

COMMUNITY-LED ACCELERATED WASH  
(COWASH)

VOL D

# VOLUME D

## GENDER AND DISABILITY INCLUSION



JANUARY, 2025

COWASH IV FTAT



## ACRONYMS

Acronym	Interpretation	Acronym	Interpretation
ASCA	Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations	PTA	Parent Teachers Association
BMC	Business Model Canvas	PTSA	Parent Teachers and Students Association
BoE	Bureau of Education	PWDs	People with Disabilities
BoF	Bureau of Finance	RPMU	Regional Program Management Unit
BoH	Bureau of Health	RSU	Regional Support Unit
BoW	Bureau of Water	RWCO	Regional WASH Coordination Office
CBE	Commercial Bank of Ethiopia	RWMU	Regional Water Management Unit
CHC	Community Health Committee	RWSC	Regional WASH Steering Committee
CLTSH	Community-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene	RWTT	Regional WASH Technical Team
CMP	Community Managed Project	SBC	Social and Behaviour Change
CMPS	CMP Supervisor	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
COWASH	Community-Led Accelerated WASH in Ethiopia	SECRSM	Social, Environmental and Climate Risk Screening and Management
DPO	Disabled Peoples Organization	SLA	Saving and Loan Association
FTAT	Federal Technical Assistance Team	SLTSH	School-led Total Sanitation and Hygiene
GIS	Geographic Information System	ToT	Training of Trainers
GoE	Government of Ethiopia	TVED	Technical, Vocational and Enterprises Development
GoF	Government of Finland	TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
HEW	Health Extension Worker	UAP	Universal Access Plan
HH	Household	VIP	Ventilated Improved Pit
IEC	Information, Education and Communication	VSLA	Village Saving and Loan Association
KWT	Kebele WASH Team	WASH	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation	WASHCO	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Committee
MBS	Market Based Sanitation	WASH SLA	WASH Saving and Loan Associations
MFI	Microfinance Institution	WAT	Woreda Appraisal Team
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management	WIF	WASH Implementation Framework
MoE	Ministry of Education	WMP	Woreda Managed Project
MoF	Ministry of Finance	WoE	Woreda Office of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health	WoF	Woreda Office of Finance
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs	WoFED	Woreda Finance and Economic Development Office
MoWE	Ministry of Water & Energy	WoH	Woreda Office of Health
MoWSA	Ministry of Women & Social Affairs	WoLSA	Woreda Office of Labor and Social Affairs
MSE	Micro and Small Enterprise	WoW	Woreda Office of Water
MSP	Multi Stakeholders Platform	WHO	World Health Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization	WSP	Water Safety Plan
NWCO	National WASH Coordination Office	WUA	Water Users Association
NWSC	National WASH Steering Committee	WWT	Woreda WASH Team
O&M	Operation and Maintenance		
ODF	Open Defecation Free		
OWNP	One WASH National Program		
PMU	Project Management Unit		

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Appendices are not attached to this document and are available upon request:

Please contact FTAT at: [www.cowash.org/contact-us](http://www.cowash.org/contact-us)  
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 or download from: [www.cowash.org](http://www.cowash.org)

## Appendix

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Appendix	6	COWASH Disability Inclusion Guideline

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The COWASH project was established to promote the efficient use of CMP (Community Managed Project) financing for rural WASH development. It is conducted under the umbrella of the country's One WASH national program and is funded by the Governments of Finland and Ethiopia, regional governments, and project beneficiaries.

COWASH aims to improve public health and well-being, social development, and climate resilience in the project area communities. A key component of this is increasing the awareness, understanding, and capacity of relevant stakeholders in the WASH sector at all levels regarding gender and disability issues.

The aim of the COWASH gender transformative and disability-inclusive WASH strategy is to scale up the practice of mainstreaming women's empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion by improving the awareness and capacity of WASH experts and communities on equity and inclusion issues. From a design point of view, the target is to ensure that all water and sanitation facilities built are accessible to all and that people with disabilities (PWDs) are increasingly included in community WASH activities.

Under COWASH, several documents have been developed concerning Gender and Disability Inclusion:

- [The Gender Transformative and Disability Inclusive WASH Strategy \(November 2021\)](#) sets out the COWASH IV strategy for scaling up the practice of mainstreaming women's empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion.
- [Training Guideline on Women's Leadership in WASHCO Management \(February 2022\)](#), designed to train newly established WASHCOs to build leadership capacity and to bring women to the leadership positions of WASHCOs.
- [The COWASH Disability Inclusion Guideline \(April 2022\)](#) is a comprehensive guideline written with the cooperation of the Ethiopian Centre for Disability and Development. It covers all facets of disability inclusion related to COWASH and recommends training programmes.

This guideline summarises the COWASH strategy for gender and disability inclusion, providing an overview of the barriers to inclusion, the audiences to be reached, the goals and objectives, and the methods adopted to achieve those goals. It also includes a summary of the remaining challenges and an outline of the training conducted under COWASH IV, which has been the foundation of the gender and disability inclusion efforts.

## 2. TARGET AUDIENCE

The Strategy and Guideline documents were developed for use by COWASH regional support unit (RSU) staff and COWASH region WASH sector partners, which include regional bureaus and zonal and woreda offices of water, health, education, women and children affairs, labour and social affairs, and micro and small enterprises. Potential strategy users include woreda and kebele WASH team members, health extension workers, and community-based structures (formal or informal).



### 3. BACKGROUND

In Ethiopia, women and girls are often the primary collectors, transporters, and water users for household consumption. Women are primarily responsible for health and childcare and are guardians of household hygiene. Availing safe water at close distances to households assists women and girls by reducing travel and queue times and improving the health conditions of the user communities. Girls can enhance their school attendance and performance; women can use their free time to accomplish productive work and engage in social activities. Access to water and sanitation facilities helps reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual harassment and assault while travelling long distances to collect water for family use, as well as when they have to go out of the home to urinate or defecate.

Based on the World Report on Disability (2011), there are an estimated 15 million children and adults with disabilities in Ethiopia, representing 18 per cent of the population. A vast majority of people with disabilities live in rural areas where access to essential services is limited. Many women and girls with disabilities face discrimination and barriers to their full and equal inclusion in society. Women with disabilities are at a significant disadvantage compared to men with disabilities.

