Gender-transformative Social Accountability for Inclusive WASH

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

Like many countries, the Government of Bangladesh has institutional arrangements in place for water service delivery such as policies, budgets, and decentralised governance, yet performance remains poor and women and marginalised communities are not guaranteed equal access to water services.

This research project explores the contribution of social accountability to inclusive WASH, with a particular focus on improving levels of water service in Bangladesh.

The research is being implemented through an academic-NGO partnership between: the Institute for Sustainable Futures-University of Technology Sydney (ISF-UTS); World Vision Bangladesh (WVB); World Vision Australia (WVA); and the University of Rajshahi (UoR).

Research is a key pathway for development innovation, policy-making and program delivery.
Social accountability is concerned with increasing citizen engagement, especially for marginalised or vulnerable groups. However, there is little consideration of the gendered nature of voice, accountability and empowerment in current social accountability literature.

This research addresses this gap in understanding gender in social accountability by focusing on effective social accountability for WASH system performance and service delivery that leads to gender-transformation, disability inclusion and pro-poor empowerment.

This research will contribute to World Vision Bangladesh’s implementation of Citizen Voice and Action, an approach which mobilises and equips citizens to monitor and advocate for the improvement of government services.

Linked to World Vision’s WASH programming and Citizen Voice and Action implementation, the research will support the co-design, implementation and review of a gender-transformative social accountability model. Concepts of gender equality, social inclusion and gender transformation, together with institutional frameworks for WASH governance are explored in the context of rural water supply in Bangladesh.

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.

Find out more at waterforwomenfund.org