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LEARNING BRIEF

DECEMBER 2022

# Gender and Social Dynamics of Water Management Committees in Budikadidi:

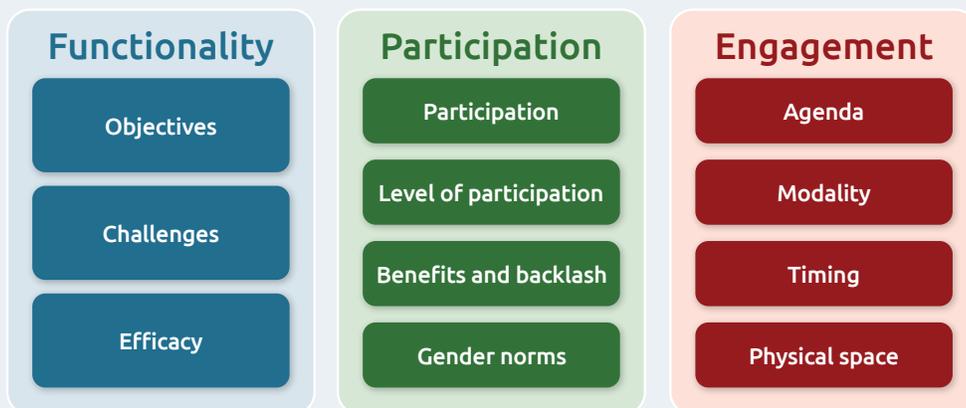
## A QUALITATIVE PARTICIPATORY RAPID APPRAISAL



<b>BACKGROUND</b>	
<b>Project background</b>	<p>The Budikadidi (“Self-Reliance”) Development Food Security Activity, improves nutrition for pregnant and nursing mothers and children under the age of 2 using a crosscutting gender transformative approach. It is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Over 470 communities in central Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) participate in project interventions. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is leading this 7-year project to bring a multisectoral suite of agriculture, livelihoods, and nutrition interventions, including introduction of fortified foods and value chain strengthening, and improving childcare and feeding practices in Kasai Oriental Province. Interventions also strengthen local governance systems, build social cohesion between communities, increase access to savings and lending services, improve water and sanitation using private sector-focused approaches, and combat harmful gender norms.</p> <p>To support the governance of newly constructed water points, Budikadidi has formed and supported seven-member <b>water management committees (WMCs)</b> who oversee springs and boreholes in the communities of focus. These committees are responsible for the governance of the water points including fee collection, maintenance, and creating rules for their use. Committees were elected during a village assembly and while women were encouraged to participate, there was not a quota system in place. The committee formation steps included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Step 1:</b> <i>Ensure support for the process from the chief and community leadership</i></li> <li>• <b>Step 2:</b> <i>Hold a general assembly and provide explanations of the management committee (roles and responsibilities of each position) and conditions of eligibility</i></li> <li>• <b>Step 3:</b> <i>Establish an electoral commission and receipt of applications</i></li> <li>• <b>Step 4:</b> <i>Conduct elections during a village assembly and publish results</i></li> </ul>
<b>Study partner</b>	<p>PRO-WASH (Practices, Research and Operations in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) is a five-year project led by Save the Children and funded by USAID/BHA. PRO-WASH works with partners to strengthen the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) practices in USAID/BHA-funded development and emergency food security activities. This includes providing one-on-one support to USAID/BHA-funded Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs), developing and delivering remote and in-person training sessions, writing technical guides, carrying out applied research activities, and supporting knowledge generation and capture, through learning briefs, webinars, and technical knowledge sharing events.</p>
<b>Study background</b>	<p>This study was a partnership between Budikadidi and PRO-WASH using tools found in the online <a href="#">qualKit</a>—an online toolkit of qualitative assessment tools for projects exploring gender equality, age, and social inclusion (GASI) in WASH interventions.</p> <p>This study is one of six collaborative coaching partnerships between USAID-funded activities and PRO-WASH focused on assessments of GASI and WASH in programs and strengthening confidence in conducting qualitative assessments.</p>
<b>Study approach</b>	<p>The study conducted eight single-gender focus group discussions with members of four water management committees supported by the Budikadidi project. Four only men’s groups and four only women’s groups.</p>
<b>Study objective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>To understand the gender dynamics of the water user committee.</b> Gender dynamics include the interactions and relationships between women and men on the committees and the power-based dynamics that underpin these interactions.</li> <li>• <b>To clarify what can be done to support the committees going forward.</b></li> </ul>

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The study drew on a three-part framework of inclusive and effective water user committees: functionality, participation, and engagement (Agarwal 2001, van Wijk-Sijbesma 1985).



