



PASSAGES PROJECT

CASE STUDY

Uplifting Women's Participation in Water-related Decision-making Project

In the development sphere, there is a growing realization that addressing social norms is key for successfully shifting behaviors within and across sectors. This case study is one of three done in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), energy and infrastructure, and education sectors. It takes a deep dive in what social norms meant for one WASH project, and demonstrates a number of cross-cutting benefits around both gender equality and WASH outcomes.

“EVEN IF YOU FETCH WATER, YOU WILL STILL BE A MAN” SOCIAL NORMS IN WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN TANZANIA

Tanzania's health, economy, and food security depend on sustainably managed water resources yet water scarcity challenges are growing. Along with the impacts of climate change on water resources, reliable access to safe drinking water and sanitation services are still beyond the reach of too many.¹ The Water Resources Integration Development Initiative (WARIDI) is the flagship USAID/Tanzania WASH Activity (2016-2021), with the goal of improving water resource management, service access, biodiversity conservation, and climate change adaptation in selected districts of the Rufiji and Wami-Ruvu river

basins. The Uplifting Women's Participation in Water-Related Decision-Making (UPWARD) was a component of WARIDI designed to address women's role in decisions around water and sanitation.

In rural Tanzania, although women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of water scarcity and inadequate sanitation and hygiene, their needs are often unrepresented in community-based water-related decision-making.² In 2016, WARIDI assessed gender integration and youth inclusion across the project and identified that prevailing social norms

Box 1

WHAT IS PASSAGES?

Passages is an implementation research project that aims to address a broad range of social norms, at scale, to achieve sustained improvements in violence prevention, gender equality, family planning, and reproductive health. The project uses norms-shifting approaches to build the evidence base and contribute to the capacity of the global community to strengthen reproductive health environments, especially for very young adolescents, newly married

youth, and first-time parents. Passages capitalizes on these formative life course transitions to test and scale up interventions that promote collective change and foster an enabling environment for family planning, especially healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies.

Activity Overview

With support from USAID's Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GenDev), the Strengthening Social Norms

Programming activity studies social norms programming in sectors outside of health. Following a landscaping report, three projects were selected for in-depth case study including review of program data, in-person and phone interviews, and discussions, site visits and observations. Each case study focuses on understanding the role of social norms in the program design and implementation, successes, challenges and lessons learned for future programming.

(such as gendered expectations around women's roles) inhibit women's decision-making power at community and household levels when it comes to water and sanitation. Moreover, they found that women's membership in village and water governance institutions did not always foster meaningful participation due to these norms and existing power structures.³ With results from the gender assessment and additional formative research in hand, WARIDI designed and implemented UPWARD as a pilot activity to address gender and social norms in order to increase women's water-related decision making.

Implemented from April 2018 through to March 2019 in two villages in Tanzania, Kanolo (Kilombero District/Morogoro Region) and Lulanzi (Kilolo District/Iringa Region), UPWARD worked within WARIDI structures to engage communities in shifting gender norms in order to increase women's participation in water-related decision-making (Box 2). The program worked with women members of Village Community Banking groups (VICOBAs), traditional, religious, and influential leaders, as well as government leaders and men in the community. UPWARD worked through transformational trainings,

community discussions that fostered critical reflection, and community-wide events. The intervention reached over 300 individuals directly (roughly 10% of each total village population)⁴ to: 1) identify and challenge harmful gender norms; 2) examine expectations of community leaders; and 3) propose and apply new, more equitable water-related decision-making at community levels. WARIDI conducted a norms assessment at baseline (December 2017) and endline (April 2019) to assess program effects (Box 3).

