

Violence and Vulnerability: Making WASH Safer

One in three women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner (WHO 2013). Gender-based violence is a widespread and complex issue rooted in power differences between males and females. Men and boys can also experience GBV, which is usually perpetrated by other males. However, the largest proportion of GBV occurs against women and girls.

In 2013 research was conducted to better understand the vulnerabilities to violence that can be related to WASH, to improve understanding on the scale of the problem and to identify examples of good practice to guide practitioners.

The research was funded through the Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity (SHARE) Consortium and a toolkit for WASH practitioners was developed. This issue of the newsletter focuses on the issue of violence and WASH and draws on the materials developed.

Violence, Gender and WASH: A Practitioner's Toolkit

The Violence, Gender and WASH practitioner's toolkit was developed for use by both development and humanitarian practitioners. It includes four key briefing notes covering:

- **An introduction to the toolkit and definitions;**
- **Guidance on how to improve WASH programming;**
- **Institutional commitment and staff capacity;**
- **Understanding the protection sector and how to respond to violence as a WASH actor.**

It also includes a checklist of practical actions established around the 10 key principles; a range of supporting tools including videos, case studies of violence and of good practices, training scenarios and guidance on how to modify existing approaches when working with communities.

For further information please contact: Dr Sue Cavill, SHARE Research Manager, WaterAid: gbv@wateraid.org

WASH programming that ignores the safety of users can exacerbate the vulnerabilities of women and girls, and other often marginalised groups.



Image: Matt Fryer



1 in 3

women worldwide will experience physical and or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner in their lifetime.

50% of survivors are under the age of 16 and women and girls with disabilities are 4-10 times more likely to be targeted for GBV than those without disabilities.

1 in 3

women worldwide risk shame, disease, harassment and even attack because they have nowhere safe to go to the toilet.



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So what's the problem?

In both urban and rural contexts, girls and women regularly face an increased risk of harassment when defecating in the open. They may delay drinking and eating in order to wait until nightfall to relieve themselves, because of the feeling of shame and risks to their dignity if they are seen defecating.

In internally displaced or refugee camps women and girls may also prefer to go to the toilet or use bathing units and other WASH facilities under the cover of darkness. Where improved water supplies are unavailable, women, girls and boys may have to walk long distances to collect

water for drinking, cooking or laundry (or to find a water source such as a river for laundry). Walking to remote locations or using WASH facilities after dark puts women, girls and boys at risk of harassment, sexual assault and rape.

Girls and in some cases boys may be vulnerable to attack and rape when using school or other public toilets, and this fear may prevent them from using such facilities.

Female WASH staff may also be a risk of being harassed and bullied because they have chosen to work in an often, male

dominated career. Similarly, in the community women who are prepared to challenge conventional gender roles by sitting on a WASH committee or being trained as a pump mechanic may also be harassed or simply ignored by others in their community for having the audacity to challenge social norms

Staff within WASH organisations may themselves be the perpetrators of violence, demanding sexual favours in return for goods and services.



Click here to see the film "As Safe as Toilets!"

By Matt Fryer and Harry Fishwick

contact gbv@wateraid.com or suzanne.ferrou@gmail.com for the accompanying facilitator's notes

Principles for reducing vulnerabilities to violence linked to WASH through improved programming and institutional commitment

The principles should be considered in all WASH institutions and programmes, but may be applied differently in each context. The actions are included as examples, but it is not expected that all actions will be undertaken in every WASH programme.

1

Principle 1. Institutionalise the requirement to analyse and respond to vulnerabilities to violence in WASH-related policies, strategies, plans, budgets and systems (human resource management and M&E) – refer to [BN3](#) for further information

2

Principle 2. Build the capacity of staff and partners to understand the problem of violence related to WASH and what their responsibilities are in relation to this issue – refer to [BN3](#) for further information

3

Principle 3. Make links with protection, gender and GBV specialists to assist in improving programmes and responding to challenges faced – refer to [BN4](#) for further information

4

Principle 4. Consider possible vulnerabilities to violence linked to WASH, integrate responses into all stages of WASH programming/service delivery

5

Principle 5. Adapt existing participatory tools and involve women, men, girls and boys in the process of identifying the risks and identifying solutions, allowing women to express their views separately where necessary

6

Principle 6. Pay particular attention to considering the safety of people who are in vulnerable, marginalised or special circumstances when accessing WASH services

7

Principle 7. Build the self-esteem and self-worth of all, but with particular attention on women and adolescent girls, linking to existing groups and networks to provide support and also to help respond to backlash

8

Principle 8. Ensure that community members have adequate information on safety linked to WASH and that community feedback processes are built into programmes

9

Principle 9. Ensure that WASH facilities are designed, constructed and managed in ways that reduce vulnerabilities to violence

10

Principle 10. Pay particular attention to transparency in processes where non-food items are distributed in humanitarian contexts



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How can WASH practitioners make a difference?



What can you do as a WASH practitioner to make sure that the project addresses the needs of men and women?