The study also aimed to classify the participation of women in each water committee in six categories (Agarwal 2001):

1. **Nominal** - membership in the group
2. **Passive** - being informed of decisions after the fact and silently attending meetings
3. **Consultative** - being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions
4. **Activity-specific** - being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks
5. **Active** - expressing opinions, whether or not solicited, or taking initiatives of other sorts
6. **Interactive** - having voice and influencing decisions, holding positions as office bearers

## APPROACH

### Methodology

This study used a form of a **participatory rapid appraisal** included in the qualKit. The qualKit is an online toolkit to support the exploration of gender and social inclusion outcomes in WASH programs.

The rapid appraisal utilized participatory and interactive focus groups conducted in October 2022. The study instruments explored each aspect of the **functionality-participation-engagement** framework through a series of group discussion questions and pocket voting. Pocket voting allowed each participant to express their personal views and perspectives. Participants were given 10 stones and could vote on how well different aspects of the committee worked for them—10 being perfectly, 1 being poorly.

Focus groups were conducted in French by two WASH promoters working with the study's focus zones. The promoters took notes during the focus groups and recorded pocket voting responses. Upon return to their duty-stations, promoters then filled in a summary document with responses for each discussion topic, pocket voting results, and key quotations. Automatic translation software translated the responses from French to English for analysis.

Content analysis (on the discussion responses) and descriptive statistics (on the pocket voting responses) were completed on the translated results. Responses were compared between the women and men's groups for each committee. Results and insights were then compiled into the aspects of the **functionality-participation-engagement** framework and reviewed by the Buduikadi team. Lastly, the team classified the participation and engagement of women in each of the four water user committees.

APPROACH	
<b>Limitations and challenges</b>	<p>As a rapid assessment, these results are not intended to be generalizable to all of Budikadidi. Rather, the study serves as a starting point for the program to continue to refine committee support modalities and identify key themes and insights.</p> <p>Several of the activities related to pocket voting were noted as monotonous and potentially confusing. Additionally, it was difficult to maintain privacy in the focus group settings. This could influence the ability to ensure candid results from participants. In future studies, conducting a one-on-one private questionnaire with participants alongside focus groups could strengthen responses.</p> <p>Each focus group was conducted by one facilitator who was also responsible for note taking. This meant that some of the notes were less detailed than they could have been. Future studies could use two facilitators, allowing one to focus fully on taking notes. Additionally, while language barriers, distance, and internet connections limited opportunities to face-to-face training, future studies could conduct more rigorous facilitator training.</p> <p>In the first committee, only one woman participated, making the focus group an interview.</p>
<b>Study participants</b>	<p>A total of 26 individuals in eight focus groups took part in this participatory study drawing from four different water user committees. The eight focus groups separated women and men in single-gender discussions.</p> <p>The four committees were selected by the Budikadidi leadership to reflect both the demographic and functional diversity of the committees. One committee managed a spring and three managed boreholes to highlight the differences in technology, cost, and management requirements. Additionally, two committees were within the rural city center and two in remote locations. A summary table of participants and their WMCs is included below.</p>

APPROACH		WMC TYPE	WMC LOCATION	COMMITTEE MEMBERS		STUDY PARTICIPANTS	
				WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN
<b>A</b>	<b>Tuyau kumpala</b>	Borehole	Rural	1	6	1	4
<b>B</b>	<b>Miabi/bena mbiya</b>	Borehole	Peri-urban	4	3	4	3
<b>C</b>	<b>Kalubi a Lukusa</b>	Spring source	Rural	2	5	2	5
<b>D</b>	<b>Miabi/nyikinyiki</b>	Borehole	Peri-urban	3	4	3	4

<b>Key findings</b>	<p><b>Committee Functionality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All committees described significant challenges with community members in the collection of fees and management of water points.</li> <li>Women were less likely than men to agree that the committee is well functioning.</li> <li>There is a need for improved community trust on fund management. The current process of reporting on financial status during the general assembly seems insufficient to gain the community's trust. This could be because corruption and funds mismanagement is pervasive in DRC.</li> </ul> <p><b>Participation and Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In these committees, Budikadidi has done a good job of engaging women who are in a life-stage (without small children at home) to best support the committees. None of the committees had nominal or passive engagement of women.</li> <li>Women in leadership roles were less likely to agree that women could do these roles well, indicating a potential lack of confidence and/or capacity.</li> <li>Gender differences were seen in engagement aspects such as communication, meeting time, location, and seating arrangements; however, these were sometimes worse for men than women.</li> </ul>
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## CLASSIFICATION OF COMMITTEES