Following the disability and development report of the UN (2018), efforts have been made by various actors, including governments and international organisations, to mainstream disability in WASH programmes by:

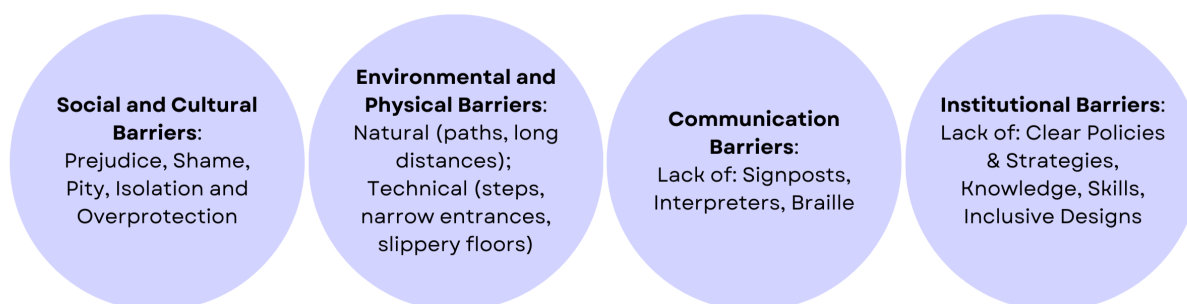
1. Addressing discrimination and stigma when providing WASH services
2. Raising awareness and capacity building for the rights and specific needs of PWDs when planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating WASH programmes
3. Mandating minimum accessibility standards and considering disability in the design of WASH interventions
4. Designing and building WASH facilities according to universal design principles.

In Ethiopia, patriarchy privileges men over women of all ages, whereas people without disabilities are favoured over those with disabilities due to negative attitudes towards disability. Disability is too often considered a curse and a burden, resulting in families as well as communities discriminating against PWDs.

#### 3.1 BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Numerous barriers exclude and hinder the participation of PWDs and other marginalised persons in WASH initiatives. Most problems are caused by external factors such as social, physical, environmental, and institutional barriers. Recognising the different obstacles to inclusion ensures that WASH planning, implementation, and management include and serve all.

Figure 3.1: Barriers to Inclusive WASH



### 3.1.1. Attitudinal (Social and Cultural Barriers)

Attitudinal barriers, prejudice, and discrimination cause the most significant problems for PWDs. In Ethiopia, having a disability is associated with shame, fear, and pity, quickly leading to isolation or overprotection. To avoid discrimination, the family may keep the person with the disability hidden at home. PWDs may be prevented from sharing family or community facilities for fear that they will contaminate the water or soil of the facility for other users. These attitudinal barriers are found at the community level and in the attitudes of WASH sector actors at all levels. Negative language reflects and can reinforce prejudice.

Social barriers are compounded when PWDs are unable to attend community meetings where WASH-related issues are discussed due to the physical inaccessibility of the meeting place, a lack of understanding of why they should attend these meetings, a lack of financial resources to facilitate their participation, and a lack of accessible transportation and information.

### 3.1.2. Environmental and Physical/Technical Barriers

Environmental barriers include natural or physical/technical obstacles that prevent PWDs from participating. These barriers occur in public transport, hospitals and clinics, schools and housing, shops and marketplaces, places of worship, and media and communications. They hinder access to facilities and participation in WASH meetings, events, and activities.

**Natural barriers** can include uneven, rough, or steep paths on muddy and slippery ground, often rendering them completely inaccessible. For many, meeting venues and water sources are too far away, and sanitation facilities are non-existent.

**Physical/technical barriers** include high steps and concrete platforms, narrow entrances, a lack of or overly heavy doors, narrow cubicles, and insufficient light and handrails. Many children with disabilities are excluded from schooling due to non-existent or inaccessible water and sanitation facilities. Barriers to schools' sanitary facilities can include a lack of toilets, uneven paths leading to toilets, an absence of supportive aids, and limited space.

### 3.1.3. Communication Barriers

A communication barrier prevents PWDs from receiving and understanding the messages others use to convey their information, ideas and thoughts. This may be due to a lack of assistive devices or support persons, such as sign language interpreters. Communication barriers hinder effective communication with and by people with disabilities.

These barriers vary with different types of impairments. Visually impaired individuals need non-visual resources to receive information, such as audio recordings or braille. Deaf people rely on visual communication, such as signposts, to assist them; even if they know sign language, they may only be able to communicate effectively if a sign language interpreter is available. Individuals with intellectual impairments may require messages in a simple or visual format or communication through caregivers to help them understand.

#### 3.1.4. Institutional Barriers

Legislation, policies, and action plans for marginalised groups need more implementation directives, strategies, and guidelines. In addition, the relevant ministries/bureaus may not be aware of these policies. Consequently, PWDs and other marginalised community members are frequently excluded from the planning, implementation, and management of WASH facilities.

Moreover, many policymakers, regulators, and WASH sector actors are unaware of the barriers to participation and access to water and sanitation facilities for PWDs, who are therefore rarely consulted about their needs. They are unfamiliar with inclusive solutions and tend not to have enough training opportunities on inclusion. At the same time, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) have a weak presence and capacity in the wordas and weak links with the WASH sector personnel. DPOs are also usually unaware of the technical solutions available to remove the barriers to accessing WASH. Similarly, although charged with providing services to and promoting the inclusion of PWDs, social affairs officials are rarely aware of disability issues regarding WASH activities.

### 3.2 RECENT THEORETICAL SHIFTS

The COWASH project strives to adopt recent theories in its attempt to address the issues of women empowerment, gender equity and disability inclusion. The following section briefly explains the theoretical shifts made over recent years and the theories to be used in implementing the project.

#### 3.2.1 Gender Transformative Programming in WASH

The concept of gender on the international agenda emerged in the early 1970s, with the Women in Development approach challenging the notion of women as passive beneficiaries of development and emphasising the need for structural changes in the global political economy. The Gender and Development approach followed, focusing on unequal power relations between men and women. The GAD approach recognises that development initiatives can affect men and women differently, given their different socially constructed roles and responsibilities, opportunities, and constraints influenced by these, and the value placed on gendered roles and responsibilities.

