

37th WEDC International Conference, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2014

**SUSTAINABLE WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES
FOR ALL IN A FAST CHANGING WORLD**

Improving WASH: reducing violence

S. House, S. Cavill, M. Sommer & S. Ferron, UK

BRIEFING PAPER 1917

A lack of access to, or poorly designed, WASH services can increase vulnerabilities to violence. Staff working in the WASH sector may come across violence in their work but not be aware of what they can or should do about it. This paper introduces a review and learning process undertaken in 2013 to better understand the types of violence that can occur related to WASH and to identify good practices that can help WASH practitioners to contribute to reducing such vulnerabilities. It summarises the types of violence identified, highlights a few examples of good practice and provides linkages to the practitioner's toolkit produced as the main output of the learning and review process.

Introduction

As water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practitioners many of us have heard of examples of violence linked to WASH; we may have experienced or seen the issues directly or heard about incidents second hand or anecdotally. But how many of us know how widespread the issue is or what we should be doing to reduce the risks?

This paper reports on the review and learning process conducted in 2013 funded by the UK Department for International Development through the Sanitation and Hygiene Applied Research for Equity (SHARE) Consortium. The process aimed to better understand the vulnerabilities to violence that are related to WASH, to improve understanding of the scale of the problem and to identify examples of good practice from which to draw recommendations to guide practitioners on how to improve their work. Based on the review and learning process a toolkit has been developed.

Methodology

The review and learning process was launched with an international call for contributions from those who have seen in their work or have knowledge of violence related to WASH, or who could share examples of good practice in reducing vulnerabilities to violence. Desk based research was undertaken to identify examples of good practice across sectors, with useful examples identified from those working on both livelihoods and in education in emergencies as well as by those working on women's empowerment and gender-based violence (GBV) related to urban services.

Case studies of violence, gender and WASH from over 30 different countries were collated and grouped to identify the different types of violence that can be linked to WASH. Many of these examples were anecdotal, but there have also been a number of qualitative in-depth studies related to violence linked to WASH, with examples of studies undertaken in India, Slovenia, Kenya, Uganda and the Solomon Islands; and a few studies which have tried to quantify issues related to violence and WASH, including two studies from India and another study from Nigeria. Examples were found in a range of different publications, including those related to reproductive health, WASH and GBV in emergencies.

Key informant interviews were also held with stakeholders in Liberia from across the protection, gender-based violence (GBV), women's empowerment and WASH sectors in order to better understand the scale and nature of the issues, as well as how the protection sector functions and responds to issues of violence. Learning on violence related to WASH was also undertaken in Afghanistan and remote discussions and

communications undertaken with practitioner's trying to consider violence in their work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burkina Faso and Mauritania and a number of other countries. The team participated in a national consultation event in India on violence against Dalit women including in relation to when accessing WASH.

Advice was also sought from specialists with expertise in areas outside the skill base of the team. This included inputs from those with legal expertise as well as experts providing services and training on how to respond to sexual assaults. Consultation was also undertaken with WASH practitioners to find out what would be useful to help them improve their practices.

Findings of the review and learning process

The following are a selection of the findings from the study.

Violence and gender-based violence

One in three women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence by a partner or sexual violence by a non-partner (World Health Organization, 2013). Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread and complex issue rooted in power differences between males and females. Men and boys can experience GBV, which is usually perpetrated by other males. However, the largest proportion of GBV occurs against women and girls. Violence against women and girls is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to particular groups within a society, although experiences can vary according to social status due to ethnicity, caste, age, sexual orientation, marital status and/or disability. People who are of other gender or sexual identities, such as lesbian, bisexual, gay, transsexual or intersex (LBGTI) can be particularly vulnerable to violence.

Why should we be considering violence, gender and WASH?