Women’s participation and engagement in each committee is classified into one of six types: nominal, passive, consultative, activity-specific, active, and interactive drawing on the definitions from Agarwal (2001). It was initially hoped that committees would self-classify, however this was deemed too complex in collaboration with the research team. The classification was conducted by comparing the roles of each woman participant against the descriptions of the six types of participation (Agarwal 2001), this was then aggregated by committee.

- **Nominal** - membership in the group
- **Passive** - being informed of decisions after the fact and silently attending meetings
- **Consultative** - being asked an opinion in specific matters without guarantee of influencing decisions
- **Activity-specific** - being asked to (or volunteering to) undertake specific tasks
- **Active** - expressing opinions, whether or not solicited, or taking initiatives of other sorts
- **Interactive** - having voice and influencing decisions, holding positions as office bearers

<b>1 Tuyau kumpala</b> (Rural Borehole)	<b>Activity-specific</b> - This committee only has only one woman and although “she’s brave,” her engagement is specific to her treasury role in the committee.
<b>2 Miabi/bena mbiya</b> (Peri-urban Borehole)	<b>Active</b> - This committee has a woman president and more women than men. However, apart from the president, the other women are advisors and do not hold office. Interestingly, the woman president did not ‘strongly agree’ when asked if she believed women could also be leaders—unlike her other committee members.
<b>3 Kalubi a Lukusa</b> (Rural Spring)	<b>Consultative</b> - This committee has two women members, one is a treasurer and one is an advisor. While the women describe having good rapport with the other members of the committee, there is no evidence that they are influencing decisions.
<b>4 Miabi/nyikinyiki</b> (Peri-urban Borehole)	<b>Active</b> - In this committee, men described lower levels of participation and poorer committee relationships than women. The three women held advisor, fontainier, and treasurer roles and appeared to be involved in some decision making.

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

The findings of the study are introduced in three sections: functionality-participation-engagement.

### Functionality

Objectives

Challenges

Efficacy

### Participation

Participation

Level of participation

Benefits and backlash

Gender norms

### Engagement

Agenda

Modality

Timing

Physical space

Color shading is used to highlight different aspects of the findings in the subsequent pages.

- Each component of the framework is introduced through colored background and colored text.
- Insights are presented on a light tinted background with black text.
- Results are illustrated on a white background with colored text.

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### A. FUNCTIONALITY

Assessment of the functionality of committees focused on objectives, challenges, future activities, perspectives of the committee efficacy, and reflections on what to do differently.

#### Committee objectives

The collated responses from the focus groups related to committee objectives are presented as a word cloud.<sup>1</sup> There were not significant differences between women and men's perspectives and most committees focused on ensuring safe and sustained water for their communities.

*"We are looking for a committee that responds well to the water needs of our community."*



<sup>1</sup> A word cloud presents a cluster of words shown in different sizes. The bolder and bigger the word appears, the more often it was mentioned within the responses, and therefore the more important it is. Common words such as 'a', and 'the' are removed and only words which appeared more than five times were included. Word clouds will be used throughout the report to illustrate important aspects.