Box 2

UPWARD PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- 1 Increase key community leaders' support for women's participation in water-related decision-making
- 2 Increase women's participation and leadership in village governance institutions
- 3 Increase community members' support for women's participation in water-related decision-making

TOP-LINE FINDINGS FROM UPWARD NORMS ASSESSMENT

UPWARD collected baseline and endline data from both villages, each with a control arm, using vignette-based focus group discussions and in-depth interviews about women's participation in water-related decision-making. The team referred to the Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) by CARE International to assess norms. The UPWARD team identified several positive results at endline, including:

- Greater support for women's participation and acknowledgement of the importance of women's opinions in informing matters related to village life
- A stronger sense of solidarity among women participating in the UPWARD intervention, which translated to greater encouragement and less ridicule in village meetings
- Higher respect granted by men to women who take an active role in village life; less ridicule for men whose wives are outspoken
- More men taking over household activities typically regarded as a women's domain, such as fetching wood or water and caring for children



WARIDI Community Engagement Agent in Ifakara. Credit: Courtney McLarnon, IRH

“ At the start, people would see a male neighbor helping with chores like cleaning outside or cooking, and other neighbors would see this and laugh. Now, no one is doing that any longer. It is now normal here to do this kind of thing and people are not being made fun of. More people are also now being involved in this kind of work outside of UPWARD groups because this is normal in Kanolo.”

WOMEN'S GROUPS

ROLE OF NORMATIVE CHANGE WITHIN THE UPWARD PROJECT

WARIDI’s gender assessment and formative research pointed to gender norms as key inhibitors of women’s decision-making power at the community level (Box 4). Drawing on the premise of “organized” diffusion, the intervention sought to form and strengthen supportive gender norms, and related attitudes and behaviors, among a critical mass of community members who could, in turn, catalyze outward diffusion of supportive norms. To build towards this critical mass, the intervention focused on key reference groups identified in the community, namely women participating in women’s groups (who are most likely to engage in decision-making fora), and community leaders (including traditional, religious, and other influential leaders) who have particular influence in shaping and sustaining social norms within the community.



Village Leaders (Executive Officer and Chairperson) in Kanolo.
Credit: Courtney McLarnon, IRH

“ We’re also seeing increasing rates of girls in school, and staying in school. Before, you didn’t see that – girls would leave school at 12 or so to work and get married. Now, they’re staying in school.”

VILLAGE LEADERS

“ Change goes slowly, some people learn from each other. I feel this can happen over time. More training is needed so that it can spread to more people.”

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER,
IFAKARA

Box 4

OBSERVED NORMS RELATED TO DECISION-MAKING AT PLAY DURING UPWARD CASE STUDY OBSERVATION

- Women should fetch water
- Men should not perform ‘women’s roles’ in the home
- Men alone are responsible for household decisions
- Women should be controlled
- Women should not attend, or speak up, in community meetings
- Women and men should not mix in spaces
- Women are responsible for taking children to the clinic
- Men should be given priority to eat the better food before women and children
- Girls should not attend schools; rather, they should be married

NORMATIVE CHANGE WITHIN UPWARD FOR WASH: APPROACH AND STRATEGIES

1 Train facilitators and community leaders to reflect on gender equity. Trainings were the starting point for engaging the ‘Community Facilitation Team’ (CFT) and community leaders. During these trainings, UPWARD staff led and trained participants including CFT and local government authorities (LGAs) to reflect on prevailing social norms, unpack their assumptions related to gender and power, and apply this new lens to water decision-making. LGAs participated in the trainings, resulting in stakeholder buy-in and linkages with other WARIDI activities. CFTs acquired facilitation skills to lead community change; their personal transformation catalyzed the transformation of others through spontaneous diffusion.

“*Now I’ve learned the difference between sex and gender – and I’ve told my friends that it’s important to help your wife and families”*

