

Women's Participation in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations: An Assessment of Socio-Economic Benefits and Empowerment Challenges in Monduli District, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigates women's participation in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs) in Monduli District, Tanzania, focusing on the socio-economic benefits and challenges associated with their involvement. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to provide a comprehensive analysis of women's roles in water governance. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 45 women involved in CBWSOs, alongside key informant interviews with local leaders and CBWSO officials, as well as a survey to quantify the extent of women's participation and the benefits they derive from these roles. The study explores women's involvement in decision-making, leadership, and resource management, highlighting the socio-economic benefits such as income generation, improved health outcomes, and enhanced community recognition. Despite these benefits, the research identifies significant barriers, including cultural norms, limited access to training, and institutional resistance, which hinder women's empowerment in water governance. The study proposes several strategies to enhance women's leadership and participation in CBWSOs, including the implementation of gender-responsive policies, capacity-building programs, flexible meeting schedules, and long-term community sensitization campaigns. The findings contribute to the broader discussion on gender equality in water governance, offering practical recommendations for promoting women's empowerment and fostering sustainable, inclusive water management practices in rural Tanzania.

Key words: Women's Participation, Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs), Gender Empowerment, Water Governance, Sustainable Water Resources

1.0 Introduction:

Water is a fundamental resource that is crucial for survival, economic development, and the overall well-being of individuals and communities. However, increasing global pressures—such as population growth, climate change, urbanization,

and the unsustainable use of water resources—have intensified the challenges related to water access. The United Nations has warned that more than two billion people live in areas facing high water stress, with the situation expected to worsen

due to the effects of climate change, deforestation, and pollution (UN, 2022). These water-related challenges are particularly acute in rural areas, where water scarcity is compounded by inadequate infrastructure and limited access to water treatment and sanitation services (Dube et al., 2023).

In rural communities, women are often the primary water collectors, responsible for ensuring their households have access to clean and safe water. This role places women at the forefront of water-related challenges, but it also underscores the gendered nature of water governance (Hussein et al., 2023). While women are key stakeholders in water use and management, their participation in formal decision-making processes related to water governance remains limited (Kariuki & Lang'at, 2023). Cultural and social norms often restrict their involvement in leadership roles and in shaping policies and programs that affect their lives (Mwaura & Lenga, 2023).

At the global level, the importance of including women in water governance has been recognized as essential for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which seeks to ensure universal access to water and sanitation (UN Women, 2023). However, despite global and national efforts to integrate gender-sensitive approaches into water management policies, women's roles in water governance—particularly in rural and marginalized communities—remain underrepresented in formal structures and decision-making positions (Kariuki & Lang'at, 2023).

In Tanzania, Monduli District—located in the Arusha region—is a predominantly rural area that faces significant challenges related to water access and governance. The district is home to various ethnic groups, including pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, many of whom rely on natural water sources that are increasingly threatened by climate change and population pressures (Tanzania Water Partnership, 2022). In response to these challenges, Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs) have been established

to manage local water resources and ensure equitable access to clean water. These organizations are vital for the sustainability of water systems in rural communities, but they often struggle to incorporate gender-equitable practices in their governance structures (Hussein et al., 2023).

Despite women's vital roles in managing household water needs, their participation in CBWSOs is limited. The leadership roles in these organizations are often dominated by men, influenced by traditional gender norms that prioritize men in decision-making (Mwaura & Lenga, 2023). Moreover, women in rural areas of Monduli face barriers to active participation due to factors such as limited access to education, training, and resources (Dube et al., 2023). This exclusion from leadership positions in water governance further marginalizes women, perpetuating gender inequality and limiting the effectiveness of water management initiatives (Tanzania Water Partnership, 2022).

In Monduli, the empowerment of women in water governance is crucial not only for promoting sustainable water management but also for ensuring that women's voices are heard in shaping policies and programs that directly affect their lives. Women's involvement in water governance can help address issues such as water scarcity, sanitation, and health, which are particularly pressing in rural areas (UN Women, 2023). By fostering an inclusive governance structure, CBWSOs can better serve the needs of the entire community, ensuring that both men and women benefit equally from improved water access and management (Hussein et al., 2023).

