IWRM Action Hub

CASE STUDY

Global: Water, Climate, & Gender Investments – AIP WACDEP-G

Summary

Addressing gender inclusion for water, development and finance, and climate investments to achieve gender transformative change. Research revealed that in-depth gender analyses - including stakeholder participation and dialogue, policy mapping, application of gender indicators - during the refinement period were key to the programme's success. Time for reflection encouraged adaptability in its design (i.e., policies/assumptions/theories/interventions) and allowed for tailor-made solutions for gender inclusion.

Background

In many African societies, gender inequalities in accessing productive assets and resources are often linked to access to water and disproportionately increase the burden of climate change on women and girls. Communities with high poverty rates are particularly affected by water challenges and vulnerable to the effects of climate change. At the same time, infrastructure developments struggle to keep up with the necessary pace required to support Africa's growing economy, address gender inequality, and meet the socio-economic needs of the population. Planning, investments, and institution building through water and climate change adaptation projects do not include or drive a gender-transformative vision, and instead, reflect structurally embedded cultural norms, practices, and gendered power relations. Unless gender equality is targeted at the systemic level, investments in water infrastructure on the continent will significantly exacerbate gender inequalities.

Despite these interdependencies between climate, development and finance, and water communities, they do not often work together. As a result, there is little known data, monitoring, or evaluation in relation to gender inclusion in climate, development and finance, and water communities. This poor

level of knowledge warranted an analysis of the existing gaps, issues, and potential for gender inclusion in several African Nations. A previous WAGDEP programme attempted to mainstream gender; however, it was realised that unless gender equality was more fully addressed within the programme, it would not be as sustainable or socially accepted. The creation of the WACDEP-G programme was thus borne as a gender transformative process towards achieving climate resilience through water, promoting better water security and gender equality in Africa. The goal of the WACDEP-G programme was to ensure that the preparation, development, design, governance, and management of ongoing and new climate resilient water infrastructure investments, institutions, and job creation interventions strategically advance gender equality. The overall objective was thus to promote gender-transformative planning, decision-making and institutional development for climate resilient water investments in Africa.

Actions taken

The WAGDEP-G programme applied a systems-thinking approach to achieving gender transformative change, addressing issues at a structural (i.e., policies and plans), relations (i.e., power dynamics, relationships, communications), and agency (i.e., woman empowerment and barriers to change) level. As finance was limited, the WAGDEP-G programme was aimed at piloting the projects in 5 African countries, with the goal of increasing this to a total of 18 countries, across 5 river basins by 2025.

Before the WAGDEP-G programme could be implemented, an inception (or refinement) period was granted by the funder - (Austrian Development Agency) - to allow for further preparation, in detail analyses (e.g., stakeholder analyses, gender analyses), and stakeholder engagement, as to achieve a better understanding of the existing issues. 'Agile learning' was adopted throughout this period to encourage adaptive thinking within the design of the implementation strategy.

The inception process was split into 5 main phases:

1. Conducting a form of internal transformation to gain ownership of the internal process.
2. A high-level form of gender analysis was conducted to create more clarity and better understand the context, barriers, relationships between water and climate, and gender-related inequality issues that needed to change. The analyses involved conducting focus groups, and employing tools such as problem trees, SWOT analyses, policy analyses, Root cause analyses, and stakeholder-mapping were employed. At the intervention level, the analyses were aimed at identifying and prioritising entry points and opportunities for gender transformative change (i.e., mapping policies and identifying best practices).
3. Based on these gender analyses, the WAGDEP-G programme interventions were redefined.
4. Engagement with key mandated institutions allowed for the assignment of a national focal point institution, such as the ministry for water. This was considered an entry point for addressing gender inequality.
5. Based on the gender analysis detailed work plans were formulated for each nation.

Included in the gender analyses process was the application of the gender ladder tool. The Gender Ladder tool played a key role in identifying gender gaps and based on this, the programme intervention areas which needed to be addressed. The tool played a particularly important role in helping to establish a baseline in which to identify and compare the location of each country on the ladder based on their varying interventions. This allowed for the identification of each country's stage of gender transformative change and a later tailoring of their strategy.

Outcomes

From the initial targets, the following were met by the WAGDEP-G programme:

- Gender-transformative structures for resilient water investments and jobs were put in place and implemented.
- 3.6 million people benefited over 6 years.
- Climate vulnerability inequalities were addressed
- USD1 billion in gender equal and climate resilient investments from government and private sources
- Embedded gender inequalities in accessing services and resource control addressed at the local level - AIP Water Investment Scorecard operationalised
- Gender-transformative planning and design enabled

The programme – more specifically, the inception (or refinement) period – facilitated the process of developing of a list of activities, plans, actions for transformative change within each African nation. As a result, the programme itself outlines the key steps involved in building a gender transformative

project. Several indicators were applied to monitor and assess the gender transformative process. Indicators were identified as actions contributing towards gender inequality included behaviour, practices, thinking, policies etc.

The gender analysis successfully identified several issues which may have affected the successfulness of the gender transformative change process. This was achieved as a direct result of obtaining more comprehensive information on the existing context, barriers, relationships, etc. via means of stakeholder participation and dialogue. This engagement played an important role in redefining the assumptions, concepts, theories (e.g., theory of change), and interventions outlined initially in the WAGDEP-G programme, alongside identifying country-specific entry points for transformative change. The participation of stakeholders also encouraged joint vision building and the creation of alliances which helped in arriving at an agenda for change.

Application of the gender ladder tool revealed that most countries (of the 5 assessed) were labelled as gender neutral/sensitive. The WAGDEP-G programme targeted to move countries from gender neutral/sensitive towards gender transformative. The gender ladder tool thus plays an important role in helping to design unique, country-specific strategies – i.e., pathways from A to B – to promote the gender transformative change process. Most countries have almost completed their design phase and have begun implementing, however as the programme remains in these early phases, results of the project are yet to be determined.

Lessons Learned

It is important that WAGDEP-G programmes are adaptable throughout its implementation. This way, evidence from demonstrations on the ground can be used to adapt policies and become integrated as part of the programme’s design.

The success of the gender analyses highlighted the importance of stakeholder participation and dialogue, integration, and application of a systems-thinking approach.

The refinement process allowed for in-depth analyses and enabled (local/regional/national) tailor-made solutions for gender inclusion. The refinement period itself should be considered as continuous process, not the end of a loop.

Developing indicators for monitoring and assessing gender inclusion in water, development and finance, and water communities is key to a successful gender transformative change process.

A challenge of the gender transformative change process was the lack of awareness and understanding of how important gender equality is in achieving water and climate security. Changing attitudes and increasing this understanding, however, is a time-consuming process.

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