, the facilitators introduced the photovoice prompt and led a short discussion to clarify the definition of climate change. While the community was familiar with concepts of WASH, they were unfamiliar with aspects of climate change. 4. Participants were then given time to make or create images. Several participants were not comfortable using smartphones and so were encouraged to draw pictures. One participant was not comfortable using a pen, so the facilitators drew images as per her descriptions and with her support. However, this was found to be a more inclusive version of the photo-voice activity which did not require digital literacy. 5. Once the images were created, participants were encouraged to select five images to share. Captioning interviews were held one-on-one between the facilitator and the participant. The interviews were structured using a photo-story submission template.

Data Curation and Sensemaking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forty photo-stories were imported into <i>Airtable</i> and captions edited lightly for clarity. We refer to the outputs as photo-stories, although 10 submissions were drawn images. 2. Thematic analysis was conducted iteratively on the photo-stories in <i>Airtable</i> - identifying the main focus of the photo-stories. 3. Collaborative thematic analysis was conducted through an online workshop to discuss the key themes of the photo-stories. 4. A photo-book was prepared, curating the photo-stories into thematic chapters.
Limitations and Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the inclusion of five images from each participant led to a diverse set of photo-stories, the captioning interviews took a long time. Next time, we recommend spending two days in the community. • In the next iteration of the process, we would add a question to clarify how 'close' the photographer is to the story. For example if this is about one's own home or about a neighbour's. We would also add some socio-demographic questions to the submission form.
Team Reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants said it felt very 'different' for them. We explained that it was because we wanted to hear their perspectives. • Many of the participants did not think much about the impact of climate change on their lives - so the workshop became also a learning exercise about climate change. • The question on the submission form about the type of 'change' allowed participants to think about what they want to do differently in the future and fostered personal reflections.

Results

Key Themes

The forty photo-stories represented 10 thematic areas.



Waste disposal

Photo-stories of waste disposal centred on the challenges of dealing with solid waste and the common practice of waste burning. These stories brainstormed options to deal with waste differently.



Water tanks

Photo-stories about water storage described how tanks can create a buffer for dealing with water uncertainties. They describe options to procure larger and better tanks.



Water for crops

Photo-stories about crops, described the challenging impacts of climate change on plant growth because of less predictable rain and also the value of systems such as irrigation and green houses in managing the instability.



Toilet water

Photo-stories about toilet water explored the importance of water in flushing latrines and keeping them clean. Water scarcity impacts the latrine use experience and could result in unsafe latrines.



Water taps

These communities primarily used tapped springs for their water sources. Photo-stories focused on taps described the wastage of water because taps get left on.



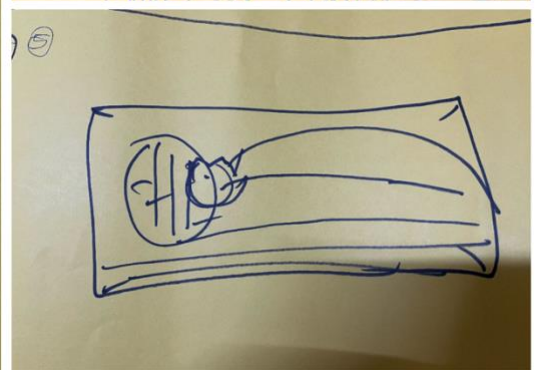
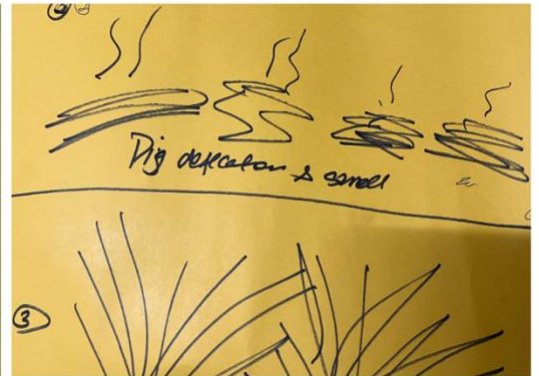
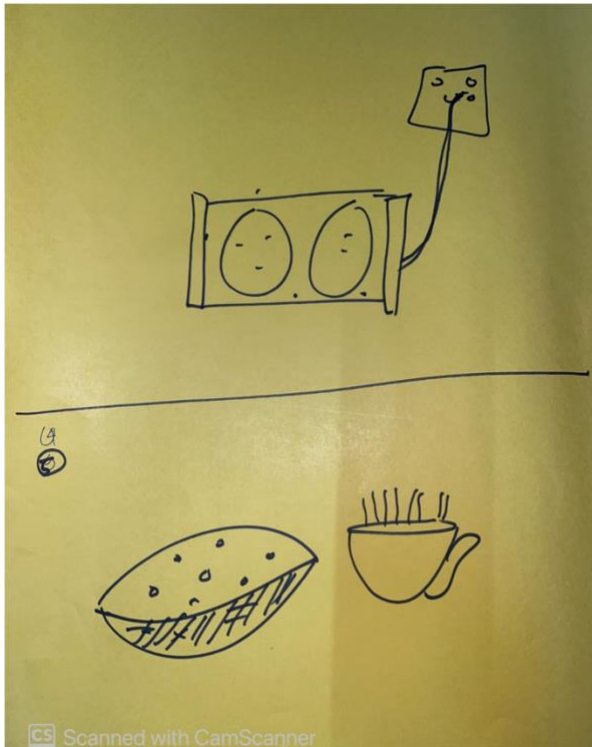
Household plants