This study aims to explore the extent of women's participation in CBWSOs in Monduli District, focusing on the socio-economic benefits derived from their involvement and the barriers that limit their empowerment. It also seeks to identify strategies for enhancing women's leadership and participation in these organizations, contributing to the broader goal of gender equality in water governance. Through this research, the study will

highlight the importance of integrating gender-responsive approaches into water management practices and provide recommendations for promoting women's empowerment at the local level, ensuring more sustainable and inclusive water governance in Monduli District.

2. Research Methodology:

2.1 Study Area:

The study was conducted in Meserani Bwawani and Mto wa Mbu in Monduli District, Arusha Region. These areas face recurrent water shortages, and CBWSOs play a key role in water distribution.

2.2 Research Approach and Design:

A mixed-methods approach was used, integrating quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to capture a holistic understanding of gender dynamics in water governance. The study employed a cross-sectional research design to assess current conditions and trends.

2.3 Data Collection Methods:

Structured questionnaires were administered to 150 CBWSO members (70% women, 30% men) to assess participation levels, decision-making roles, and socio-economic benefits. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Conducted with 15 CBWSO leaders and local government officials to understand policy implementation and institutional challenges. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Six FGDs were held with women involved in CBWSOs to explore gender-related challenges and opportunities. Document Analysis: Policy documents, CBWSO records, and government reports were reviewed for contextual insights.

2.4 Data Analysis:

Quantitative Data: Analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics (percentages, means) and inferential statistics (chi-square tests) to identify patterns in women's participation. **Qualitative Data:** Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes related to gender norms, empowerment, and institutional barriers.

3. Findings and Discussion:

3.1 Factors Influencing Women's Participation in CBWSOs:

Women's participation in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs) is crucial for achieving equitable and sustainable water governance. However, findings from this study indicate that women's involvement remains limited due to several intersecting barriers. These barriers—ranging from cultural norms to institutional limitations—reinforce gender disparities in leadership and decision-making roles.

3.1.1 Cultural Norms as a Barrier:

Cultural norms emerged as the most significant barrier, with 65% of respondents indicating that leadership in CBWSOs is traditionally perceived as a male domain. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed that many community elders and male leaders resist women's leadership, arguing that governance roles require assertiveness and decision-making authority, traits often socially ascribed to men. From an institutional perspective, structural gender biases within community governance further reinforce these cultural beliefs. For instance, women who attempt to assume leadership positions often face social stigma and exclusion from critical decision-making processes. Some women reported feeling discouraged due to a lack of mentorship and role models in leadership, making it challenging to break the long-standing male dominance in CBWSOs. This shows that unless deliberate efforts are made to challenge these norms—through gender-awareness programs and advocacy—women will continue to be marginalized in water governance (Mukasa & Huyer, 2023).

3.1.2 Limited Education and Training:

Education and technical expertise play a vital role in water governance, particularly in managing water systems, budgeting, and policy implementation. However, 60% of surveyed women cited a lack of technical knowledge as a key barrier to their participation in CBWSOs.

Interviews with CBWSO members revealed that most leadership roles require familiarity with water resource management, financial literacy, and governance structures—areas where many women have limited exposure. Additionally, women’s lower literacy rates, particularly in rural areas, reduce their ability to engage in training programs that could enhance their competencies. Addressing this barrier requires targeted capacity-building initiatives such as training programs in leadership, water management, and financial planning. Encouraging mentorship programs where experienced women train newcomers can also bridge the skills gap (Cheng et al., 2023; Muhandiki et al., 2023).

3.1.3 Time Constraints Due to Domestic Responsibilities:

The highest reported barrier was time constraints, with 75% of women stating that household responsibilities limit their availability for CBWSO

meetings and activities. Women in rural communities often bear the primary burden of unpaid care work, including cooking, childcare, and fetching water—leaving them with little time for leadership or governance roles. FGDs further revealed that CBWSO meetings are frequently scheduled at times that conflict with household duties, making it difficult for women to attend. Some participants noted that even when they express interest in leadership, they are discouraged by their families, who perceive such roles as additional burdens that interfere with household responsibilities. As noted in the findings, to increase women’s participation, CBWSOs must adopt gender-sensitive meeting schedules and provide childcare support during meetings. Encouraging men to take on a more active role in domestic responsibilities could also free up time for women to engage in governance roles (Mwaura & Lenga, 2023; Makoi et al., 2022).

