

WfWP BLOG July 2020/ LW

Human Rights to water and sanitation: we celebrate or mourn?

On the 28 July 2010, the UN general assembly accepted the first resolution on the human right to water and sanitation. The Human right to water and sanitation is the only human right specifically mentioned in agenda 2030.

Access to water and sanitation – as phrased especially in SDG 6.1 and 6.2 - is an equality and equity issue. In many cases access to safely managed water and sanitation is key to access to education, plays a huge role in ensuring health (care), is key for women to be able to do business, leads to empowerment of women.

Probably the most extensive research and reporting done on the relation between the human rights to water and sanitation and gender to date, was the report of the special rapporteur in 2016 (A/HRC/33/49)¹. Notably, the report rightly so makes a distinction between gender issues of all different genders and women's issues specifically.

The new resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2019 on the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation was the first resolution on the topic to specifically mention gender, women's rights and referring to the Beijing Platform for Action (IOR 40/1601/2019)²

Progress on implementation of the HR Water & sanitation and SDG 6.1 and 2 seems to still be lacking data and thus implementation. The latest report from EUROSTAT in that respect is "shocking": regression of SDG5 and not enough data for SDG6.

(file:///C:/Users/Windows/Documents/Advocacy/europeanPact-water/eurostatsdgreport-sdg2020.pdf and <https://ec.europa.eu/.../KS-02-20-202-EN-N.pdf/334a8cfe-636a-...>)

All the more reason why advocacy efforts from Women for Water, European Pact for Water and partners like EU Water alliance towards the European parliament and the European Commission are so important. (Background information on that can be found on the websites of WfWP and EUWA: www.womenforwater.org and <https://eu-wateralliance.eu/>).

So we keep saying it:

- Get sex-disaggregated data connecting women – gender-water-sanitation, analyze them and ensure appropriate actions
- Ensure women's involvement in designing, deciding and designating tasks to ensure access to safely managed water and sanitation
- Invest in women's organizations so they can do their job
- Get more women as professionals into the water sector and water-related jobs in general; go from unpaid to professional
- Spread the word to national governments, agencies and utilities.

So we celebrate the resolutions are there. We mourn that most of these very important intentions and issues in most cases have not translated yet to concrete policies and programs at national (or regional) level, impacting on the ground.

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https://www.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc=/Documents/Issues/Water/10anniversary/Gender.pdf&action=default&DefaultItemOpen=1

² <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/IO4016012019ENGLISH.PDF> and <https://undocs.org/en/A/74/PV.50>; this meeting was notable also because all outcomes of the third committee including reaffirming the CEDAW convention were accepted.