

# WATER POINT MAINTENANCE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

## SENSITIZATION GUIDELINES FOR THE ANIMATORS

*Complementary note to “Developing communities through women and water” and “How can we ensure that women participate actively in the planning and management of water projects?”*



## 1. Women attendance

- Insist on women attendance at any meeting. **Do not start** a meeting without a sufficient representation of women even if other members are ready to start.



- If necessary, go by yourself talk to women watching the meeting point from their house and explain that women have to be part of any discussion on water issues as they are the ones fetching water.

- If men remain indifferent to women's absence, give a deliberately provocative affirmation that
  1. will go into men direction and therefore will retain their attention,
  2. will act also as an ice breaker:

“If women are the ones using the pump, it means they are also the ones damaging it”.

**Act** a women misusing the pump (by relaxing on the handle for instance), men and women will laugh and get closer.



## 2. Women and mechanics

- We encourage women to assume the position of pump care taker because, on the contrary to men who are regularly moving to other villages for business or because they have different households, women are more reliable as they stay more permanently at village level.

Most of the time, they first reject this responsibility since they think mechanics is a men's activity. It is important to explain that we are talking about **minor** maintenance which involves very few mechanical skills and low strength. We also have to emphasize on their legitimacy on this duty as they are the people who are regularly fetching water.



- To convince women but also men, **perform** minor maintenance in front of everybody if you are a woman. If you are man, ask a woman from the community to open/close the pump, grease the chain and tighten bolts and nuts. Assist her during the exercise but make sure men around the water point are not getting too much involved. Indeed, they generally want to first give advice, then assist but finally discourage the woman and perform the maintenance of the pump in place of her. If the woman is having issues at any step, let her time to make a new try until she succeeds. Make the women attending your meeting proud of their capacities and ask for a general clap.



### 3. Women and community representation

- Women should be encouraged to lead their water point management. Some positions of the water committee will traditionally be devolved to men but not automatically. If most of the time the position of chairman, advisor and secretary are hold by men, it sometimes happen women are elected in lieu of men. These situations are very few but it also means that **nothing is frozen**. Specific positions have been designed for women in our strategy to encourage gender equality: chairlady-treasurer and pump care taker.
- The chairlady is also supposed to carry the duty of treasurer (keeping the cash box safe). These 2 positions have been combined as it appears that women are declared more **trustful** in money management than men when interviewing community members. In some communities, it has also been witnessed women were the ones contributing for hand pump maintenance and not men (it happens that in the daily life, they are managing their own budget for family and household expenses). The main idea is to target a natural leader so she can also represent women and gather their contribution for the water point management.



- The pump care taker can be a woman if the initial sensitisation about women and mechanics has been rightly done. During the collective training of the water committee, it is important to turn the pump care taker **visible** to other members. Patience and dedication is essential to make her confident about her responsibilities within the community. To maintain the behaviour change, pay attention whilst visiting again the community to the person taking care of the pump. Use the information recorded in the file to get the name of the woman trained and make sure she is still in charge of the pump maintenance. It often happens a man has been replacing the woman initially trained. It is important to **retrain** her if necessary, to give her confidence.