- ★ Employ both men and women in positions of responsibility, and ensure that all field teams have a mixture of women and men.
- ★ Have a clear gender policy that is well communicated to all staff and partners.
- ★ Carry out a gender analysis and use the results to inform the project design.
- ★ Keep gender on the agenda at all stages of the project cycle: encourage discussions on progress, and sharing of successes and challenges so that solutions can be proposed and debated.
- ★ Encourage the use of gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluation.
- ★ Promote the use of inclusion and safety audits of WASH facilities.
- ★ Take care to ensure that women at the community level are not expected to undertake activities as a lone woman as this can lead to their exclusion or rumours occurring about them having relationships with the men.
- ★ Always ensure that there is a minimum of three women involved in any committee or activity.

SAFETY AUDITS

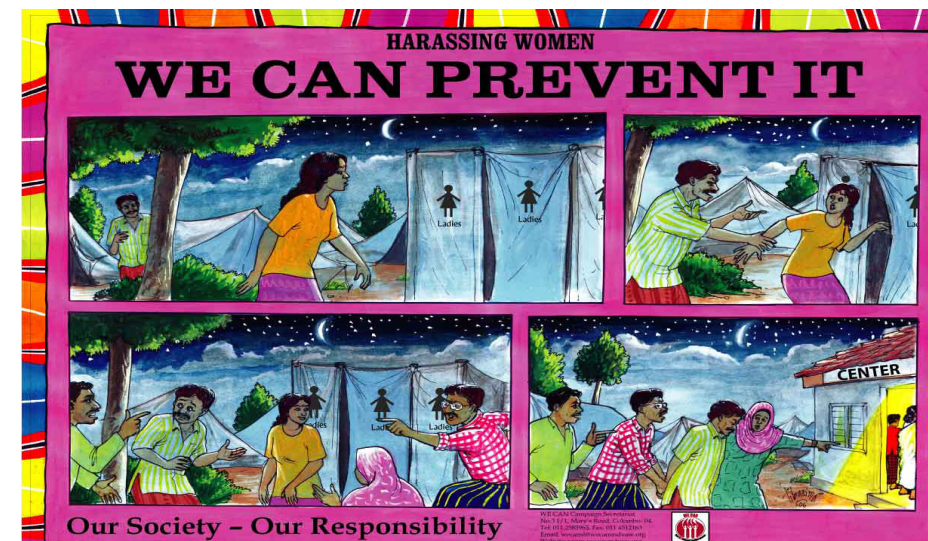
A safety audit consists of a group of women or girls walking in public spaces in their neighbourhood or around their school to identify the physical or social characteristics that make these spaces feel safe or unsafe. This is a useful way to start discussing the issue of safety and a way to begin to identify possible solutions with women themselves.

Jagori is an organisation working for gender equality based in Delhi. They worked with women to conduct safety audits in low income neighbourhoods and found that:

- ★ Boys and men often entered the women's wing of the toilet complex.
- ★ Women were often followed by men on their

way to the open toilets and were even touched by men.

- ★ Women and especially girls were pushed by men and boys while filling water from tankers, or followed when they have to walk to the neighbouring areas to collect water.
- ★ Waste-water on the streets and lanes makes it difficult for them to walk on the streets.
- ★ Women reported that men enter women's toilet blocks during power failures.
- ★ Also, as toilet complexes often shut down when there is a power failure, women are forced to use open areas for defecation, which leaves them vulnerable to further harassment.



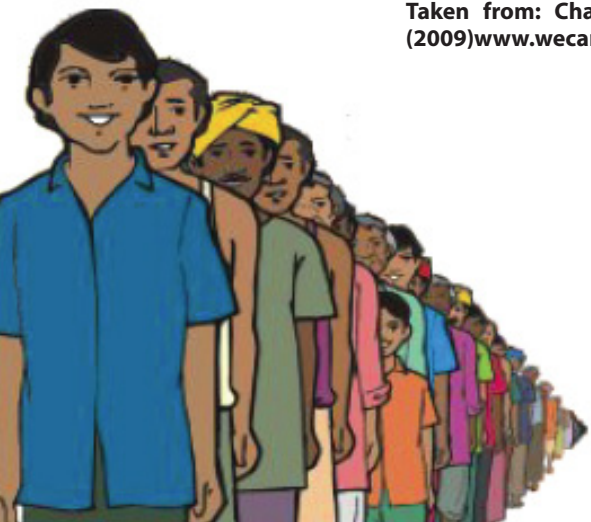
Hygiene Promotion



How can WASH practitioners involve men and boys in reducing the vulnerabilities to violence?

- Men and boys have a key role to play in reducing the vulnerabilities to violence, and it can be useful to build on the traditional roles they are usually expected to play in protecting the family.
- It is important for male as well as female WASH practitioners to have a good grasp of gender issues, and what this means in any particular context.
- Work with influential male community leaders to become champions on reducing vulnerabilities to violence and encouraging men and boys at the community level to understand the problems and contribute to developing solutions.
- Organising safety audits, with separate groups of men and women or boys and girls, and then sharing the information from each and discussing this can help to identify possible solutions and ways to overcome problems.

