



Measuring empowerment in WASH

Policy Brief - Ghana

Why measure empowerment in WASH?

Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services is critical for gender and social equality, including women's empowerment. This is because in many low-and middle-income countries women do the majority of water collection and management work. Therefore, women are more prone to negative impacts, such as exposure to water-related disease, missed educational opportunities, and unrealised economic productivity. It is also important to consider that some women may have less say in decision-making about WASH services in their households and communities. Although gender disparities related to poor WASH services are well known, there is a lack of widely used quantitative indicators to monitor empowerment in the WASH sector.

Improved monitoring tools are key to ensuring that gender and social equality outcomes receive priority attention within policy and practice related to WASH. The Empowerment in WASH Index (EWI) is a new assessment and monitoring tool that aims to close the evidence gap on the links between WASH interventions and the empowerment and wellbeing of individuals. Challenges identified by EWI go beyond infrastructure-oriented solutions and address more structural (e.g. social norms, governance systems) changes. Thus, quantitative data collected with the EWI tool allows for more informed and equitable action planning of WASH interventions.

This policy brief provides an overview and key findings of the EWI study in Asutifi North District, Ghana and

presents recommendations drawn from dissemination workshops held at a District Level Learning Alliance Platform (DLLAP) at the Asutifi North District Assembly and a National Level Learning Alliance Platform in Accra.

Leave no one behind: key messages

For government: Take the lead in making sure WASH services are empowering.

For NGOs: Support government in monitoring empowerment in WASH programming.

For communities: Promote marginalised voices, participation and engagement of all.

About the EWI study location: Asutifi North District

The Empowerment in WASH Index tool was piloted in Asutifi North District: a district with a population of 62,816 people projected for 2017, located in the newly created Ahafo Region. The district capital is Kenyasi. The main source of income comes from crop farming, but mining activities are also play an increasingly important role.

As far as local government is concerned, the Asutifi North District Assembly is divided into five Area Councils and is made up of 36 members. Traditional authorities – like the three paramount chiefs at Kenyasi

No.1, Kenyasi No.2, and Ntotroso traditional councils and a divisional chief at Wamahinso in the district – also play an important influencing role concerning the use of water, waste management and public hygiene.

Regular rainfall feeds into the Tano and Offin rivers and many other streams, which are the main sources for water provision systems. It is important to note that out of the four top diseases in the district according to 2016 data, three are WASH-related: malaria, diarrhoea, and skin diseases.

Addressing inequalities in the Asutifi North District WASH Master Plan

In order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) – ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – Asutifi North District united under the Ahonidie Mpontuo initiative (ANAM). The aim is to provide safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services to the entire population living in the district by 2030. The 2018 Asutifi North District WASH master plan sets out the strategic steps needed to achieve this goal.

When working towards reaching SDG 6, it is crucial to focus on leaving no one behind. Because women and men usually have different roles in WASH, targeting the gender dimension is important to ensure everyone is reached.

The master plan states the following about equality and inclusion in Asutifi North District:

- Water services: the unserved population lives in the poorer and rural areas.
- Sanitation services: lack of full availability of improved, gender segregated and disability friendly facilities in schools and health facilities.
- Most Water and Sanitation Management Teams (WSMTs) in the district are not gender-balanced, with less than 30% of members being women.

However, a comprehensive analysis of equality and inclusion challenges in the district is missing from the master plan.

The Empowerment in WASH (EWI) Index study was conducted in Asutifi North to increase understanding of gender dimensions that require attention to achieve the master plan and SDG 6.

Empowerment in WASH Index: Making equality & inclusion measurable

The Empowerment in WASH Index (EWI) measures agency, participation, and empowerment in the WASH sector. As Figure 1 shows, the EWI tool consists of 12 indicators to assess empowerment across individual, household and societal levels. It was developed by the Stockholm Environment Institute and Queens University, in collaboration with IRC and with input

Figure 1: The 12 EWI indicators by levels of operationalisation

LEVEL	INDICATOR
INDIVIDUAL	1. Intrinsic attitudes about WASH roles and responsibilities
HOUSEHOLD	2. Input decisions about WASH roles and responsibilities
	3. Input decisions about WASH expenditures
	4. Input decisions about involvement in community WASH activities
	5. Control over household assets
	6. Work balance
	7. Time for water collection
	8. Access to and sharing of WASH practice information
SOCIETAL	9. Access to and sharing of information on WASH and responsibilities
	10. Group membership
	11. Leadership in WASH planning / implementation
	12. Leadership in WASH accountability

from local WASH authorities, NGOs, traditional leaders, women’s and youth groups.

