RESOURCE

# Concept mapping: Engaging stakeholders to identify factors that contribute to empowerment in the water and sanitation sector in West Africa

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**Description / Abstract**

Research has shown that inadequate access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) affects women and girls in several ways, including lowering their participation in the labour market and community activities and contributing to psychosocial stress and poor educational outcomes. There is growing awareness that addressing the gender inequalities related to WASH that many women and girls face on a daily basis must go beyond focusing on delivery of infrastructure and facilities alone and include attention to issues of empowerment. Yet there is limited exploration of how the concept of empowerment is defined and applied in the WASH sector and thus limited information on how it could be measured. This study used concept mapping to uncover the meaning and key dimensions of empowerment in WASH among 34 and 24 stakeholders in Asutifi North District, Ghana, and Banfora Commune, Burkina Faso, respectively. The study was part of initial steps toward choosing indicators for developing an Empowerment in WASH Index. In Ghana and Burkina Faso, 42 and 29 items were generated, respectively. These items were thought to empower men and women in WASH at the household and community levels. In both case studies, 7 clusters were generated and named by participants, and themes related to sharing of information, sociocultural norms, participation, and accessibility of WASH services were associated with empowerment. Some themes were unique to each case study site. Participants also showed a multidimensional and multilevel understanding of empowerment. Concept mapping created an effective balance between individual and group contributions and facilitated accessible, rapid, and contextually relevant data collection. The findings can be used to generate domains of empowerment in future quantitative research as well as inform the design of the Empowerment in WASH Index.

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