Gender describes the socially constructed roles and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for men and women. Gender equality means that men and women have equal power and equal opportunities in every sphere of life. Women's empowerment is a critical aspect of achieving gender equality. It includes increasing a woman's sense of self-worth, decision-making power, access to opportunities and resources, power and control over her life, and ability to effect change. Gender issues are not focused on women alone but on the relationship between men and women in society.

Two terms considered in COWASH implementation are practical gender needs and strategic gender interests. Practical gender needs relate to the responsibilities and tasks of women's or men's traditional gender roles. Strategic gender interests concern the position of women and men towards each other in a given society, including the division of labour, access to and control over resources, and decision-making power at household and community levels. WASH interventions affect women and men on both practical and strategic levels.

Interventions close to family homes help meet women's practical needs related to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and reproductive and maternal health. They also impact women's other practical needs arising from their traditional role in the care economy and reduce their risk of vulnerability to violence when collecting water far from home or when practising open defecation.

Gender transformative WASH programming aims to transform the power structures that underlie unequal gender power relations and norms by empowering marginalised women and girls to come into the public domain, share their perspectives, take on leadership roles and effectively discharge their responsibilities of managerial positions. It addresses the root causes of gender inequality, promotes the value of women and girls, and goes beyond improving their condition; it seeks to improve their social position. Working with men and boys as allies and champions of change is vital to challenge and transform dominant social, economic and political structures that perpetuate gender inequality.

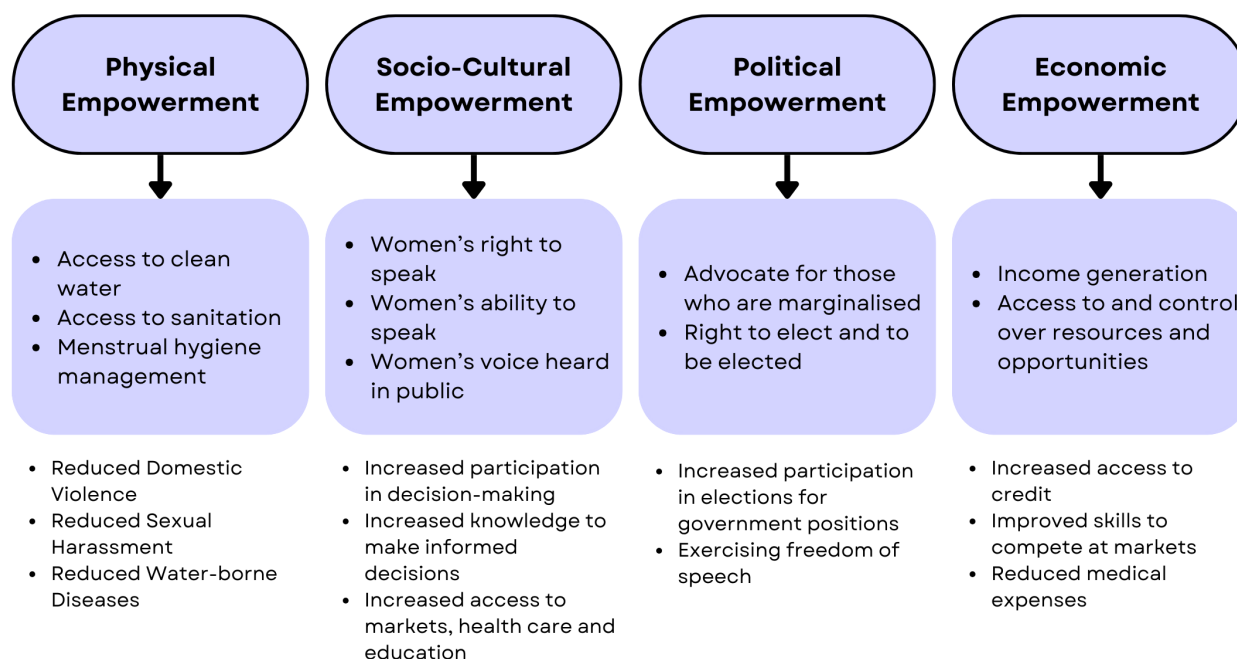
The approach encourages critical reflection, questioning and challenging gender norms and distributing resources and roles based on a person's gender. It aims to foster an enabling policy and budgetary and institutional framework for gender equality that adequately protects girls and women's rights, tackles the barriers they face and meets their particular needs. It requires working at all levels (as individuals, within family and relationships, as communities, institutions and societies) and across a person's life course. It involves active listening and continuous engagement with power holders, with girls, boys, women, and men.

The process can be complex, highly context-specific, and time-consuming, but gender equality cannot be achieved by just one intervention, project, or program. However, collectively, the impact can be maximised.

COWASH considers the following four elements of empowerment to address issues of gender transformation and women empowerment within the project:



Figure 3.2: Four Elements of Women's Empowerment



### 3.2.2 Disability Inclusion / Social Inclusion in WASH

People with disabilities face barriers to accessing WASH services and facilities that fully meet their needs. Women and girls with disabilities experience double discrimination, placing them at higher risk of violence, exclusion, and exploitation. This inequitable access to WASH impacts their health, livelihood, and other opportunities.

Despite the progress in improving the availability of WASH services, ensuring that WASH services reach everyone is still a challenge for Ethiopia. Exclusion from WASH means a person or group of people are prevented from having access to water, a toilet or a handwashing facility, or where access is complicated for them and their needs have not been recognised.

Inclusion in WASH means that everyone has access to safe WASH facilities, and the needs of all community members, regardless of who they are or their circumstances, are fully addressed in the design, planning and implementation of WASH services. Everyone benefits from inclusive WASH, including elderly people, young children, pregnant women, people living with long-term illnesses, people engaged in marginalised occupations, and internally displaced people.

COWASH strives to target these marginalised groups in providing WASH facilities and services, ensuring that they benefit equally and that their voices are heard in the planning, implementation, and post-construction period.

## 4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the COWASH gender transformative and disability-inclusive WASH strategy is to scale up the practice of mainstreaming women's empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion during the project implementation period by improving the awareness and capacity of WASH experts and communities on equity and inclusion issues.