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

<p><b>Committee challenges</b></p>	<p>The groups mentioned three main challenges facing the committees. These primarily related to the relationships with community members and not to the functioning of the groups. While both women and men described poor community relationships, women described the challenges in fund collection and community relationships in more detail.</p> <p>However, two male respondents noted that the committee was a waste of time.</p>	<p><b>Challenge 1. Poor-relationships with community members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Sometimes community members insult us, especially when they come after the borehole closing hours.”</li> <li>“Community prejudices about management for those who have just arrived in our community.”</li> <li>“Some community have prejudices on us thinking that we eat money although the financial report is presented quarterly to the community.”</li> <li>“Pressure from users and failure to respect certain established norms.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenge 2. Collection of funds from community members:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Non-payment of water by community members.”</li> <li>“It is a kind of mobilization and sensitization of community members to pay for water.”</li> <li>“If only the households find the will to contribute for the water.”</li> <li>“The fontainier<sup>2</sup> mobilized the money at source and some mothers insult him to say that he is a thief, our source has always been free, despite the village general assembly.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenge 3. Time commitment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Waste of time in my private activities.” (only from male respondents in that the committee duties were taking away from private activities)</li> </ul>																																				
<p><b>Committee efficacy</b></p>	<p>Men and women had different responses related to the efficacy or effectiveness of the committee. Women were more likely to say that the committee was not effective and to describe detailed examples of challenges noted above.</p> <p>Additionally, rural committees were described as less effective than peri-urban committees. Examples of a lack of effectiveness included: the lack of monitoring and follow up, poor respect for internal regulations, and low mutual respect between committee members.</p>	<p><b>To what extent do you think this committee is effective in achieving its objectives?</b> (Scale of 1-10; Not effective – Very effective)</p> <p><b>Gender Comparison:</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rating</th> <th>Woman</th> <th>Man</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>2</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Location Comparison:</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Rating</th> <th>Peri-urban</th> <th>Rural</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>6</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>8</td> <td>4</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Rating	Woman	Man	4	1	0	5	1	0	7	0	1	8	2	6	9	5	5	Rating	Peri-urban	Rural	4	0	1	5	0	1	7	0	1	8	6	3	9	8	4
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2 A 'fontainier' is a water point overseer or mechanic.

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### Transformative reflections

All eight groups were asked what they learned from the process of the focus group discussion.<sup>3</sup> The reflections focused on the value of conducting a self-assessment to help shape future management. Overall, the groups mentioned four focus areas for the future, which did not differ by gender. Notably, all the groups see themselves as catalysts for future community development beyond their role in water management.

- *“This discussion allowed us to see our level of support from the community for the proper functioning of the work and to self-evaluate ourselves in order to see our strengths, weaknesses, and how to improve them.”*

#### Four future areas of focus:

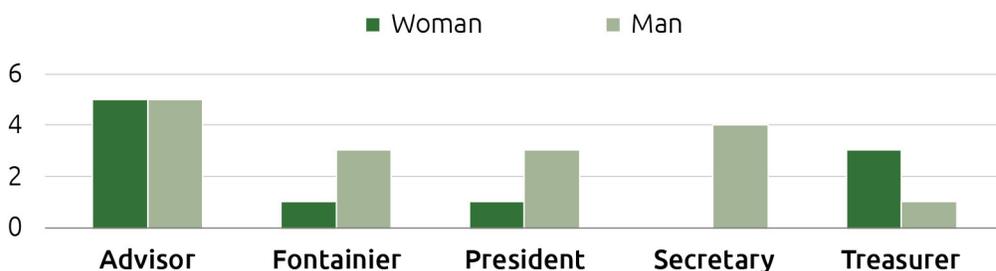
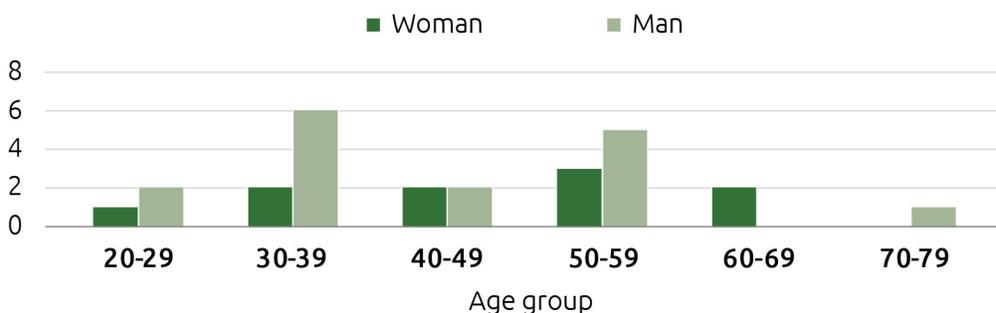
1. Awareness raising and sensitization
2. Further community development
3. Ensure water quantity
4. Ensure water quality

## B. PARTICIPATION

Inclusive and equitable participation was assessed through socio-demographic information of participants and reflections on the opportunities and challenges to support women members.

