

CRIDF's Gender Journey - *Lessons Learned*



CRIDF



CRIDF's Gender Journey – Lessons Learned

The United Nations recognises women as the prime users of 'domestic water', often collecting from isolated areas, increasing their vulnerability. In collecting water, women face technical, social, economic, physical and cultural challenges. These challenges reflect a lack of adequate and appropriate infrastructure while power and gender relations within the social context reflect cultural barriers that women face.

CRIDF works with a range of water infrastructure stakeholders, incorporating climate resilience into their decision making. As part of this process, we pilot demonstration projects, aimed at increasing the climate resilience of poor and vulnerable groups. In southern Africa, women, especially rural women, are often amongst the poorest and most vulnerable. Part of our mandate is to include these women in our programme work, to ensure that their voice is heard regarding their communities' water infrastructure and its use. We have had some successes in this area, but we are also well aware that there are always ways to improve.

Recently we called for a review of our gender related work¹ so that we could continue to build on the work that we have done well, and aim to improve in other areas. As part of this process we reviewed our Gender Strategy and Tool Kit, key reports from an earlier phase of our project and interviewed some of our staff about their understanding of their positions regarding CRIDF's gender mandate. From this, we can share where we have done well in our gender focussed work, and about how we aim to improve going forward.

Organisations throughout SADC continue with the challenge of mainstreaming gender issues into programmes and plans in a practical way. Projects often have suboptimal designs that don't alleviate the GESI burden of equitable access to water.

As a result, we also want these findings to contribute to wider learning and improvement of GESI solutions to tangibly promote equality and inclusion.

Box 1: The CRIDF approach to involving vulnerable populations

By focussing on the inclusion of vulnerable populations, we don't only want to improve their physical access to water but we want to:

- Empower them to participate in decision-making structures from a local to ministerial level,
- Provide opportunities to raise their incomes and improve their livelihoods through better water infrastructure that meets their needs, and
- Ensure that they have opportunities to provide input in the technology and operation choices, surrounding their water access.



What have we done well?

Our Gender Strategy is a foundational piece for all our gender and GESI related work. In this, the review reported that we have shown commitment to mainstreaming gender in all areas of our work, but as always there are areas where our work could be improved and reinforced. As our work improves, we then hope that other organisations we work with will benefit, improving their own inclusion of gender and vulnerability in their work.

The fact that we are collect GESI related data and report on it was a strength of the programme research phase. To try and streamline this process we developed the CRIDF Gender Toolkit. This Toolkit aimed at helping gather relevant gender related data in the field, and categorise and make informed decisions using this data, all of which is used to help the voices of GESI groups to be heard (See Box 2). The Toolkit is recognised for reflecting on gender and social

inclusion issues connected to water infrastructure projects and for helping decision makers, who might have no insights into these issues, be aware of and take the vulnerable voices into consideration. For example, many SADC institutions responsible for designing, managing and/or funding water projects often do not have the resources for in-house gender expertise. The Toolkit with its comprehensive guidelines, can be used by them (and even by non-experts) to allow them to effectively identify, analyse and mainstream gender issues.

Box 2: GESI at the Mashili Dam

Women-only focus group discussions uncovered previously unheard responses; this in spite of respondents being present at several community meetings. Women asked about the possibility of accessing social services after construction. As a result, the engineer included suitable crossing points in the final design.

An Action Plan forms a fundamental part of the toolkit; it helps identify possible paths that decision makers could explore, to ensure the GESI analysis conducted early on in the project

cycle is carried through to implementation. However, having the data was one thing, the review suggested, we might be able to make the Plans more robust, but more on that later in this article.

The review also noted that there has been an improvement in the GESI processes from the first to the second phase of CRIDF, recognising that the programme has built on its successes.

2 What could we do better? ◀

Overall

Having a strategy and implementing that strategy are two different things. To have your goals and objectives written down is a good starting point. To actually pursue these goals with commitment, takes time, resources and effort. While we have moved forward with this process, the review reported that CRIDF could make the Gender Strategy and its goals and objectives more widely accessible, better understood amongst all levels of staff and encourage its uptake and application.

