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Relationship Between Gender-based Violence And Poor Access To Water, Sanitation, And Hygiene Services

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Abstract

It is generally believed that gender gaps in having access to safe, equitable and adequate Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services arise from the unfair distribution of WASH resources between females and males, in addition to the gender norms that assign WASH responsibilities to women and girls.

It was found that poor access to WASH services is not a main cause of Gender Based Violence (GBV), however, it increases the vulnerability of females to different types of GBV.

It is strongly recommended to conduct research on GBV and access to WASH facilities that is more qualitative, reliable and evidence based.

Introduction

Poor access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) services affect males and females disproportionately. Females who suffer from poor access to adequate and safe WASH services are more likely subjected to Gender Based Violence (GBV) risks. (Global Protection Cluster).

"2 billion people lacked safely drinking water"

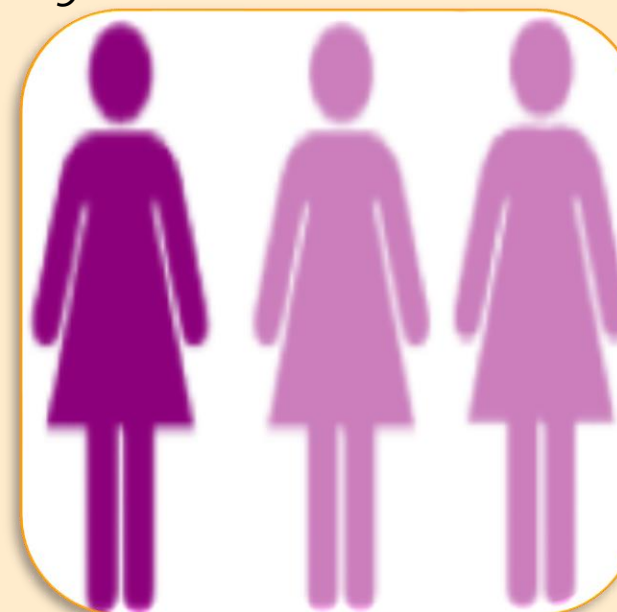
"3.6 billion people lacked safely managed sanitation"

2.3 billion people lacked access to hygiene facilities

UNICEF. (2021, July). WASH and COVID-19

Globally, about 1 in every 3 women experiences domestic violence. (WHO 2021)

30% of females aged 15 years or above (736 Million women) are exposed to partner violence or non-partner sexual and/or physical violence during their lifetime. UN Women (March 2021).



COVID-19 pandemic places a burden on females with increased risk of gender-based violence associated with WASH activities. IFRC (2012).

Vulnerability to GBV is Affected by Access to WASH Facilities

Water:

Females spend much more time acquiring water comparing to males. (UNICEF 2017)
Violence related to water accessibility varies from **tension to being raped** while fetching water.



World Health Organization (2017)

Sanitation:

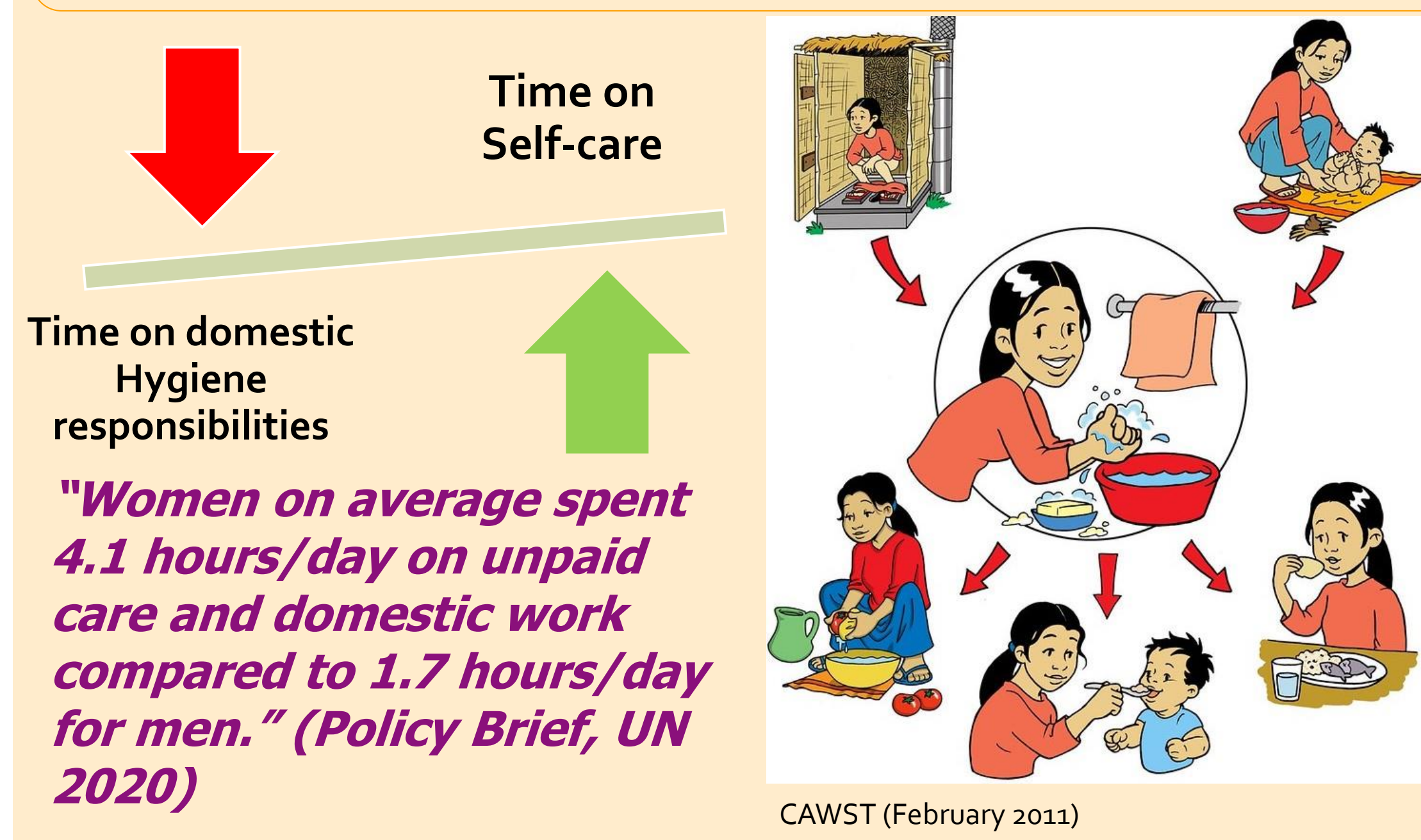
Latrines are common sites for sexual violence, particularly in the vulnerable communities when females wait until night to use latrines. (Sommer, M, 2014, pp. 108-111).
Toilets are often designed with poor consideration to GBV specific concerns, such as dignity, accessibility, Female/male ratio, safety, etc.



Source: Community-Led Total Sanitation (2014)

Hygiene:

Unpaid domestic responsibilities.
Females don't have time for self care and socialization activities.
Menstruation hygiene increases the need for water and sanitation.



Recommendations

Society and institutional level

- Active participation of females in the WASH decision making process (Enhanced Females Leadership)
- Enforce WASH-GBV sensitive tools at society level, particularly during COVID-19 pandemic (strategies, budgets, codes of conduct, etc.)
- Building the capacity of WASH actors and leaders on GBV detection and referral, in addition to GBV-WASH programming.

Community level:

- Equal participation of females and males in WASH facilities design and installation, in addition to hygiene promotion.
- Re-distribution of WASH resources and responsibilities between males and females

Future quantitative and comprehensive research should be focused on addressing and investigating the complexity of WASH-GBV relationships

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