Photo-stories about household plants described the impacts of a lack of water on mental health and keeping a clean beautiful home.



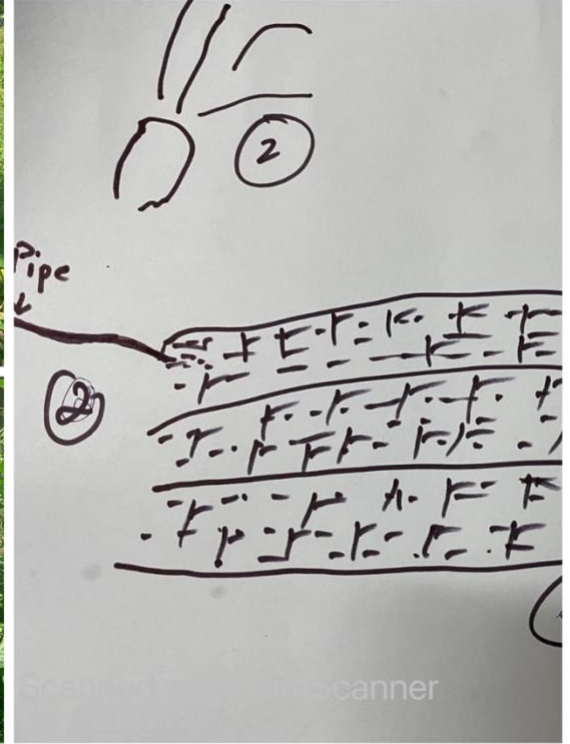
Health and food

One participant - a monk - described the impacts of water scarcity on food and health. He described how a lack of water can even lead to death.



