



## SOCIO-POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY WATER DELIVERY IN THE OFFINSO NORTH DISTRICT OF THE ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA

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### **Abstract:**

The study examined women participation in the management of community water in the Offinso North District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The study was motivated by the fact that not enough literature is available on the subject in Ghana and the Offinso North District in particular. The concurrent mixed method design was used for the study. The study population consisted of household heads, staff of CWSA, Assembly members, and members of the DWST, and Watson committees. A multistage sampling with structured questionnaires and interview were used for the study. The study revealed that women were motivated to participate in water governance because they want to benefit optimally from water facilities; the need to give back to the community; the prestige women enjoy and the need to satisfy a regulatory requirement. However, women felt intimidated by their male counterparts and also felt the management of water delivery was hijacked by men. Also, low level of education, gossip or intimidation by men and inadequate time were revealed as challenges women actively involved in water management in the OND face. The study recommends among others the organisation of ceremonies to award women for their courage and dedication, training workshops for women to build their courage, morale and self-esteem as ways of overcoming the challenges they face in order to ensure inclusive development and participation in the communities.

**Keywords:** water supply, sanitation, water management, women's participation, Offinso North

### **1. Introduction**

Water is crucial for sustainable development. However, limited access to clean and safe water associated with poor water supply, hygiene and sanitation at the household level is widening the poverty gap, gender inequalities and increasing the prevalence of water borne diseases (Gender & Water Alliance, 2006). According to WHO/UNICEF (2008),

limited access to clean water and safe sanitation has contributed 3.7% of the total global disease burden and 2.2 million deaths each year, with women and children in the developing countries being the most affected.

Although the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 7(c) sought to “*halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation*” (UNDP, 2006: p46), it is anticipated that Sub-Saharan Africa will only reach the MDGs water target by 2040 (Sutton, 2008). Even with the target being met, some 400 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa will be left without access to safe water with a majority of them being women and children living in rural households. All over the world, development activities related to the provision of social infrastructure such as the construction of roads, educational, health, water and sanitation facilities has been a major concern of individuals, governments, NGOs and the community as a whole (Tigabu et al., 2013). Water is a major commodity without which life will be impossible. However, access to quality, regular and safe drinking water has become a problem for many people in the developing world especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Sutton, 2008).

Water scarcity worldwide has been attributed to rapidly growing population, intensive agricultural and mining activities, climate change and lack of sustainability for water infrastructure (Chifamba, et al., 2013; Marks et al., 2014; Kevany et al., 2013). The issue of poverty, sanitation and environmental sustainability, has called for the attention of both local and international initiatives to come up with programmes and projects to curb the problem of water scarcity as it is seen as central to environmental sustainability (Kevany et al., 2013).

In order to design a more effective and responsive approach to the provision of water and sanitation, development organizations and donor agencies were utilizing a series of participatory methodologies and techniques that focus on getting intended users actively involved in all stages of the project cycle. The underlying principle is that community participation increases the probability of success and the sustainability of the projects implemented.

Even though the water crisis is observed as a general problem for the rural population, women bear the greatest burden because of their socially engendered roles, which involve looking for and collecting water for their households (Buckingham, 2000). Women as principal water collectors in households had their participation in education, income generating activities as well as in cultural and political engagements often compromised (Panda, 2007). Access to water is fundamental to human survival, health and productivity. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the sustainability of people’s “*access to water, and to the environment which is dependent upon it. As pressures and demands on this limited resource increase, the need to find new and innovative approaches to providing it becomes more apparent and more urgent*” (Water Aid, 2011).

The use of participatory approaches is one of the principles of the Dublin convention (GWP, 2000). The Dublin convention Principle No. 2 states that; “*Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.*” And whenever clean water is scarce, the

livelihoods of the poor and women were often the first to suffer the consequences. Based on this realisation, specific obligations with water access and sanitation have been recognized in the following international human right treaties: 1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979 - article 14 (2); 2. International Labour Organization Convention No. 161 concerning Occupational Health Services, adopted in 1985 - article 5; 3. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 - articles 24 and 27 (3); and 4. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2006 - article 28.

Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) has since the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin and the United Nations (UN) Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, been stated, as the major approach in tackling the world's water crises (GWP, 2010). A common understanding of IWRM is that it presents an *"environmentally sound, equitable and sustainable manner to utilization and development of water resources"* and can be understood as a systemic process for sustainably developing, managing, allocating and monitoring water resources. The third of four IWRM guiding principles is the recognition that women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water (GWP, 2000, p 13).

Integrating gender aspects when developing water policies, projects, and programmes, require significant women's participation in water management. Since Ghana's independence in 1957, its water management has undergone a number of reforms. The most important reform in Ghana has been the decentralisation (empowering citizenry to meaningfully participate) of the management of the country's water resources in the early 1990s (Fuest et al., 2005. p 18). In 1959 the then Ministry of Works and Housing was assigned the main responsibility for the water sector (Eguavoen, 2007, p 81). The ministry was recently renamed Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing (MWRWH) as the leading government institution responsible for the country's water sector. In 1992, the Water Resource Commission was established under the MWRWH as the main regulatory body for the water sector.

With the decentralization process, the government initiated a delegation of responsibilities to several smaller regions. Today, Ghana is divided into 10 administrative regions with 216 distinctive districts (Government of Ghana Web, 2011-07-22) within each district is a District Assembly (DA), the highest political authority responsible for *"the planning, implementation, operation and maintenance of water and sanitation facilities and the legal owners of communal infrastructures in rural communities and small towns"* (MWRWH, 2007, p 48-52).

This research seeks to understand how the creation of new participatory spaces have been effective in empowering community voices especially women to influence water governance and accountability from water providers.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

It has long been recognized in Ghana that water supply and sanitation services can only be effective and sustainable if they meet the needs of beneficiaries. An effective system of communication between water and sanitation agencies and communities at all stages of the project cycle is therefore inevitable if this has to be achieved. Community participation as one of the ways of using internal resources to facilitate development effectiveness and water delivery becomes critical in this process. Women participation is explored in the Offinso North District as a way of contributing to the development of an area that has water as a top development challenge.