COMMUNITY FACILITATION TEAM

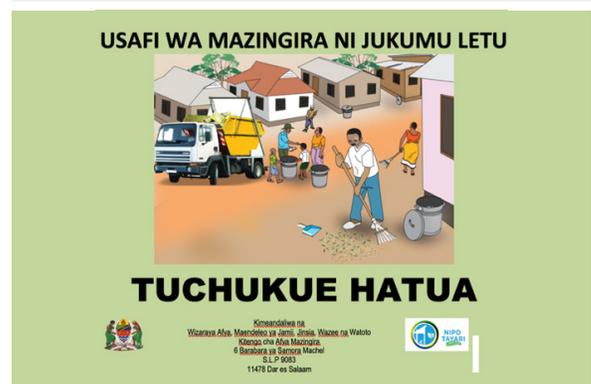
2 Reach beyond project participants to include individuals who pass on and enforce social norms. Through community discussions, UPWARD strengthened women’s leadership skills. UPWARD staff and CFTs facilitated education sessions with Women’s VICOBAs, as well as with community leaders. Over a five-month period, CFTs met with these groups, using tailored facilitation tools, to review core concepts, explore gender and its relation to WASH, envision norm change, practice models of inclusive leadership, strengthen communication skills, and consider how to support women’s decision-making. These education sessions were complemented by community-wide events where trained women and leaders shared ideas from these small group discussions.

3 Actively consider power imbalances. UPWARD dealt with inequitable power relations head on, catalyzing reflection of the limitations women face in communicating their needs and opinions, and accessing decision-making positions. The recognition of power inequities between men and women was seen by many intervention actors as the critical ‘turning point’ in understanding how increased engagement of women could profoundly improve community well-being.

4 Shift norms to support behavior change in community and households. Recognizing that public and private behaviors are linked, program content and strategies focused on norms and public behaviors related to WASH decision-making (e.g., women’s leadership in Community Water Supply Organizations and Community Groups) as well as private household behaviors (e.g., women negotiating with husbands over water fetching responsibilities) to effect change.

5 Diffuse key ideas through Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials. Gender-sensitive IEC materials (Figure 1) were used in conjunction with the community education sessions and trainings to reinforce social and behavior change. For example, posters were distributed with images of men and women sharing household/water-related duties.

FIGURE 1. UPWARD (WARIDI) gender-equitable IEC materials for the home



UPWARD'S FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

UPWARD helped to establish an enabling environment for women's meaningful participation in decision-making. Case study results included examples of male leaders opening spaces for women to run for office, women holding leaders accountable, and governing structures responding to community women's needs and preferences. Women have been recognized as positive advocates for water systems and managing water access points.

“Men are getting involved in the household much more. They're also getting involved along with the women in meetings, and supporting their ideas in some meetings.”

VILLAGE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
FOR WARIDI

While these are notable accomplishments within UPWARD, there were also observed shifts outside of the WASH sector. These include improved couple communication and strengthened confidence among women, leading to more equitable distribution of household chores among both adults and children. There were also reports of improved livelihoods of women due to greater engagement in paid work, expanded participation of men in household caregiving tasks, and greater prioritization of education for girls. These program achievements were due to key program design and implementation factors that enabled its success:

- **Diagnosing norms from the outset.** Conducting the gender and youth inclusion assessment, along with the formative baseline research, provided UPWARD with evidence to identify specific norms for the intervention to address.
- **Iterative monitoring accompanied by ongoing mentoring.** UPWARD implemented a robust monitoring system, including structured observation and supportive mentoring, which allowed timely mid-course corrections. UPWARD monitoring was linked with WARIDI project-wide M&E systems. The mentoring visits fostered strong relationships between the Program Coordinator and the CFTs.
- **Being flexible and meeting people where they are.** Because UPWARD was a pilot, there was built-in flexibility to explore the landscape and respond to community needs. Monitoring revealed the need to engage men to avoid pushback and address concerns about rapid change. This information prompted UPWARD to adopt a more gradual pace of change—meeting people where they were.
- **Encouraging champions of change through role modeling.** The UPWARD CFTs were commended as pillars of support for women and community leaders trained in the intervention. Often, CFTs were referred to as role models for new behaviors. This prompted community member reactions and discussions leading to visible shifts in WASH-related behaviors among men, women, boys, and girls. Early adopters (participants of the program) were encouraged to mentor newcomers and those skeptical of the program.
- **Creating an environment where gender is considered throughout.** Considered more of a complementary strategy to WARIDI, gender mainstreaming included all-staff gender trainings, making each technical touch-point responsible for promoting gender equity and reinforcing change by rewarding “gender champions.” It was also important to explicitly integrate gender from project inception, starting out with a gender assessment and including gender in routine monitoring and evaluation.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING UPWARD

Implementers and participants identified several challenges to shifting norms related to women's participation in the WASH sector, as well as ways to overcome the challenges faced.