WASH programming that ignores the safety of users can exacerbate the vulnerabilities of women and girls, and sometimes men and boys and people of other sexual and gender identities and other marginalised groups. Vulnerabilities to violence can also have a significant impact on the access of women and girls to adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

What violence linked to WASH can look like

In both urban and rural contexts, girls and women regularly face risk of harassment when defecating in the open. They may delay drinking and eating in order to wait until nightfall to relieve themselves, because of the feeling of shame and risks to their dignity if they are seen defecating in the daylight. Given the taboos around defecation and menstruation, and the frequent lack of privacy in internally displaced or refugee camps (including latrines and bathing units that are not gender segregated, are too close to male facilities or do not provide privacy or have locks), women and girls may prefer to wait for the cover of darkness before going to the toilet or using bathing units and other WASH facilities. Where improved water supplies are unavailable, women, girls and boys may have to walk long distances to collect water for drinking, cooking or laundry (or to find a water source such as a river for laundry). Walking to remote locations or using WASH facilities after dark puts women, girls and boys at risk of harassment, sexual assault and rape.

"The two men were standing by the beach when I finished [relieving myself in the sea]. I recognized them immediately from their voices. I knew they were drunk, because I saw them drinking in a dilapidated house close to the road in the early evening. They came and one of them grabbed my arm and one closed his hand over my mouth. They held me down and took my clothes off and raped me. They were very violent and I had bruises all over my body. I wanted to die desperately and I was crying and crying, thinking of my children. After they raped me, they warned me that if I told anyone they would cut me up. I was so afraid, but couldn't do anything. I see them around the settlement, but I wouldn't dare tell the police"
(37 year old woman from Mamanawata settlement, Solomon Islands) (Amnesty International, 2011)

Implications of violence linked to WASH

Such experiences of violence can result in fear and stress, which can undermine mental health. In the case of rape, it can also lead to depression, being accused of infidelity by husbands, being disowned by families or

being mocked or stigmatized by other community members. Additionally, it can lead to unwanted pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections.

As many of the responsibilities relating to WASH are socially allocated to women or children, such as collecting water, they risk being blamed for lack of access to water in the household. This may contribute to increased tensions between husband and wife, particularly in areas of water scarcity, which may lead to violence. Girls and in some cases boys may be vulnerable to attack and rape when using school or other public toilets, and this fear may prevent them from using such facilities. Children, particularly girls are usually expected to collect water and hence may be particularly at risk. If men are bathing at water points this can also be intimidating for women and girls. In addition where women and children have to queue for extended time periods at waterpoints, this can lead to fights with other service users. Conflicts may also occur between host and displaced communities over water use. In conflict situations, men and boys may also be vulnerable to abduction or death when accessing waterpoints outside the boundaries of a camp.

Research undertaken with 10,000 Dalit households across five states - Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar - found that Dalit women face multiple forms of violence in relation to accessing WASH. It identified that women from other castes were the most likely perpetrators of discrimination or violence against Dalit women, then same caste men and then other caste men. Violence linked to water collection reported varied from abusive language, vulgar moments, sexual harrasment, scolding / threats and physical violence. Problems faced due to the delay in fetching water included: physical violence by family members; scolding by family members; and that small children remain alone at home for long periods of time and risk facing accidents. Dalit women also face a range of problems by not having toilets in their premises. These include humiliation and insults; sexual harrasment; health problems; painful situations during illness, particularly for stomach-related diseases; risk of accidents when defecating on roads or railway tracks; risk of snake and insect bites; risk of attack by wild animals; and difficulties and pain during their menstrual cycle. (*WaterAid and the National Confederation of Dalit Organisations, 2013*)

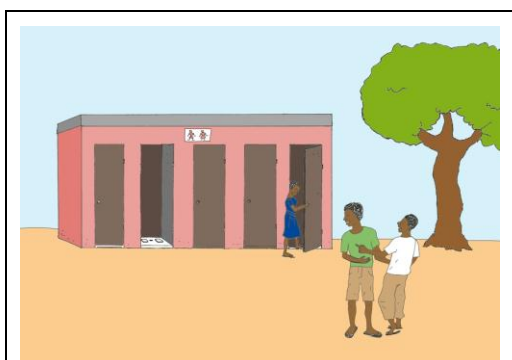


Figure 1. Women and girls may be frightened to use school or public toilets

(Annina Bornstein)

