



CRIDF

Ensuring water infrastructure meets the needs of all

CRIDF addresses issues of gender, equality and social inclusion through an integrated approach that encompasses gender and social analyses, capacity strengthening and stakeholder engagement – delivering tangible benefits to women, communities and water sector institutions throughout Southern Africa.

While the challenges facing women across Southern Africa are diverse and stem from broader social structures, institutional issues and cultural nuances, there are common themes. For instance, there is often a disconnect between women and girls being the primary managers and users of water but typically having less decision-making power. They also tend to lack access to resources and finance and are disadvantaged due to high levels of illiteracy.

The detrimental impacts of these ‘gender gaps’ are not only confined to women – they can also have negative repercussions for entire communities. Infrastructure projects that do not reflect the needs of women risk failure as women’s ability to utilise or benefit from the infrastructure is constrained. Moreover, initiatives that do not engage women early on may fail to capitalise on their indigenous knowledge and deep understanding of community dynamics.



ADDRESSING GENDER GAPS

Mainstreaming gender in development interventions is not just about empowering women. Gender is best addressed when the needs of all social groups are considered and appropriate platforms are created that allow everyone to comfortably articulate their needs. CRIDF also recognises the need to engage men and avoids delivering approaches and infrastructure designs that disempower them or trigger unintended feelings of resentment.

CRIDF conducts gender and social analyses as part of its project preparation cycle, ensuring that infrastructure and related service delivery is designed to address the needs of all social groups within beneficiary communities. In an effort to ensure gender dimensions have greater visibility in project planning and preparation, CRIDF produced the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Toolkit to outline necessary steps and procedures (see box 'The CRIDF GESI Toolkit').

At the project scoping and prefeasibility stages, it is critical that adequate efforts are invested in preliminary research, analysis and targeted stakeholder engagement. CRIDF sociologists typically conduct an extensive literature review and gather as much data as possible before going into the field, to get a better understanding of the social status quo.



Integrating gender and social analyses into project preparation cycles

- **Undertake preliminary research** to better understand the social status quo.
- **Develop question checklists** to guide stakeholder engagement and focus group discussions on issues of access, participation and preference.
- **Reflect on stakeholder feedback, literature reviews and data analysis** and support development partners to draw up **gender action plans**.
- **Hold capacity-strengthening workshops** to share experiences and resources.

To guide engagements with stakeholders, we develop checklists of questions for different social groups, focused on understanding issues of access, participation and preference. Our extensive, Excel-based checklist provides an exhaustive list of possible questions that can be tailored to specific projects and contexts. Asking these questions through focus group discussions and key informant interviews can elicit critical project design information.

Stakeholder feedback, literature reviews and data analysis help CRIDF and our development partners to draw up design recommendations that target gender issues, as well as action plans to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to gender issues at each stage of a project. CRIDF's work in this space also extends to capacity-strengthening workshops where we can share our experiences and introduce useful tools and resources.

The CRIDF GESI Toolkit

The GESI Toolkit is a practical resource that helps water practitioners more effectively integrate gender into their work. The Toolkit is informed by CRIDF's practical experience in Southern Africa, as well as two excellent SADC tools – the SADC Handbook on Mainstreaming Gender in the Water Sector and the SADC Gender Mainstreaming Resource Kit – and additional resources that address gender and water or related issues. Although designed to support CRIDF sociologists, the Toolkit serves as a useful resource for water and gender practitioners throughout Southern Africa.



IMPLEMENTING THE CRIDF APPROACH

The CRIDF emphasis on using focus group discussions and key informant interviews to elicit project design information was critical in Mozambique. Here, discussions with adolescent girls influenced the placement of yard taps next to a school's female latrines, in a protected space for exclusive use by the girls, with menstrual hygiene waste disposal facilities also included.

In Siavonga, Zambia, women and men organised themselves and requested that the local water company, with CRIDF support, install communal taps for a limited number of households. Placed within the premises of one member, with bills shared equally among four or five households, this option helped poorer families overcome the challenges of high water connection fees, while also reducing conflicts and maintaining security and privacy.

The approach was an improvement on the use of water kiosks, which were managed by water companies through contracted vendors but experienced high turnover because of low remuneration, negatively impacting water service delivery. Given the initiative's success, and the ease with which water user fees were collected, CRIDF documented it as a best practice that was shared with other water and sanitation companies. Beneficiaries also demonstrated the initiative's benefits to other poor households.

Selected CRIDF gender resources:

- **GESI Toolkit:** <http://cridf.net/RC/publications/gesi-toolkit-for-project-preparation/>
- **CRIDF Voices (Gender):** <http://cridf.net/RC/publications/cridf-voices-interview-with-caroline-solik/>
- **Gender Checklist Action Plan:** <http://cridf.net/RC/publications/gender-checklist-action-plan/>
- **SADC Handbook on Mainstreaming Gender in the Water Sector:** https://sadc.int/files/1914/8474/1374/SADC_Handbook_on_Mainstreaming_Gender_in_the_Water_Sector.pdf
- **Delivering inclusive, gender-sensitive water infrastructure:** <http://cridf.net/blog/delivering-inclusive-gender-sensitive-water-infrastructure/>

CRIDF Approaches

CRIDF Approaches provide an outline of CRIDF strategies that address specific challenges relevant to water infrastructure initiatives working with key national and regional institutions in Southern Africa. They are designed as a guide to inform the practices and strategies of development organisations in the region and beyond.