Empowerment and Gender Equality for Water and Sanitation in Rural India

Two Case Studies

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Introduction

- Lack of **safe drinking water** and **adequate sanitation**
  - Close to 1 billion without safe drinking water
  - Around 2.6 billion without adequate sanitation

- People in rural areas most affected
  - 27 percent lack water, 78 percent lack sanitation in India

- Women and marginalized populations most affected
  - Limited access, planning, and management
Introduction

- Development specialists aware of hardships faced by women and marginalized populations

- Embrace idea of empowerment and gender equality for water and sanitation projects

- Two case studies to understand if water and sanitation (WatSan) efforts of two NGOs in rural India have led to empowerment of women and gender equality

NGO A and NGO B
Background and Literature

Access, Planning, and Management for WatSan

Women and marginalized populations* most affected by lack of WatSan in rural India (Ahmed, 2005a; Coles & Wallace, 2005)

Access to Water

- Women may not be able to access water due to religious beliefs or patriarchy
- SCs may not be able to access water due to religious beliefs

Access to Sanitation

- Women may not be able to access toilets because men do not encounter similar hardships to open defecation
- SCs may not be able to afford to build toilets

*Scheduled castes (SCs) are the only marginalized population reviewed in this study
Background and Literature

Access, Planning, and Management for WatSan

Participation in WatSan Planning and Management

- Women often do not participate in WatSan planning or management
- SCs do not always participate or caste division is prevalent
Background and Literature

Participatory WatSan Management in India

- 1992 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act
  - Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs)
  - 1/3 of seats for women, proportion seats for SCs

- 1999 Sector Reforms Project
  - Water program = creation of community groups for planning and management
  - Sanitation program = focuses on privacy and dignity of rural women

- Government and NGOs embrace an empowerment and gender equality approach for WatSan in India
Empowerment and Gender Equality

What are they?

- **Empowerment**
  - Obtaining *resources*, securing *agency*, and realizing *achievements* (Kabeer, 1999)
  - Self confidence for empowerment (Narayan, 2005)

- **Gender equality**
  - Women and men have same status, equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for realizing human potential (Ivens, 2008)
Background and Literature

Empowerment and Gender Equality

Why measure?

- Many organizations claim empowerment and gender equality but few measure
- Measurements may help influence policy (Rowlands, 1996; Joshi & Fawcett, 2001)
Methods - Overview

- Mixed-method study with quantitative and qualitative data collection (Johnson & Owuegbuzie, 2004)
- Measuring empowerment is more robust with mixed methods (Narayan, 2005)
Methods - Quantitative

Empowerment Potential Index (EPI)

- Access to resources = empowerment potential
- Data for EPI from household surveys with women and men
- Each person receives an EPI score, mean values of scores of women and men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Water</td>
<td>Individual Latrine</td>
<td>WatSan Planning</td>
<td>WatSan Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[a\] Those with shared water access received .5 instead of 1 because shared water access represents some level of increased hardship for those collecting and storing water from shared water sources.

\[b\] Those with shared latrine access received .5 instead of 1 because shared latrine access represents some level of increased hardship for those walking to use and clean the shared latrine.
Methods - Qualitative

Empowerment Process

- NVivo to code individual interviews with women for empowerment indicators (see below)
- Individual interviews with women coded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Self-Worth</td>
<td>Value of the self as a person. Words and phrases that might exhibit this feeling include pride, dignity, joy, pleasure, value, happy, coming up in life, having a drive, wanting better, having a better life, or not sitting down with a thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity to Make Decisions</td>
<td>Ability to make and influence decisions. This might include making choices on the household level, participation in groups, communication during meetings, or input in politics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation of Decisions to Reality</td>
<td>Power shift to enable previously disempowered to see their hopes or dreams to come to fruition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
History and Methods

- History
  - Long-term WatSan efforts in one state in India for over 20 years
  - Recent interventions in over 100 rural villages

- Empowerment and Gender Equality Focus
  - Vision = equal gender rights and access to WatSan
  - Mission = WatSan for all with empowerment of women, SCs, and children

- Approaches
  - Micro-credit for WatSan and non-WatSan purposes
  - Creation of and collaboration with community groups and PRIs
  - Training for community groups and PRIs
**NGO A**

**EPI Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Category</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>2.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCs</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SCs</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of NGO A</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income in Rs.</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;18,000</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19,000-36,000</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37,000-54,000</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;55,000</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Twenty-seven respondents (17 women and 10 men)
Empowerment Process Results

- Themes of the empowerment process occurring in the present were coded among women in interviews (3)

Empowerment and WatSan

- Increased access to WatSan from micro-credit = empowerment in household
- Increased participation in WatSan planning groups = empowerment in household through planning WatSan
- Increased participation in WatSan management groups = empowerment on community level through sharing awareness
History and Methods

- **History**
  - Launched for empowerment of people in rural areas
  - Focus on WatSan in rural areas started in 2006
  - Small-scale WatSan efforts from 2006 to present

- **Empowerment and Gender Equality Focus**
  - Organizational goal is empowerment
  - WatSan project documentation refers to empowerment of women and gender equality

- **Approaches**
  - Repair water structures (minimal)
  - Form and train community groups for WatSan planning/management
  - Financial sustainability of WatSan systems
NGO B

EPI Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Category</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCs</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-SCs</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total of NGO B</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income in Rs.</th>
<th>Mean Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;18,000</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19,000-36,000</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37,000-54,000</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;55,000</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Eighteen respondents (11 women and 7 men)
Empowerment Process Results

- Themes of the empowerment process occurring in the present were coded among women in interviews (7)

Empowerment and WatSan

- Increased **access to WatSan** = empowerment in household
- Increased **participation in WatSan planning** = empowerment in community through sharing WatSan information
- Increased **participation in WatSan management** = empowerment on political level through one-on-one communication with vice-president of PRI
Research Limitations

Past

- Small sample size = unrepresentative
- Non-conformity of NGO A and NGO B data-collection methods and data-set size
- Interpretation difficulties
- Cultural differences

Future

- Collect representative samples
- Ensure data-set size is conform between case studies (or only evaluate one NGO)
- Speak the language, be aware of cultural norms, confront own cultural biases
Conclusion

Common Strengths

- Both NGOs strive for empowerment and gender equality in WatSan
- Both NGOs use participatory planning/management approaches for WatSan
- Both organizations emphasize economic ownership
Conclusion

Common Challenges and Opportunities

**Challenges**

- Lack of clear definitions or measurement of empowerment or gender equality by NGOs
- Payment required for some and caste division of other community WatSan groups
- Low political involvement in relation to WatSan by women
- Few mentions of self worth

**Opportunities**

- Define and measure empowerment and gender equality
- Financially-tiered community WatSan groups and/or ensure SC WatSan community groups
- Education/outreach to PRIs and government officials
- Additional research is needed
Future Research

- EPI methodology to quantify empowerment potential with adaptations
- Similar process to quantify empowerment process with adaptations
Questions
References


References


References


