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ROLE CITY ENGINEER

Mayor Zambene had been quite enthusiastic about the visit to the City of Urbana of the State-level Director of Public Works, Water and Sanitation. The mayor had informed you that your presence at next week's multi-stakeholder dialogue will be critical as you are the city's engineer and most knowledgeable about the dire condition of the city's water and sanitation services. The Mayor promised to give you a free hand to direct the engineering work on the city's water and sanitation systems once the national government approves funding to create a community savings and loans association so people can borrow money to build toilets in their houses and contribute funds to construct piped water systems in selected sites within the community.

You are energized by this opportunity to direct your first city-wide engineering project. Hired only two years ago, you have taken on minor engineering projects as the city has had no funding to implement major construction and rehabilitation of the crumbling infrastructure of the city. This program will provide an opportunity for the local government and its citizens to collaborate to meet a critical need for water and sanitation. While government will create a community savings and loans association, the community will need to participate actively in making decisions to construct and afterwards to maintain and repair these water and sanitation facilities. It is a program that will have the potential for long-term sustainability.

But funding from the national government includes a provision for increasing the participation of women, the disabled, and marginalized sectors of society in making decisions about these water and sanitation systems. The national government policy on 'gender inclusive decision-making' emphasizes that men, women, the disabled, use infrastructure differently. And there needs to be a way to make these water and sanitation systems safe and useful to all.

You empathize with the sad plight of women. They spend a lot of time and energy just to secure water supplies for the family and are often harassed and abused by water truck operators and drivers. Your own relatives continue to suffer from the same plight. But how can traditional social norms be changed? In your own experience in engineering school you recognized that any woman wanting to be an engineer had to work 'twice as hard' to be considered 'half as good' as a man.

As a young professional in your first major position, you believe that your main role is to demonstrate that you are highly professional, competent and able to take on increasing responsibility for infrastructure projects of the city. While you are aware that diversity and especially gender inclusive considerations are within the scope of your work, you have not spoken publicly about gender issues in your work. You have not returned the recent phone call from the Director of the NGO called Women Advancing through Education and Resistance (W.A.T.E.R). You would not want to be seen as a strong supporter of this NGO as you feel their tactics are abrasive and will not lead to collaboration with the local government especially the

Office of the Mayor. You cringed when the Director of this NGO publicly berated the mayor on the government's turning a 'blind eye' to the atrocities committed by water operators. Such 'in-your-face' tactics are counter-productive, in your view.

In next week's multi-stakeholder dialogue with the Director of Public Works, Water and Sanitation, you will serve as the source of technical expertise and will share your knowledge about the condition of water and sanitation in the city. You feel confident that the extensive data-gathering exercise you have just completed on the city's water and sanitation systems will give everyone in the meeting the chance to see the immensity of the problem and the urgent need to address these immediately.

You will try to provide a neutral voice, balancing the frustration of the people with the inadequacy of water and sanitation services with the hope that if the program is approved, increased access to clean water and improved sanitation will be an achievable goal for the next 12 months.