Truly Teaming: Partnering to Integrate Gender in Kenya’s Water Sector

In spite of its importance in development and poverty reduction, the water sector has had one of the largest gaps between what women do and the influence they actually have. In Kenya, women are still underrepresented in water governance structures at all levels, yet they are the most negatively affected by unavailability of water. To substantially boost gender integration in the country’s water sector, a team of professionals from the World Bank, the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI) pooled their resources and energies. This SmartLesson illustrates how forging nurturing partnerships with a wide variety of development partners can result in effective strategies for gender mainstreaming—allowing us to do far more together than any one of us could do alone.

Background

One of the biggest challenges to redressing gender inequality is translating policy into practice at the implementation level. According to the African Union Gender Policy, to date, 70% of member states currently have national gender policies, yet few of them have been implemented. In view of this, gaps persist between men and women and inequality persists in almost every aspect of life. The graph below provides a snapshot of some inequalities in the Kenyan society.

Figure 1: Gender Gaps in Kenya


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1. African Union Gender Policy, 2009, p 5
The Bank has several drivers for gender mainstreaming in its operations and policies, and the Bank’s Kenya Country Partnership Strategy 2010–2013 commits to work with the government to promote women’s empowerment in productive economic sectors such as water.

The six lessons outlined below demonstrate how through partnership between the World Bank, the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation (MoWI), government policy priorities, World Bank programs and sector expertise were combined to initiate gender equality and mainstreaming activities in the water sector in Kenya.

What We Learned

Lesson 1: Identify your entry point and focus on client priorities

The entry point for the team, comprising professionals from the World Bank, the Water and Sanitation Program, and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation Gender Desk Officer was the MoWI performance contract. Every year the GoK evaluates performance based on a negotiated agreement signed between GoK and the management of public agencies, and releases the results through the media to the public. Good performers and their teams are publicly rewarded. As a consequence, top management of public agencies takes great interest throughout the year to perform well. Since 2008, gender was included as one of the indicators evaluated within all performance contracts including water sector agencies, making them keen to address gender. The performance contract contains the following gender targets requiring water sector agencies to:

1. Develop a framework / policy to guide gender mainstreaming activities
2. Identify gender concerns, needs, and priorities and devise ways to address them
3. Produce status reports on compliance levels of 30% gender representation, and
4. Collect sex-disaggregated data to guide in planning and programming.

Instead of trying to mainstream gender “everywhere,” the partners concentrated on implementing a select set of key actionable results that, if achieved, could help the sector achieve its gender mainstreaming targets. The Bank and the MoWI agreed to partner on a work plan (see figure 2 below) focusing on:

- Building the capacity of a community of water sector practitioners to mainstream gender in the water sector;
- Initiating gender action plans within selected sector oversight institutions: the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, Water Service Boards across Kenya, the Water Services Trust Fund, the Water Services Regulatory Board and the Kenya Water Institute;
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data for the water sector;
- Developing tools and training utilities in World Bank lending operations to address gender concerns in (i) designing and developing new water and sanitation services, (ii) during regular utility operations, and (iii) within institutional policy and practice.
- Developing national policy, regulatory and strategy guidelines, building on field experiences.

Lesson 2: Build a community of practice with effective gender mainstreaming competence

The Gender Action Plan’s (GAP) just-in-time modality allowed the team to address the first critical skills gap, aiming to strengthen the gender mainstreaming capacity in the water sector through capacity building of gender desk officers (GDOs) in water governance structures in Kenya. In this initiative, the MoWI partnered with the Bank-supported $150 million Water and Sanitation Service Improvement Project (WASSIP) and, with support from the GAP, provided financial support for a series of workshops to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the water sector. The workshops gathered 35 GDOs from a variety of water sector oversight agencies and equipped them with the gender mainstreaming skills to effectively perform their roles and to develop action plans to integrate gender in their institutions.

Later in 2011, the capacity building expanded to include training of GDOs in 24 utilities in the Coast, Athi, and Lake Victoria North Water Service Board service areas targeted by WASSIP, helping utilities to interface with urban consumers in a gender sensitive manner, and in turn, positively impact the WASSIP investment.

