



Water Supply and Gender

Water for Women is the Australian Government's flagship program on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) aimed at improving the health, gender equality and wellbeing of Asian and Pacific communities through inclusive and sustainable WASH.

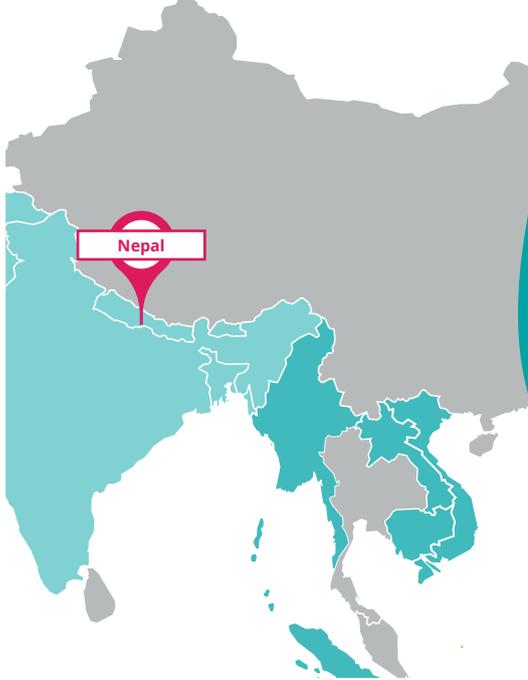
Research is an important element of Water for Women, it is a key pathway for development innovation and helps to inform policy-making and program delivery. Investments in research programs facilitate access to diverse partnerships and networks, contributing to Australia's aid policy and wider diplomatic engagement with our partner countries.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 calls for 'ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all' recognising that maintaining the quality, quantity and availability of water services post-construction has been a greater challenge across developing countries.

Partnering with the **International Water Management Institute** (IWMI), this research project on water supply and gender will look through a gender perspective to understand and enhance the functionality of water supply systems in Nepal.



Research is a key pathway for development innovation, policy-making and program delivery



Accessing safe drinking water in Nepal (IWMI)

A gender perspective to understand and enhance the functionality of water supply systems: lessons from Nepal

Recent research has pointed to the need to better understand power structures and local governance to improve functionality in community-managed water supply systems. In particular, how gender power dynamics affect the operation and maintenance of water systems is inadequately researched and understood. This is particularly relevant in Nepal, and other countries, where new patterns of male out-migration are significantly changing gender roles and relationships.

“Access to water is often related to wealth and power in the society. Influential people are often able to capture and monopolise water sources.”

**Purna Bahadur Oli,
Chairperson of Ward No. 8, Guras
Rural Municipality, Dailekh district**

This research project explores how dynamic gender relationships influence the sustainability and functionality of water systems, with a focus on the effects on collective action. The project examines how better gender-programming might improve the outcomes of WASH interventions.

“Research and development must clearly go hand in hand. Efforts to improve water service systems in Nepal, especially for rural areas, are a case in point. Their success depends crucially on collective action, which is influenced in turn by gender and power dynamics.”

**Manita Raut, Research Officer,
International Water
Management Institute**

Our key findings so far, based on a household survey and qualitative inquiries, show that power to make decisions around community water projects, maintenance, formation and operation of Water User Groups (WUGs), tariff rates, and water distribution lies predominantly with men.

Gender roles in water supply and use is gradually changing in the hills whereby men and boys are taking up the role of water fetching, while in Terai, a lowland region of Nepal, women continue to be exclusively responsible for carrying and using water at household level.

In one of the research sites, only one out of seven WUGs is functioning well and this situation calls for alternate models of managing community water supply systems. The move to a federal system of governance lends opportunities to practice inclusive and gender equitable water resources development and management in local level governments.

Nonetheless, greater efforts are required to develop capacity of the governments in creating a gender and socially inclusive water supply system.

To address these two gaps, IWMI will investigate the linkages between gender and collective action in the WASH sector.

Water for Women is proud to be partnering with the **International Water Management Institute**, and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation in this important research work.



Australia believes that equitable WASH access is of crucial importance to develop communities. Water for Women and our partners provide innovative solutions to WASH delivery and use research to contribute evidence to the global WASH sector. By working together and building evidence, we can create better, more sustainable WASH outcomes whilst also contributing to strengthened gender equality and inclusion.



Type 2 Awards support implementation of Water for Women projects. Research is closely associated with the work of partner CSOs and covers inclusive WASH approaches, partnerships and topic areas. Research results will help improve projects and inform future inclusive WASH design and implementation.