Specifically, the strategy has the following objectives:

- To use the learnings of previous COWASH phases on gender and disability inclusion as input and capitalise on accumulated knowledge and practices.
- To give clear guidance for implementing partners on gender and inclusion focus areas of COWASH that need deliberate action by individual WASH sector partners and call for increased collaboration among the sectors and target communities.
- To consider disability in designing, monitoring and evaluating development and emergency WASH interventions.
- To identify and enable target communities, including people with disabilities, women and men, boys and girls, to benefit, actively participate and contribute equally in WASH planning, implementation and services management.
- To ensure WASH-related information is accessible and in formats that people with different types of disabilities can understand.
- To contribute to the national efforts challenging gender stereotypes, as well as stigma and prejudice against people with disabilities, by bringing women and PWDs into leadership and decision-making positions in WASH management and WASH businesses.
- To adopt a twin-track approach in WASH and advance equal rights and opportunities for PWDs.
- To document and disseminate learnings and research findings.

## 5. STRATEGIC UNDERTAKINGS

The strategy focuses on a holistic approach to promoting gender and inclusion issues, particularly regarding gender equality, women empowerment, and disability inclusion components of the COWASH project. The strategy focuses on the following key issues:

- Staff assignment and sharing of responsibilities
- Equity and inclusion in decision-making of WASH implementation & WASH services management
- Capacity development/strengthening
- Equal access to and control over WASH services
- Partnership, networking and advocacy
- Research on gender and inclusion
- Planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The following sections describe how the COWASH project approaches these issues.

### 5.1 STAFF ASSIGNMENT AND SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES

**RSU Staff in COWASH Regions** - Each region supported by COWASH should have a Gender and Inclusion Specialist as part of the regional support unit team. If a full-time staff member is impractical, each region should assign a focal point to oversee the mainstreaming of gender and disability inclusion in all project components. Each RSU member must consider gender and disability responsibilities in their respective areas of work so that gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion are not the sole responsibility of the full-time GIS staff or the focal

point. The regional full-time Gender and Inclusion Specialist staff or the focal point receives technical support from FTAT.

**DPOs** - COWASH works closely with DPOs and associations at various tiers. Cooperation benefits knowledge sharing, human capacity building, and research undertakings. A list of renowned/influential PWDs and DPOs that COWASH works with is updated regularly and disseminated to the regions for subsequent use.

## 5.2 EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN WASH DECISION-MAKING

The CMP approach stimulates demand among the communities to obtain water facilities. Both men and women take part in electing their WASHCO representatives, who then become representatives of the community as a whole. Most members of the five to seven-member WASHCO need to be women to ensure the sustainability of the WASH services. COWASH promotes the role of women in rural water and sanitation management beyond mere service recipients. Thus, in each WASHCO, women shall hold at least one or two of the three leadership positions (chairperson, treasurer, and secretary).

PWDs should also be part of the committees that plan and manage the implementation of community WASH projects to ensure their voices are heard. This will demonstrate to the community that PWDs can be active and productive. COWASH recommends that at least one PWD be represented in each WASHCO. Beyond the quota system for the representation of women and PWD in WASHCOs, a strengthened and coordinated effort is necessary to build their leadership capacity. Woreda and kebele facilitators and WASH teams must be aware of these issues during WASH-related capacity building/CMP training.

After the election process, WASHCOs submit project applications to the Woreda WASH Team, attaching the list of potential beneficiaries to the application form. From a gender and inclusion perspective, two issues need attention. Firstly, at the application stage, local leaders must ensure that marginalised groups are included in the list of potential beneficiaries. Secondly, these groups should not be viewed as mere recipients of benefits. They should contribute in areas where they feel comfortable, and their contributions need to be recognised by the community. They should also be able to make their voices heard and be part of each process throughout the construction period and beyond. Thus, WASH-related community meetings must be organised at convenient times for the majority of community members, including women, PWDs, and other marginalised groups.

Water is necessary for food production and preparation, personal hygiene, care of the sick, cleaning, washing and care of domestic animals and, in some cases, small home gardening, as well as for drinking. Since women have traditionally been responsible for collecting household water, they have accumulated considerable knowledge about water resources, including location, quality and storage methods. Women's involvement during site selection and deciding on the design of the water point needs to be ensured; the woreda technicians responsible for the site selection of water wells must be aware of this during the CMP training. The number of women participating in the site selection process must be included in the COWASH CMP reporting form.

Two sets of checklists have been prepared to ensure gender mainstreaming and inclusion of PWDs in the implementation process of the CMP approach.

**Gender and Disability Inclusion Checklist in Key Steps of the Community-Managed Project Approach:** this checklist guides COWASH stakeholders at all levels in integrating gender and disability inclusion throughout the critical steps of the CMP approach to ensure the involvement of women, men and PWDs in the decision-making process and to collect gender and disability disaggregated data at each step of CMP approach. WASH experts and WASHCOs should use the checklist to plan, implement and evaluate the project (Annex 1).

**Disability Inclusion Checklist:** this checklist guides COWASH project stakeholders in raising awareness of disability issues and ensuring that the needs of PWDs are addressed and mainstreamed in COWASH activities. It can measure whether a proposed COWASH project involves and meets the needs of community members with disabilities. WASHCOs should use it to guide disability inclusion at the start of a project's development. All project applications submitted for COWASH support are evaluated according to this checklist (Annex 2).

### 5.3 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT / STRENGTHENING

The project continuously strives to increase the awareness, understanding, and capacity of WASH stakeholders in the COWASH regions at all levels regarding women empowerment, gender equality, and disability inclusion. These stakeholders include RSU staff and government partners (working in water, health, women's affairs, education, social affairs, and enterprise development and finance sectors) and woreda and kebele WASH teams. Such capacity-building efforts ensure that all newly constructed water and sanitation facilities are accessible and enhance the inclusion of women and marginalised groups, including PWDs, in community WASH activities.

Due to staff turnover, conducting continuous capacity-building training/refresher courses throughout the project is essential. Capacity-building activities can be done through:

- Formal awareness-raising training on disability inclusion, gender mainstreaming and women empowerment training
- Sharing electronically or via printed materials, posters and leaflets, information on gender and disability inclusion, as well as sharing links and creating a conducive environment for RSU and sector government partners to attend virtual meetings
- Cross-learning and experience sharing through site visits and discussions with user communities.

Since disability inclusion in the WASH sector requires a commitment of high-level officials, awareness for disability inclusion needs to be raised among regional, zonal, and woreda office heads. Moreover, all COWASH training must include PWDs as trainers and trainees, reporting on it in disaggregated form. The FTAT-prepared 'Tool to Collect Data on Persons with Disabilities in Training at Regional, Zone, and Woreda Levels' is available to enable this.

