

Summary of seminar Women and Youth:

Both women and youth encounter distinctive hurdles and challenges in their fight for equality within the water sector. The seminar series “Women and Youth: Living apart together” exposed the stark reality of the gender and age-related disparities in a masculine dominated water sector and challenged the tokenism of women and youth inclusion. The seminar explored three aspects to identify and transform the water sector. By giving voice and agency for meaningful change, women and youth are able to unlock their untapped potential and ultimately transform the water sector, thus incorporating the conference’s overarching theme, Water for Society: Including all. Creating a safe space for women and youth matter to enhance their meaningful participation. Empowerment processes need to be established to ensure that stakeholders will participate equally and that their voices are being heard. Context specific action is essential for all projects to understand gender and youth patterns and shift the policy and practice in the water sector.

The overarching key messages from these presentations and discussions were:

1. While women represent more than 50% of the world population, less than 1% of development aid is designated to women and their organisations directly. To, achieve equality in water and sanitation, there is need for an equal share in funding.
2. To break the cycle of masculine managed water, a shift in policy discourse, actors and power relations is required.
3. The voices and meaningful participation of women and youth bring equality to the water sector and investing in youth and women is key to support change.

Recommendation

- Water programmes must be designed and implemented, so that no one is left behind. Intersectionality and diversity considerations are needed in design, decision-making and implementation phases, inclusive of both rich and poor, and young and old. Sex-disaggregated water data through methodologies based on intra-household surveys are relevant throughout the programme cycle. Again, for this to happen adequate funding is needed as well as great commitment of the practitioners, policy- and decision makers.

Initiatives, tools, networks

- **Youth Mentorship Programmes** pairing professionals with students and young people entering the water sector thus cultivating the next generation of water leaders are highly relevant.
- **Men’s engagement** must be considered as part of promoting gender mainstreaming in reducing masculinity in the water sector. With the goal of bridging the gap, advocating gender equality among boys and men, and including them in discussions on gender inequality, are important to make them aware of the very social structure in the water sector and beyond. SDG 6 can never be achieved without involving men and boys, nor without women and girls.
- Social enterprise can be a solution to equality and understanding grassroot context can enhance and shift the practice in water when the interlinkages between water, women, youth and governance are being made.

