

The Rising Tide

A New Look at Water and Gender



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What is it about?

The
RISING TIDE

A New Look at **Water and Gender**

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- A “thinking device” to help visualize the relationship between gender and water
- A contribution to two sets of discourses
 - on the understanding of water more broadly
 - on advancing gender equality.
- A reflection on the path to action
- A question...

How can the tide lift more boats?

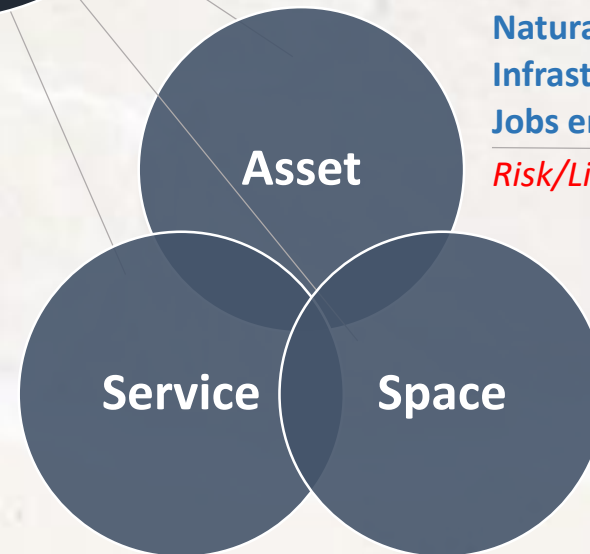
Main messages

1. Presenting a “thinking device - water as ***an asset, a service and a space***.
2. Water is an arena for the play of gender relations that often **mirror inequalities** between the sexes.
3. Gender inequality in water, as elsewhere, is **complex** & surfaces in **unexpected, non-linear ways**
4. **Norms and practices** related to water can exacerbate entrenched gender and other hierarchies.
5. The **nonmonetary, noneconomic values** of water are important for policy and practice.
6. Interventions that **balance gender relations in water-related domains** can have a strong influence in furthering gender equality more broadly.
7. **Policies and programs** can influence change.

1 A thinking device –
water as an asset, a
service and a space.

HOW DO WE
THINK ABOUT
THE **GENDERED**
NATURE OF
WATER?

Water supply
Sanitation
Transport
Irrigation
Information
Technology



Natural resource
Infrastructure
Jobs emanating from water
Risk/Liability

Political space
Physical space
Cultural space
Religious space

2 Water is an arena for the play of gender relations that often mirror inequalities between the sexes.

Ownership and control over assets, employment, wages, household division of labor, exposure to and management of risk, access to services, and decision making.



3 Gender inequality in water, as elsewhere, is complex & surfaces in unexpected, non-linear ways.

Not all women are disadvantaged, nor all men privileged

Race, class, caste ethnicity, place in the life cycle, sexual orientation, location, age matter



Who is more likely to die from drowning?

MALES (twice as likely as females according to the WHO)

Why do we think that's the case?

- Swimming ability & training?
- Permission to be around water bodies?
- More leisure?
- Risky behavior?

4 Norms and practices related to water often exacerbate ingrained gender and other hierarchies.

Informal institutions, taboos, rituals, and norms all play a part in cementing the status quo. Therefore, water often reflects, and even reinforces, gender inequality.

- Men and women have different roles in agriculture and fishing
- Taboos associated with bodily waste of all kinds
- Menstruation and rituals of childbirth as stark examples



5 The nonmonetary, noneconomic values of water are important for policy and practice.

- For effective behavior change, policies and programs need to take account of belief systems.
- **BUT THESE ARE NOT IMMUTABLE AND CHANGE WITH THE RIGHT DESIGN AND INCENTIVES**