Accessibility of training venues needs special attention to ensure the participation of PWDs as attendees or trainers. Hence, accessibility has to be a mandatory requirement in the procurement process in COWASH-organized training.

WASHCOs receive gender and disability inclusion awareness training as part of their CMP training. Husbands and wives of WASHCO members, as well as family members of PWD

WASHCO members, must also receive training so that the WASHCO member will receive the required support from other family members for their voluntary work. Targeting the wider user communities for gender and disability inclusion awareness training is vital so that women and PWD WASHCO members can gain community support to play their leadership roles.

Leadership training shall also be provided to WASHCO members to bring women and PWDs into leadership positions (chairperson, treasurer and secretary). Capacitating women and PWD leaders with leadership skills is essential to build their confidence and fulfil their responsibilities to the required level. Due to budget constraints, the gender and disability inclusion awareness and leadership training for partners/family members of WASHCOs and the user communities shall be conducted at water point level alongside other awareness-raising issues.

When arranging training for WASHCOs outside their kebele, women members with young children and PWDs need special dispensation to afford them equal opportunities to attend. Support could involve arranging spaces for the children to stay with volunteer babysitters or arranging a safe playground to create an environment conducive to their mothers attending the training without interruption. Similarly, the training venues must be convenient for PWDs to the maximum extent practical.

## 5.4 EQUAL ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER WASH SERVICES

### 5.4.1 Promoting Accessible WASH Facilities

Ensuring inclusive access to water and sanitation for PWDs requires accessible designs, including toilets, water points, water carriers, bathing places and handwashing facilities. To facilitate the implementation of accessible water points, COWASH has developed an inclusive hand-dug well design and an inclusive public tap design to be adopted in all target regions.

The lack of access paths to WASH facilities remains challenging due to rugged topography in some areas and necessitates alternative solutions to ensure access for all. In some cases, investing in an access path may be achievable regarding financial, human, and material resources. However, it still requires commitment from the user communities to join hands and take action. People sometimes use different routes to and from the water points, particularly during the rainy and dry seasons. Thus, seeking a solution for the access path in a given community requires consideration of these scenarios.

### 5.4.2 Promoting Improved Sanitation and Hygiene

The full health benefits of an improved water supply can only be achieved with improved sanitation and hygiene. Within households, men and women have different roles and unequal decision-making powers when investing in sanitary items. Men traditionally decide on the plot of land in the compound and invest in the necessary resources to construct household latrines and handwashing facilities. As guardians of family hygiene, women must be given a voice in whether the constructed facility offers privacy and is safe for the children, themselves, and other family members. Thus, both men and women, including PWDs, need to be targeted for hygiene education, either in a separate or mixed group, depending on the prevailing practices of the local area.



Many households have adopted low-cost technical solutions to improve sanitation access for their disabled family members. However, intensive and targeted promotion is needed to scale up their facilities. As households with disabled family members need to be identified under the project application, technical support by woreda technical staff and continuous follow-up must be given to those identified households to meet their water and sanitation needs. If budget/financial resources allow, households with disabled and elderly family members should get priority for water service connections in their yards.

Health extension workers (HEWs) are usually responsible for performing this activity at the grassroots level. To expedite the implementation of hygiene and sanitation-related activities, COWASH works on the capacity development of woreda WASH experts and kebele WASH teams so that HEWs receive the necessary technical and facilitation support from these teams. COWASH IV has included behavioural change interventions in its program to accelerate the adoption of improved hygiene and sanitation practices in the target woredas (refer to Volume E: Social and Behaviour Change Guideline).

### 5.4.3 Promoting Menstrual Hygiene Management

Improved WASH facilities benefit all students, but MHM interventions within schools will particularly benefit adolescent girls. These interventions include safe spaces for girls to wash, change, and dispose of sanitary pads, access emergency pads, receive information and counselling about menstruation, and rest to alleviate menstrual pains and cramps. This helps keep girls in school during menstruation.

The focus areas of COWASH on MHM include:

- Enhancing the knowledge of adolescent girls and women (including those with disabilities) on MHM using comprehensive MHM awareness-raising materials.
- Supporting the construction of separate toilets for boys and girls and MHM rooms in schools as per the Ministry of Education's design. The MHM rooms should also be accessible for PWDs.
- Promoting an enabling environment for local manufacturing and distribution of menstrual hygiene products, including the supply chain, to ensure sustainability.
- Supporting awareness-raising training for regional, zonal, and woreda staff, teachers, school supervisors, directors, and school gender and WASH club leaders to make menstrual hygiene an issue for everyone in the school. The trainees cascade the training to all teachers and students within their respective schools.
- Promoting awareness-raising in the communities to address societal beliefs, taboos, and stigmas surrounding the issue.

COWASH also needs to verify that the MHM interventions help improve school attendance of adolescent girls during menstruation. Data collection tools measure the impact before and after MHM interventions.

### 5.4.4 Engaging School Girls' Clubs

School girls' clubs, run by trained teachers, are an increasingly popular approach to promoting adolescent girls' well-being. They help girls cope with the physical and emotional changes they experience during adolescence and equip them with knowledge and skills to challenge

discriminatory norms within their homes and broader communities. Clubs may target girls in a specific age group, all girls who enrol above a particular school grade or may be open to any girl who wishes to participate. Most girls' clubs are single-sex environments, enabling girls to meet, learn, and discuss issues that affect their lives without the presence of boys, who might make it harder for girls to reflect on issues like menstruation. For this reason, girls' clubs are often labelled as 'safe spaces'. In some cases, 'Gender Clubs' might be formed, targeting both girls and boys in mixed groups, as boys also have an essential role to play in changing attitudes and practices around gender equality.

COWASH endeavours to establish or strengthen school girls'/gender clubs, to empower girls to become more assertive and develop self-esteem, to exercise their rights in decision-making at home and school, and to advocate for their right to attend and remain in school. Increased retention of girls in schools can be achieved by removing barriers to girls' education, deepening understanding of MHM among adolescent girls, including those with disabilities, and empowering them to serve as change agents in sensitising their parents and communities to eliminate harmful traditional practices that hinder their pursuit of education. Empowered school girls can also be role models for dropouts and out-of-school girls, increasing their desire to return to or join school.

