POLICY BRIEF: *Enhancing Equity and Inclusivity in WASH Services in Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City*

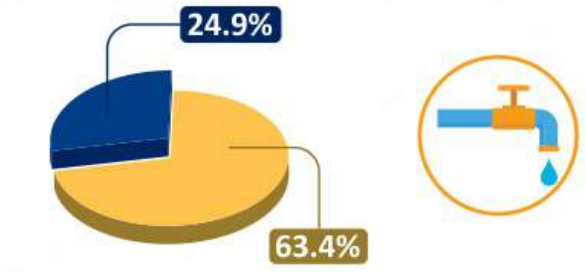
Overview:

Access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services is fundamental to human well-being and public health. Nepal has made significant strides in improving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, with a focus on inclusivity and sustainability. Despite progress, disparities persist, especially for marginalized groups. In water supply, 93% now have access, with Hetauda exceeding national averages. Challenges remain in sanitation, with 95% toilet access but limited wastewater management. Local governments are enhancing policies for inclusivity and effectiveness, aligning with national goals. Nepal's pursuit of equitable and sustainable WASH services requires targeted interventions in water supply, sanitation, and governance.

This policy brief aims to assess the existing policies related to the WASH sector in Hetauda, with a focus on enhancing equity and inclusivity, particularly in Safely Managed Sanitation Services (SMSS) and Citywide Inclusive Sanitation (CWIS). By identifying areas for improvement and recommending policy revisions, it will ensure that all residents have equal access to essential WASH services, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, or location.

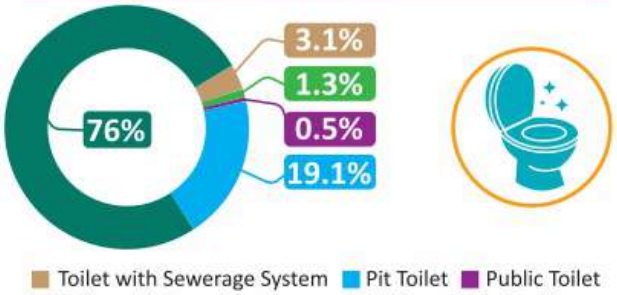
Status of Water Supply Coverage at Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City

Households by main source of drinking water (NSO, 2021)



Status of Toilet Coverage at Hetauda Sub- Metropolitan City

Households by types of Toilet (NSO, 2021)



Problem Statement:

Despite significant progress in WASH service provision in Nepal, disparities remain, particularly affecting marginalized communities. In Hetauda, issues such as limited wastewater management and inequitable access to sanitation services persist. The policy brief aims to address the specific challenge enhancing equity and inclusivity in WASH services.

Methodology:

A comprehensive methodology was employed, including literature reviews, stakeholder consultations, and in-depth policy analysis, to assess existing WASH policies at both national and local levels. Findings were compiled into a comprehensive review report and presented to relevant stakeholders for validation and feedback.

Policy, Legal, and Regulatory Framework

Federal and Provincial Level:

The **Constitution of Nepal 2015** guarantees citizens' rights to clean water and sanitation.

The **National WASH Policy 2023** prioritizes basic services and gender equality by focusing on provision, conservation, municipal planning, cost-sharing, tariff recovery, regulatory transformation, private sector engagement, and social inclusion.

National Drinking Water Quality Standard 2022: Sets parameters for water quality testing, mandates Water Safety Plans, and includes Health Based Guideline Values.

Local Government Operation Act 2017: Emphasizes coordination, disaster management, partnerships, & inter-governmental cooperation for effective WASH service delivery.

The **Drinking Water and Sanitation Act 2022:** aims to ensure easy access to clean water and sanitation while respecting citizens' basic rights and managing sewage and wastewater effectively.

Bagmati Province WASH Bill: Collects and updates disaggregated data to ensure WASH programs benefit all segments of society, focusing on gender, age, disability, and socioeconomic status.

This WASH Bill stands out for its inclusive approach, comprehensive data collection provisions, and strategic focus on ensuring that WASH programs are equitable and inclusive. This proactive and well-rounded approach ensures that the bill is not just a policy on paper but a practical tool for achieving inclusive and sustainable WASH development.