### Representation

- Participants came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and often had other roles in the community such as Pastor, Church Elder, RECO (community health worker) and Maman lumiere (community nutrition coach). Three women served as community health workers and six participated in Maman lumiere. Community leaders, pastors and elders were men-only roles.
- Participants included a wide range of adult ages, yet women members tended to be older, indicating that women were more likely to be recruited and agree to participate when they no longer had children in the house. This represents a positive modality of recognizing the life-stage of women and promoting reasonable engagement. Other research has highlighted the challenge of engaging women because of the productive, reproductive, and social burdens (triple-burden) on women. Older women have fewer domestic tasks and therefore may be better suited to participate.
- Participants reported ‘good’ or ‘very good’ relationships with other members of the committees.



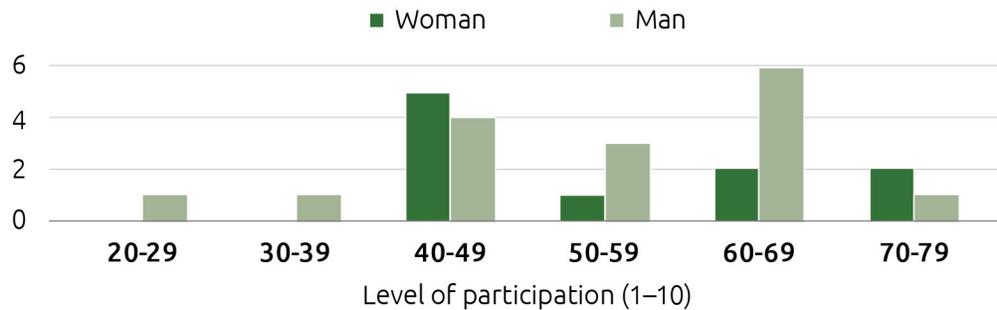
<sup>3</sup> Group reflection is a key-tenet of transformative modes of assessment; recognizing that any study into gender equality or social inclusion can be a pathway to improving equality and inclusion alongside generating insights and knowledge.

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### Level of participation

There was a difference in the level of participation of women and men, with men's participation more varied than women's. Women had an average participation level of 8.2 and men 7.6. This suggests that women tend to be more stable participants than men, although women were more likely to be involved in non-decision-making roles.

What is your level of participation? (Scale of 1-10; Not at all - Very much so)



### Benefits and backlash

The benefits of having women on the committee included improvements in: collaboration, cohesion, equality, fairness, unity, 'good-climate,' trust and peace.

Although none of the groups described backlash, they did mention that women were often underestimated and could fear their husbands.

**"Women are listened to more than men at the water point, especially since they are the first users of water and know how to mobilize the community on the consumption of drinking water."**

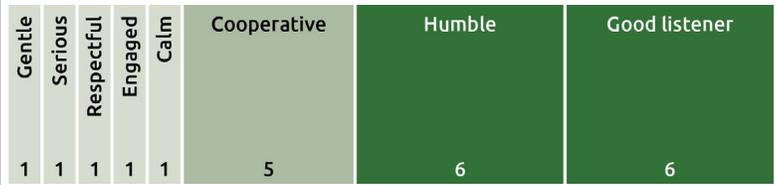


## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### Gender norms and perspectives of women's involvement

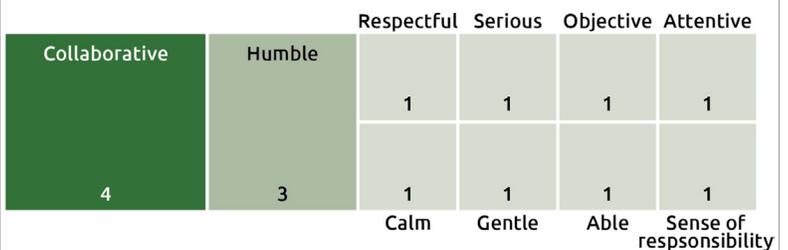
Committees identified 10 characteristics of active participants, presented as a treemap.<sup>4</sup>

“Men typically pump water more than women, although some women do. Men also play the role of secretary because they can write better than [women]. Women can also play the role of responsibility. As an example among us, [we] have a woman president.”



Committees also identified 10 characteristics of good leaders.