Members of girls' clubs may convey pertinent messages through social media, dramas, poems, case stories, and songs to the school community and the wider community during off-school days and public gatherings. Quiz competitions with other clubs or with boys from their school, as well as award ceremonies for the best-performing girls at the end of each semester, encourage girls to place greater emphasis on their education. COWASH supports training for teachers and leaders of school girls' clubs on MHM, disability inclusion, and school WASH management. Trained teachers and club leaders can then cascade the training to school girls' club members. They should also hold regular meetings and discussions with the club members on topics affecting girls, such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health education, personal hygiene, and MHM.

Girls' clubs can help ensure access to and proper use of MHM blocks/rooms in their schools. They can also ensure that the necessary furniture and relevant consumable items are provided and maintained.

### 5.4.5 Engaging School WASH Clubs

Schoolchildren are considered effective WASH promotion agents who can catalyse behavioural changes in their community. As they experience improved WASH facilities daily in school and learn why sanitation and good hygiene are essential, their attitudes and practices can be positively influenced. Strengthening school WASH clubs helps introduce behavioural change, firstly in the children, secondly through their influence on their families at home, and thirdly through the impact on the broader community.

COWASH strives to establish and strengthen school WASH clubs to ensure the proper utilisation and management of accessible WASH facilities in schools. In collaboration with school management and other school clubs, WASH clubs are beneficial for disseminating sanitation and hygiene messages to the school community and beyond, ensuring the functionality of WASH facilities, including the availability of soap at the handwashing stations and generating resources for the maintenance of facilities through various activities. WASH

clubs can use hygiene events like Global Handwashing Day (15 October), World Water Day (22 March), and World Toilet Day (19 November) to raise awareness in the community about WASH-related issues.

## 5.5 PARTNERSHIP, NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

**At the Federal Level** - COWASH works with and extends technical support to the Women Affairs Directorate (WAD) in the MoWE, particularly in capacity building and conducting gender research, and with the MoLSA to address disability inclusion issues. COWASH has also supported the National WASH Coordination Office (NWCO) in establishing a gender equity and disability inclusion task force to facilitate learning and information sharing among members at the federal level. COWASH continues to work closely with the NWCO and the established task force on gender equity and inclusion issues and strengthening partnerships with DPOs.

**At Regional, Zonal, and Woreda Levels** - The Women's Affairs Bureau, the Women's Affairs Office, regional gender focal persons of water, health, and education bureaus, and regional and zonal DPOs need to work closely together to address issues of gender equity and inclusion in the WASH sector. COWASH assists by preparing articles on gender equity and inclusion and producing brochures and leaflets for broader circulation to inform and educate the general public.

**At Kebele Level** - At the community level, the woreda WASH teams need to encourage the kebele WASH teams and WASHCOs to work closely with community-based organisations such as women and youth associations, DPOs, artisan associations, other business people, and PWDs to promote their WASH rights, maximise opportunities to get the technical and financial support needed for managing water schemes and build the leadership skills of women WASHCO members.

Awarding the best-performing WASHCOs, with the involvement of government partners at the woreda level and local administration at the kebele level, can also be used as an advocacy tool to encourage other WASHCOs and user communities to excel in water scheme administration performance. Depending on their local context, regions can establish the criteria for selecting the best-performing WASHCOs.

## 5.6 RESEARCH ON GENDER AND INCLUSION IN WASH

All qualitative and quantitative research undertakings in COWASH IV include analyses from the point of view of gender and marginalised groups, including disability inclusion.

Research on gender and social/disability inclusion is conducted to better respond to women's, men's, and PWDs' needs for improved WASH services. Research topics include gender and disability inclusion audits of selected water points in the project woredas, harmful social norms and cultural practices, menstrual hygiene management practices, women's participation, empowerment, and leadership.

## 5.7 PLANNING, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Data collection checklists/questionnaires for project planning, monitoring, and evaluation must include gender and marginalised group concerns, with data disaggregated by gender

and disability. Equity and inclusion indicators are included in baseline data collection, outcome surveys, and sustainability studies to measure progress during implementation. COWASH's performance monitoring plan includes monitoring indicators with the required data collection frequency and disaggregated by region, sex, and disability.

COWASH's annual progress reports include analyses of the project's impacts on the livelihoods of boys and girls, men and women, PWDs, and other marginalised groups. Reports collected from COWASH regions should also include analyses from a gender and inclusion perspective and present balanced pictures.

Presentations/reports prepared for the project, from federal to woreda level, need to show the beneficiaries' numbers (training, exposure visits, users of water and sanitation facilities, etc.) disaggregated by sex and disability.

Intensive supportive supervision and practical on-site demonstrations conducted at various levels should ensure all stakeholders fully understand and practice accessibility principles.

## 6. CHALLENGES

The following findings and observations have been obtained from field-level assessment reports and discussions with target communities and relevant government partners during supportive supervision visits during COWASH implementation.

### 6.1 GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CHALLENGES

Despite some improvements, the patriarchal social system still dominates Ethiopia. Such a social system is based on beliefs of men's superiority and gives them significant decision-making power at both household and community levels. Thus, local people consider 'empowering women' to be 'disempowering men' unless men of different age groups actively participate in the women's empowerment process.

Gender-based differences persist in access to and control over resources. Men tend to control household financial resources (most rural women lack the opportunity to generate income due to a lack of time, skill, and capital), making the women economically dependent on the men for sustainably using WASH facilities, etc.

Women have fewer opportunities for a decent education than men and thus benefit less from potential opportunities. Women's lower educational achievement is usually considered an excuse for not selecting women for leadership positions in WASH management structures.

Women are less mobile than men due to their childcare and household responsibilities, fear of physical and social violence and socio-cultural norms that limit their mobility. Hence, women face difficulties leaving their residential area or spending the night away from home to attend training, meetings, etc., organised by government and development partners, including COWASH.

Women have triple roles: productive, reproductive, and community work, which means they work longer hours per day. Men don't prioritise investing family money in labour and time-

saving devices to alleviate women's work burden. Women need more time to engage in self- or public development activities.

Women's empowerment training is usually given to women without partners, government officials/local administrators, and religious leaders. Subsequently, women will have problems putting what they have learned into practice. Providing awareness-raising sessions only to women will not help remove the social and institutional barriers that hinder women's empowerment.