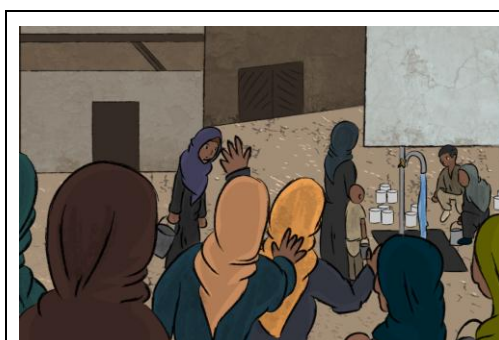


Figure 4. Inadequate access to WASH services can lead to physical violence

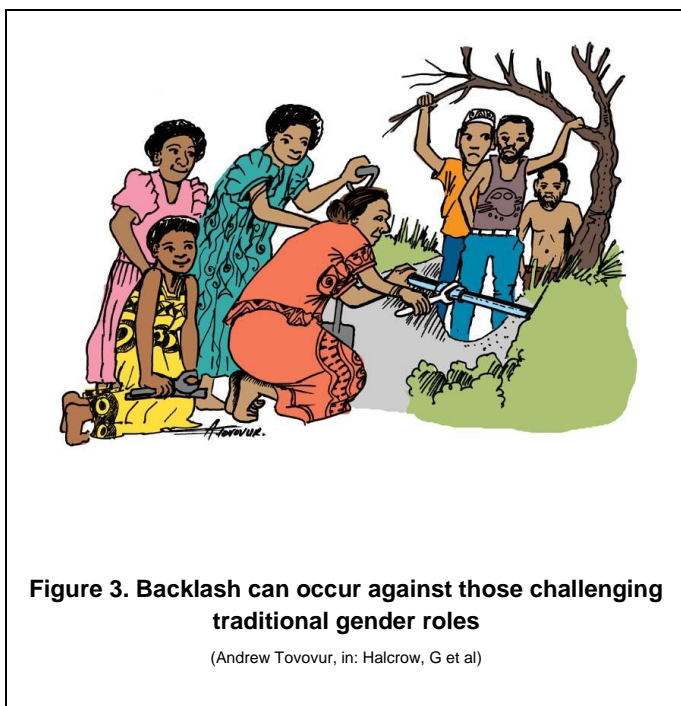
(Matthew Fryer / University of Winchester)

Violence in WASH programmes

WASH professionals working at the community level in conflict-affected areas or where violence is particularly high, can sometimes be the first point of contact for people who have experienced violence, even though they are not protection or GBV specialists. As WASH programmes seek to improve gender equality, women may take on what are perceived to be traditionally male roles, such as being part of a WASH committee or accepting a paid job (e.g. pump mechanic). As a result, they may face emotional (psychological) abuse, such as being excluded from relevant meetings, being bullied or victimised, or they may be the object of scorn by community members who do not appreciate their willingness to take on a new role. They may even face physical violence. Yet the involvement of women as well as men will help to ensure that such programmes are responsive to the needs of women and girls, and also contributes to improving the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of services.

Violence and the WASH professional

Staff within WASH organisations may themselves be the perpetrators of violence - or face violence because of their gender. In some contexts, female professionals training for, or working in, the WASH sector may need to fend off sexual advances that are demanded in return for better grades, jobs or promotion. Where gender power differences are particularly stark, women may find their views are not respected, may be ignored or pro-actively undermined; or they may be subjected to gossip implying sexual liaisons, if a male colleague or line manager praises their work. At the other end of the spectrum, staff members who control the distribution of non-food items and the use of facilities may abuse their power by demanding sexual favours from vulnerable individuals.



How should WASH practitioners reduce vulnerabilities to violence?

Modifying current approaches

There are a range of ways that WASH practitioners can help to reduce vulnerabilities to violence. For instance by modifying existing tools and approaches to consider safety, by undertaking safety mapping with communities or safety audits involving women and adolescent girls (Plan International et al, 2013), or by using tools such as role plays to engage community members to discuss potential risks and develop solutions. Appropriate design and placement of public WASH facilities, such as public latrines, can also contribute to reducing vulnerabilities through the provision of lighting, doors, locks and training caretakers in their role and how to minimise harassment associated with the use of facilities (Women in Cities International et al, 2010).