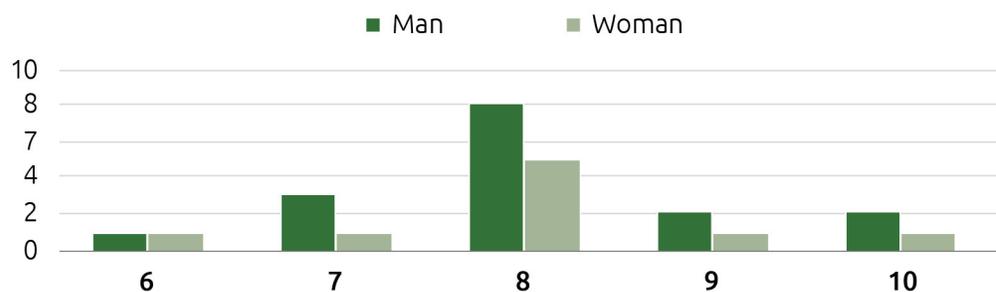
“Because women also have skills like men, for example, our committee is headed by a woman and out of seven committee members, four are women.”



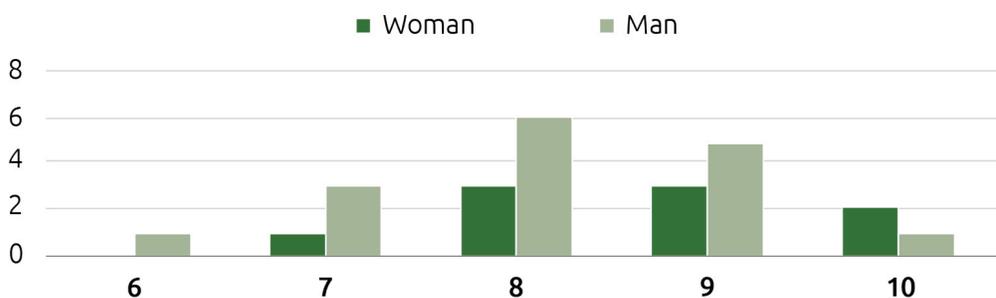
Both women and men committee members believed that women could be somewhat active participants and leaders. However, women in leadership positions were less likely to believe this than their non-leadership counterparts. Men described that women are often underestimated, and women described that household work is a limiting factor to active participation.

#### Do you think that women can also be active participants?

(Scale of 1-10; Not at all - Very much so)



#### Do you think that women can also be leaders? (Scale of 1-10; Not at all - Very much so)



<sup>4</sup> A treemap displays data as a set of nested rectangles. Each rectangle has an area proportional to the number of respondents who noted the characteristic.

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### Transformative reflections

Committees identified several ideas to better include women:

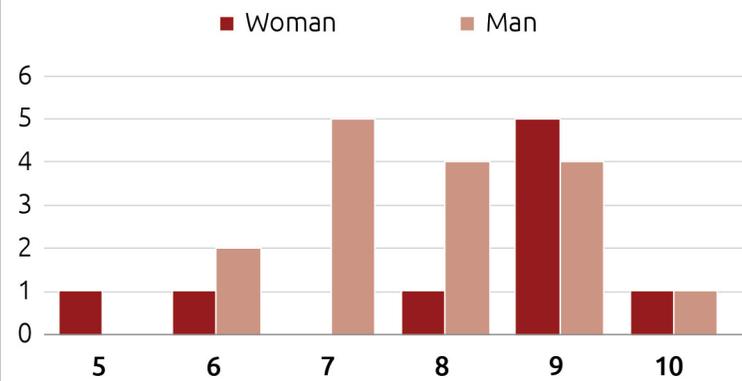
- Aim to have at least 30% of positions held for women
- Encourage women to join the activities of the committee
- Intensify the promotion and accession of women to positions of responsibility and decision-making
- Review everyone’s assignments at each meeting
- Speak to men to encourage their wives to take an interest in development activities
- Track the accomplishments of each member’s tasks

## C. ENGAGEMENT

### Modality

Groups meet monthly at set times and all groups described high levels of gender equality relations.

