

Statement of Women for Water Partnership (WfWP) for CSW63.

(co-signed by IFBW, SI, SEI, NVR)

(access to) Water and sanitation are key for women emancipation and development in general.

Despite the commitment of member states to targets 6.1 and 6.2 (universal access to water and sanitation) of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) / Agenda 2030 and recommendations such as number K of the Commission on the Status of Women 60 agreed conclusions, according to the UN Water synthesis report these targets are seriously lagging behind and will not be met at current “ speed” (UN Water synthesis report 2018).

Access to and equal management of water and sanitation (and as a minimum access to basic, public, services on Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)) are prerequisites for women’s development and empowerment. The water-related labor market, financial independence, education and good health are all unlocked by access to water and sanitation.

Women play a pivotal role in water management. Although this principle nr. 3 (<http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/hwrrp/documents/english/icwedece.html>) has been part of the legacy of and policy on water since 1992 (Dublin principles, 1992), the implementation needs a real boost. Acknowledging women’s traditional and modern roles in water management and governance can help unlock women’s potential in achieving SDG 6 (water and sanitation) and 5 (equality and empowerment) and the wider 2030 Agenda. To reach the SDG targets it is imperative to ensure and enhance women’s professional and voluntary roles and involvement in water.

Current reports show, there will be a huge lack of trained professionals to ensure the water-related targets of the SDGs; one of the reasons is that women have not enough access to relevant education or jobs / hired in these fields (IWA, 2014).

It should be emphasized that pursuant to the human rights to water and sanitation, countries have an obligation to progressively provide safe drinking water and adequate sanitation services, including in the workplace. Countries also have the obligation to guarantee that the right to water is enjoyed without discrimination and equally between men and women. Meeting this obligation will remove one of the major hurdles to girls and adult women having the opportunity to go to school, obtain the appropriate education and training, and hold positions in the workplace, further adding to the economies’ skilled human resource capacity. Clean, safe and readily (uninterrupted) available water in medical posts, homes, schools, workplaces and training institutions is therefore another prerequisite to a healthy economy (edited from OECD, 2011a). As such, investing in water is a winning proposition from economic, environmental and social standpoints.

In many countries, droughts, floods and deforestation increase the risks for women and girls by itself and because of lack of information, persistent cultural roles, etc. Loss of housing, livelihoods and even death are impacting women and girls more than men, because they are left behind including by lack of coping mechanisms due to cultural restraints.

It (also again) increases unpaid time girls and women spend to retrieve water for household chores and small-scale farming e.g., leaving them less time for education or earning an income (ILO, 2013a; UNDP, 2014). Lack of coping mechanisms leads to exponential increase of female-headed / one parent households and internal displacement.

Supporting women, give them at say at the table to decide on policies and measures to prevent disasters, find the right coping mechanisms, build their resilience are crucial elements to prevent

death and destruction as a result of natural disasters.

A lot of investment in water-related infrastructure turns out to be dysfunctional after a very short period of time. One of the main reasons is the lack of maintenance and management due to lack of structural funding and capacity (and not tapping into the competences of local women). To make infrastructure sustainable (affordable, appropriate, accessible), women need to be involved in the design and decision-making and be enabled to play a (professional, paid) role in the upkeep of the infrastructure (e.g. multiple reports from the World Bank <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/IDA/Resources/IDA15Infra-SectionI.pdf>).

Large infrastructure and building of dams e.g. for hydropower and/ or irrigation often lead to displacement of local populations and hence to obviously problems for women and their families. Even if new jobs are created, they are often not suitable to replace loss of income and livelihoods requiring different skill-sets. The use of tools like the Hydropower sustainability assessment protocol can lead to different decisions and designs.(<http://www.hydro-sustainability.org/>)

WfWP urges you to:

- Follow-up on the recommendations of the special rapporteur on the gender aspects of human rights to water and sanitation (https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Water/Pamphlet_GenderEquality.pdf)
- follow-up on the recommendations of the World Water Development report 2016: A number of measures can be undertaken to improve women's participation in, and contribution to the water-related workforce, including: adopting equal opportunity policies and measures; improving sex-disaggregated workforce data sets; addressing cultural barriers, social norms and gender stereotypes; and expanding access to public services and investment in time - and labor saving infrastructure (UNESCO-WWAP, WWDR 2016)
- Acknowledge women's traditional and modern roles to unlock women's potential in achieving SDG 6 and 5 combined and the wider 2030 Agenda. To reach the SDG targets it is imperative to ensure and enhance women's professional and voluntary roles and involvement in "water"
- Invest in vocational education / training for women (in non-traditional occupations) to ensure they can obtain jobs in also managing and maintaining water-related infrastructure and better managing water use in many occupations such as agriculture, health care, etc.
- Adapt human resource policies together with business and other organizations to enhance the gender balance in the workplace at all levels
- Promote the use of the Hydropower Sustainable Assessment protocol to ensure social impacts are taken into account
- Promote the adoption of the Women Empowerment principles (http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/womens_empowerment_principles_ppt_for_29_mar_briefing-without_notes.pdf)
- Agree to a dedicated World Water Day on water and women that can help to unlock this major, persisting issue.