

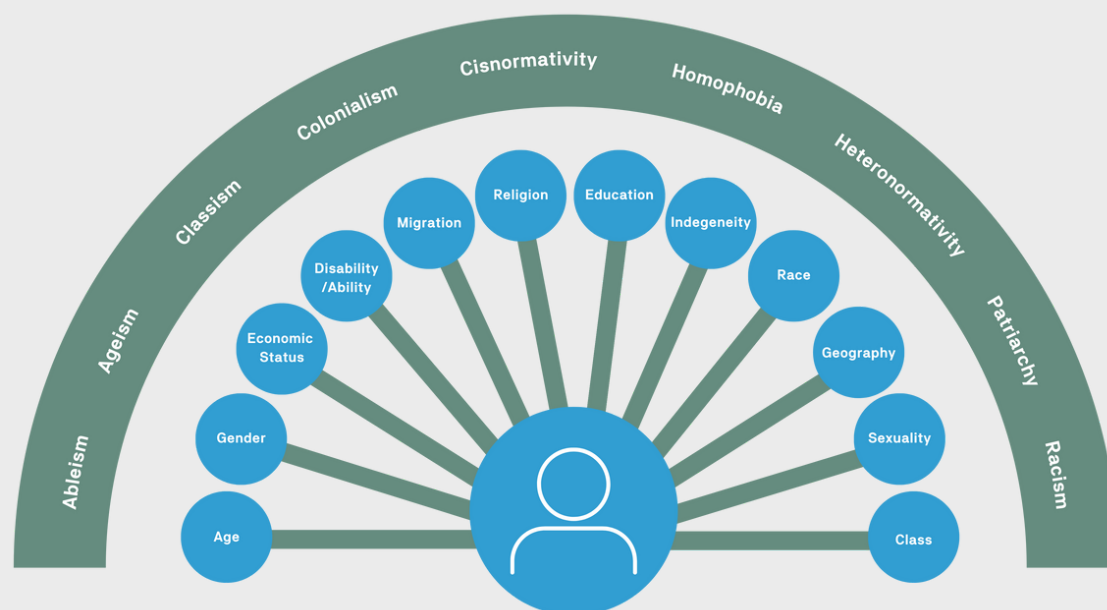
# Intersectionality

## Background to our work on this topic

The term 'intersectionality' is often used to represent the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity shape their experiences in society, and the way in which intersecting societal power structures create oppression and opportunity. It underscores the importance of being aware and sensitive to the multiple individual factors, along with understanding and engaging with societal power structures. These facets interact in complex and compounding ways to collectively influence individual experiences, placing them at an advantage or a disadvantage in various situations.

The figure below presents the key intersectional characteristics of an individual (such as age, class, gender etc.) and interacting societal norms which oppress and disadvantage certain people and groups (as a result of racism, patriarchy, homophobia etc.). This figure demonstrates the complexity of intersectionality dimensions, and how a person can experience many of the dimensions simultaneously. Taking an intersectional perspective enables a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the multiple fluid and stable identities of individuals, and their experiences in, and response to, complex social environments.

The concept of intersectionality and its careful consideration and understanding is important, especially as development organisations strive to 'leave no one behind'. It is also a critical aspect of gender-transformative change, prompting attention to wider range of norms and structures spanning gender equality, class, ableism and other dimensions.



## Our recent thinking and expertise

Through our research, the University of Technology Sydney Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS-ISF) strive to support and promote marginalised voices in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) service provision, engaging with existing societal structures and norms, with a view to institutional change that sees diverse representation in leadership and decision-making.

We have led several projects that aim to strengthen an intersectional perspective in WASH and other international development projects. These include research to understand the multi-dimensional enablers and barriers faced by female WASH workers from an intersectional perspective, to enable them to better participate in and benefit from being part of the government and private sector WASH workforce. We have led sector wide initiatives exploring how WASH organisations can partner with organisations for people with disabilities, gender equality and women's organisations, and sexual and gender minorities organisations in support of intersectional understanding and approaches. We have developed guidance to support WASH workplaces to become more inclusive, providing actionable ideas and tools to address inequalities across the career cycle and taking into account a range of intersectional identities including disability, gender, age and indigeneity.