How does this modality or way of conducting meetings work for you? (Scale of 1-10; Not good - Very good)

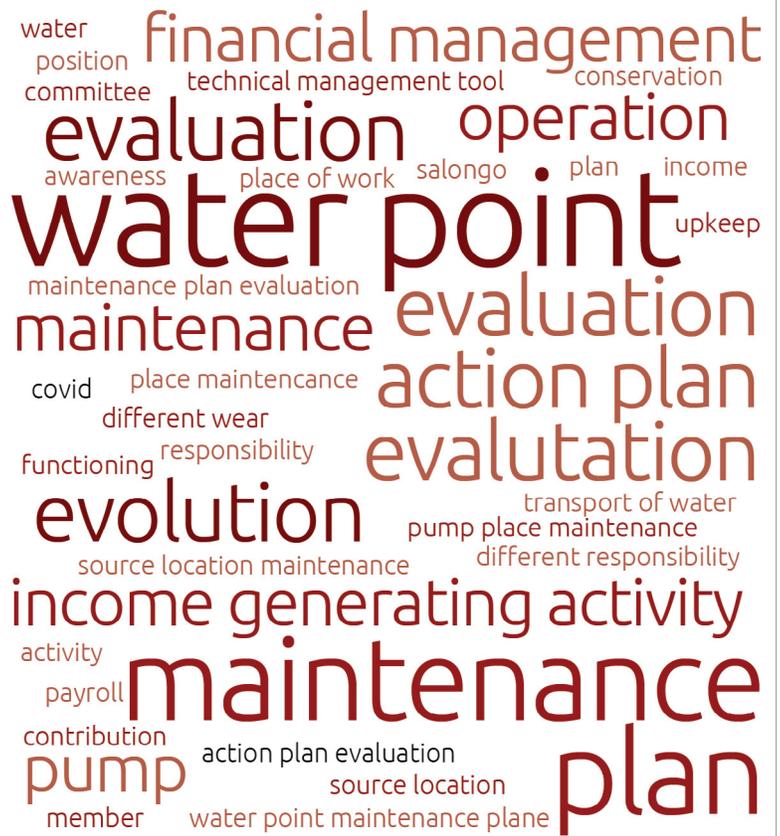


*“For me the main thing is that the meetings are held.”*

## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### Agenda meeting topics

The collated responses from the focus groups related to committee meeting topics are presented as a word cloud. There were not significant differences between women and men's perspectives and common topics included finances, monitoring, and maintenance.

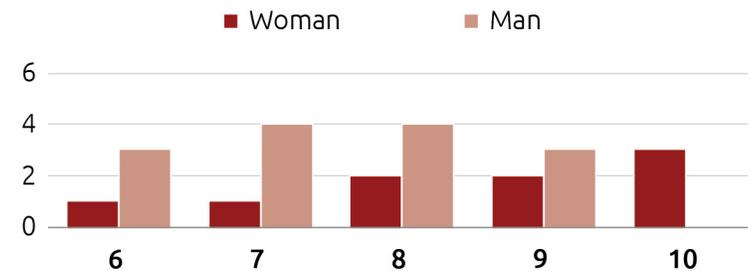


### Meeting locations

All groups meet outside under a tree but each expressed how creating a more formal meeting space and providing chairs would improve meetings.

- *"We consider buying committee chairs."*
- *"For me, I wish it was a room because often the rain disturbs the meetings."*
- *"We are already thinking of building a payautte for our meetings."*

**How does the meeting location work for you?**  
(Scale of 1-10; Not good - Very good)

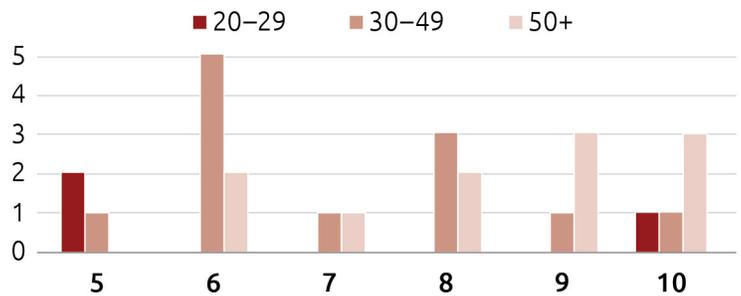
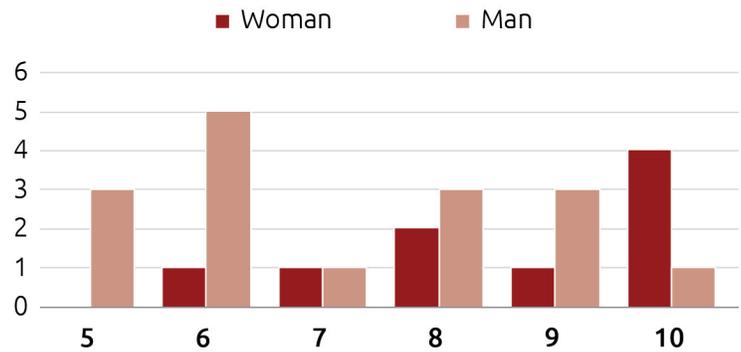


## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

### Meeting times

Meeting times were surprisingly less practical for men than women. For men, participation in the committee took away from time spent in economic activities, which was undesired. For the older women on the committees though, the timings were more suitable given fewer childcare responsibilities.