Taken from: Change Begins With Me (2009) www.wecanendvaw.org



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Don't miss the next newsletter on: Innovation and hygiene promotion

Find out about the portable microbiological laboratory and community based water quality monitoring:



Photo: Jeanne Cabugawan/Oxfam

and the Mrembo handwashing device



and much more!!

Please send contributions including photos, suggestions and field examples to:

Mkan61101@aol.com or suzanne.ferron@gmail.com



What can you do to support the functioning of the WASH committee?

- Provide training on gender, leadership and group dynamics and enable the male members of the committee to appreciate the contribution that women can make.
- Make sure that there are several women on the WASH committee (ideally near to 50:50 men and women), with an absolute minimum of three women. While this will not fully solve the problem, they will be able to give one another moral support and will feel more confident to speak up. Also while it is easy to not invite a single woman member to meetings and activities, hence excluding her, it is not so easy to not invite half of the committee. Having active participation of both women and men will become normalised.
- Arrange visits to communities where the WASH committee is functioning better, with active involvement of women and men, so they can learn by example.
- Encourage the committee to analyse its own performance and identify solutions to the poor integration of women.
- When attending committee meetings, make sure that you encourage the women to speak as well as the men and show that you respect their opinions.

Hygiene Promotion in Emergencies No 5

Useful Resources

House, Sarah, Suzanne Ferron, Marni Sommer and Sue Cavill (2014) Violence, Gender & WASH: A Practitioner's Toolkit – Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services. London, UK: WaterAid/SHARE.

The Violence, Gender and WASH Toolkit will be freely available electronically for any actor working in humanitarian, development or transitional contexts. If you are interested to receive a copy please send an email to Sue Cavill at gbv@wateraid.org

Mehrotra, S.T. (2010) A Handbook on Women's Safety Audits in Low-Income Urban Neighborhoods: A focus on essential services, November 2010, Jagori & Women in Cities International

Women in Cities International, Jagori, IDRC (2011) Gender and essential services in low-income communities, report findings of the action research project, Women's rights and access to water and sanitation in Asian cities; and

<http://jagori.org/category/video/>

Schulte, S. and Rizvi, Z. (2012) In Search of Safety & Solutions: Somali Refugee Adolescent Girls at Sheder and Aw Barre Camps, Ethiopia, Women's Refugee Commission

Interagency standing committee (2005) Guidelines for gender based violence interventions in Humanitarian Settings; focussing on prevention and response to sexual violence in emergencies: IASC, Geneva. (A New version of these guidelines is due out later this year)

IRC (no date) GBV Emergency Response & Preparedness: Participant Handbook available from: www.gbvresponders.org/filedepot_download/26/71

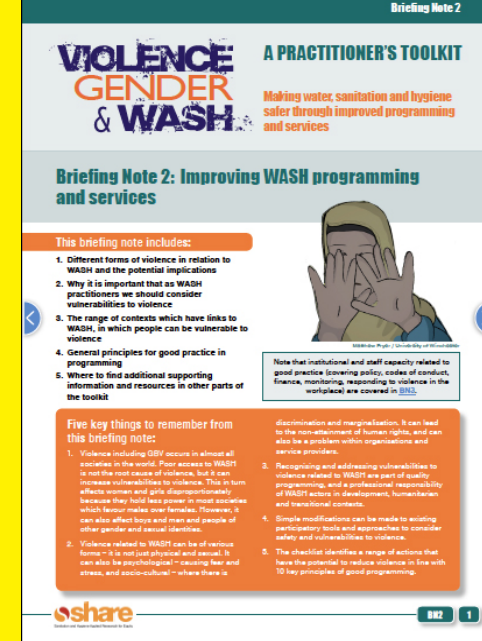
Jones, H. (2013) Facilitator notes: Accessibility and safety audit of water and sanitation facilities (Version 2), and three associated accessibility and safety audit forms: a) Water point, b) School latrine and c) Latrine. WEDC and WaterAid.

A few samples of the WeCan materials developed to promote a reduction in violence against women can be found on the USB. A range of other participatory materials from WeCan can be found on: http://thoughtshopfoundation.org/project_detail/Changemakers_Tools.htm

Videos

'1 in 3' Campaign video, 2012 [WaterAid, US, prepared by UK campaigns team] highlighting dangers for women to access safe sanitation using a high income context. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4aHy49waoE>

'Boys show the way' by the We Can Campaign, South Asia: A short video on boys being involved in the 'We Can' Campaign in Asia to stop violence against women. This video is not focussed specifically on WASH but shows boys engaging in the issue of violence against women and through understanding the issues making changes in their own lives at home, such as sharing the housework with their sisters, as well as undertaking advocacy activities in their schools and communities. <http://wecanendvaw.org/we-can-videos>



Erratum

The following picture of children playing snakes and ladders in the last newsletter was credited to Golam Morshed in error and should have been credited to Ruhul Amin.

