



# Women & Water: A Ripple Effect

*Part 1: A Theory-Based Approach to Understanding the Gendered Impact of Water Programs*

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*In 2017 and 2018 Ipsos and the Water & Development Alliance (WADA) undertook research to investigate the gendered “ripple effect” impacts of WASH and water stewardship programs (“water programs”). In this two-part paper, we present the findings of that investigation: Part One (this paper) describes the tool developed to understand the potential impacts of water programs on women; Part Two describes findings from primary data collection in three countries and the evidence for the “ripple effect” of water interventions for women, with a specific focus on economic empowerment.*

## Women & Water

There is significant evidence that women receive disproportionate benefits from WASH and water stewardship programs (“water programs”). With women responsible for domestic chores such as collecting water, cooking and cleaning, as well as taking care of sick family members, access to clean water and sanitation can positively impact multiple aspects of their lives. As time collecting water and handling the health consequences of unclean water is spent elsewhere, there is the potential for women to spend time on other things, including income-generating activities.

Applying a gender lens to the billions of dollars spent each year globally on water programming creates significant potential for implementers to make their investments go further and achieve even greater sustainable development impacts. However, while evidence for the gendered impacts of water programs (what we call “women & water” impacts) is abundant, the evidence for empowerment impacts, such as the ability to turn time savings into income generation (or the “ripple effect”) is largely anecdotal.

In 2017-2018, Ipsos and the Water & Development Alliance (WADA) conducted a study to map the hypothesized gendered direct impacts (“women & water”) and the pathways to indirect empowerment impacts (“the ripple effect”) of water programming, and to collect primary data to assess whether these hypotheses can be supported. The outcome of the study is a tool that can be used by development practitioners to understand how applying a gender lens to their water programming can lead to greater “empowerment” impacts for women.

## An Impact Mapping Tool

Water programming is a broad field, including WASH, water stewardship, and support for enhanced agricultural productivity, among other areas. To create a high-level tool to assist water-focused organizations that are looking to generate and measure empowerment effects, it was necessary to organize all of the potential impacts, and means to achieving those impacts, into a single framework.

The Ipsos team used a theory of change (TOC) to create a map of hypotheses for how water interventions lead to direct impacts, hypothesized gendered direct impacts (“women & water”) and indirect empowerment impacts (“the ripple effect”). Frequently, a TOC, which is a commonly used tool in program management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E), is program or policy specific. However, in this exercise we created a TOC that is comprehensive and generalizable to all water programs in the WADA portfolio, to enable practitioners to trace a range of activities to potential women’s empowerment impacts.

In these circumstances, a TOC serves a broad function. It:

- articulates a clear hypothesis for how a program intends to achieve impact.
- can be used as a planning tool for program implementation.
- serves as a framework for evidence gathering and M&E.
- offers an alternative analytic approach to experimental evaluation design (a way to understand the attribution of effects to a program).
- is a flexible tool – it can be adapted to specific programs and revised based on new evidence over time.

In our view, the more people working from the same overarching TOC, the better the common understanding of how to create impact from programs will be. In the case of the TOC we created for water programming, our hope is that it will serve as a foundation for an evolving collective source of knowledge and a guide for future interventions which aim to empower women through water programs.

## Pathways to Empowerment

### STEP 1: Mapping Activities and Direct Impacts of Water Programs

Based on the available literature and relevant documentation on water program impacts – with a particular focus on programs targeting women’s empowerment as an outcome – the Ipsos team built a generalized TOC for water interventions structured around program type (“inputs” and “activities”), and outlined all of the anticipated direct impacts (“outcomes”) of these programs.

We identified eight categories of potential impacts, which we called **the “pathways”: health, income, nutrition, safety and security, education, leadership and skills, time savings, and shifting roles and norms.**

### STEP 2: Women & Water Impacts

The next step was to assess each pathway with a gender lens. That is, based on the literature, we considered how the direct impacts of water programs affect women in a disproportionate or qualitatively different way than they affect men.

We found gendered “women & water” impacts for all of the seven pathways, including:

- In **health and nutrition**, access to clean water disproportionately affects women, who are more likely to get sick from poor sanitation, more responsible for taking care of sick family members, and often the most affected by negative coping mechanisms during food shortages.
- Closer proximity to a clean water point means that women and girls, who tend to be responsible for collecting water, as well as caring for sick members of the household, **experience time savings** disproportionately.
- With access to better sanitation facilities in schools enabling women to manage their menstrual hygiene, women and girls are **better able to continue their education.**

- When women and girls are incorporated into water management and WASH trainings, they have opportunities to learn new skills and take on leadership roles, [increasing their community involvement](#).
- With more accessible water points within their communities, women no longer had to make long and dangerous journeys to collect water, [reducing their vulnerability to violence and harassment](#).