#### How does the meeting time work for you? (Scale of 1-10; Not good - Very good)

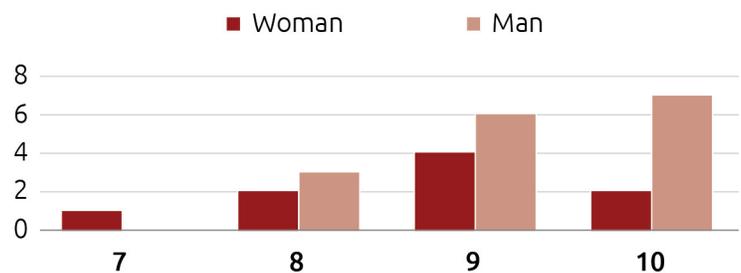


### Seating locations

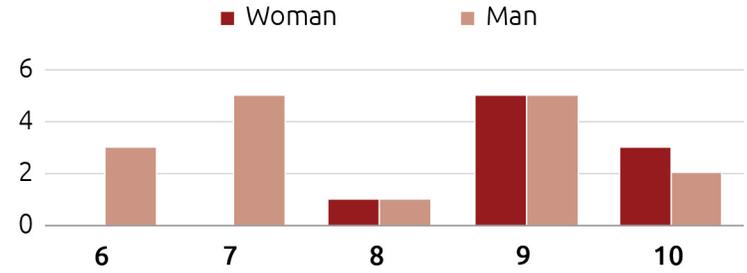
All groups considered the seating equitable and fair.

- *"Often we go in a circle. For me, I think the position is suitable."*
- *"There are not specific chairs for any one person, the seating is mixed."*

#### How does this seating modality work for you? (Scale of 1-10; Not good - Very good)



## RESULTS AND INSIGHTS

<b>Communication</b>	<p>Communication between meetings was noted as an area for improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[I must] reschedule my activities on the day of meetings in order to attend them.”</li> <li>• “[I would like] the president and secretary send us a reminder message even one week before the date of the meeting”</li> <li>• “[I would like to] establish the meeting schedule and submit a copy to each member in order to consult each time”</li> </ul> <p><b>How does this mode of communication work for you?</b> (Scale of 1-10; Not good - Very good)</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Communication Work for You Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Rating</th> <th>Woman</th> <th>Man</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>0</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>0</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>1</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>3</td> <td>2</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Rating	Woman	Man	6	0	3	7	0	5	8	1	1	9	5	5	10	3	2
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<b>Transformative reflections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “We want to review the afternoons meeting times because the women return from their activities late. Instead of 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., we may now go from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.”</li> </ul>																			

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify opportunities to better communicate the value of the committee and fee system to communities and new-community joiners.
- Identify ways to build confidence for women in leadership positions—such as networks, capacity strengthening, and individual coaching.
- Clarify opportunities to build confidence in women’s leadership among community members and male counterparts.
- Support committees in structuring committee meetings to ensure good time management.
- Consider rebranding the committee’s organizational structure to give each member a substantive role and rotate meeting chair positions.
- Explore opportunities to increase younger women’s participation in the committees.
- Future research could explore the incentives for being a committee member and differences between fee structure for boreholes and springs.

Conceptualization, analysis, and reporting by Rafaramalal Volanarisoa and Jess MacArthur.

Focus group facilitation by Theo Yakalo and Jonathan Ngeleka.

## ABOUT PRO-WASH

PRO-WASH (Practices, Research and Operations in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) is an initiative funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and led by Save the Children. PRO-WASH aims to improve the quality of activities, strengthen the capacity and skills of BHA implementing partners in WASH, and improve the level of knowledge and practices around WASH.

## RECOMMENDED CITATION

MacArthur, J., Volanarisoa, R., Yakalo, T. and Ngeleka, J. (2022). Gender and Social Dynamics of Water Management Committees in Budikadidi: A Qualitative Participatory Rapid Appraisal. PRO-WASH Learning Brief.

## PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

Budikadidi/Catholic Relief Services

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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