In Asutifi North District, the Empowerment in WASH Index (EWI) served to identify levels of empowerment related to WASH, as well as gaps in empowerment of men and women. During data collection, surveyors spoke with male and female principal decision-makers from the same household and collected individual responses with a mobile phone application. They surveyed 300 households over a week in May and June 2018, across 20 rural and peri-urban communities.

Across the 12 indicators, a respondent had to achieve a threshold of at least 75% in order to be considered empowered. The EWI is calculated from several components, including the percentage of empowered individuals, the percentage of disempowered individuals (who did not achieve 75% of the indicators), and the percentage of indicators achieved by the disempowered individuals. The calculation of the index is described below:

$$EWI = \% \text{ Empowered respondents} + (\% \text{ Disempowered respondents} * \% \text{ of Indicators achieved by those disempowered})$$

The approach can also be used to identify gaps in empowerment, and find out which indicators contribute most to disempowerment. This helps in identifying targeted actions to increase empowerment. Project implementers can then track progress over time to measure change.

The status of empowerment in Asutifi North District: key findings

The results of the EWI pilot in Asutifi North indicate that male respondents were more empowered in WASH than female respondents. The percentage of empowered respondents was 63% for women and 76% for men. The final EWI scores were 0.84 for women and 0.9 for men, out of a maximum score of 1.

Figure 2 shows that the individual level contributes more to disempowerment for men compared to women, while the household and community levels contribute more to disempowerment for women compared to men. Concentrating on the disempowerment score (1-EWI) then helps further understanding the details of disempowerment

in WASH for men and women, per indicator, at individual, household and community levels.

Looking at specific indicators in Figure 3, 10 of the 12 indicators contributed more to disempowerment for women than for men.

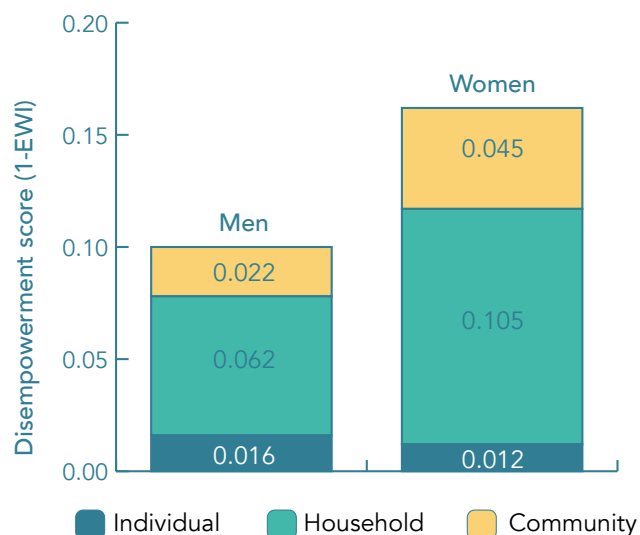


Figure 2: Contribution of indicators at each level to disempowerment in WASH

Gaps in women’s empowerment

The two main contributors to women’s disempowerment are input in decisions about involvement in community WASH activities and group membership.

Household decisions about involvement in community WASH activities. Limited say in the household about who will participate in these activities may translate into less involvement in community WASH planning and management. Women’s lack of say in these matters is the largest contributor to women’s disempowerment in the district.

Group membership provides an important source of social capital, information and access to networks. This indicator required being an active member, contributing to activities and decision-making in a group. Social and cultural norms as well as lack of time may discourage participation in activities outside the home.

