



Delivering the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework and tackling the triple crisis: Our call to States at the World Water Forum.

March 2022

Introduction

Right now, Governments face a severe and immediate triple crisis in water which is making achieving SDG6 targets via the Global Acceleration Framework by 2030 even more challenging.

The global pandemic, the pursuit of economic recovery and growth, and the devastating impacts of climate change threaten to push the achievement of SDG6 even further off track.

But water is the solution, not the problem.

The battle to manage the Covid-19 pandemic requires greater efforts on hygiene and sanitation – access to water is essential. The financial cost of the pandemic is a huge burden and economies need to recover – but water resources are needed by all sectors and water is a huge multiplier on investment. And the world is having to mitigate and adapt to climate change – this is dependent on the long-term resilience and sustainable use of water resources.

The Women for Water Partnership and AquaFed call on States to take urgent action on water. Political will, partnerships and people-participation are the drivers for action that will deliver all the promises that have been made.

The value of water

Water's ultimate value is that water is life and it is essential.

Poverty reduction, food and nutrition security, human development, gender equality, climate action, environmental protection, biodiversity and ecosystem preservation, humanitarian action, and peace and stability – these all depend on water.

Fundamentally, we need every State to:

- ➔ make the human rights to water and sanitation a reality
- ➔ manage our water resources and services in an equitable and sustainable way

Five political changes for the greatest impact: the challenges for States



There are 5 challenges that States must achieve to significantly move the dial towards addressing the triple crisis and achievement of SDG goals:

1. Stronger political will
2. Robust governance
3. More finance
4. People participation in decision-making
5. A renewed commitment to multi-lateral action

1 Stronger political will

Water impacts on all aspects of our existence and has many values to people. It must have its rightful place at the core of public policies, especially those on health, food, hygiene, environment and climate change. This requires action from everyone. In countries where political will has been strong, there have been hugely positive changes.

We call on each State to:

- Declare a Global Water Crisis and a global emergency like on the impacts of climate change and make clear commitments to national and international action at the UN 2023 Water Conference.
- Enshrine the human rights to water and sanitation in legislation and/or constitutions and regulations.
- Recognise the multi-dimensional values of water and make water a higher political priority for intersectoral collaboration at national and international level.
- Recognise water as a common good that must be managed democratically and collectively and put people at the heart of decision-making.

2 Governance

Weak governance has plagued the water sector for too long and has held back development of services and access to desperately needed finance. Fixing governance requires bold action and is not easy. But it leads to hugely positive outcomes.

WASH services and water resources must be managed with integrity, equity and transparency, involving all people and stakeholders. Strong water governance in today's world makes the critical linkages between water and sanitation and planning for health, climate, the environment, food and agriculture.

We call on each State to:

- Adopt strong, cross-sectoral legislative frameworks that align policies and strengthen operational and financial planning.
- Have systems and institutional arrangements which ensure clear responsibilities and accountability.
- Strengthen the role of local authorities and communities' management and capacities of local actors.



- Establish effective, publicly accessible, disaggregated data collection and monitoring systems – recognising the role and value of information from civil society and citizen science.
- Ensure legal protection for human rights and environmental defenders

3 Finance

To close the enormous water financing gap, action is needed to mobilise finance from public and private, as well as international and domestic sources. WASH's contribution to other sectors eg health, environment, climate change must also be recognised in financial investment and planning in these areas. Existing funding has to be better directed to reach the most vulnerable populations and areas.

We call on each State to:

- Maximise the value of existing funds through better planning and incentivizing performance of service providers.
- Mobilise more funding, for example through increasing WASH budgets or bold tariff reforms.
- Concentrate efforts on mobilizing and utilizing domestic/national sources of finance.
- Encourage innovation in finance, new sources and new finance models.
- Prioritize efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized populations and areas by identifying them thoroughly and through budgetary funding and subsidies
- Increase funding for climate change adaptation in the water sector and acknowledge the interconnections between water and climate

4 People participation in decision-making

Decision-making and outcomes are better when there is active involvement and meaningful participation by people and users of water. This requires making data about services and resources timely, understandable and for everyone to see. Also, effective dialogue and coordination mechanisms are to be included through means and tools accessible to them, this means all marginalised voices and vulnerable groups.

We call on each State to:

- Formalise people participation in law and regulation so it is embedded in policy development, sector budgets, pricing, service management and monitoring (including a mechanism for complaint and redress) and communication strategies.
- Review Human Resource policies to ensure more women, young and indigenous people can participate and get access to capacity building and professional training at all levels.
- Establish tools to ensure inclusive, informed and effective people participation, eg information sharing, recognition of representative organizations (regardless if



they are a legal entity or not), spaces for dialogue and user participation, public consultations, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, among others.

- Ensure equitable representation of women, youth and indigenous people in water management, particularly in decision-making bodies and leadership positions and ensure their interventions are recorded and recognized.

5 A renewed commitment to multi-lateral action

Despite the many values and essential nature of water, there is no "binding" international policy on water management, apart from the conventions on transboundary waters ratified by approximately 1/3 of States. Yet it is a major geopolitical issue and a peace issue: water knows no borders and must be managed in a concerted manner, acknowledging the water cycle. There is also a "void" in the United Nations on this issue, since there is no intergovernmental body where States could exchange on the corrective measures that are necessary on a global scale for water.

We call on States to:

- Ratify the Helsinki (UNECE 1992) and New York (UNWC 1997) international conventions on transboundary water cooperation.
- Establish an intergovernmental committee within the UN dedicated to water management and access to WASH, responsible for accelerating and coordinating efforts to achieve and monitor international goals.
- Establish a UN special envoy for water.
- Include water in national adaptation plans under the UNFCCC and acknowledge the role of water in the convention on biodiversity.
- Provide an international response to humanitarian disasters and increase the financial share of WASH in the budgets of humanitarian response plans.
- Prohibit and strongly condemn the use of water as a weapon of war.

About AquaFed and the Women for Water Partnership

Our organisations have been partners for many years through our collaboration in UN Water but also many other fora and programmes.

[Women for Water Partnership](#) has consistently raised the profile of women in the water and development sector, both in their professional capacity and as major group in society.

[AquaFed](#), the International Federation of Private Water Operators, represents private companies that deliver water supply or sanitation services under the direction of public authorities.