There has been a growing backlash against top-down approaches to management throughout the world because of its tendency to prioritize and solely appreciate professional and scientific “expert” knowledge. Besides, the top-down approaches lend themselves to a potentially exclusive and paternalistic nature, which can be alienating to local people and their internal resource management schemes. Hence, there has been a growing acceptance of bottom-up approaches that characteristically, both appreciate and incorporate local people and their local knowledge, skills, needs and experiences.

It has also been recognized that the way to overcome the barriers caused by under-valuation of women's time and women's relative lack of access to cash is to give women more responsibility within the management system. In rural water supply, there is consensus in the extant literature that sustainability is dramatically enhanced when women have key responsibilities. However, the focus of studies so far on women participation in water governance have been geared towards the extent of women participation, the reason for low participation of women in rural water provision and the relationship between participation in community water supply, characteristics of women and sense of belongingness to the projects (Mensah, 2015).

This study explores the social, political and economic factors affecting women's participation in community water delivery in a district noted for low participation of women in water delivery. The study also examines the perspective of the few women actively involved in water services delivery, the motivating factors as well as the challenges they face in their participation in the governance of water in their communities.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

1. To assess women involvement in the planning and management of water delivery in the OND.
2. To ascertain the socio-cultural, political and economic factors affecting women's participation in water governance.
3. To evaluate the challenges faced by women actively involved in water management in the OND.

### 1.3 Research Questions

1. How were women involved in the planning and management of water delivery in the Offinso North District (ONDA)?
2. What were the socio-cultural, political and economic factors affecting women participation in water governance?
3. What were the challenges faced by women actively involved in water management in the OND?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 History of Women Participation in Water Governance

The importance of involving both women and men in the management of water has been recognized at the global level, since 1977 United Nations Water Conference at Mar del Plata, the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade (1981-90) and the International Conference on Water and the Environment in Dublin (1992), which explicitly recognizes the central role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. Reference is also made to the involvement of women in water management in Agenda 21, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Moreover, the resolution establishing the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life' (2005-2015), calls for women's participation and involvement in water-related development efforts. The Water for Life Decade coincides with the timeframe for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The close inter linkages between gender equality and women's empowerment (goal 3), and target 10 on access to water and sanitation. Wallace and Coles (2005. p 17) state that efficient participation tools that encourage female participation within the water management at all societal levels constitute a vital element for promoting sustainable and efficient water supply management and distribution.

In many cases, showing that water projects work better when women were involved has a greater impact on mobilizing finance for gender-based projects than showing that access to water has an impact on gender equality, Water for Life, (2005-2015). This is an evidence of previous studies by World Bank which concluded that women's participation was strongly associated with water and sanitation project effectiveness. Due to that, there has been pressure on government across the globe to include more women in water management positions. Partners, governments and development agencies have made commitments to support greater equality between women and men and to use a gender perspective in water and environmental initiatives.

In Ghana, women and children were traditionally responsible for the collection and utilization of domestic water (GWA, 2010-09-15). Furthermore, they have been acknowledged as key actors in implementing water and sanitation (WATSAN) measures. The Ministry of Water Resources, Works, and Housing (MWRWH) (2007. PP 37-38) states that in order to reach sustainable and adequate water supply, efficient and

effective management of the country's water resources must be approached. As part of this management, the NWP further states that *"Women must be seen not only as beneficiaries and water users, but also as water managers and decision-makers. There has been a paradigm shift in the design and implementation of water policies that were gender sensitive by key players in the water sector such as government, NGOs, and Private sector today."*

## **2.2 Approaches of Water Supply in Ghana**

In the Offinso North District, as is it in many parts of the country, availability of clean water for drinking is a main challenge in most rural communities. The development aggravated during the dry season where most women walk long distances in search of water which most often were not hygienic for human use. This unacceptable situation has dire consequences on the quality of life of the rural folks. For example, the uneasy access of water by rural dwellers results in waste of economic time and effort, physical burdens, and incidence of water-related diseases (Kelvany et al., as cited by Mensah, 2015).

Efforts to put mechanism in place for rural areas for the provision of potable water have become the concern of many developing countries. It is in this regard that the government of Ghana is taking advantage of the global agreements on the provision of community water supply and sanitation services in deprived areas, focused on community based water delivery with the aim of providing potable water in rural communities. The type of approach is known as the Demand Responsive Approach (DRA) which requires that the community members themselves take active participation in the planning, design, implementation and monitoring of the community water projects in order to ensure the acceptability of the project, and influence sense of ownership in the community members (Tigabu et al., 2014). This approach of the central government aids the provision of the water facilities by setting policies, institutional legal framework and strategies that ensures that the DRA functions effectively and efficiently.

Finally, government liaise with internal and external partners to raise funds to support water delivery sector and provide the blueprint for efficient and cost-effective usage of funds. The DRA requires that the local people form Water and Sanitation Committees which is gender-sensitive to see to the active inclusion of women in the project delivery. There is also District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWST) at the district level, charged with the responsibility to initiate, plan, supervise and manage water facilities in the district with active involvement of beneficiaries in rural communities.

## **2.3 Institutional Framework for Community Water Supply in Ghana**

### **A. Ministry of Water and Sanitation**

The MWS formerly called the ministry of Water Resource, Works and Housing (MWRWH) through the Water Directorate Department, at the national level, is responsible for the formulation and coordination of water sector policies. Its functions

include developing policy framework for the water and sanitation sector; soliciting funding from External Agencies (EA); monitoring activities of water supply and sanitation sector, and advising cabinet on water and sanitation issues. With regard to rural water supply, the Directorate coordinates activities of key sector agencies which were the Water Resources Commission and the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA).

### **B. Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development**

The Ministry exists purposely to promote the establishment and development of effective and well-resourced decentralized system of local government for Ghana to ensure good governance and equitable local based development. The Environmental Health and Sanitation Directorate within the ministry were responsible for coordinating all the key sector institutions involved in the water and sanitation sector. The directorate relays with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies in enhancing the decentralization of the water sector to rural communities in Ghana.