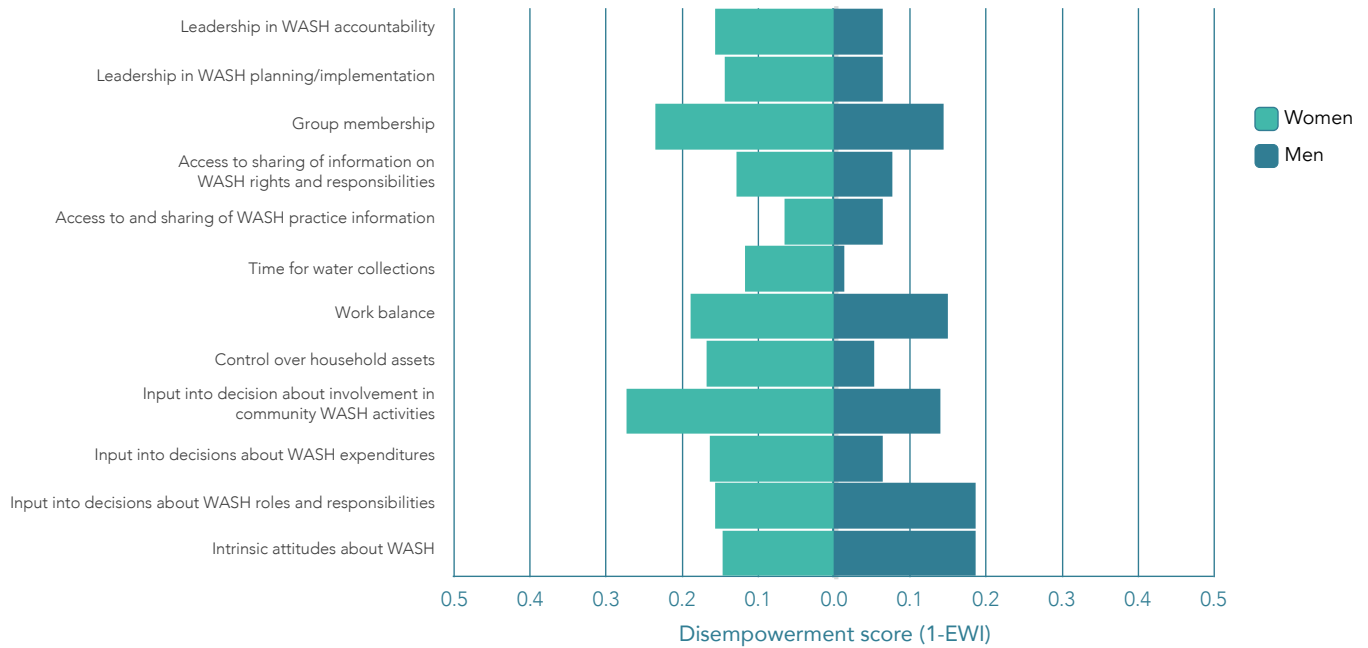


Figure 3: Proportion of disempowered respondents not achieving each indicator

Gaps in men’s empowerment

The two main contributors to men’s disempowerment were intrinsic attitudes in WASH and input into household decisions on WASH roles and responsibilities.

Intrinsic attitudes about WASH roles and responsibilities of some men meant they did not feel they could make their own personal decisions related to WASH. Social and cultural norms that dictate roles for men and women within the society, particularly those that assign WASH responsibilities to women could lead to men’s disempowerment in this area.

Household decision-making about WASH roles and responsibilities. Some men reported limited involvement in decisions about household WASH roles and responsibilities (e.g. water collection, WASH management). This is likely linked to their intrinsic attitudes about these issues, and may have negative implications for the whole household.

Recommendations

EWI findings were shared in Kenyasi, Asutifi North and Accra in April 2019 and a diverse group of stakeholders formulated recommendations for action. This chapter summarises recommendations based on EWI findings and the dissemination at district and national levels.

At the district level, it will be important during the implementation of the Asutifi North District WASH master plan to focus on the following key steps.

For local government, traditional authorities and NGOs involved in ANAM:

Local government needs to play a leadership role in strengthening **women’s** empowerment in WASH. Traditional authorities are important partners in implementation and involving communities, whereas for local NGOs and CSOs it is key to support these processes and hold authorities accountable. Some specific recommendations:

- Institute regular stakeholder engagement and information flows with women’s groups. Include them in ANAM meetings and implementation.
- Promote women’s and marginalised peoples groups` (e.g. youth, persons with disabilities) participation in decision-making around community WASH planning and activities (e.g. location and opening times of water facilities or resolution of problems). Community groups, such as Water and Sanitation Managements Teams (WSMTs) may serve as primary channels for decision-making and leadership opportunities. Group membership is an engaging way to keep women involved and exercise agency at individual, household and community levels.
- Monitor and hold review meetings with WSMTs.