Table 1: Barriers to Women's Participation in CBWSOs

Barrier	(%)	Key Observations from FGDs/Interviews
Cultural Norms	65%	Leadership perceived as a male domain, with resistance from community elders.
Limited Education and Training	60%	Lack of technical skills limits confidence and participation in governance.
Time Constraints	75%	Domestic responsibilities prevent regular attendance at meetings.
Financial Constraints	40%	Inability to afford training or travel to attend CBWSO-related activities.
Lack of Institutional Support	55%	Absence of policies that actively promote women’s leadership.

Source: *Field data, 2024*

3.1.4 Financial Constraints:

Economic barriers also play a significant role, with 40% of surveyed women citing financial limitations as a key obstacle. Leadership in CBWSOs often requires individuals to attend workshops, training sessions, and community meetings—many of which involve transportation costs or participation fees that women may

struggle to afford. Furthermore, in cases where CBWSO leadership positions are voluntary, women prioritize income-generating activities over unpaid governance roles. Interviews revealed that, due to financial constraints, some women prefer to engage in small-scale businesses or casual labor rather than dedicate time to CBWSO governance, which does not offer immediate

financial returns. Moreover, providing stipends or financial incentives for women leaders in CBWSOs could help mitigate this issue. Additionally, scholarships for training programs and subsidized transportation costs could encourage greater participation (Boogaard et al., 2021; Khainga & Mmbaga, 2022).

3.1.5 Lack of Institutional Support:

Over 55% of respondents indicated that inadequate institutional support hindered their ability to participate in CBWSOs. Although national policies, such as Tanzania's Water Sector Development Programme (WSDP), advocate for gender-inclusive water governance, the enforcement of these policies at the community level remains weak. Interviews with local officials highlighted the absence of structured mechanisms to ensure that women have equal representation in leadership roles. While some CBWSOs have policies promoting gender inclusivity, these guidelines are rarely implemented due to: a lack of accountability mechanisms to track women's participation, limited awareness among community members about gender-related policies, and male-dominated decision-making bodies that resist policy enforcement. This implies that strengthening institutional frameworks to support women's leadership in CBWSOs is critical. This includes introducing quotas for women's representation, establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and ensuring that gender policies are effectively enforced at the local level (Chianu et al., 2023; Mfongos et al., 2021).

3.2 Forms of Women's Participation:

The table presents an analysis of women's participation in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs) across various roles and leadership positions. The following discussion breaks down the findings based on the data provided:

3.2.1 Water Distribution (45% Participation, 10% Leadership):

A substantial 45% of women participate in water distribution activities within CBWSOs. This

reflects their active engagement in the operational aspect of water management, which is critical to the success of water supply programs. Women's role in this function is often practical and directly tied to daily household needs, suggesting that women may feel a personal connection to the activity, given their traditional responsibility for water collection in many communities. However, only 10% of women hold leadership roles in water distribution. This discrepancy indicates that while women are integral to the water distribution process, their participation in decision-making or managerial roles remains limited. This could be due to systemic barriers such as gender stereotypes, social norms, or a lack of access to leadership training, which may prevent women from advancing into leadership positions in these organizations (Sakilika et al., 2022; Ujunwa et al., 2023).

3.2.2 Hygiene and Sanitation Education (30% Participation, 15% Leadership):

Thirty percent of women are involved in hygiene and sanitation education, which is a critical function in maintaining public health, especially in rural or underserved areas. Women's participation in this area could be influenced by their historical roles as caregivers, which makes them well-suited to promote hygiene and sanitation practices within their families and communities. The 15% leadership involvement shows that a small yet notable proportion of women take on leadership roles in hygiene and sanitation education. This is a promising indicator of women's potential to lead in public health and education sectors, suggesting that when given the opportunity, women can take charge of vital community functions. However, the relatively low percentage of women in leadership positions may still point to the challenges they face in securing these roles, possibly due to insufficient access to leadership training or societal expectations about women's roles (Amin et al., 2023; Kische et al., 2023).

