

Bangkok Learning Event—Communique



Over the week 18 to 22 March, the Water for Women Fund partners joined together in Bangkok with other regional organisations including UNICEF, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) and the World Health Organisation to acknowledge and celebrate the importance of collaboration and sharing of learning when working towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation. The event, which was attended by over 80 Water for Women Fund participants, culminated in a celebration of World Water Day. Australia’s Ambassador to Thailand, Mr Allan McKinnon opened and closed the event, affirming the commitment of the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) WASH sector.

Water for Women’s partnership approach was evident throughout the event, setting the pre-conditions for, and supporting, collaboration, connection and cross learning across the Fund.

Connection

The event built upon and strengthened a diverse range of relationships between strategic partners within and beyond the Fund. This reflects DFAT’s broad commitment to strengthening WASH that extends from bilateral relationship to global partnerships and forums.

Spending the week together was another step in building a common identity and Fund story. Partners used the opportunities throughout the event to share their research and project activities, through detailed posters, discussions in plenary and small group work, and in one-on-one interactions.

Opportunities for new connections with the private sector were highlighted throughout event sessions. The private sector is playing a crucial role across the WASH value chain and reaching marginalised communities at scale, with products designed with them, to meet their needs and at a price they can afford.

Collaboration

Many of the event sessions were developed collaboratively between Fund partners, building on the rich depth of knowledge partners have to draw upon. Insightful content was presented on effective sanitation; women’s leadership and empowerment; WASH sector strengthening and behaviour change communications. Opportunities for engaging with and stimulating the private sector to deliver inclusive WASH outcomes was also prominent throughout the sessions.

Project partners reflected on the need to approach WASH programming with a commitment to improve gender and social inclusion dynamics; to question whose

voices are heard and to avoid a narrow efficiency-driven focus on reaching WASH outcomes.

Cross Learning

Project partners committed to a strong focus on gender and social inclusion, with a particular focus on Do No Harm. Partners shared practical examples of how to integrate do not harm into project planning and implementation as a critical step in moving towards transformation. There was acknowledgment that unless we actively address gender inequality and social exclusion in our WASH programs, we are not only leaving people behind but we are potentially causing harm.

Project partners explored ways to create credible evidence in two challenging areas for the WASH sector: systems strengthening and gender equality and social inclusion outcomes. These sessions provided the platform and mandate to further strengthen the Fund-level M&E system.

The experiences shared during the event, worked to harness the knowledge of a diverse range of CSOs and ROs working together in pursuit of inclusive WASH. It created excellent networking opportunities between all participants and there was consistent agreement around the importance of face-to-face interaction to deliver the important work of the Fund. A full report will be prepared and circulated in coming weeks.

Participants will be invited to provide further perspectives through a survey that will be circulated to all participants next week.

Respect • Purpose • Mutual Benefit • Commitment

Accountability • Collaboration • Adaptability • Courage