### **C. Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA)**

At the regional level, there is the CWSA which relays with the Water Directorate of the MWRWH and now MWS in promoting the development of water sector in the rural communities and small towns. The CWSA also formulate strategies, standards and guidelines for the sector; coordinates the work of NGOs and donors; and encourage private sector activity in water and sanitation. It provides support to District Assemblies in promoting the development and sustainability of safe water. The CWSA contracts both private firms and NGOs for borehole construction and supervision (Kleemier, as cited by Decardi, Asare & Ayeh, 2012).

### **D. District Assemblies**

The District Assemblies were responsible for rural and small town water and sanitation delivery using the private sector for infrastructure delivery and communities or private operators for management. They have the responsibility for preparation of District Water and Sanitation Plans. District Assemblies also set up District Water and Sanitation Teams (DWST) and contributing their part of the capital cost. The District team consists of members from the Works, Health and Planning Departments of the Assembly. The DWSTs consider beneficiary communities and seek funding from national program's benefits on their behalf. The DWSTs also manage the implementation and approve tariffs set by Community Water and Sanitation Committees and the town Water and Sanitation Boards. The DWST in the Assemblies also trains members of the WATSAN committees in the various communities.

### **E. Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs)**

NGOs also play strategic roles in the provision and management of community water in the country. They offer technical assistance to communities during planning, implementation and provision of facilities. They also provide capacity building to community management groups (WATSAN). Some NGOs in some instances provide water and sanitation facilities. The NGOs active in the rural water sector include World

Vision International, Water for Life, Water Aid, Pro-Net and church funded organizations.

#### **F. Private Sector**

The structural reforms of community water sector in Ghana led to the involvement of the private sector players in the provision and management of water facilities for some of the communities. The CWSA in playing its roles, sometimes contracts some private firms for borehole construction and supervisions.

#### **2.4 Water Users**

The basic unit for promoting the community based approach which was one of the main objectives of the rural water reforms in the country is the community members. In their quest to accessing potable water, communities have to apply for benefits available from the District Assemblies. Commitment is demonstrated by contributing five per cent of the capital cost for each facility. Community Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Committees were also established to set tariffs, maintain accounts, and manage day-to-day operations of water points. The WATSAN is in charge of collecting the initial community contribution for construction costs and is also responsible for the maintenance and operation of the water and sanitation systems. The committee is supposed to work closely with the district assemblies. Day-to-day management and operational issues, such as the definition of access, allocation of water, and maintenance of the pump sites and hand pumps, were also major tasks of the committees (Eguavoenas cited by Decardi, Asare & Ayeh, 2012).

#### **2.5 Benefits of Women Participation in Water Management and Sustainability**

Though women participation has already *“gained the status of development orthodoxy”* (Cornwall, 2006, p. 62), it is worth noting some of its specific benefits:

- 1) **Empowerment and preventing marginalization:** As many development workers have found, *“communities”* were not homogeneous units. There were often internal divisions and hierarchies which lead to the marginalization of certain groups such as women and minorities and these groups being excluded from public life. However, including participants from marginalized groups will ensure they have the opportunity to express their opinions and reduce the incidence of discrimination. Seeking participation is not simply a neutral act.
- 2) **Sustainability:** A major concern for development organizations is sustainability. As Jordan’s Ministry of Planning & Economic Cooperation has put it: *“We seem to do all the right things, go through all the right steps, but then the projects don’t work...We need someone who takes ownership of the project”* (Burt, 2010, p. 3). A project or development initiative that ignores people’s opinions, local knowledge or cultural appropriateness will more likely meet opposition along the way. According to the World Bank, *“projects in which affected peoples’ views have been excluded suffer from more frequent delays and poorer quality”* (World Bank Environment Department, 1992).



- 3) **Efficiency:** Engaging local peoples into the design, implementation, and evaluation of a project can appear time consuming. However, participation saves time and money in the long run by harnessing local and specific knowledge, avoiding disputes and allowing for alterations in the program's early stages. People will more likely accept a decision if they understand the reasons behind it, even if they were not in full agreement. Furthermore, through participation, beneficiaries can contribute by providing ideas, labour, and/or financial resources (Van Heck, 2003).

## 2.6 Constraints for Women's Participation in Water Management

- 1) **Unequal distribution of land and other resources such as water.** These resources basically in the hands of the local authorities who in most cases were men, leaving very limited room for women to manage these facilities (Omoredede, as cited by Mensah, 2015).
- 2) **Fear of being criticized,** ridiculed coupled with destructive criticisms from people especially at the lower level, women mostly out of jealousy gossip about them of trying to gain recognition from men. These breeds loss of confidence and discourage them to talk about issues pertaining to their welfare in public. Hence men take the initiative and decide for them (Boateng et al, 2013).
- 3) **Timing,** Domestic and economic activities also serve as a barrier to women participation in community water projects. The fact that most meetings were held in the evenings when most women were busily preparing domestic chores or trading made it difficult for them to partake in such meetings (Boateng et al., 2013).

Implementing governmental or non-governmental agencies often contact male elite farmers, either because they were known from them or because they were a compulsory entry point in the community to lead any intervention (Meinzen-Dick & Zwarteveen, 1998, Sultana, 2009). But even when women were members of the Water management bodies, the outcomes have not necessarily contributed to enhanced women's rights and access to water.

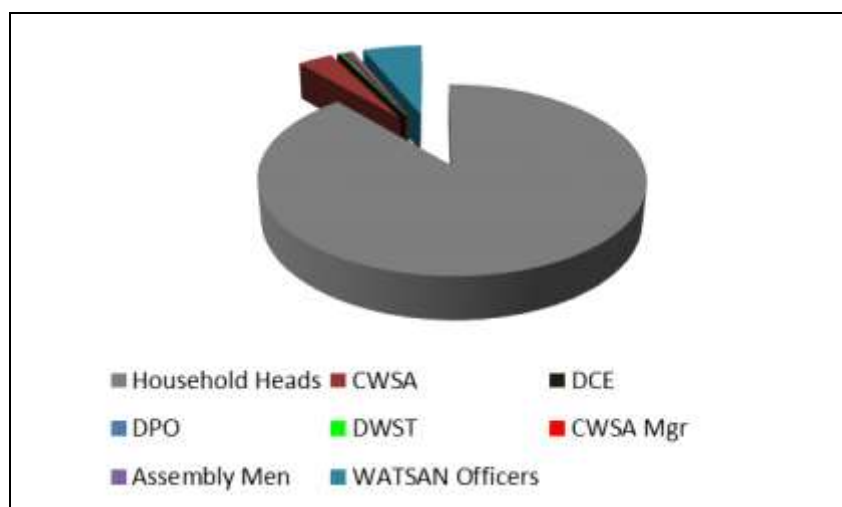
## 3. Research Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research was considered suitable in this study as the study did not necessarily seek to uncover any universal truth but aim at seeking to establish in-depth on participation of women in community water delivery in order to enhance knowledge and understanding of a particular phenomenon, in this instance women's participation. In the light of this, some officials who happened to be directly involved in community development and more specifically water projects at the district and community levels were interviewed to get a deeper knowledge of the topic, thus participation of women in planning, implementation and managing water projects in the Offinso North District (OND) of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The quantitative