A prominent challenge noted was concern for backlash related to shifts in power. In the early phases of the project, UPWARD **worked closely with power holders**, including the local government and community leaders, to orient them to the program and monitor for backlash or possible sanctions. The CFTs also worked closely with power holders through repeated, often one-to-one discussions, to support their alignment with the intervention.

Another challenge was the **involvement of male community members** not formally engaged in the intervention at the outset. Through ongoing monitoring efforts, program staff communicated with CFTs, who noted a range of reactions from men in the community about UPWARD, from curiosity to opposition. As a result, the project started to engage men more fully in activities and to include male-focused sessions within the community sessions.

This course correction was made to mitigate any negative consequences or backlash.

A final challenge was **scaling the program**. UPWARD is a small pilot with limited resources, but with more time and resources, this program could have been scaled up through integration in WARIDI or other WASH sector activities. An expanded scope and implementation at a larger geographic scale would increase understandings of the mechanisms of change and better understanding of the impact of the program.

“ Now, husbands are doing work and sharing in the household activities – like cooking, fetching water, cleaning inside and outside, bringing children to the clinics.”

WOMEN'S GROUPS



Community Facilitation Team members and UPWARD Program staff. Credit: Courtney McLarnon, IRH

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM UPWARD TO THE WASH SECTOR

UPWARD has shown that a lean, targeted community engagement intervention can affect change in social norms within a limited timeframe. It demonstrates the multiple, cross-cutting benefits that improved normative environments around gender equality can have for common WASH outcomes, including household and community water and sanitation decision-making. For WARIDI, changes from the individual, household, and community levels in the UPWARD pilot subsequently impacted the larger project's gender outcomes of increasing women's involvement in water and sanitation decision-making. Further, UPWARD offers an example of how a gender norm-shifting intervention in one sector can affect outcomes in other sectors. This experience offers information on best practices and a blueprint for future social norms programming, specifically in the WASH sector, including the following recommendations for where UPWARD and the WASH field can go from here.

Identify and advocate for sustainable pathways to scale. For UPWARD, a number of potential scale-up opportunities were noted which may be applicable to other WASH projects. These included working with

local or regional government, schools, and youth clubs. A common reflection from program staff during field visits was 'change takes time.' Thinking through community ownership from the outset is needed to support the long-term effort that is transforming norms—keeping in mind the importance of finding the right balance between progress and process.

Build evidence through measurement of norms change in WASH. UPWARD's program learnings and findings from the norms assessment provide strong evidence for norms change in WASH. For other WASH projects seeking to shift norms, building in mixed-methods research and quantitative measurement of norm change at individual and collective levels or of diffusion will help diversify learnings to improve programming.

Dissemination. The UPWARD story is notable and has the potential to encourage programs to look within their WASH programs and consider adding normative change strategies to existing activities. Sharing both the program implementation experience along with the evidence will be critical in advocating for norms change initiatives in WASH.

REFERENCES

- 1 Waridi Report "Quarterly Reportfy19, Quarter 1: October 1 – December 31, 2018".
- 2 Upward Endline Report. "Usaid/Tanzania Water Resources Integration Development Initiative (Waridi) Upward Gendered Social Norms Change Intervention Evaluation Report".
- 3 Waridi Giyi Strategy. Usaid/Tanzania Water Resources Integration Development Initiative (Waridi) Gender Integration And Youth Inclusion (Giyi) Strategy And Actions.
- 4 Upward Endline Report. "Usaid/Tanzania Water Resources Integration Development Initiative (Waridi) Upward Gendered Social Norms Change Intervention Evaluation Report". Note: The number of people reached through diffusion is not known.

Cover photo: Members from Women's Groups from UPWARD.
Credit: Courtney McLarnon, IRH

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