### STEP 3: The Ripple Effect

We then considered the indirect “ripple effect” impacts of water programs on women. While the evidence for these impacts was more qualitative and anecdotal, some concrete areas for investigation were revealed:

- Improved health and nutrition helps women to [spend more time on economically beneficial activities](#), including education and employment or income generation.
- Women save time they are then able to [spend more time on income generation](#), housework, leisure and rest, and participating in the community.
- Reducing the risk of violence and harassment [improves women’s freedom of movement](#), which supports participation in education, employment, and community activities.
- When women have the opportunity to participate in water leadership in their communities, this can lead them to [participate more in their community](#) and take on additional leadership roles.
- As a result of many of these impacts, [women’s contributions and opinions become more valued](#) in the household and community, and norms around the role of women begin to shift.

These “ripple effects” may create an enabling environment for women’s empowerment, more broadly defined. To ensure that we considered empowerment in a holistic way, we applied the [Ipsos framework for measuring women’s economic empowerment](#) to the theory of change model, and to subsequent primary data collection activities.

The full, final TOC, is a multi-layered tool which guides the user through the pathways, starting from the specific type of program activity, through the direct and gendered “women & water” impacts, to the “ripple effects” and women’s empowerment impacts.

### Evidence to Support the Pathways

At this stage, the TOC was based on a review of the relevant literature and discussions with key stakeholders. The next step was to gather program-specific evidence from the WADA portfolio to support (or refute) the hypotheses as outlined in the TOC, and to refine the TOC to create a solid evidence base for use by implementers.

The Ipsos team carried out desk-based performance assessments, including key informant interviews, on several projects from the WADA portfolio. These were used to refine the TOC further. Following this, the team conducted three visits to the sites of water programs:

- **Global Grassroots, Women’s Water Leadership Initiative, Rwanda:** In addition to creating community access to water at 10 points, women-led pay-for-water ventures participated in multiple training modules and designed projects in their respective communities.

- **Nazarene Compassionate Missionaries, Water for a Generation, Swaziland:** 46 water systems were installed, and programming included formation of 16 community gardens, including gardens focused on improved livelihoods for individuals living with chronic illnesses.
- **Women Farmer’s Advancement Network, Improving Health and Livelihoods in Rural Communities, Nigeria:** 38 water points were installed at schools and clinics in Northern Nigeria, and women farmers participated in agricultural training.

At these sites the Ipsos team designed a quantitative and qualitative study around the framework provided by the TOC. Emphasis was placed on the pathways for which there was less existing evidence in the literature, such as time savings, income generation, and cultural norms.

The key findings of the primary research in terms of evidencing the hypothesis are discussed in detail in Part Two of this paper. As Part Two shows, a particularly interesting finding of the primary data collection was the importance of the cultural context in which the programs operate: one project will not have the same outcome in different settings. This reinforces the need to take a multi-dimensional approach to understanding empowerment and what can be achieved in this field, as reflected in the multi-layered TOC.

## About Ipsos

Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks third in the global research industry.

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With offices in 90 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across six research specializations: advertising, customer loyalty, marketing, media, public affairs research, and survey management.

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## About WADA

The Water and Development Alliance (WADA) partners with companies, communities, and governments to address challenges and harness opportunities connected to water. WADA's enterprise-driven approach brings together business capabilities of the Coca-Cola system with USAID's premier development expertise to create solutions that help develop thriving communities, grow stable economies and strengthen resilient environments around the world.

## About USAID

USAID is the world's premier international development agency and a catalytic actor driving development results. For more than 40 years, USAID has worked closely with governments, communities, and water sector experts to improve water supply and sanitation service delivery while supporting community-led sustainable management of water resources in developing countries.

## About Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola is the world's leading total beverage company with operations in over 200 countries. Together with its bottling partners, Coca-Cola is committed to responsible water stewardship, community prosperity, and the empowerment of individuals across their global areas of operation. Through targeted investments and the deployment of its technical expertise, Coca-Cola creates shared value around the world.

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