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2 A Performance Contract is a negotiated and documented agreement between the Government of Kenya and public agencies against which results are reviewed and measured.

3 Water Services Boards hold assets and develop large scale WSS infrastructure. They are responsible for water services delivery through appointed Water Service Providers (water utilities).

4 The Water Services Trust Fund is a basket fund through which the Government, donors and other organizations can fund water and sanitation targeting the poor.

5 The Water Services Regulatory Board is responsible for setting and enforcing standards within the sector, issuing licenses, and approving tariff adjustments.
To inform these capacity building efforts, a round of training-needs assessments was done, (see table 1 below). This allowed the team to tailor training to the participants’ experience and later to measure the impact of the training. The assessment showed that most GDOs had little knowledge of gender mainstreaming and limited experience on how to apply it in their daily work, whereas the training evaluations showed significant learning leaps.

To reinforce learning and guide managers, a toolkit on gender mainstreaming in utility operations was developed. The “Toolkit for Mainstreaming Gender in Urban and Sanitation Utilities” comprises 18 modules to guide utility managers in integrating gender within the targeted change areas of developing new urban water and sanitation services, mainstreaming gender within regular utility operations and redressing institutional level gender gaps. Action learning within the utilities is informing the update of the toolkit for scale up in urban utilities in other parts of the country.

A South – South exchange visit to India was another capacity building activity undertaken to expose the GDOs to best practice internationally. In May 2011, an 18-person Kenyan delegation, traveled to both urban and rural Maharastra and Kerala to strengthen Kenya’s capacity to diagnose policy options and challenges for gender mainstreaming. Additional exchange visits are planned: one to Peru in 2011 focusing on gender dimensions for effective PPP and governance in small towns, and another to South Africa to show how the country has interpreted gender-related commitments in its constitution.

Lesson 3: Follow up to guard your gains

Overall, appointing and training GDOs proved a successful strategy for initiating change; their skills and dedication led to the successful implementation of the gender action plans. The results were particularly successful where the GDOs continued to monitor closely the progress of their action plans and where they had support from their managers. The lesson learnt was that the CEOs and Managing Directors of institutions must take time and care to appoint GDOs who are committed, have the right skills, and can be relied upon to lead change after the training.

Furthermore it is critical to allocate time to review progress after the training. Three months after the initial focal point training, a follow-up training reviewed early progress in implementing the action plans. In the WASSIP areas, the gender trainers had follow up missions to coach GDOs in the field and engage with utility managers. Scheduling time between workshops and following up allows knowledge to sink in, challenges to be discussed and action plans to be updated, and approach yields more than a one-off training.

Lesson 4: Integrate gender initiatives within lending operations for scale

In 2007 the Government of Kenya received a World Bank credit of US$150 million for the Water and Sanitation Service Improvement Project (WASSIP, credit number 4376-KE) to actions included the establishment or strengthening of gender committees in various water agencies, initiation of institutional gender policies, and integration of gender into the budgets for the following financial year. The appointment and equipping of GDOs has proved a critical lesson to the success of the overall initiative.

“[I have now sensitized ten officers in my department; we are developing gender guidelines for the Ministry, gender education and communication materials; and allocating funds for gender issues. Gender will [continue to] be one of our performance contract indicators.”

- Workshop Participant
expand access to safe water and sanitation services in 3 of the 8 Water Services Board areas of Kenya. The project is expected to benefit about 9.3 million Kenyans including residents of some of Kenya’s largest urban informal settlements. Although gender dimensions were not originally included within the project concept, the partners including the GDOs who had been trained, participated in the midterm review mission in February 2011 to advise WASSIP on how to mainstream gender.