Under COWASH III, among all the water schemes where women were chairpersons of the WASHCOs, those women chaired 88% of the WASHCO meetings. In the other 12%, their husbands or other WASHCO members chaired the meetings on behalf of them. So, in some cases, the presence of women in leadership positions is only a nominal representation. Culture-related problems devaluing women in leadership positions, the busyness of women with household chores, men's better capacity (gained due to experience) in water point management, and women's low approval by the community to hold leadership positions are typical issues that need addressing.

Regarding the engagement of women and PWDs in WASH businesses, previous COWASH experience illustrates that assigning women to leadership positions and including PWDs in WASH businesses needs close follow-up at the establishment stage of the enterprise to avoid their practical exclusion.

To ensure the achievement of women's empowerment and gender equality, issues like gender-based violence/domestic violence, harmful traditional practices and child abuse need to be addressed. COWASH continues to attempt to bring behavioural change to these issues.

## 6.2 DISABILITY INCLUSION / SOCIAL INCLUSION CHALLENGES

In previous COWASH phases, despite extensive training given to water technicians/artisans within the project woredas to apply inclusive designs for WASH facilities construction, it still proved difficult for them to understand how an accessible water point/latrine might look and why it is essential.

There are also significant performance differences among COWASH woredas. Some have constructed all water points with the new design, some a few, and some none at all. These differences are due to attitudinal barriers. Some woredas have only used the latest designs for new construction, while some have made all rehabilitated water points accessible.

Challenges regarding the use and application of inclusive design for the construction of institutional latrines include the need for the designs to be understood, known, implemented, or perceived as necessary by the woreda or region, or by the artisans and contractors. Implementation has also been poorly monitored.

Due to attitudinal barriers at different levels, both women and PWDs themselves have a fear of rejection, unacceptance and discrimination to take up leadership positions in WASH management.



## 7. GENDER AND DISABILITY INCLUSION TRAINING

Gender training is conducted following FTAT's '[Training Guideline on Women's Leadership in WASHCO Management \(February 2022\)](#)'. The training program is designed for new or established WASHCOs and to train leaders of community-based organisations in a broader sense. The program includes modules on:

- Background Information
- Community Participation and Women's Empowerment
- Conceptualizing Leadership at the Community Level
- Leadership Skills
- Decision Making

Disability Inclusion training is conducted following FTAT's '[COWASH Disability Inclusion Guideline – Part C \(April 2022\)](#)'. The target groups, duration, content and trainers for this are summarised in Table 7.1 below. FTAT and the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) train all RSU staff and one regional DPO staff/PWD in each COWASH region as resource persons in using the guideline. From there, the training is cascaded down following the Training of Trainers (ToT) approach to the other regional-level stakeholders, zones, woredas and kebeles by the RSUs/DPO resource persons/woreda water office community participation officer.

The zone and woreda-level training is divided into two parts: one day of awareness-raising for the zone and woreda WASH teams and experts, followed by two days of more in-depth training for the experts. As the number of participants in the first woreda-level awareness-raising training is limited, a second one-day awareness-raising event for the other woreda WASH office staff is also organised to ensure that more woreda-level staff can receive the required information.

As it is essential to use PWDs themselves as trainers, the FTAT trains selected resource PWDs in each region to act as trainers and resource persons in the region and woreda-level training. The regional Social Affairs Bureau should be invited to participate in the training in the regions to ensure linkage and cooperation between them and COWASH.

**Table 7.1: Disability Inclusion Training under COWASH IV**

Type of Training	Target Groups	Duration	Main Contents	Trainers	Responsible Body
Orientation on COWASH for new RSUs (including ToT on disability inclusion guideline; planned at Federal level)	- Newly recruited RSU technical experts - One DPO representative/ person with a disability from each region.	3 days	- Understanding disability - Policy framework - Barriers to inclusion - Inclusive solutions for WASH - Disability inclusion in COWASH - Roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders - Participation of PWDs in all COWASH - Activities: Training planning	Experts from ECDD, together with FTAT	FTAT

Type of Training	Target Groups	Duration	Main Contents	Trainers	Responsible Body
Awareness raising workshop on disability inclusiveness in WASH at regional Bureaus of Water (BoW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bureau Heads and COWASH focal persons from BoW, BoE, BoH, BoF, BoWSA, BoMSE,, RSU staff, DPO Representative</li> <li>- Zone level Office heads of water, health, education, finance, women and social affairs, DPO representative</li> <li>- Woreda level Office heads of water, health, education, finance, women &amp; social affairs, one DPO representative</li> </ul>	2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding disability</li> <li>- Policy framework</li> <li>- Barriers to inclusion</li> <li>- Inclusive solutions for WASH</li> <li>- Disability inclusion in COWASH</li> <li>- Roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders</li> <li>- Participation of PWDs in all COWASH activities</li> <li>- Plan to cascade the training</li> </ul>	1 trainer from each RSU and 2 DPO trainers  1 Advisor from ECDD, together with FTAT	FTAT
Conduct ToT training for Woreda and Zonal Experts on disability inclusiveness in WASH (BoW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CMP supervisor, Woreda COWASH Focal persons from water, health, education, women &amp; social affairs, Finance, DPO;</li> <li>- Zone water and Women and Social Affairs, 2 DPOs &amp; 2 PWDs (female and male)</li> </ul>	3 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding disability</li> <li>- Policy framework</li> <li>- Barriers to inclusion</li> <li>- Inclusive solutions for WASH</li> <li>- Disability inclusion in COWASH</li> <li>- Roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders</li> <li>- Participation of PWDs in all COWASH activities</li> <li>- Cascading the training</li> </ul>	RSU  Trained regional DPO resource person	Region Water Bureau & RSU
Awareness raising training workshop on inclusive WASH at Woreda Offices of Water (WoW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Woreda WASH office staff (Administration, finance, water, health, education, women &amp; social affairs, agriculture, social affairs, MSE agency) and non-WASH related woreda sector offices, i.e. police, Association of persons with disability, development partners, youth, women and different association members, religious leaders etc.</li> <li>- Representative of woreda level DPOs if any/2 PWDs (female and male)</li> </ul>	1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Disability (definitions, understanding etc.)</li> <li>- Policy framework</li> <li>- Disability inclusion in COWASH</li> <li>- Roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders</li> <li>- Inclusive solutions for WASH</li> </ul>	Water Office (trained staff; community mobilization officer)	Woreda Water Office
Train Kebele WASH Team members on CMP management, MHM, women empowerment, disability inclusion in WASH (out of total 4 training days, disability inclusion training in WASH will take 2 days) (WoW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kebele WASH Team members</li> <li>- Religious leaders, elders, youth leaders, women leaders, CBOs, 2 PWDs (female and male)</li> </ul>	2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Awareness of disability issues</li> <li>- Inclusive solutions for WASH</li> <li>- Roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders</li> </ul>	Water Office (trained staff; community mobilization officer)	Woreda Water Office

