Water for Women is partnering with Plan International Australia and Yayasan Plan International Indonesia to improve the health, gender equality and wellbeing of Indonesian communities through inclusive and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The project, WASH and Beyond – Transforming Lives in Eastern Indonesia aims to benefit more than 556,400 people in rural and urban areas of Manggarai district in Nusa Tenggara Timur Province and Sumbawa district in Nusa Tenggara Barat Province, Indonesia by December 2022.

In 2021, this project was awarded an Innovation and Impact grant to further strengthen the use of new evidence, innovation and practice in sustainable and inclusive WASH and, in doing so, contribute to improved learning and practice globally.

Led by Plan International Australia in partnership with Edge Effect, this Innovation & Impact project will strengthen inclusion in WASH implementation by using Participatory Action Research (PAR) within its WASH programs, with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion. This work will result in the development of a practical toolkit called ‘Voices at the Table’, which will help practitioners to embed and strengthen inclusion in their projects.
Participatory Action Research (PAR) emphasises participation and action by members of communities affected by the research. PAR is a key approach within WASH and Beyond project in Indonesia. Plan International is partnering with Edge Effect to strengthen inclusion in WASH implementation by using PAR in its own WASH programs, including six groups consisting of women, people with disabilities and other minority groups.

The PAR framework, which involves an iterative cycle of experiencing, reflection, planning and action, allows marginalised groups to identify WASH issues and lead their own responses, thereby putting power in their hands. Individuals also continuously assess the power dynamics of activities.

Through this Innovation and Impact project, partners are advocating for institutional systems-strengthening to reinforce an inclusive environment for WASH programs.

Partners are developing a practical PAR toolkit called ‘Voices at the Table’, to support WASH practitioners to work alongside women, people with disabilities, other minority groups and representative organisations, and to strengthen individual and collective agency to lead development, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of actions.

Using inclusive-led processes that involve marginalised groups leading their own ‘action inquiry’ is empowering them to improve safe, accessible, and inclusive WASH practice and policies.

Each toolkit activity includes guidance on adapting the activity for different groups, such as adaptations for blind and sight impaired communities, and for women, who occupy traditional gender roles.

Further, the toolkit includes principles, theories, and case studies detailing how activities can be adapted to support diverse communities and WASH projects, together with duty of care and safeguarding approaches. It also includes an M&E section covering participatory methods, in addition to completable checklists to support informed decision-making for appropriately and meaningfully conducting activities.

To maximise uptake of the ‘Voices at the Table’ toolkit, it is being translated into Bahasa and disseminated widely. Toolkit orientation sessions within the WASH sector in Indonesia and internationally will further strengthen practitioner capacity and inclusive WASH outcomes.