Organisational responses

Closer links between protection, GBV or women's empowerment professionals can help to strengthen programmes and services. Examples are provided in the toolkit (House, S. et al, 2014) where WASH professionals have been trained on how to provide information to someone who has experienced violence on how they can access services (Hastie, 2013). Institutional commitment is also paramount to ensure that policies, strategies and systems consider vulnerabilities to violence. Clear codes of conduct and confidential reporting systems that people trust as they are seen to work, act as a deterrent to WASH staff who are would-be perpetrators of violence. Issues of violence linked to WASH should also be included in training and capacity building. Refer to the 10 key principles behind reducing vulnerabilities to violence linked to WASH in the figure which follows.

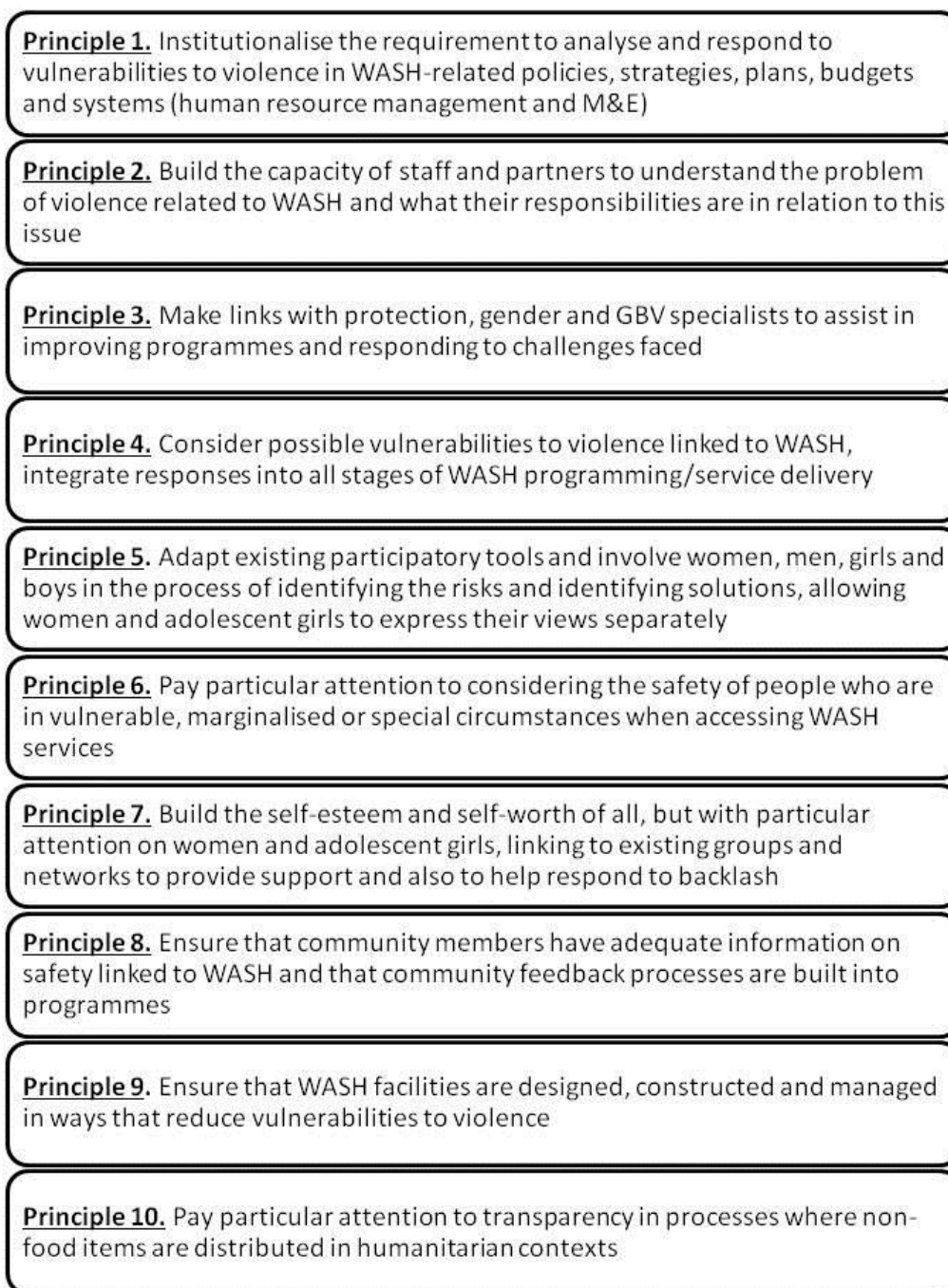


Figure 5. Principles for reducing vulnerabilities to violence linked to WASH

The Violence, Gender and WASH Practitioner's Toolkit

The Violence, Gender and WASH practitioner's toolkit has been developed for use by both development and humanitarian practitioners. It includes four key briefing notes covering 1) An introduction to the toolkit, contents and definitions; 2) Guidance on how to improve WASH programming; 3) Institutional commitment and staff capacity; and 4) Understanding the protection sector and how to respond to violence as a WASH actor. It also includes a checklist of practical actions established around the 10 key principles; and a range of supporting tools including videos, case studies of violence and of good practices, training scenarios and guidance on how to modify existing approaches when working with communities.

Accessing the practitioner's toolkit

To access the toolkit and the introductory toolkit 'As safe as toilets?' please see the following link: <http://violence-WASH.lboro.ac.uk>. For additional information on the toolkit please email: gbv@wateraid.org

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend thanks to the 27 co-publishing organisations of the toolkit, who can be viewed by accessing the toolkit through the link noted above, and the wide range of contributors to the violence, gender and WASH research who gave their time to share case studies and examples as well as to provide review comments and guidance. This document is an output from the SHARE Research Consortium funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) (www.shareresearch.org)