In addition to the above-mentioned guidelines and training materials, a brochure on 'Women's Empowerment in COWASH' and a 'COWASH Community Level Disability Inclusion Guidebook (Inclusive WASH for all in Rural Communities in Ethiopia)' are also disseminated to concerned parties. These can all be accessed from the COWASH website, with versions available in Amharic, Affan Oromo, Tigrigna, and Sidama.

## Annex 1: Gender and Disability Inclusion Checklist in Key Steps of the CMP Approach

### 1) Promotion

- ☐ Are men, women, and PWDs aware of the approach and its benefits?
- ☐ Is participation from women and PWDs encouraged right from the beginning of the project?

### 2) WASHCO election

- ☐ Are the obstacles that women and PWDs face when participating taken into consideration?
- ☐ Have the time, financial and social constraints of the participation of women and PWDs been considered?
- ☐ Are special measures taken to ensure women's and PWDs participation?
- ☐ Is the qualitative participation of women and PWDs ensured?
- ☐ Are the benefits of women's and PWDs' participation communicated to the whole community, to the women and PWD themselves, and especially to the men and the elderly in the community? Are the benefits of women's and PWDs' leadership in WASHCOs communicated and promoted?

### 3) Project Application

- ☐ Is the participation of women and PWDs in the application process ensured?
- ☐ Are the differences between men's and women's literacy and education levels considered?

### 4) Desk appraisal

- ☐ Has the person submitting the CDF application to the water office been identified?
- ☐ Are women & PWDs also coming to the office to submit applications?
- ☐ Are special measures taken to ensure that the membership of women and PWDs is clearly stated in the application?

### 5) Field appraisal

- ☐ Are the times and places of the appraisal meetings convenient for men, women and PWDs?
- ☐ Are the possible financial and social constraints of the participation of women and PWDs considered?
- ☐ Are the appraisal purposes, times, and places well-communicated to men, women and PWDs in the community?
- ☐ Are special measures taken to ensure women's and PWDs participation?
- ☐ Is the qualitative participation of women and PWDs ensured?
- ☐ Is special attention given to women's and PWDs' opinions?
- ☐ Is the extraordinary knowledge women have in water usage taken into consideration?
- ☐ Are women's and PWDs' opinions involved in the actual site selection?

### 6) Approval

- ☐ Is women's and PWDs participation in the proposal actual?
- ☐ Are women and PWD in leading positions?
- ☐ Is the proportion of women and PWD membership kept in the WASHCO election (2 women + 3 men, 1 PWD)?

### 7) Funding agreement

- ☐ Are all community members, including women and PWD, aware of the agreement and its content?

### 8) Training

- ☐ Are the times and places of the training convenient for men, women and PWDs?
- ☐ Are the obstacles women may face in participation considered (for example, breastfeeding children)?
- ☐ Are special measures taken to ensure women's and PWDs participation?
- ☐ Is the purpose of the training, its benefits, and the time and place well communicated to the community's men, women, and PWDs?
- ☐ Is the qualitative participation of women and PWD ensured?
- ☐ Is special attention given to differences in men's and women's educational backgrounds and training experiences?

### 9) Contracting and Procurement

- ☐ Is the procurement of gender-sensitive materials ensured?
- ☐ Is women's and PWDs' involvement in the procurement process ensured?

### 10) Construction

- ☐ Are special measures taken to ensure women's and PWDs participation in the construction?
- ☐ Are the benefits of women's participation in the construction communicated to the whole community to prevent prejudices?
- ☐ Are the roles of women and PWD during construction clearly stated and communicated?

### 11) Supervision

- ☐ Is women's and PWDs' qualitative participation in the supervision ensured?
- ☐ Is special attention given to the participation of women and PWDs in the supervision of the construction?

### 12) Celebration

- ☐ Are special measures taken to ensure water point ownership covers men, women and PWDs in the community?
- ☐ Is it well communicated to the community that women's and PWDs' benefits from the water supply will benefit the entire household?
- ☐ Is it well communicated to the community that proper water point management is the responsibility of the whole community, not only women?

### 13) Post Monitoring

- ☐ Is gender-disaggregated data collected to ensure the project benefits men, women and PWDs equally?
- ☐ Are women, men, and PWDs equally active in safeguarding the water point and caring for the facility's environment and sanitation issues?
- ☐ Are women and men equally participating in managing the water point and trying to find immediate solutions to problems?
- ☐ Do women, men & PWDs regularly inspect the water point guard?
- ☐ Are women, men and PWDs all regularly visiting the water point?

### Annex 2: Disability Inclusion Checklist

This checklist has been prepared to guide COWASH project stakeholders in raising awareness of disability issues and ensuring that the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed and mainstreamed in COWASH activities.

It can measure whether a proposed COWASH project involves and meets the needs of community members with disabilities. A WASHCO should use it to guide disability inclusion at the start of a project's development. All project applications submitted for COWASH support will be evaluated according to the checklist.

Name of applicant community \_\_\_\_\_

Type of proposed project \_\_\_\_\_

The number of beneficiary households \_\_\_\_\_

Did the WASHCO:

- ☐ Identify all households in the community with a disabled family member.
- ☐ Invite persons with disabilities or family members to attend WASHCO meetings.
- ☐ Ask persons with disabilities or family members to describe their water and sanitation needs.
- ☐ Include their needs in the proposed project design.
- ☐ Discuss the proposed project design with members of the community who have a disability or a disabled family member.
- ☐ Request technical support to help design a disability-inclusive project.
- ☐ Receive the needed technical support.

Name of person completing the CHECKLIST: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_