

Role of Water in Women's Economic Engagement: A Qualitative Investigation in Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, and Zimbabwe

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Background & Objective

Background

- Water is essential for life and development. Insufficient access to quality water impacts women's health, wellbeing, time, and economic opportunities.
- However, little is known about specific role of water on women's ability to engage in economic opportunities.

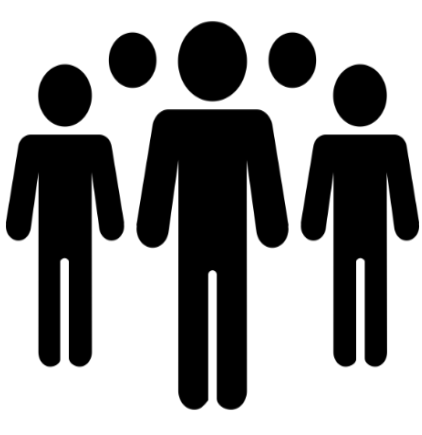
Objective


- We conducted qualitative research to understand the role of water in women's economic engagement in Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

Methods

- All research took place in communities engaged in World Vision's *Strong Women Strong World: Beyond Access* program, which were purposively identified by local World Vision teams
- Participants were purposively identified by local learning partners in each country including Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras, St. Paul's University, Kenya, and Datalyst Africa, Zimbabwe

38 Focus Groups with Women				
	Guatemala	7 FGDs	46 Participants	
	Honduras	7 FGDs	46 Participants	
	Kenya	11 FGDs	88 Participants	
	Zimbabwe	13 FGDs	101 Participants	

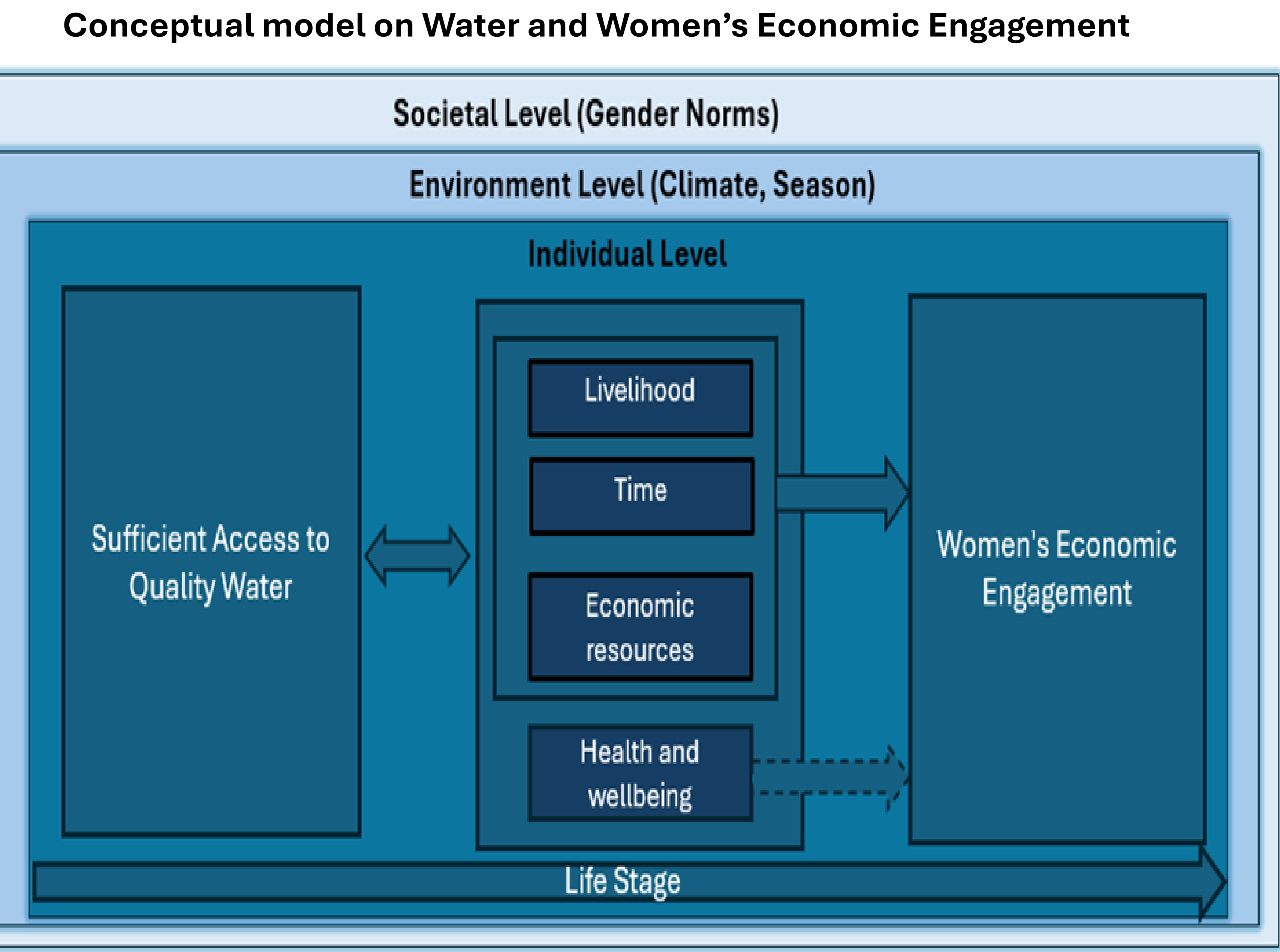
34 Focus Groups with Men				
	Guatemala	7 FGDs	29 Participants	
	Honduras	6 FGDs	35 Participants	
	Kenya	12 FGDs	96 Participants	
	Zimbabwe	9 FGDs	68 Participants	

63 Key Informant Interviews with women and men				
	Guatemala	22 KIIs		
	Honduras	12 KIIs		
	Kenya	13 KIIs		
	Zimbabwe	16 KIIs		

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Findings



Gender norms determine women's household roles & responsibilities

- Water collection is primary responsibility of women & girls**
- Men as household heads, dictate what women can and cannot do
- Widowed, single and unmarried women make all the decisions on water related activities

Access to water & water work influence the time women have to engage in economic & other activities

- Long distances to water sources decrease time and energy to engage in economic and other activities
- Water related work, including mandatory service on water boards & committees, can add substantial burden to already limited time.
- Women shared that planning for other activities is difficult when they spend so much time collecting water & doing water work
- Women said they would save time & engage in economic activities if water was closer

Water impacts women's physical & mental wellbeing, further limiting opportunities

- Women can experience physical injuries, pain, fatigue, body weakness, etc. from carrying heavy water loads over long distances, further diminishing their energy and capacity to pursue economic opportunities
- Women experience stress thinking about water collection processes and related roles
- Lack of sufficient water quantity can affect women's nutrition and personal hygiene, further influencing economic engagement

Water access can shape the type of livelihood & economic activities women engage

- Water source distance and supply influence economic engagement options for women
- Women noted that improved water access and supply could allow women to raise livestock and grow produce to sell
- Prioritization of water collection over livelihood activities hindered sustainability of specific activities
- Flourishing agriculture and livestock production is dependent on water availability

Discussion

- Water collection impacts health, specifically energy and risk of injury. These negative health impacts, coupled with time and opportunity costs, constrain women's abilities to engage in other facets of life, including economic engagement, which could provide well-being benefits to them and their families.
- Programming is necessary that specifically aims to reducing the water-related burdens women face, opening opportunities for economic engagement.