The project adjustments were captured in the WASSIP aide memoire as hereunder:

- Disaggregation of project monitoring data, including of core indicators, in the WASSIP results framework. Rather than measuring access in general, the new indicators would measure the percentage of women and men in project areas with access to safe water supply and sanitation. Rather than combined satisfaction, the project would now measure the percentage of women and men rating services as satisfactory or better; (done in FY 11)

- Building on gender mainstreaming capacity of utilities staff in WASSIP areas and subsequent implementation of gender action plans (done in FY 11);

- Incorporation of gender dimensions within the WASSIP socioeconomic baseline survey to inform gender-differentiated implementation in informal settlements (done in FY 11);

- Integration of gender within the Water Services Regulatory Board regulatory framework using WASSIP funding (planned for FY 12);

- Support a national gender policy and strategy development forum (planned for FY 12).

Linking gender within WASSIP means that gender integration approaches are now being tested at scale. Box 1 lists some early results reported from monitoring the utility training.

**Lesson 5: Forge partnerships, collaborate and piggy back on existing initiatives**

Often, practitioners have only limited resources and knowledge to dedicate to gender work. Joining hands and resources with a wide variety of development partners can make a big difference to the scale and reach of gender integration.

For example, the partners in the mainstreaming initiative comprising staff from the MoWI, the World Bank and the Water and Sanitation Program recognized the need for gender-disaggregated data that would inform evidence-based policymaking. The opportunity was seized when a nationwide survey for the Kenya Agricultural Productivity and Agribusiness Program (KAPAP) costing US$475,000 was initiated. The innovative methodology for this survey is to undertake two interviews per household; one with the household head, and the other with the female head. The partners were able to piggyback on this survey and integrate a water and sanitation module which will now generate much needed **gender-disaggregated baseline data**

for the sector and inform appropriate responses to address identified gaps. Table 2 below illustrates a section of the water module inserted in the KAPAP survey.

Similarly, collaboration was evident in the capacity building workshops, enriched by substantive skills and perspectives from various ministries and organizations. The World Bank, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, the Ministry of Planning’s National Bureau of Statistics, the Water and Sanitation Program, the University of Nairobi, United Nations Environment Program, United Nations Development Fund for Women, Gender and Water Alliance, and consultancy firms all contributed towards the training initiatives.

Collaboration was a feature of the India exchange visit as well; it was supported by the **South-South Knowledge Exchange Trust Fund**—a joint effort managed by World Bank Institute and the Regions and the Knowledge and Learning Council. WSP South Asia team further leveraged their links with government clients to set up meetings between the Indian government and the Kenya GDOs.
Collaboration was not only between different organizations, it was also between the water sector agencies. Once buy-in was secured at top management, the Ministry of Water and Irrigation for example, instructed the Water Service Boards to support the capacity building and action plans for the utilities. This request was fulfilled with full cooperation; staff time has been allocated by the Water Service Boards to supervise utility action plans, which would have been more difficult otherwise.

**Lesson 6: Communicate for horizontal replication**

Communicating early success of the capacity building workshops and action plans is leading to horizontal and vertical replication. Preliminary observations demonstrate stakeholder interest to learn from workable and replicable gender integration strategies.

The lessons learnt have been widely shared, for example during the Bank’s 2010 Annual Meetings, Stockholm Water Week 2010 and 2011, GAP learning workshop in Washington 2011, Multi lateral Development Banks Gender Workshop in Addis 2011; UN Women conference on innovations in rural service delivery in Dar es Salaam 2011. The sharing process has represented an important starting point for replication, spin-offs and partnerships. During many of these occasions, the lessons have triggered people’s interest and generated requests for support.

As a result of the sharing, there are plans to replicate the GDO initiative in the energy sector in Kenya. Members of the donor community in Kenya have also expressed interest in supporting replication of the initiative and the Italian government for example is planning to support training of land reclamation officers, and district water officers based in the arid- and semi-arid areas building on this gender mainstreaming initiative in FY 12 - 13.
Conclusion

Results in gender integration were progressed through the partnership between MoWI, the Bank, the Water and Sanitation Program building on their collective experiences, expertise, and commitment under the gender mainstreaming initiative. Moving forward, the experiences from the new community of practice, lessons from implementing action plans, insight from exchange visits and analysis of data will be consolidated to inform policy and strategy recommendations for the water sector in FY12 (see figure 3 below). This will help to scale up and sustain the gender mainstreaming gains made in Kenya’s water sector so far.

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