Stand outs in the Bagmati Province WASH Bill

Inclusive Stakeholder Consultations

The Bagmati Province WASH Bill prioritizes inclusivity through extensive stakeholder consultations, incorporating valuable inputs on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) provisions.

Comprehensive Data Collection Provisions

The Bill includes robust measures for collecting and updating disaggregated data on gender, age, disability, and socioeconomic status. This ensures WASH programs benefit all societal segments.

Strategic Approach to Inclusivity

By aligning data collection with GESI considerations, the Bill ensures WASH programs are tailored to diverse needs, promoting effective and equitable services for all community members, especially marginalized groups.

Municipal Level- Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City:

Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City Health and Sanitation Service Act 2075:

Explicitly recognizes citizens' rights to free basic health services and access to safe water and sanitation.

Narrowly defines sanitation, lacking comprehensive provisions for toilet and fecal sludge management.

Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan Water Resource Use Procedure, 2077:

Ensures responsible water use and conservation in alignment with constitutional mandates.

Does not address water quality and lacks concessions for disadvantaged households & GESI-responsive infrastructure.

Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan Sanitation Management Procedure 2079:

Aligns with citizens' constitutional rights to a clean environment, emphasizing cleanliness and solid waste management.

Lacks specific guidance on fecal sludge and wastewater management technologies and inclusive access for marginalized groups.

Annual Plans and Programs of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City:

Prioritizes inclusive development with initiatives for child-friendly, disability-friendly, and girl-friendly school infrastructure.

Needs more practical implementation plans and financial assistance provisions to support marginalized communities.

Budget Overview of Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City:

Allocation of a significant portion of the budget to development projects (40%) demonstrates a commitment to long-term growth and infrastructure improvement.

WASH sector budget is only 4.35% of the total, indicating the need for higher resource allocation to significantly impact public health and quality of life.

Policy Recommendations:

Strengthen Policy Framework: Amend policies and enact legislation to address gaps in sanitation, inclusivity, and climate adaptation, aligning with national WASH policies and constitutional mandates.

Enhance Coordination: Improve coordination among agencies, NGOs, private sector, and communities. Develop participatory decision-making to ensure policies meet local needs.

Increase Resource Allocation: Allocate more budget to WASH, prioritizing sanitation, hygiene, infrastructure, capacity building, and public awareness in underserved areas.

Promote GESI: Integrate gender equality and social inclusion in all WASH planning, ensuring accessible and inclusive infrastructure and services for diverse needs.

Strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish robust systems to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and measure impact. Use disaggregated data for evidence-based decisions targeting vulnerable populations.

Build Capacity and Awareness: Invest in capacity-building for local governments and stakeholders. Promote hygiene, water conservation, and sustainability through public awareness campaigns.

Ensure Financial Assistance: Provide financial support and concessions to poor households, including subsidies and reduced tariffs, to improve equitable access to WASH services for marginalized groups.

> *As a member of the LGBTIQ+ community in Hetauda Sub-metropolitan City, I constantly feel unsafe and harassed when using public WASH facilities. The absence of gender-neutral toilets forces me to avoid public spaces altogether, leading to health issues from limiting water intake. Despite laws meant to protect us, the lack of enforcement leaves us without safe and inclusive access to essential services,* **reflected a participant from the WASH Rights session organized for the LGBTIQ+ communities of Hetauda.**

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Hetauda needs comprehensive WASH legislation that recognizes citizens' rights to health services, safe water, and sanitation. Expanding the Water Resource Use Procedure to include provisions for water quality, fecal sludge management, and inclusive infrastructure is crucial. Additionally, the sanitation management policy and legal framework should incorporate technology, financial aid, and targeted measures for underprivileged households, with a strong emphasis on gender equality and socially inclusive infrastructure. Implementing these steps is essential for achieving equitable WASH services in Hetauda.

References:

- National Population and Housing Census 2021
- National Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Policy 2023
- Drinking Water and Sanitation Act 2022
- National Drinking Water Quality Standard 2022
- Local Government Operation Act 2017
- Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2019
- Sustainable Development Goals: Status and Road Map (2016-2030), National Planning Commission Nepal
- Constitution of Nepal 2015

Disclaimer:

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