approach instruments such as the survey questionnaires was administered amongst household's members in the chosen areas of Offinso North District on women participation in water governance and the challenges therein.

### 3.1 Target Population

The population includes all elements that meet certain criteria for inclusion in a study (Burns & Grove 2003:43). The population of the study consisted all stakeholders who are directly or indirectly concerned with the availability and maintenance of water supply, and proper sanitation in the Offinso North District of the Ashanti Region. In this study, the target population was 465 comprising three chiefs, 30 WATSAN Officers, 434 Household Heads in the three communities namely; Asempanaye, Srentiatia and Sraneso No.1. Again, 30 CWSA, One DCE, One DPO, One DWST, One CWSA Manager in Kumasi and Three Assembly members were also targeted for the study. The participants were stakeholders and household heads above eighteen years. Respondents have stayed in these communities for at least two years and have participated in the community water project in their respective communities. The target population for the study is shown in the Figure 1 below.

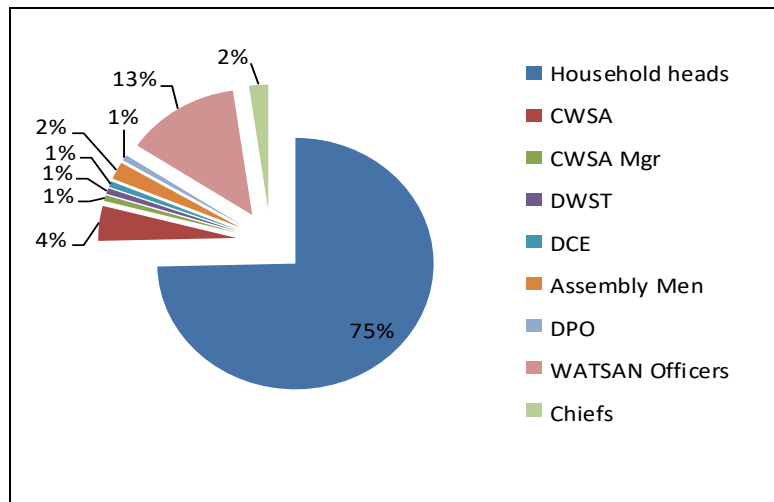


**Figure 1:** The target population for the study  
(Source: Author's Construct, 2018.)

### 3.2 Sample Size Determination

A total of 134 of the target population were selected for the study using systematic sampling and purposive sampling techniques. A probability sample technique thus systematic sampling was used to offer all the participants equal opportunity to be selected for the study. The systematic sampling was employed to select 100 household heads from 40 households from Asempanaye, 35 from Sraneso and 25 from Srentiatia which were communities with an estimated population of 437. Again, three chiefs, three assemblymen, Six (6) officers from CWSA, One DCE, One DPO, and One DWST. Also 18 participants who are members of WATSAN took part in the focus group discussion. The sample size for the survey was determined bearing in mind that the sampled

population possesses characteristics of the entire population that make it imperative for generalization of the outcome. The sampled population for the study is shown in the chart below.



**Figure 2:** Sampled population for the study  
 (Source: Author’s Construct, 2018)

**Table 1:** Sampled population of the study

Sampled population	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Household heads	100	75%
CWSA	6	4%
CWSA Mgr	1	1%
DWST	1	1%
DCE	1	1%
Assembly men	3	2%
DPO	1	1%
WATSAN	18	13%
Chiefs	3	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field study, 2018.

The table above indicates the numbers of respondents and participants for the study. From the table, 100 Household heads making 75% who considered the heads of the various families in the community were selected for the study; Six Community Water and Sanitation Committee Agents (CWSA) representing 4% of the sampled populations were interviewed. Also Community Water and Sanitation Manager in Ashanti Region was also selected, He forms 1% of the sampled population. Again, one person from the District Water and Sanitation Team (DWST) of Offinso North District totalling 1% was selected. Moreover, two persons thus the District Chief Executive and District Planning Officer of Offinso North District Assembly representing 2% were included in the study and Three Assembly members making 2% responded to the questionnaire. Lastly, in the focus group discussions, 18 Water and Sanitation officers summing up to 13%

contributed. These individuals were sampled due to their roles in water and sanitation issues in the various communities and the District at large.

### **3.3 Sampling Procedure**

A probability sample is one that has been used to select in such a way that every element chosen has a known probability of being included. The study selected three communities - Asempanaye, Sraneso and Srentiatia purposefully. For the purpose of choosing other stakeholders (the DCE, DPO, DWST leader, CWSA, NGOs in water sector, chief) for in-depth interviews, purposive sampling was used. This technique provides the researcher the flexibility to reach individuals on purposeful bases as they possess the qualities to give in-depth information peculiar to the study subject matter. In the case of women participation in planning and water management which is the focus of this study, CWSA, DWST head, Offinso North district assembly, NGOs in water supply, a chief and 3 assembly persons were purposefully selected for interview due to their in-depth experiences in community water delivery.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **A. Questionnaire**

Survey questionnaires were administered to women above 18 years and any other water management persons in the 3 communities under study representing each cluster using a systematic sampling technique. Structured questionnaires were used. The advantage of this technique is that it is flexible and allowed researcher asked questions that demanded direct answers from respondents. In all 100 questionnaires were administered. Thus 40 for the urban cluster (Asempanaye), 35 for the peri urban (Sraneso) and 25 for the rural community (Srentiatia).