Yvonne Opoku Kwarteng, Secretary for Women's Consultative Committee speaking during the EWI dissemination meeting in Asutifi North District

- Build capacity for women's leadership – e.g. in the Assembly positions and elsewhere – through campaigns and trainings.

To address the disempowerment of **men** in intrinsic agency in WASH and participation in decision-making, it is key to consider the following recommendations:

- Share knowledge and provide WASH education targeting men at household and community levels. This is key to increase the ability of men to provide input into decision-making about WASH roles and responsibilities and involvement in community WASH activities.
- Increase WASH education in schools.

For communities, civil society:

The recommendations listed below apply for both **women and men**.

- Work balance is a disempowering factor for men and women, so it is important to encourage people to see WASH tasks, such as fetching water, operations and maintenance, and other household duties as a shared responsibility. National policies can support this change (see below).
- Address WASH as a regular discussion theme in family and community meetings to support increased participatory decision-making.
- Promote men and women's active participation in community WASH groups.

At the national level, National Level Learning Alliance (NLLAP) discussions prompted the following key recommendations for government to prioritise:

- Implement quota system that supports leadership positions for women. e.g. 50% of appointed members in district assemblies.
- Intensify behaviour change communication and gender education (as part of school curricula at all levels) through multi-stakeholder collaboration between Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, Assemblies and more.
- Require Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies to conduct annual gender audits in WASH programmes and budgets. This can support increased gender assessment and analysis for the development of other district WASH master plans as well.
- Implement paternity leave and other policies that address traditional household structures to create shift in work balance.
- Include WASH facilities as standard part of housing and building plans with primary attention on mechanised schemes.
- Half of the 10% of community-managed funds allocated for capacity building should be solely reserved for women.
- Organise WASH campaigns as part of other social events, such as football galas or dubars.

Development organisations and civil society play a key role in supporting government and holding them accountable for making gender empowerment in WASH a reality.

Implications

For monitoring gender outcomes in WASH: This study indicates significant potential for greater monitoring of empowerment as an outcome of WASH interventions. EWI can help prioritise and target areas where one stands to make the largest improvements. Importantly, the EWI study indicates that technical and infrastructure-oriented WASH solutions are not sufficient to address the identified challenges. Transformational change in the WASH sector requires shifts in social and cultural norms and attitudes, as well as policies and interventions that are context specific and evidence-driven.

For Asutifi North: Information provided by the EWI can inform strategic planning, increasing the effectiveness of the district WASH master plan in empowering individuals and ensuring no one is left behind. However, this requires action at both district and national level, such as drawing on stakeholder recommendations. In particular, the results from the EWI tool indicate that even though men face some levels of disempowerment, the magnitude of women's disempowerment is greater, linked to lower input to decision-making and participation in WASH issues.

For the SDGs: These findings also highlight the importance of SDG 6 in making progress towards SDG5, addressing gender inequality and SDG10, addressing other inequalities.

Main References

Asutifi North District Assembly, 2018. Water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) Masterplan. Kenyasi. Available at <http://bit.ly/AsutifiNorth>

Stockholm Environment Institute, 2018. Empowerment in Wash Index, Asutifi North, Ghana Draft Technical Report.

As additional resources, we used and recommend for further reading:

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About this policy brief

This policy brief was authored by Sára Bori (IRC), Sarah Dickin (SEI), Elijah Bisung (Queens University) and Jeremiah Atengdem (IRC Ghana). The brief is primarily based on the SEI technical report mentioned above and on discussions during district and national level learning alliance meetings in Asutifi North District and Accra, Ghana. Furthermore we would like to thank Benjamin Agbemor and Abubakari M.S. Wumbei (IRC Ghana) for their work on facilitating the EWI study, Tettje van Daalen (IRC) for proofreading, Dechan Dalrymple (IRC) for designing the brief and Ekaterina Bessonova (SEI) for her work on the infographics.

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