3.2.3 Fee Collection (25% Participation, 5% Leadership):

A quarter of women are involved in fee collection, which is a key administrative function in many CBWSOs. Women's engagement in this role could reflect their active participation in the financial aspects of water supply management, which may also link to their responsibility for household financial decisions. However, only 5% of women

hold leadership positions in fee collection. This suggests that while women may engage with the day-to-day operations of financial management, the strategic and decision-making aspects of fee collection remain dominated by men. This could be due to the perception that financial management is a male-dominated sphere, or a result of gender bias in assigning leadership roles related to finance (Rosenberg et al., 2022; Teri, 2023).

Table 2: Women's Roles in CBWSOs

Type of Participation	Women Participation (%)	Women Leadership (%)
Water Distribution	45%	10%
Hygiene and Sanitation Education	30%	15%
Fee Collection	25%	5%
Administrative Roles	15%	20%
Decision-Making Positions	10%	35%

Source; *Field data, 2024*

3.2.4 Administrative Roles (15% Participation, 20% Leadership):

Fifteen percent of women are involved in administrative roles within CBWSOs, which typically include record-keeping, organizing meetings, and other management functions. While this is a lower percentage compared to other roles, it indicates that women are involved in some of the organizational aspects of water supply management. Interestingly, 20% of women hold leadership positions in administrative roles, suggesting that when women do participate in administrative functions, they are more likely to take on leadership roles. This might be because administrative tasks often align with traditional roles that women may be more comfortable with, such as organizing and coordinating. However, the overall low participation in administrative roles points to a gap in women's involvement in the more strategic and influential areas of water management (Chianu et al., 2023; Kische et al., 2023).

3.2.5 Decision-Making Positions (10% Participation, 35% Leadership):

Only 10% of women participate in decision-making positions, the lowest participation rate across all the roles. This highlights a significant gender gap in the ability to influence decisions at a strategic level within CBWSOs. Decision-making positions often come with greater power and influence over the direction of projects, and the low participation of women suggests that barriers such as gender inequality, lack of training, or cultural norms may hinder women's ability to ascend to these positions. Despite the low overall participation, the 35% leadership involvement indicates that a higher proportion of women in decision-making positions hold leadership roles. This could be interpreted as women taking on key leadership roles in the few instances where they are able to participate in decision-making. However, this figure could also reflect tokenism, where women are included in decision-making roles but may have little actual influence on the final outcomes. It may also highlight the potential

for women to lead when given the opportunity and support (Boogaard et al., 2021; Rosenberg et al., 2022).

3.3 Socio-Economic Benefits of CBWSO Participation:

Table 3 provides insights into the socio-economic benefits that women experience through their involvement in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs). These benefits are categorized into income generation, health and hygiene improvements, social empowerment, and enhanced community participation. The table provides both percentages of women reporting these benefits and key observations to contextualize these findings.

3.3.1 Income Generation

Forty percent (40%) of women report income generation as a benefit of their involvement in CBWSOs. Specifically, women who manage water kiosks within these organizations are able to

earn supplementary income. This is an important socio-economic benefit, as it directly contributes to women's financial autonomy and economic security. By managing water kiosks, women engage in the financial aspects of water distribution, which not only helps provide a crucial community service but also empowers them economically. The ability to generate income through water kiosks can significantly improve women's socio-economic status, especially in rural areas where other income-generating opportunities might be limited. This form of income generation gives women more control over household finances and can enhance their bargaining power within the family and the community. However, the percentage of women reporting income generation could indicate that more opportunities for women to manage and benefit from water-related services exist but might not be fully utilized or accessible in all areas (Amin et al., 2023; Teri, 2023).

Table 3: Economic and Social Benefits of Women's Involvement in CBWSOs

Type of Benefit	Percentage (%)	Key Observations
Income Generation	40%	Women managing water kiosks earn supplementary income.
Improved Health and Hygiene	28%	Reduced waterborne diseases and better sanitation practices.
Social Empowerment	50%	Increased recognition and decision-making influence within the household.
Enhanced Community Participation	35%	More women engaging in community meetings and leadership discussions.

