

BEST PRACTICE

Diverse teams boost creativity, innovation, collaboration, and efficiency for better performance

TOPIC:

Gender and Social Inclusion

COP:

Leadership and Organisational Development

WOP:

WOP – Mali, Kenya, & Zimbabwe

MORE INFORMATION:



CHALLENGE

Water and sanitation utilities frequently overlook gender and inclusive services for individuals with disabilities in planning, financing, and service provision, resulting in dissatisfied customers. Moreover, women and marginalized groups remain underrepresented in WASH service professions. Comprehensive discussion on social inclusion is imperative across all levels. Gender-balanced teams enhance workplaces, boost customer satisfaction, and improve operational efficiency. Achieving gender equality enriches utilities with diverse competencies, fostering healthy and sustainable business practices.

Women associations such as SOMAGEP AFSO actively engage women, using surveys to identify barriers. Collaborations with groups like the women's cluster of AfWASA raise awareness through diverse leadership training events. WaterWorx empowers young water professionals, utilizing programs like SUFESEA for female mentoring and engaging networks like AJPEA and ICRA. These collaborations aim to progress gender and social equality within utility sectors through tangible steps.



APPROACH

The gender inclusion approach begins by evaluating current attitudes and practices using tools like the Gender Tool. Discussions are encouraged among all utility employees to address any imbalances found. Creating a safe environment is crucial for mobilizing female employees to express their insights, observations, and needs.

RESULTS

The approach raised utility-wide awareness of gender and social inclusion, leading to notable promotions for women in SOMAGEP. Enhanced working conditions, focused on better facilities for women, increased productivity. NARUWASCO and NAWASCCO prioritized gender and disability sensitivity, while NAIWAWASSCO emphasized equal job opportunities. Efforts aimed to exhibit inclusive policies to customers for appreciation.

"Embracing social inclusion fuels a collaborative environment, unlocking the full potential of diverse perspectives and talents, propelling operational efficiency to new heights."

Hadi Toure Guindo, Mali



SUCCESS FACTORS

Critical success factors include active local women platforms, receptive utility managers ready to act on employee recommendations for gender and social inclusion. Prerequisites for success involve a corporate culture appreciative of change, backed by field-level recommendations, management commitment, and allocated resources. Engaging men to mitigate resistance, solid HR policies for unbiased opportunities, and fostering a safe environment for open dialogue are imperative for enhancing utility workplaces.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information from resource persons:

- Hadi Toure Guindo, SOMAGEP, Mali: Hadi.TOURE@somagep.ml;
- Zaituni Kanenje from Nakuru County, Kenya: zaituni.rehema@vei.nl or zaitunirehema@yahoo.com
- Sandra Naphi from Harare Water:
- Brenda Brouwer, VEI: brenda.brouwer@vei.nl

OTHER

The Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) helps water operators help one another to provide quality services to all. GWOPA is an international network alliance supporting water operators to engage in WOPs. WOPs are peer support exchanges between two or more water operators, carried out on a not-for-profit basis with the objective of strengthening operators' capacity and performance to provide better services to more people (www.gwopa.org).

WaterworX is a major Dutch WOP program engaging over 50 water operators in their joint effort to capacitate peers, strengthen their work processes, and ultimately improve operational and managerial performance (www.waterworxprogramme.com).