



GESI champions and changing mindsets

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The Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) Champions approach



Why?

- People with disabilities often hidden away in households
- Not participating in public gatherings or CS WASH project community-wide activities
- Government and DPOs don't know who/where people with disabilities are

Source: Charity Mvere, WVZ
GESI Champions, along with representatives from the Municipality of Gwanda, at a training workshop in Gwanda (2017)

GESI Champions approach

- Used an existing network of volunteer home-based carers, and then recruited women and men with disabilities identified through social services records
- Volunteers were selected on the basis of having:
 - a commitment to learn about gender and social inclusion
 - willingness to attend regular trainings, meetings and community activities.
- A total of 47 “GESI Champions” were recruited, two volunteers from each “segment”, (local sub-community).

Training and orientation of GESI Champions

- World Vision and Local Authority Partners (BCC & MoG) worked with FODPZ and CBM to provide training and orientation to the GESI Champions covering Disability Inclusion, gender equality, WASH, accessibility and community engagement/advocacy strategies



Source: Charity Mvere, WVZ
*GESI Champions, at a training
workshop in Bulawayo (2015)*

Activities done by GESI Champions



- Identifying people with disabilities
- Conducting a basic needs assessment
- Raising disability awareness through 'road shows' and meetings
- Ensuring people with disabilities are invited and encouraged to contribute in project activities

Source: Charity Mvere, WVZ
GESI Champions performing a community drama as part of gender and social inclusion awareness raising "roadshow" in Gwanda. (2017)

Activities done by GESI Champions cont.



Source: Charity Mvere, WVZ,
GESI Champions raising
awareness on Disability at primary
school.(2016)

- Distributing information
- Regularly visiting people with disabilities at their households
- Testing and advocating for accessibility of WASH infrastructure and other public buildings

Impact

- Personal changes: knowledge about gender, disability and WASH; increased awareness and appreciation of people with disabilities.
- Changed attitudes and practices and increased visibility of people with disabilities within communities.
 - People with disabilities report that parents, carers and neighbours have changed their attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Impact cont.

- GESI Champions are now independently advocating for disability accessibility in WASH and other public amenities.
 - E.g. Undertaking “spot audits” of water point construction and convincing engineers to modify construction based on accessible designs provided by WVZ.
- Mobilising people with disabilities and linking them to relevant government and NGO agencies.

Impact Cont.

- Government and NGO service providers outside of the project are using the GESI Champions and reaching people with disabilities.
 - In Gwanda, MoG now intends to consult GESI Champions whenever organisations come in with a new project.
- BCC and MoG have decided to adopt and replicate the GESI Champions approach independently of WVZ.
 - BCC has already recruited **550** GESI Champions from every ward in the city and worked with FODPZ to train them based on WVZ's training materials.



Hazel Tshuma, GESI Champion, Bulawayo

“Personally, I am now confident and competent in my role as a GESI Champion. Previously I didn’t know what to do to solve these issues or even how to talk to the relevant officials. Now I know how to approach these officials and confidently present a case. ...

“Because of our official title we can get an audience at various public offices and can influence their delivery of services. For example, I identified a girl with a disability who was not attending school. I successfully arranged for her to get a birth certificate and ID from the Ministry of Home Affairs, and then got the Ministry of Social Welfare to agree to pay her school fees. She is now enrolled and attending primary school.”

Challenges and lessons learnt

- Training materials were initially overly complex.
 - Need for practical and grass roots focus on accessible communication, local advocacy strategies and referral pathways.
- Economic situation in Zimbabwe and lack of disability or health services to provide referrals. Some GESI Champions felt ashamed that they were not able to offer any material benefits.
 - Collaboration between WVZ and CBM-funded rehabilitation program established.
- High expectation from community members, especially those used to receiving food aid/handouts.
 - Need for clear communication and messaging right from the start about advocacy and networking role, not welfare.

Recommendations for strengthening inclusive WASH practice

-) Link with DPOs and involve people with disabilities as trainers, advisors, consultants and decision-makers
-) Embed inclusion in government agencies and civil society (including DPOs and NGOs) for sustainability and to build networks.
-) Keep disability inclusion messages practical and relevant to context – for example, covering practical and low-cost accessibility and communication strategies, rather than physical modifications or hiring interpreters.
-) Make sure GESI Champions feel adequately supported and motivated, e.g. by providing reference materials, certificates, allowances for attending training, mentorship opportunities.