6 Interventions that balance gender relations in water-related domains can further gender equality more broadly.



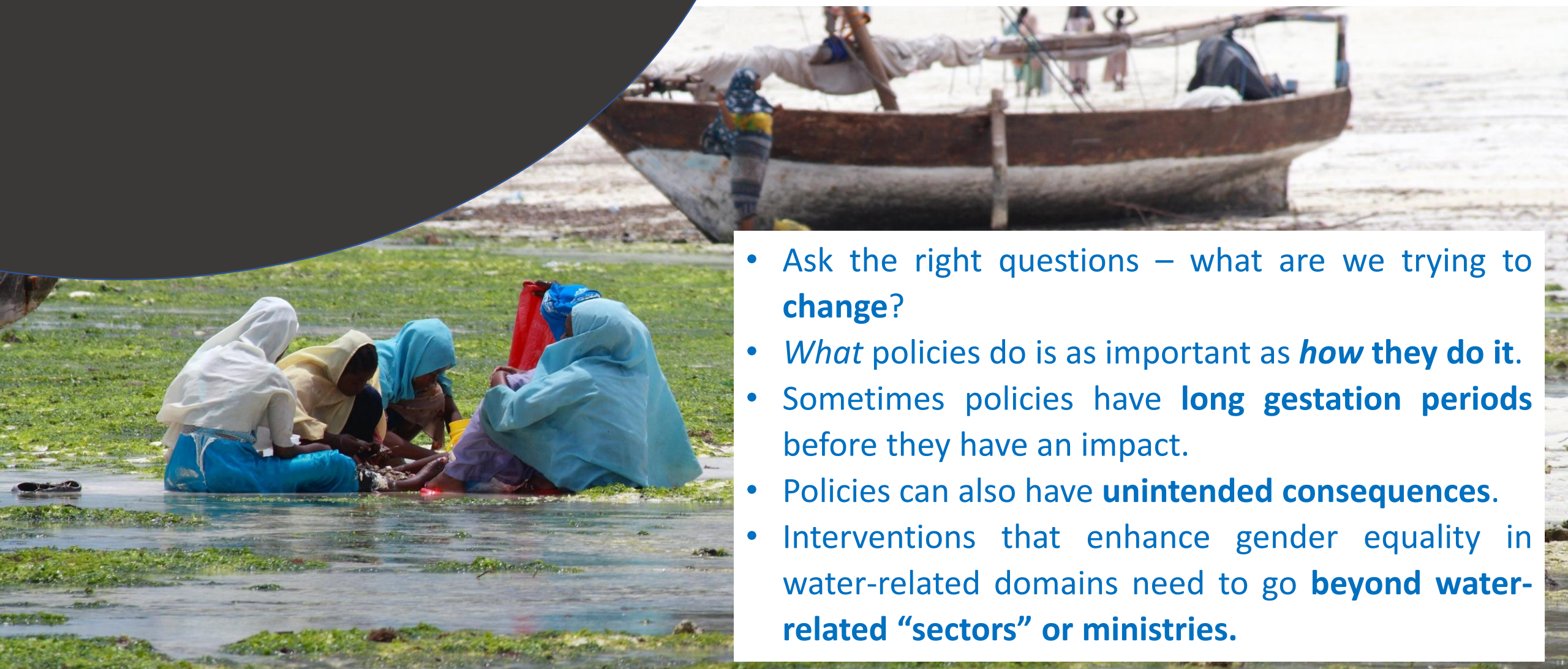
How? Through **assets, services, spaces**

By whom? **Government, communities, individuals and civil society**

- Irrigation and extension services can be improved if spouses have joint titles
- Toilets can affect schooling, employment outcomes
- Formal roles in decision-making can improve overall voice and participation
- Women's groups assert demand rights and create movements.

.....most of these mean **that power relations will change.**

7 Policies and programs can influence change.



- Ask the right questions – what are we trying to **change**?
- *What* policies do is as important as **how** they do it.
- Sometimes policies have **long gestation periods** before they have an impact.
- Policies can also have **unintended consequences**.
- Interventions that enhance gender equality in water-related domains need to go **beyond water-related “sectors” or ministries**.

- Water and gender nexus extends well beyond access to water. There are gendered dimensions of **water as an asset, a service and a space**
- Gender inequality in water is **complex, non-linear, unexpected**
- **Noneconomic, nonmonetary values** of water are important considerations for designing policies and programs
- **Context, cultural and social preferences**, matter
- The first step is to **ask the right questions**:
 1. **Who** – because women are not always disadvantaged.
 2. **How** – where does the exclusion take place? Assets, services, spaces?
 3. **Why** – are there historical, institutional or other reasons for being disadvantaged?
 4. **How** – how to move forward toward greater gender equality?