Collecting data

The tools in our Gender Toolkit can be sharpened and strengthened. The review reported that the tools, while still useful, could be updated to incorporate the latest thinking on gender mainstreaming. A weakness was the emphasis that our toolkit had on incorporating GESI voices from rural communities, and apparently not applying the same rigour and intensity to hearing those voices from urban and peri-urban groups. This might be a reflection on our portfolio of projects, focusing on rural areas. As a result, our checklists could be improved to ensure that they allow for data to be collected

in a variety of contexts. Adding probing questions would also strengthen them, as would the inclusion of a mandatory stakeholder mapping exercise. It is important to identify institutional stakeholders that are not only involved in water related activities, but also those that might deal with health, gender based violence, education, agriculture and a host of other fields that might have influence on GESI populations. (See Box 3). All of these additions would add texture to the data to be used in the development of the Action Plan. Gathering data in a more participatory manner would assist in hearing GESI voices that might otherwise be lost if we only gathered data in a uni-linear manner. And detailing these data collection methodologies in the reports would assist us in picking up where we could improve things in the future. However, while making these recommendations the review also acknowledged that these more participatory approaches, even if they were more inclusive, took more time and resources.

To improve the effectiveness of the Action Plans themselves, the review suggested that more attention be given to the understanding of the centrality and importance of the indicators of change. It is also suggested that we spend

some time strengthening the capacity of the CRIDF staff to develop appropriate and applicable indicators – perhaps with greater focus on promoting bottom-up involvement of the beneficiary community in the project monitoring process.

Reporting

The review identified a few areas where CRIDF reports with GESI data could be improved. The first was to make sure that GESI reporting was not isolated to only a GESI section in the report, but to integrate these GESI data throughout the report. While a GESI section might be appropriate to give more detail and present evidence, the reports should present findings in appropriate places – avoiding “siloing” GESI and facilitating the mainstreaming of these issues.

Initial reports and inclusive analysis should take specific challenges faced by GESI populations into account, e.g. safety or socio-cultural issues that could prevent vulnerable groups from benefitting equitably from water infrastructure. These challenges could

then be explored in more detail during field work, and potential solutions identified. These potential solutions might then provide suggestions for decision makers to think through and incorporate in their deliberations.

With regards to the actual reports, while the review acknowledged the primary users of the reports to be CRIDF, there is a possibility of considering how the reports, or at least the data reflected in the reports, might be used in other CRIDF activities or by other stakeholders and organisations.

Decision Making

While the reports with GESI data form part of the decision-making process within CRIDF, it is not always clear to what extent GESI analysis contributes to these decisions. Given the CRIDF pro-poor and GESI focussed mandate, the review suggests that this contribution

be explained more explicitly regarding project selection, bankability and construction related decisions.

Box 3: 12 Towns in Zambia project

In the 12 towns in Zambia, the CRIDF engineers had to think beyond their technical expertise, about where to locate kiosks. Women respondents raised issues related to safety, hygiene and privacy during the kiosk site-selection process, and these concerns influenced the final location of the kiosks.

3 How do we aim to get better? ◀.....

The review made several suggestions about how we could make our GESI work even better: These suggestions are currently under consideration and we are thinking of the best way of implementing these ideas.

Collecting data

We are currently examining our Gender Toolkit and Guidelines, following this review, taking the suggestions for improvement into consideration. We are specifically looking to ensure that the toolkit checklists are relevant

for gathering data in a variety of settings, and that they also provide guidance on how to probe for specifics relevant to a particular context. These revised tools will help our own field staff gather more appropriate data more effectively, but the redrafted guidelines will also help our institutional stakeholder partners, when they make use of the tools.

Other improvements to the Toolkit and the Guidelines include giving guidance on using more participatory data collection and mapping methods. We will also provide

additional guidance to better populate and utilise the Action Plan - especially identifying and defining indicators and to include links to other pertinent information; for example, how to draw on the SADC Handbook on Mainstreaming Gender in the Water Sector ².

We will also encourage our field staff to identify and share sources of GESI data and to disaggregate this data more effectively into appropriate categories³ (See Box 4). For example, although it is useful to have data disaggregated by sex into men and women, it might also be useful to have estimates of levels of education of the women, thus providing insights into levels of literacy, which in turn might influence how best to communicate with this group and ensure their voices are heard. Similarly, although the percentage of women members of community water groups might be reported, it would be interesting to know to what extent these women actively contribute to the committee's decision making and their intensity of contribution. In the same way, given the number of border post projects with which we engage there is a need for a better understanding of who crosses the border and to disaggregate the cross-border populations in terms of gender and vulnerabilities. Estimates are that most cross border traders are women⁴, but does this group have any specific vulnerabilities that need to be taken into account?

In collecting data, we hope to more fully explore partnerships with other organisations working on gender and water infrastructure or related issues such as health and food security as a means of gathering the most up-to-date information. We might look into organising or co-hosting partnership meetings to share information and develop networks on GESI and water infrastructure. We don't expect our staff to be experts in every area that needs improved water access. As

a result, we should look into developing linkages with institutions or stakeholders who are able to advise on data and issues relevant to specific situations. As an example; GESI needs and requirements might be very different in projects that face issues related to access to land, or gender-based violence, or border crossings, or migrant labour; or refugee crises, or agricultural productivity and market access.