Source: Field data, 2024

3.3.2 Improved Health and Hygiene:

Twenty-eight percent (28%) of women reported improved health and hygiene as a benefit of their participation in CBWSOs. This includes reduced waterborne diseases and better sanitation practices, which are crucial for community well-being. Women's involvement in water supply

management directly correlates with improved public health outcomes, particularly by ensuring access to clean water and promoting hygiene education. Women's participation in CBWSOs helps raise awareness about the importance of water quality and sanitation, which has direct

health benefits. The reduction of waterborne diseases, which disproportionately affect women and children, highlights the role of women in not only ensuring access to water but also advocating for better hygiene practices. However, the relatively lower percentage of women reporting this benefit may indicate that health and sanitation improvements might still be concentrated in areas where access to water and sanitation infrastructure is already strong, leaving some women outside these improved conditions (Nielsen et al., 2022; Boogaard et al., 2021).

3.3.3 Social Empowerment (50% Reporting):

Half of the women (50%) involved in CBWSOs report experiencing social empowerment as a key benefit. This empowerment manifests in increased recognition and a stronger influence on decision-making within their households. Through their active involvement in CBWSOs, women gain respect and recognition from both their families and communities, which can translate into greater agency and authority. The significant percentage of women reporting social empowerment highlights the positive impact of participating in CBWSOs on women's status within their families and communities. As women take on more visible and influential roles in managing water resources, they challenge traditional gender norms and expand their decision-making authority. This empowerment extends beyond the individual level, potentially influencing broader social dynamics and promoting gender equality. The strong sense of empowerment may also encourage more women to participate in leadership and community activities, contributing to further societal change (Rosenberg et al., 2022; De Lange et al., 2021).

3.3.4 Enhanced Community Participation (35% Reporting):

Thirty-five percent (35%) of women reported enhanced community participation as a benefit of their involvement in CBWSOs. This includes more women engaging in community meetings and leadership discussions, where they can voice their opinions and influence decisions on water

management and community welfare. Enhanced community participation suggests that CBWSOs provide a platform for women to engage more actively in public life, especially in decision-making processes that affect their communities. Through their involvement, women gain a stronger voice in community discussions, which can lead to more inclusive governance. However, the fact that 35% of women report this benefit suggests that there is still room for improvement in encouraging broader female participation. Barriers such as cultural norms, lack of confidence, or limited access to leadership opportunities might still restrict women's ability to fully participate in community governance (Amin et al., 2023; Kishe et al., 2023).

3.4 Strategies for Enhancing Women's Empowerment:

Table 4 outlines recommended strategies for enhancing gender-inclusive governance in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs), focusing on increasing women's participation, leadership, and empowerment. The table provides both the expected impacts of these strategies and potential implementation challenges.

3.4.1 Gender-Responsive Policies:

The implementation of gender-responsive policies is expected to increase leadership opportunities for women within CBWSOs. These policies could involve creating quotas for female leadership, ensuring equal participation in decision-making roles, and promoting gender equality in the organizational structure of CBWSOs. By formally recognizing and institutionalizing the importance of women's involvement, these policies can break down existing barriers and provide women with the resources and support they need to take on leadership roles. A major challenge to implementing gender-responsive policies is the resistance from male-dominated institutions. CBWSOs often operate within communities where traditional gender roles are firmly entrenched, and men may feel threatened by changes that promote women's leadership.

Additionally, organizational structures may be resistant to change due to entrenched patriarchal norms or fears that such policies could disrupt the status quo. Overcoming this resistance requires strong advocacy, sustained efforts from gender equality champions, and the involvement of both men and women in the process to ensure acceptance and buy-in from all stakeholders (Rosenberg et al., 2022; Teri, 2023).

3.4.2 Capacity-Building Programs:

Capacity-building programs are aimed at enhancing women’s skills, knowledge, and confidence, which will increase their ability to take on leadership roles within CBWSOs. These programs could cover areas such as water management, leadership development, financial management, negotiation skills, and organizational governance. By equipping women

with the necessary skills, these programs can help them assume more active and impactful roles in water governance, thereby enhancing their empowerment and participation. The primary challenge with capacity-building programs is the financial investment required to implement them. These programs often need funding for training materials, facilitators, and logistics, and may require sustained support to ensure they reach a large number of women. In addition to financial constraints, there might be logistical challenges in organizing training sessions, particularly in rural areas where access to resources may be limited. Ensuring that these programs are affordable, accessible, and tailored to the specific needs of women in CBWSOs will be essential for their success (Boogaard et al., 2021; Chianu et al., 2023).