#### **B. Interviews**

Key informant interviews were conducted involving DWST leader, OND, NGOs managers in the OND as it enables contact beneficiaries directly. An interview guide was designed to elicit information on the above subject. The interview was conducted in a language accepted by both interviewer and interviewee preferably Twi and English for my study. In all 10 people were interviewed. The study conducted a focus-group interview for 5 members each in Asempanaye, Sraneso and Srentiatia. The language for the FGD was Twi and transcribed by researcher into the report.

### **3.5 Data Analysis and Presentation**

The data was analyzed by organizing them into themes and further discuss them in order to establish trends and patterns in accordance with the research questions. The data was analyzed using Microsoft excel. Frequencies, percentiles, tables and graphs were used in describing and presenting the data. Information that was gathered was assimilated and correlated into summary findings of women participation and effective water management which allowed for constructive recommendations and suggestions to be arrived at.

### 3.6 Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Out of the hundred (100) per cent of respondents who responded to the questionnaires, fifty - eight (58) were females. This is an indication that although the sample was dominated by females, but it is fairly spread among both genders since the female population at towns under study is also higher than the male population. Also, the research is female inclined.

## 4. Presentation and Discussion of Findings

**4.1 Research Question One:** How are women involved in the planning and management of water delivery in the Offinso North District (ONDA)?

The first objective of the study sought to answer the research question which wanted to measure the involvement of women in the planning and management of water delivery in the entire district of Offinso North.

### 4.2 Water and Sanitation Committees (WATSAN)

The WATSAN is a carefully selected people from a beneficiary community made up of five people of whom at least 40% were supposed to be women. The mandate of the WATSAN is to manage the water systems specifically boreholes and to promote good sanitation and hygiene in the area or community. The WATSAN therefore has the power to operate, maintain, repair, replace and manage the water facility in their respective areas. Another responsibility of the WATSAN is to put in place a system for interacting with the people in arriving at decision on all matters affecting the water system. Each WATSAN has an executive committee made up of members from amongst its members comprising a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, organizer and caretaker (in charge of daily supervision) of which at least two shall be women. In Offinso North, there were thirty- one WATSAN committees.

### 4.3 Water and Sanitation Committees Composition

The records available at the DWST show that of the 155 members of the WATSAN committee, 65 were women representing forty – two per cent (42%).

**Table 2:** WATSAN Gender Composition in the OND

	Men		Women		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Chairman	31	100	0	0	31	100
Secretary	31	100	0	0	31	100
Organizer	18	58	13	42	31	100
Treasury	4	13	27	87	31	100
Caretaker	6	19	25	81	31	100
Total	90	58	65	48	155	100

**Source:** Author's Construct, 2018.

From Table 2, it can be observed that men entirely occupied the top most positions such as chairmen and secretaries on the WATSAN in OND and women dominate a lowest executive position that is caretakers and treasuries. With the fact that women occupy superficial positions on the committees were seen to be dormant and inactive. The men who occupy higher executive positions in the committees were seen as active and influential on the WATSAN because they were men who mostly had attained tertiary education and had retired home. This current study supports the assertion that most women on WATSAN had no significant influence on the decisions of the WATSAN (Boateng et al., 2013). The reason is that, there were no women who hold higher executive position on the WATSAN and they do not have any great influence on the decisions of the committee due to their low position on it and lack of courage to express themselves in the group. Some women were just on the WATSAN committees to fulfil a regulatory requirement but do not contribute meaningfully when they were on Water related projects committees.

#### 4.4 Stages of Women Participation in Community Water Delivery

In community development space, project goes through certain stages: Planning, Implementation and management. Research shows that in community water delivery, sustainability is dramatically enhanced when women have key responsibilities." (Briscoe & de Ferranti, 1989; Dublin Declaration, 1992; Nordic Freshwater Initiative, 1991; Ladele et al., 2011; Tigabu et al., 2013; Boateng et al., 2013a&b; and Harmon, 2012 cited in Mensah, 2015). They added that even where their involvement looks encouraging, their participation is bend towards only two stages and not all the three stages. Rather they actively engage women at the implementation and management stages, they continued to ignore from decision making space.

#### 4.5 Research Question Two: What are the socio-cultural, political and economic factors affecting women participation in water governance?

The second objective of the study was to ascertain the socio-cultural, political and economic factors affecting women participation in water governance in the Offinso North District. The results obtained from the respondents with regards to this research question have been tabulated in the table below.

**Table 3: Factors Affecting Women Participation in Water Governance**

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Neutral		Strongly Agree	
	Males	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Culturally, women and men have equal opportunities in the workplace.	7 (7)	14 (14)	13 (23)	9 (9)	22 (22)	35 (35)
Gender stereotypical norms and practices guard against women active involvement in water governance in the community	11 (11)	7 (7)	24 (24)	9 (9)	7 (7)	42 (42)
Employment and productive activities affects women participation in water governance	15 (5)	20 (20)	8 (8)	9 (9)	19 (19)	29 (29)

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Poverty and low income of women affects their participation in water governance	23 (23)	15 (15)	3 (3)	4 (4)	16 (16)	39 (39)
Low level of education of women and illiteracy discourages them from involving in water management	11 (11)	8 (8)	11 (11)	7 (7)	20 (20)	43 (43)
Political, chieftaincy and power imbalances affects women participation in water management.	22 (22)	16 (16)	8 (8)	7 (7)	12 (1)	35 (35)
Women role is still the kitchen activities	19 (19)	31 (31)	9 (9)	12 (12)	14 (14)	15 (15)
Gossips against women who participate in water management position discourages them	9 (9)	11 (11)	9 (9)	4 (4)	24 (24)	43 (43)
Men serves as the first contact in the community gives them the traditional advantage over women in participation	14 (14)	9 (9)	13 (13)	7 (7)	15 (15)	42 (42)
Women role is still the kitchen activities	4 (4)	22 (22)	10 (10)	19 (19)	28 (28)	17 (17)

**Source:** Author's Construct, 2018.

The study made use of statements to measure how some identified variables affect the participation of women in water governance in the Offinso North District.

