

# THE JOURNEY TO GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION UNDER THE WASH SDG CHAMBESHI-LUKANGA SANITATION PROGRAMME

by Edgar Chaamwe - Governance Advisor & Mwangala Mulundano - BCC Advisor SNV Zambia



More and more in recent years, different countries and organisations have concentrated efforts to improve Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). GESI seeks to address the inequalities in access to livelihood assets and services for ALL, paying particular attention to the groups that have traditionally been excluded, namely women and girls, people with disabilities, and the poor, amongst others. It aims to support more inclusive policies and mindsets and increase the voice and influence of these vulnerable groups. To ensure the realization of this, globally and nationally, GESI has been enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that have a dedicated focus on Gender Equality (SDG5) and on the reduction of inequality (SDG10) and that are mainstreamed in all goals, including on SDG6, on Clean Water and Sanitation.

*Mason Training for construction of safe sanitation facilities, Kasama, April 2021*

Through the Dutch Government Funded WASH SDG programme, SNV Netherlands Development Organisation is implementing the Chambeshi Lukanga Sanitation Project, whose aim is to sustainably increase access to and use of sanitation services and improve hygiene behaviours for 200,000 and 260,000 people respectively in peri-urban/urban areas of 5 towns in Zambia. Through this project, SNV is driven by the principle of “leaving no one behind” and strategically engaged the socially excluded groups such as women and girls, people with disabilities, the elderly and the people in the lowest wealth quintiles.



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Focused research conducted showed that these groups tend to be left out of WASH decision making processes both at community and at the institutions level. Consequently, policies and investments do not consider them, with schools failing to provide conditions for safe Menstrual Hygiene Management for girls (that miss school days as a result) and public WASH facilities inaccessible for people with disabilities (that are then limited to fully participate in the social and economic dynamics of their communities).

In a bid to address the GESI challenges identified, SNV has been engaging the socially excluded groups in the programme implementation to ensure the delivery of inclusive interventions. Recently, a meeting was held in Kasama where the Local Authority officers from the planning department, Zambia Agency for Persons With Disability (ZAPD) and Disability People's Organisation (DPOs) discussed how to ensure inclusivity in the design of sanitation facilities in public places. This was a step towards bridging the gap between decision makers and socially excluded groups. Some of the challenges identified included improving access and use for people with mobility constraints and for the visually and hearing impaired. As a result, an immediate 3 months' joint action plan was created. One of the key decisions was led by the planning department from the Local authority, that committed to vet public facilities designs that do not meet full accessibility standards when approving building plans, to avoid aggravating the status quo.

Achieving GESI is a journey which should be embarked by all institutions, governments and organisations. For us to safely say we have achieved universal



*Meeting with the Nakonde Federation for People with Disabilities (NFPD), Nakonde, November 2021*

coverage for WASH special attention has to be given to the marginalized groups and their involvement in WASH activities is cardinal. Let us always remember the motto carved by tireless years of work by people with disabilities, "Nothing about us without us." We must strive to ensure that marginalized groups are involved at all levels, from planning strategies and policies to actual implementation of all WASH activities.

Draft Background paper, Defining GESI Operational Framework, July 2016, p. 24.



*Meeting between Local Authority, ZAPD and DPOs, Kasama, October 2021*