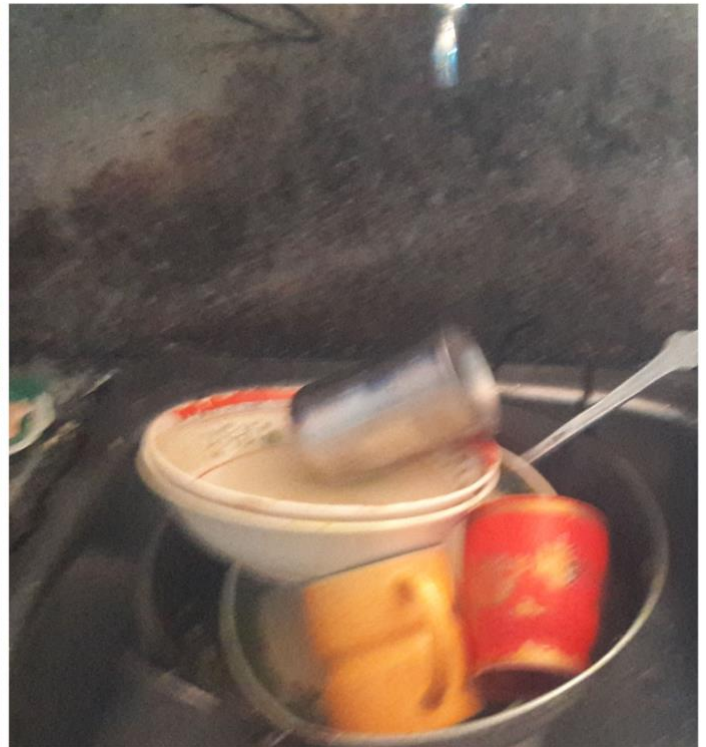
Piped water

Piped irrigation water was a theme of three photo-stories. Irrigation water was described as reducing the inconsistency in rain because of climate change.



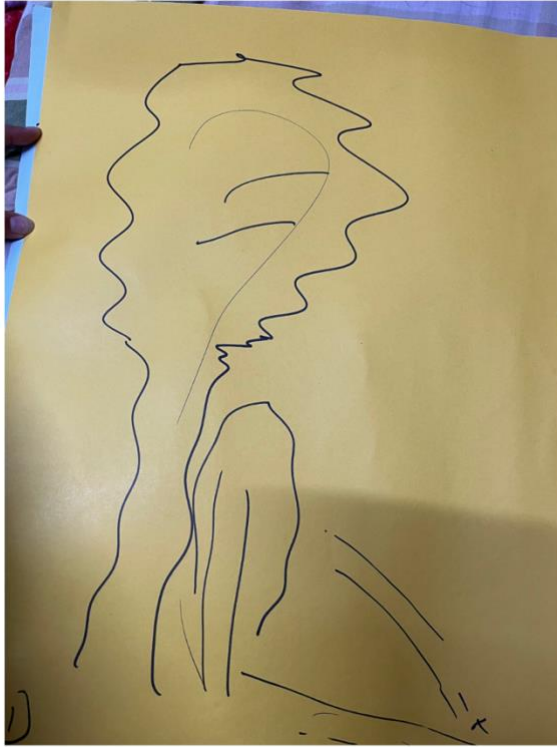
Cleanliness

Two photo-stories described the impact of a lack of water on keeping households and drains clean - with an impact on overall wellbeing.



Water for animals and the environment

Lastly, in two drawn examples, the impacts of a lack of water on the environment and on animals was described. Both the forest and livestock are important features in Bhutanese rural life and impact livelihoods and incomes.



Conclusions

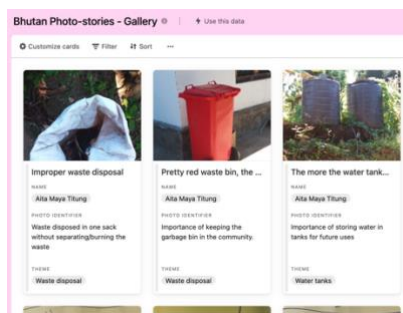
Key Findings

- All participants focused on the impacts of climate change on **water resources** and how this could impact household water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Five participants described the importance of water tanks for the storage of water in times of water shortage. This included storing water from taps which were inconsistent.
- Four participants included stories about waste disposal and challenges with solid waste management in the communities - noting the common practice of garbage burning, but the harm that this causes on community members
- Three participants described challenges with water taps and the wastage of water when taps turn on without warning.
- Climate change impacts on water were described not only in physical terms but also spiritual and emotional. For example, two women described the impact on mental health because of the difficulties in keeping household plants alive during water scare seasons.

Recommendations

In the next phase of the program,

1. **Prioritise water user management support.** This could include better clarification of roles and responsibilities for water management and training for management committees.
2. **Clarify and strengthen the links between water and sanitation.** As 98% of latrines in rural Bhutan are now pour flush, there is further thought to explore how best to ensure that they can be flushed during droughts. This could include technical or awareness support.
3. **Explore the use of photovoice workshops to foster awareness of climate issues.** One of the unintended positive outcomes of the photovoice activity was the value it had in generating and solidifying collaborative awareness of climate change within the community.



The full gallery can be found here: airtable.com/shr1tjT7iOV0ETvMB

The photo-book can be found here: [Bhutan - Climate - Photo-stories_small.pdf](#)



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Guidance and study support by Kencho Wangdi and Juliet Willetts.

Photos by SNV (2022).

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