References

- Amnesty International (2011) *Where is the Dignity in that? Women in the Solomon Islands slums denied sanitation and safety*. London, UK: Amnesty International.
- Halcrow, G., C. Rowland, J. Willetts, J. Crawford and N. Carrard (2010) *Resource Guide: Working effectively with women and men in water, sanitation and hygiene programmes*. Sydney, Australia: International Women's Development Agency and Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology – resource guide; flashcards; case study snapshots; poster of principles and practices. Available at: www.genderinpacificwash.info [accessed 11 October 2013].
- Haste, Rachel (2013) Personal communication. Oxfam.
- House, Sarah, Suzanne Ferron, Marni Sommer and Sue Cavill (2014) *Violence, Gender and WASH: A Practitioner's Toolkit – Making water, sanitation and hygiene safer through improved programming and services*, WaterAid/SHARE
- Plan International Because I am a Girl, Women in Cities International, UN-Habitat (2013) *Adolescent Girls' Views on Safety in Cities; Findings of the Because I am a Girl Urban Programme study in Cairo, Delhi, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima*. Plan International, Women in Cities International, UN-Habitat: Woking UK, Montreal, Canada, New York, USA.
- WaterAid and National Confederation of Dalit Organisations (2013) *Research on the DFID-supported IPAP programme in India in 5 states* (unpublished).
- Women in Cities International, Jagori, International Development Research Centre (2011) *Gender and Essential Services in Low-income Communities, Report findings of the action research project: Women's Rights and Access to Water and Sanitation in Asian Cities*. Women in Cities International and Jagori: Montreal, Canada, Delhi, India.
- World Health Organization, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council (2013) *Global and Regional Estimates of Violence Against Women: Prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO.
-

Contact details

Sarah House
Address: U.K.
Tel: +44-743-211 3939
Email: sjhouse.majisafi@gmail.com

Sue Cavill
WaterAid, 47-49 Durham St, London
SE11 5JD
Tel: +44-7926-296 989
Email: suecavill@wateraid.org
www: www.wateraid.org