#### 4.5 Cultural Factors

From the results it was seen that fifty – seven percent (57%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that culture allows women and men to have equal opportunities in the workplace. Out of this, 35(35%) were female respondents. Twenty – one percent (21%) of them disagreed to the statement and twenty – two percent (22%) stayed neutral to the statement. This implies that majority of the respondents especially females 35(35%) of 57(57%) think culture is not a limitation to women participation in water governance. This is influenced by the recent campaign by women activist for gender equality with a mantra “*what men can do, women can do it, even better*”. I believe in any case, that campaign should lead to real structural changes in the area of public policy at the community level. The media campaign is not enough to guarantee the prerequisite changes required at the desired level (community level). This concurs with the response from a Focus Group Discussant who told the researcher that; however, this is, contrary to popular belief that the local culture does not give enough freedom to the women; majority of the respondents believes that the local culture does not necessarily hinder the participation of women.

#### 4.6 Gender Stereotypical Norms

The study also found that forty – nine per cent (49%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that gender stereotypical norms and practices guard against women's active involvement in water governance in the community. Out of this, 42 (42%) were female respondents. Eighteen per cent (18%) of them disagreed to the statement and thirty – three percent (33%) of them preferred to stay neutral. Out of 33(33%), 24(24%) were males. This means that majority of respondents 47(47%) out of which 42(42%) female's

belief culture plays a role in undermining women active involvement in water governance.

The findings from the focus group discussions and interviews confirmed this result and made it clear the difference between the gender stereotypes and the local culture. It was revealed that gender stereotypes were from the people themselves in their current state and therefore easily changeable but the culture consist of traditions that has been passed on to the people from older generations. That is the current beliefs and the things they do and say affect the active participation of women in water management. The 18(18%) respondents who disagreed to the statement may be influenced by their exposure to other formal setting who was not inclined to tradition. They may include educated elites in the communities. The 33(33%) out of which 24(24%) were males who stayed neutral represent respondents who do not want to say anything that will result to the review of the current socially male dominated arrangement.

#### **4.7 Poverty and Income Levels of Women**

The study also found out that 55 respondents representing fifty – five per cent (55%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that poverty and low income of women affects their participation in water governance. Out of this, 29(29%) were female respondents. 38 respondents representing thirty – eight per cent (38%) of them disagreed to the statement while 7 respondents representing seven per cent (7%) stayed neutral. This implies that majority of respondents with a strong female’s voice of 29(29%) out of 55(55%) belief that most of the women were into petty trading and some of them do not work at all and stay home as housewives. This makes them low income earners and makes them less effective participants at the community water committee level because they cannot contribute any funds when the need arises.

The people themselves believe that when they accept any position, they cannot perform. The attitudes of the general public and the stigma towards the poor may also be a reason for low morale of the poor segment of our society taking leadership responsibilities. This finding agrees with the fact that to elect a woman to a responsible decision making positions, it does not give room for the seemingly poor women to participate. Chifamba (2013) observed that, in Zimbabwe, elected women were those who command some sort of respect from the community members, or a woman with a certain level of resources such as bicycle or cash (Chifamba, 2013; Omorede, 2014; Marks et al., 2013).

#### **4.8 Low Level of Education**

It was further found that 63 respondents representing sixty – three per cent (63%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that the low level of education of women and illiteracy discourages them from involving in water management. Out of this, 43(43%) were female respondents. Nineteen respondents representing 19% of them disagreed and eighteen respondents representing 8% of them stayed neutral to the statement. This



implies that majority of the respondents 63(63%) out of which 43(43%) females admits that illiteracy is a dominant factor that results to low level of women in water management. The illiterate women view themselves as inferior and cannot do anything. Also, the current social system embraces literacy as basic standard qualification for any leadership position. Concurring to the survey results, DWST leader revealed that Illiteracy is one of the reasons for low involvement of women in community water based committees. I know the field, I go there and I ask for women be placed on the committees but they tell me I am not educated. I cannot be part; in fact what can I bring on board. That is why men continue to dominate the committees, he lamented. 19% of respondents think that education does not matter but other socially accepted norms may be why women were low in water governance committees. The 8 (8%) who stayed neutral may genuinely have no knowledge in the topic.

The study went further to find that 47 respondents representing forty – seven per cent (47%) of the respondents agreed to the statement that political, chieftaincy and power imbalances affects women participation in water management. Out of this, 35(35%) were female respondent. Thirty-eight (38) respondents representing thirty – eight per cent (38%) of them disagreed to the statement while 15 respondents representing fifteen per cent (15%) of them stayed neutral. Thus, a significant respondent many of whom 35(35%) were females believe that the low participation of women in water governance is politics and chieftaincy. Most chiefs and politicians would want favours from any community based established leadership, therefore will show much interest in determining who makes it onto the committees. These unnecessary interferences will eventually result to exclusion of a segment of our society with women bearing the brunt. Confirming the survey outcome, the DWST leader told the researcher this:

#### **4.9 Gossips against Women Who Participate in Water Management Position**

Furthermore, the study brought to light that majority of the respondent representing 67% agrees to the statement that Gossips against women who participate in water management position discourages them. Out of this number 43(43%) were female respondents. Twenty respondents representing 20% disagreed and 13 respondents representing 13% of the respondents stayed neutral to the statement that gossips against women who participate in water management position discourages them. This indicates respondents mostly females of 43(43%) out 67(67%) assert that gossips against women discourage them.

This further explains how women attach premium to gossip and it concurs with Boateng's view who said ridicule coupled with destructive criticisms from people especially at the lower level, women mostly out of jealousy gossip about them of trying to gain recognition from men. These breeds loss of confidence and discourage them from talking on issues pertaining to their welfare in public. Hence men take the initiative and decide for them (Boateng et al., 2013a). Contrary to the above, a Focus Group member told me:

*“For me, I do not care about gossip; I became a member of the WATSAN committee voluntarily. You know as a woman, water is important to my life and water is a big challenge in this community. Could you believe that here in Srentiatia community, over 500 people were sharing just a single borehole? Due to numerous challenges of our water system, the WATSAN members, all the men, were not helping so I took it upon myself voluntarily supported by ‘Odikro’, I performed the role of water fees collection, maintenance and repairs and now it’s better.” (WATSAN committee member at Srentiatia, May, 2018)*

This FGD participant agreed with 20(20%) who think that gossip against women do not discourage them from participating in community based water committees. This may be influenced by individual level decision and personal values. The 13(13%) cannot appreciate the question and do not want to take any position that they do not understand.