A source of data that is often overlooked resides within the beneficiaries themselves. Because of their dependence on water resources, women in particular have accumulated considerable knowledge about local water resources, including location, quality and storage methods. It might be worthwhile to encourage the gathering of information local women have both on effective water uses and more broadly, climate adaptation responses, including those that are more traditional and grounded in current and past cultural practices.

Finally, we might look into developing toolkits with specialised focal areas; for example, a toolkit that, along with the normal GESI, tools also provides tools that are specific to gathering data on water infrastructure at border posts, or providing irrigation facilities, or in areas of highly mobile populations such as refugee camps. Part of this process might include preparing questions that are adapted to the specific context under investigation; for example, questions for border towns are likely to involve a great focus on urban and peri-urban issues and populations whereas irrigation may focus more on gathering an understanding of GESI issues within a rural context.

Reporting

To be able to compare like with like, the review suggests

Box 4:

The Chibavaba Schoolgirls

When collecting data in Chibavaba, adolescent girls specifically asked for yard taps be installed in the schools' female latrines and that a protected space be reserved exclusively for girl learners.

They further asked that school going girls and teachers be consulted in the design of the space and the location of the taps to ensure that these were the most functional.

that it would be useful if our internal CRIDF reports were consistent in terms of their structure and terminology. While we have been improving in this area, some of our reports serve different purposes, and so are written with the end user in mind. However, the recommendation is well understood, and we will look into building greater consistency in the use of our terminology and reporting structure. This will also aid other institutions who want to make use of our reports and data. Part of this process is integrating GESI into all pertinent aspects of the report, or if it is not appropriate or applicable, noting the intentional absence of GESI commentary.

We will work to ensure that the potential negative impact of any actions on GESI populations are highlighted in reports. These also need to be prioritised as areas for mitigation. This is particularly important for projects where CRIDF does not take a lead development role, but might hand over to another institutional investor or funder:

Decision Making and Implementation

As an organisation we need to be more thorough and systematic in the recording of our decision-making process. Part of this process is to record the extent to which GESI is factored into decisions and the context of that decision.

As with any organisation with limited resources, we are not able to take on every project that crosses our desk, and some projects will not make it through our selection process. We need to record more accurately the extent to which GESI was an influencing factor in these decisions. This will help us track our own progress and will assist other institutions to whom we might hand over the project, understand our decision in context.

In making decisions, we will also try to be clearer on how we will address any GESI issues that were raised in the report, that might have a negative impact, and indicate what mitigation measures have been or may be put in place.

CRIDF's mandate focusses on institutional change. However, we might consider making inroads into institutional change, even in the smaller pilot projects that we work with. For example, we could seek ways to incentivise men to play a more active role in water collection or other water-related tasks or look at ways to ensure that women are able to play an active role on water committees. We recognise that these are not necessarily our areas of expertise, and we would have to draw on expertise in the field and partner with organisations which have these areas of speciality. To do this we would need to draw on the more comprehensive stakeholder mapping carried out in the data gathering stage.

4

The road ahead



Incorporating GESI into all areas of our work is a massive undertaking. However, there is a desperate need to ensure more equitable access to and use of water resources, especially in a water scarce region like southern Africa. This review has highlighted areas where CRIDF has blazed a trail in ensuring the vulnerable populations are identified and included in the decision-making process related to water. It

has also identified areas and made suggestions on how we might stretch ourselves further, to try and ensure we leave no one behind in the journey to water access.

Further Reading: Hagerman, E. CRIDF Gender Review Report, CRIDF, Pretoria 2018

1 In CRIDF when we talk about gender, this does not limit our conversation to women. Our inclusive terminology is GESI – gender and social inclusion – which includes all groups of people regarded as vulnerable. As an example of this, please see the CRIDF series, "Water for All", available here: <https://goo.gl/0dVnHq>

2 The Handbook is available for download here: <https://goo.gl/Ax7SPd>

3 The United Nations World Water Assessment Programme has produced a series of working papers on how to collect sex-disaggregated data that could assist in collecting and documenting indicators more generally while also inputting into the Gender Action Plan. It is available here: <https://goo.gl/6Tof5>

4 Blumberg, R., (et al) Women Cross-Border Traders in Southern Africa: Contributions, Constraints, and Opportunities in Malawi and Botswana. March 2016, USAID Southern Africa.