



Greetings to our Strong Women Strong World Community!

Today is [World Water Day](#) and we wanted to invite you to join us in taking a moment to stop and reflect on the impact that clean water has on the life of a woman or girl.

For Aynaddis Ababil, the burden of collecting water daily had robbed her marriage of love. Barely having enough energy to care for her family, she found herself feeling more alone and disconnected. However, the new drilled well in her community brought a renewed hope for her family and community. Read how love was saved by water [here](#).

Please join us in praying that World Vision continuously improves its work and expands its reach so that more women and girls can access to clean water.

Blessings,

Kerry Bendt

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## **New Study Shows that Women Leadership Results in Water that Continues to Flow**

A new study shows the role of women is critical to providing water points that continue to function. This study is part of a six-year collaboration between World Vision and the Water Institute at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC) designed to learn and improve our water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programming at an unprecedented rate ([Brochure](#)). A previous study in Ghana demonstrated that World Vision water points functioned at high levels even after two decades. The key factors leading to this achievement were the existence of a water committee and a fee-collection system. As a follow-up, we conducted a new qualitative research effort to better understand what leads to successful water committees by interviewing key water sector participants in 18 communities in Ghana, Kenya and Zambia. Based on 237 hours of recordings, UNC researchers identified several critical factors for sustainability including the role of women, which is the focus of this newsletter.

### Women are Essential Water Committee Members

Women's role as the dominant water collectors and users is often given as a reason for the importance of their role in water management. Also, this greater knowledge of how water is used and more direct reliance on a functioning water system results in women being better managers of the water system. Female members of the water committee also can communicate better with women in the community about the water system. These female committee members bring other women's knowledge of the water system to the committee, and help lead and educate female community members.



Study participants perceived women as more trustworthy as treasurers and in other roles connected to money. A male water committee secretary in Zambia specifically pointed out that men may not be good managers of money, stating, “We men, we are wasters [of] money.” Thus, female treasurers have the potential to improve project management. One World Vision staff member in Kenya stated, “You know with ladies it is very unlikely that they will mismanage the money and normally, because of that, the others tend to trust them, so the project runs better. ...”

#### Recognizing and Preventing Breakdowns

Women, as the most frequent collectors of water, are more aware of the status of the water system and are more likely to detect hardware breakdowns. The women can then inform the committee when there is a hardware breakdown, thus triggering rehabilitation of the broken system. A water committee member in Ghana described that “the women are so important because before the borehole will spoil, they will detect it more than a man because...here, the men we don’t go to the borehole.” In terms of preventing breakdowns, women were more often present near the borehole and could actively take steps to curtail damage. A water committee member in Zambia stated that women tell “the children not to play with it and not pumping it too much, because if they play with it, it can break down.”



### Barriers to Women's Involvement in Water Management

While some committees may have equal or near equal gender representation in terms of positions on the committee, women on committees may not have an equal voice as that of men, and women may not attend or speak at full community meetings focused on the water system as frequently as men. To help improve this situation, World Vision staff, particularly female behavior-change specialists, are coaching women water committee members on how to give voice within the committee. This is having positive impact, not only on the water committees, but on the overall health of communities.

These lessons and others from the UNC collaboration are being used to improve World Vision water, sanitation, and hygiene efforts so that water continues to flow and women are empowered to play an even greater role in their communities.

"The participation of women in water management and water committees is critical. As carriers of water and caregivers for their families, the women's perspective ensures that investments to increase access to clean water are maximized."

-Lisa Trevino Cummins  
President, Urban Strategies  
Advisory Council Member, Strong Women Strong World



## Meghan Markle advocates for improved sanitation to keep girls in school

Actress and World Vision Global Ambassador Meghan Markle, of *Suits*, travels to Rwanda to visit a school where girls can now attend thanks to the recently built latrines. [Watch this video](#) to see what Meghan learned about the impact of improved sanitation on girls' education.



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World Vision's *Strong Women, Strong World* exists to bring awareness to issues facing women and girls, to raise resources, support programs and cultivate a movement of women and men in the U.S. who are committed to restoring dignity to women and girls in order to create a stronger world for all people.

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