



Women and Water Governance

PHOTO CREDIT: Replenish Africa Initiative (RAIN), Rwanda, 2018.

Background

It is well documented that women are disproportionately affected by a lack of reliable drinking water services. Women nearly always bear responsibility for water collection, and experience extremely high maternal mortality due to water-related disease and infection.

Women are most often responsible for caring for family members afflicted with water-related illness. Due to a lack of menstrual hygiene facilities, girls are often pulled from school once they reach puberty, and women and girls often face sexual assault and other forms of violence when fetching water, particularly over long distances. Here we highlight key findings and considerations for gender-sensitive programming.

Finding

Women value technologies and water systems that improve water access and allow faster and more flexible water collection compared to technologies or water systems which have more limited hours and longer queues. For example, the use of electronic taps resulted

in less time away from home and was associated with a reduction in household gender-based violence. However, more efficient collection times also result in a loss of valuable social time for women to engage with one another outside the home.

Consideration

A comprehensive analysis of how a proposed water project will impact women's time should be conducted during the design phase to account for unintended consequences.

Finding

In Tanzania, women were more likely to provide feedback to the local village government than to the newly established community-based water and supply organizations (CBWSOs).

Consideration

While this finding may be related to the newness of the CBWSO structure, implementers should be aware of differences in how men and women share feedback and work to ensure that women's voices are heard by key decision-makers.

Finding

Inclusion of women on community water boards does not necessarily equate to equitable decision-making.

Consideration

Effective program design must include elements beyond establishing quotas or encouraging inclusion of women in decision-making groups to ensure that women not only have a seat, but also a voice at the table.