#### **4.10 Serving as the Traditionally Accepted**

Moreover, the survey revealed that fifty – seven (57) respondents representing 57% agrees to the statement that men serving as the traditionally accepted first contact in the various communities gives them advantage over women in community WATSAN committee participation. Out of this 42 (42%) were female respondents. Twenty-three respondents (23) representing 23% disagreed with the statement while twenty respondents representing 20% stayed neutral. This implies that most respondents especially females 42 (42%) out of 57(57%) were of the view that men being the entry points in the community gives them the opportunity to serve their interest first before women. This is based on previous knowledge of respondent on the known tradition and their experiences. The survey consolidates Meinzen et al argument that, implementing governmental or non-governmental agencies often contact male elite farmers, either because they were known from them or because they were a compulsory entry point in the community to lead any intervention (Meinzen-Dick & Zwarteveen, 1998, Sultana, 2009). The 23 (23%) who disagreed to the statement may be influenced by personal belief for gender parity or non-appreciation of the effects of the traditional structure. The 20(20%) who stayed neutral may be deliberately neutral in order not to provoke gender debate that will result to home-based conflict.

Question eleven sought to know whether there is any other cultural practice(s) that reinforces the exclusion of women in water governance in the Offinso North District. 62 respondents representing 62% answered in the affirmative Out of this 40(40%) were male’s respondents. while 23 respondents representing 23% answered no. Also 15 respondents representing 15% were unsure about any cultural practice that reinforces women exclusion in the district. This implies that majority of the respondent’s 62(62%) out of which 40(40%) were male’s beliefs that there were other cultural practices that reinforces women exclusion from water management in the OND. This indicates that the men enjoy the current social structure which favours them.

**4.11 Research Question Three:** What were the challenges faced by women actively involved in water management in the OND?

Across the globe, the social and economic roles as well as women's positions in society as major water users make them the heavily affected people in the face of water scarcity and poor water supply. Even though the water crisis is observed as a general problem for the rural population, women bear the greatest burden because of their socially engendered roles, which involve looking for and collecting water for their households (Buckingham, 2000). Therefore, there is consensus in literature that participation by both men and women, not as objects of development but as equal partners, is essential for sustained interventions. However, despite women's important involvement in water and their multiple uses of water, women's participation in water management has been low (Meinzen- Dick, 1998). Nonetheless, there were few women on water committees and the current studies evaluate the challenges faced by women actively involved in water management. Some of the challenges include low level of education, gossip against women, intimidation by men and inadequate time.

**A. Low Level of Education**

Low level of education was identified as a major challenge to meaningful participation of women actively involved in water management. All FGD participants except two believe uneducated women could not comprehend and understand key issues on the table to inform their contributions. Uneducated women could not also read workshop manuals to familiarised themselves with the new guidelines for community water administration. This reaffirms the assertion that women non-participation in formal settings is due to a high illiteracy level and male dominance (Sultana, 2009). However, two FGD participants rejected the assertion said despite their illiteracy, they were able to speak and manage water facilities. Therefore, for women to be able to participate and make meaningful contributions in water management, they should have an appreciable level of education at least up to secondary level where they can demonstrate the ability to read, write, understand and indeed interpret the medium of communication. This is because throughout the interview and FGD the participant except two repeatedly referred to the inability to read and write as a disability to their involvement in decision-making.

**B. Timing**

Homework responsibilities of women such as childbearing and nurturing, cooking, washing, fetching of water and firewood and cleaning consume a lot of their time and attention such that they have little time left to concentrate on WATSAN activities especially in the areas of community decision making. The DWST head and most of the FGD participants recounted several instances where women on WATSAN committees had failed to participate in their meetings and workshops. This they overwhelmingly attributed to the fact that women played other home responsibilities. Also, inappropriate timing of WATSAN meetings normally on decision making affected women. Some male respondents were of the view that it is indeed the lack of interest in community development issues that serves as a challenge to women's participation,

making their case further said that whenever the chief calls the entire community for a meeting, majority of the women do not show-up using their household chores as an excuse.

The women respondents heavily disagreed with this assertion intimating that their homework burden was a major challenge to their involvement in community water delivery. It is clear from the above response which affirms that the nature of home and economic activities of most women affects their effectiveness in the water delivery. According to Boateng et al., (2013b) stated that domestic and economic activities also serve as a barrier to women participation in community water projects. They added that most meetings were held in the evenings when most women were busily preparing domestic chores of trading made it difficult for them to partake in such meetings. Domestic work-load therefore seems to be the major reason for the differences in the level of participation of men and women in decision making and planning in community water delivery.

### **C. Intimidation and Gossip**

This study observed that men in their bid to perpetuate the acceptable ways of doing things in most rural communities in the OND, happens to hinder the effective involvement of women in the decision making process by way of intimidation. In the proper context of culture, for a woman to remain silence when men were talking was a norm that was highly obeyed. Unacceptably, this kind of behaviour has led in the timid nature of most rural women of our days. However, time has challenged and women were consistently encouraged to participate in all forms of development especially water. The few women who were in the water committees and were loud mouthed suffered intimidation especially during decision making and planning.

The responses corroborates the assertion by Boateng et al (2013a), who said that Fear of being criticized, ridiculed coupled with destructive criticisms from people especially at the lower level, men gossip about them of trying to gain recognition from them and authority. Boateng added that these breeds loss of confidence and discourage them to talk on issues pertaining to their welfare in public. Hence men take the initiative and decide for them. This mentality has crept into women of today and has made them not interested in decision making where men were present because of fear of criticisms from other women (Mensah, 2015). Despite series of workshops and sensitization programmes on the need to accept women space for their voices to be heard, according to the DWST leader, it had yielded or little gains had been achieved. This notion was corroborated by the challenges of some women to speak even in the presence of their fellow women at the FGDs. They sometimes second by affirmative head nodding or remained quiet.