Table 4: Recommended Strategies for Gender-Inclusive CBWSO Governance

Strategy	Expected Impact	Implementation Challenges
Gender-Responsive Policies	Increased leadership opportunities for women.	Resistance from male-dominated institutions.
Capacity-Building Programs	Enhances women's skills and confidence.	Requires financial investment.
Flexible Meeting Schedules	Increases women’s participation.	Potential scheduling conflicts with community activities.
Community Sensitization Campaigns	Reduces cultural barriers and stereotypes.	Requires long-term engagement and behavioral change.

Source: Field data, 2024

3.4.3 Flexible Meeting Schedules:

Flexible meeting schedules can significantly increase women's participation in CBWSO activities. Many women, particularly in rural areas, have household and caregiving responsibilities that may prevent them from attending meetings scheduled during traditional working hours. By offering more flexible timing or conducting meetings in the evenings or weekends, CBWSOs can make it easier for women to engage without sacrificing their family

responsibilities. This can help to ensure that women’s voices are heard in decision-making processes and improve their overall participation in the governance of water resources. One potential challenge is that flexible meeting schedules might conflict with other community activities, such as agricultural work, social obligations, or meetings of other local organizations. Coordinating meeting times to accommodate everyone’s schedules can be difficult, and some women may still face barriers

related to time management, particularly those who are already juggling multiple responsibilities. Effective communication and planning are necessary to ensure that meeting schedules do not create conflicts, and that women are able to balance their involvement in CBWSOs with their other commitments (Sacko et al., 2023; Njoroge et al., 2022).

3.4.4 Community Sensitization Campaigns:

Community sensitization campaigns can help reduce cultural barriers and stereotypes that hinder women's participation in CBWSOs. These campaigns aim to shift attitudes and raise awareness about the value of women's contributions to water governance. By addressing traditional gender biases and promoting the importance of gender equality, these campaigns can foster a more supportive environment for women to engage in leadership roles and decision-making processes within the community. The primary challenge with community sensitization campaigns is that they require long-term engagement and behavioral change, which can be slow and difficult to achieve. Changing deep-seated cultural norms and challenging entrenched gender stereotypes takes time and sustained effort. Additionally, there may be resistance from some members of the community, especially men, who might not see the value of gender equality in water governance or may feel uncomfortable with changes in gender roles. Therefore, these campaigns must be carefully designed to engage both men and women, provide clear messages about the benefits of gender equality, and ensure that they are ongoing to achieve meaningful shifts in attitudes (Chirwa & Jowett, 2023; Mtega & Jire, 2022).

4.0 Conclusion:

The findings from this study underscore the significant potential of Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs) to empower women, offering both socio-economic benefits and leadership opportunities. Women's involvement in CBWSOs not only contributes to income generation, improved health, and social

empowerment, but also enhances their participation in decision-making processes. However, despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as institutional resistance, limited resources, and deep-rooted cultural norms still hinder the full realization of gender equality in water governance. The strategies for enhancing women's empowerment—gender-responsive policies, capacity-building programs, flexible meeting schedules, and community sensitization campaigns—have the potential to foster more inclusive and gender-sensitive governance in CBWSOs. While the expected impacts of these strategies are promising, they must be carefully tailored to the specific contexts of each community to overcome implementation barriers. The success of these strategies will depend on sustained efforts, adequate resource allocation, and active engagement from both men and women within the community.

4.1 Recommendations:

In order to enhance women's empowerment in Community-Based Water Supply Organizations (CBWSOs), it is recommended to implement gender-responsive policies that ensure women's equal participation and leadership roles. Capacity-building programs should be prioritized to equip women with essential skills in water management and leadership. Flexible meeting schedules should be adopted to accommodate women's caregiving responsibilities, and alternative participation methods, such as mobile or virtual meetings, should be explored. Long-term community sensitization campaigns are crucial to changing cultural attitudes towards women's leadership. Lastly, fostering collaboration between CBWSOs, local governments, and NGOs will strengthen gender equality initiatives and create a more inclusive and supportive environment for women's involvement in water governance.

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