In addition to applied research, UTS-ISF have also contributed to the discourse, thinking and conceptualisation of intersectionality to inform more nuanced development approaches (refer to examples below).

# Selected examples of our work on intersectionality



## **Intersectionality: Ask the other question**

This think piece delves into some of the key proponents and literature that gave rise to the concept of intersectionality, the debates that informed its evolution and use, and shares some insights on how to “ask the other question” to inform more nuanced development approaches. The article was produced as part of the ‘Gender in WASH: Partnerships, Workforce and Impact Assessment’ project.



## **“A mosaic of identities, opportunities, and challenges: How intersectionality shapes the experiences of female water, sanitation, and hygiene entrepreneurs in Indonesia”**

This paper investigates the intersectional aspects that influence the experiences of female entrepreneurs in WASH sector business activities in Eastern Indonesia.



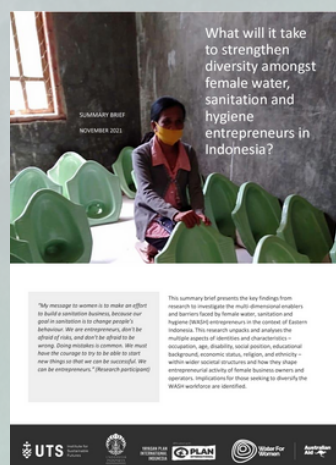
## **Partnerships for Transformation: Guidance for WASH and Rights Holder Organisations.**

This guidance offers insights into effective partnerships between WASH sector organisations and rights holder organisations (RHOs). It provides practical recommendations for effective collaboration in all types of partnerships and is designed to support organisations looking to begin, build or strengthen partnerships to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.



## **Inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) workplaces: Guidance for the WASH Sector**

This guidance document to support WASH workplaces to become more inclusive, highlights the context and provides actionable ideas, tools and responses to GEDSI inequalities across the various stages in a career cycle.



## **“What will it take to strengthen diversity amongst female water, sanitation and hygiene entrepreneurs in Indonesia?”**

This summary brief presents the key findings from research to investigate the multi-dimensional enablers and barriers faced by female WASH entrepreneurs in the context of Eastern Indonesia.



## **“We cannot work alone”: A study of WASH and gender equality civil society partnerships**

Findings from research on the drivers, benefits, and challenges of engagement between WASH civil society organisations (CSOs) and gender equality and women’s rights organisations in Indonesia.



## **Gender equality in the government water, sanitation, and hygiene workforce in Indonesia: an analysis through the Gender at Work framework**

This paper investigates gender dynamics in the Indonesian government's WASH workforce at national and subnational levels and evolves conceptual foundations to be used in similar studies implementing the Gender at Work framework, including insights on intersectional aspects.



## **Working together: A study of WASH and gender equality civil society partnerships in Timor-Leste**

Highlights from a study that aimed to better understand connections and engagement between WASH civil society organisations (CSOs) and women's and gender equality, disability and inclusion (GEDSI) CSOs in Timor-Leste.

For more information: [www.uts.edu.au/isf](http://www.uts.edu.au/isf)

For our WASH projects and resources: <https://www.uts.edu.au/isf/explore-research/international-development/water-sanitation-and-hygiene-wash>

Who we are: We work to create a world that is socially, ecologically and economically just and safe, where everyone has the resources and skills they need to flourish. UTS-ISF brings together expertise from a diverse range of disciplines to deliver practical solutions for our partners, and to empower our students to effect positive change in the years to come.

Let's collaborate: For more information or to collaborate with us, please contact Juliet Willetts, [Juliet.willetts@uts.edu.au](mailto:Juliet.willetts@uts.edu.au)