

GOLDEN SLUDGE

CHAMPIONING GENDER EQUITY IN SANITATION

In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 28% of the population has access to basic sanitation and 32% still practice open defecation (WHO/UNICEF 2017). Every year, 2 million people die from diarrheal diseases, 90% of them children under five years old (i.e., 5,000 children a day); 88% of these diseases are linked to problems of water quality and lack of sanitation and hygiene (WHO, 2017). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2016), in Sub-Saharan Africa, one girl out of ten does not go to school during her menstrual cycle, which corresponds to about 20% of school time lost over a year. Besides, women specific issues, such as menstrual hygiene, at the operational level, other relevant gender issues include:

- The lack of consideration of specific women's and people living with disabilities' needs and opinion for the construction of sanitation facilities in public or private spaces.
- The lack of positive discrimination in favor of women, people living with disabilities in sanitation related careers.
- Women, girls and people with disabilities' decision-making power as far as sanitation-related matters are concerned.

These above-mentioned points need to be considered for comprehensive, equitable and transformative sanitation policies.

Moreover, the sector lacks analyses and data on gender, as well as specific sex-disaggregated data, which complicates further the development and implementation of gender transformational programs.

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for access to safely managed sanitation for all with attention to specific needs of women and girls, and those living in vulnerable situations, as targeted by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6.2. Yet, to this day, a large number of young girls and women still do not have access to clean and secure toilets that enable safe menstrual health and hygiene management. In the same vein, people living with disabilities remain without constant access to safe and secure toilets in public spaces. This is a direct consequence of the lack of adequate representation and participation of these groups within decision-making processes, which are mainly composed of men.



GENDER AND SANITATION: WHAT IMPACT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

The challenges of gender mainstreaming in water and sanitation sector policies are real and a durable solution will require a comprehensive citizen-based approach.

Beyond biological differences and policy challenges, disparities in access to sanitation and hygiene also emerge from gender norms (cultural and social practices). These factors also strongly influence the roles and responsibilities for sanitation management within households, with a negative impact on the consumer, especially people with special needs.

INEQUITABLE ACCESS TO SANITATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON SDGS



SDG 3

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

- The use of facilities with no water and soap increases risks of contracting infections for women and young girls.
- The location of public toilets affects women and girls' security and privacy, in some contexts.
- The lack of adapted toilets to proper menstrual health and hygiene management in schools affects girls' self-confidence.
- Inadequate toilets affect the human rights of people living with disabilities or in vulnerable situations.
- Women and girls can suffer from mental health issues because they cannot lead regular daily activities due to their periods.
- In some cultures, and societies, women and young girls are excluded from their living environment for the entire duration of their periods.



SDG 4

QUALITY EDUCATION

- Young girls are sometimes unable to safely manage menstrual hygiene in school due to unsanitary and/or lack of separate toilets for boys and girls, leading them to repeatedly miss school.



SDG 5

GENDER EQUALITY




- Women experience difficulties to manage their menstrual hygiene in the workplace, leading to increased unproductivity.
- Women interested in jobs across the value chain, especially in emptying and transport components, are often discouraged to pursue their ambitions.

GENDER ACROSS THE SANITATION VALUE CHAIN

The sanitation value chain refers to all the processes and steps involved in fecal sludge management: household management (containment/storage), emptying, transportation, dumping, treatment, reuse/disposal. Disparities and differences relative to gender occur across each component of the sanitation value chain as highlighted below.



Social division of labor and responsibilities place men as the head of the household, in reference to this following table:

 COMPONENT	 MEN	 WOMEN
Household management	Decision-maker for purchasing toilets and buying facilities (e.g., toilets, septic tanks, soap)	In charge of the maintenance of sanitation facilities
Emptying, transport	Manage professional emptying services Decision maker for preferred emptying method (manual or mechanical)	Hold administrative positions in private sector companies
Treatment, reuse/disposal	Mostly occupy construction-related jobs due to the fact that most of the jobs are considered needing a certain physical strength and endurance	

The lack of integration women's needs in sanitation solutions is linked to multiple factors such as infrastructure's location, septic tank type or sanitation system, menstrual hygiene management integration.

HOW CAN WE PROMOTE GENDER IN SANITATION?

Encouraging institutions/organizations to integrate gender into their development projects is a priority as this approach contributes to reducing gender inequalities by better addressing the needs of vulnerable people along the sanitation value chain, from collection to recovery of sanitation by-products.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

To mainstream gender across the value chain, gender must be integrated in sanitation policies at all levels.

- Conduct institutional audits to assess the gaps in terms of gender integration into sectoral policies, including analyses of existing skills and an inventory of practices.
- Institutionalize the need for specific gender sensitive orientations and objectives in policy documents or regulations.
- Reinforce sensitization and/or capacity building on gender issues for sectoral institutions' staff.
- Implement a gender-sensitive human resources policy for public and private sectors.
- Organize regular sectoral consultations convening women-led organizations, networks, or associations that are active at the national level.
- Promote the development of quality data and evidence on sanitation, including sex-disaggregated data and responding to SDG 6 indicators, to foster evidence-based decision-making.
- Advocate for the implementation of gender assessments at all levels in sanitation projects.
- Increase budget allocation for sanitation management with consideration for gender issues.
- Promote and increase women's participation in sanitation policymaking, decision-making processes, and governance to ensure the needs of women and young girls are accounted for.
- Document and disseminate success stories from women working in the sanitation sector.



OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations aim to integrate gender aspects into every component of the sanitation value chain.

Across All Components of the Value Chain



Engage in positive discrimination for women-led organization to lead sanitation projects or programs.



Encourage female participation in technical jobs across the value chain (trainings, career management, etc.)



Develop women leadership and empowerment in the sanitation sector.

HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT: CONSTRUCTION

Advocate for the development and availability of sanitation solutions that incorporate the specific needs of women and young girls.

HOUSEHOLD MANAGEMENT: USE AND MAINTENANCE

1. Reinforce awareness raising and behavioral change communication on gender issues, menstrual health and hygiene management to deconstruct social representations and norms that keep women in a position of end-users.
2. Sensitize populations on responsible fecal sludge management to ensure every household member is concerned with maintenance of sanitation facilities.
3. Sensitize men in the importance to involve women in household-level decision-making processes.
4. Encourage women's participation in technical jobs related to building and marketing sanitation infrastructure (toilets, etc.).

EMPTYING/TRANSPORT - TREATMENT/VALORIZATION/REUSE

1. Integrate gender dimensions in sanitation by-products reuse (i.e., marketing towards women in reuse, etc.)
2. Encourage women's participation in technical and field jobs related to emptying, transport, treatment, valorization, and reuse components.

ABOUT SPEAK UP AFRICA

Headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, Speak Up Africa is a Policy and Advocacy action tank dedicated to catalyzing leadership, enabling policy change, and increasing awareness for sustainable development in Africa. Through our platforms and relationships and with the help of our partners, we ensure that policy-makers meet implementers; that solutions are showcased and that every sector – from individual citizens and civil society groups to global donors and business leaders – contributes critically to the dialogue and strives to form the blueprints for concrete action toward public health and sustainable development on the continent.



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