## **5. Summary of Findings**

Even though participation has gained development orthodoxy and has been duly recognized in many forums held over the years. There is consensus that the

sustainability of any development project is dramatically enhanced when all the stakeholders in the project delivery were involved. However, involvement of key stakeholders depended on the nature of design, implementation and maintenance of the water facility. Various efforts have been made by successive governments to ensure equitable participation of both men and women in community development especially in the delivery of basic infrastructure such as water projects in communities. Even though these measures have succeeded in increasing the number of women on decision-making arena, still these interventions have failed to ensure equitable involvement of both genders in the area of community water management. This is despite that women are the majority in Ghana.

The argument is that these interventions have been designed by merely addressing the surface problems undermining women participation while ignoring the structural factors that perpetuate inequality in participation. This still keep poor women folks suitable for subservient responsibilities in our communities in terms of voice on issues affecting them. The research focused on addressing four main questions regarding the involvement of women in planning and management of community water delivery, the socio cultural factors affecting women, motivating factors of women actively involved in water management and the challenges women actively involved in water management faced.

### **5.1 Women Involvement in Water Planning and Management**

With this objective, data analysed revealed that women participated in the three major stages of water projects in the OND. There are: planning stage, implementation stage and management stage. However, it was noted that women were more active at the implementation stage (where physical labour is required such as fetching of water) and management stage (where many of them served as daily caretakers of the water facility including money collection). Planning stage where major decisions were taken had few women whose positions were not influential to drive the decisions of the planning committee. Also, the study identified chiefs, Queen mothers and other opinion leaders that have played a key role in the management of water in the OND.

### **5.2 Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Women Participation in Water Management**

The study revealed that there were no known socio-cultural practices and traditions that impede women's involvement in water management in the study area today. However, our entrenched patriarchal systems and ideologies give men more opportunities in decision making process in our communities more than women. It was further observed that women were allowed fully at the implementation stage but at the decision making stage, which is key, women who were there could not express themselves.

### **5.3 Challenges Faced by Women Actively Involved in Water Management**

On the fourth research objective on challenges faced by women actively involved in water management, the study revealed three challenges. These were; low level of education, gossip or intimidation by men and inadequate time. For instance, the literate ones mostly men contributed so much to discussions because they could read write and interpret within logical sense. Even though women participation is becoming appreciative with regards to water projects of OND, there is still a wide range of challenges facing women actively involved in the decision making process.

These discouraged women actively involved in water management despite the fact that the used language was local. Also, women overwhelmingly asserted that their home responsibilities were not favourable to them to attend meetings. Besides, some men on the water committees have killed the confidence of women to contribute strategically to discussions. Men on the committees; mock, intimidate, gossip and hijack the process to the detriment and subdue women participants. These challenges have successfully made women in many communities, content with their subservient roles at the implementation and management stages of the water project. Thus, leaving the decision-making level the preserve for men. It is against this backdrop that this research likened women participation as passive.

## **6. Conclusion**

The conclusive argument has been that both men and women need to have equal participation in community water delivery and that for this to be achieved; access to certain basic facilities such as education, health and economic facilities should be made available and indeed accessible by all especially women. Women contributions to community water delivery in the study area is still limited to physical labour, food and fees collection at the designated points.

### **6.1 Women Involvement in Water Planning and Management**

From the findings, the first objective concludes that the limited role of women in decision-making regarding water management means that women's perspectives, needs and knowledge, ideas, experiences, concerns, and proposed solutions were often ignored. Because women were recognised as major resource users especially water, they were the ones who were directly affected by water management policies.

### **6.2 Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Women Participation in Water Management**

An understanding of gender based difference is crucial for developing policies aimed at sustained resource use and improved health and well-being. Thus, women were not equally treated as partners in the development of social, political and economic management policies, and they were not involved at all levels. The goal of development cannot be achieved if specific plans and expertise do no work to improve women's position and condition.

### **6.3 Challenges Faced by Women Actively Involved in Water Management**

The low levels of formal education of women and by extension low capacity among women, especially rural women, increased their inability to master courage to speak on issues affecting them. These make them vulnerable to gender discrimination perpetuated by men on women on the committees in the form of intimidation. This makes women generally accept their subservient positions in society. They also reduce their ability to participate in water management issues and increased their likelihood of being excluded from new opportunities. Even if women were given the chance, they cannot take advantage of participatory opportunities because of their low capacity to interact in the settings in which they were placed.

## **7. Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to improve the participation of women in the management of water sources in the OND.

- 1) During the planning process, the Rural Water and Sanitation Team (RWST) through the existing local networks, such as chiefs, elders, and Assembly members should inform and encourage community members, especially women, to attend public meetings by assigning 40% of contributions and questions to women.
- 2) The Community Water and Sanitation Agency should assign some key roles to Chiefs and Queen Mothers in water management.
- 3) There is a need to establish appropriate policies and guidelines that gives quota for women representation in community water management. This provision should reflect the local culture of the people to enable women to have equal opportunities in resource allocation and management and to share their views and concerns in decision-making. To ensure the absolute engagement of women in decision making, women must be evenly represented and treated as interest groups on all platforms.
- 4) Beside the quota approach, other approaches such as the mode of women involvement, and conducive participatory mechanisms such as places of meeting, times of meeting, incentives for women participants should considered.
- 5) Also, ceremonies should be organised to award women for their courage and dedication to community water management activities.
- 6) Further, training workshops for women will help build their courage, capacity, morale as well as their self-esteem to effectively participate in the water management process.

## **8. Scope for Future Research**

Having delved into the given research questions within the stated scope of this study, it was realized that certain important related issues were not covered by the study. In an

attempt to explore the Participation of women in community water delivery in the Offinso North District of the Ashanti region of Ghana, this current study only emphasised on the engagement of women at the planning, implementation and management stages of the project cycle. Little attention was given to women's involvement at other equally important stages such as the monitoring, and evaluation stages of the water project. Also, other areas such as the role of community leaders (especially the men) in ensuring the effective participation of women specifically at the decision making levels of the project and women's contribution to project's financial management remained unexplored. It is believed that, to effectively and adequately understand the dynamics of women's participation in water management, future research can look into these relevant and interesting areas.

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