

World Water Day (22 March) is a second Women's Day (8 March): standup4water and women.

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The connection between women, gender-aspects and water and sanitation has been well established.

In 1992 the Dublin principles³ were formulated. Principle No. 3: "Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water".

In 1995 the Beijing Action platform⁴, connected to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW⁵) was one of the first treaties that formulated a demand for universal access to water and sanitation: "106 x) Ensure the availability of and universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation and put in place effective public distribution systems as soon as possible; ". This declaration was one of the basics leading up to the human rights to water and sanitation resolutions and is echoed by SDG6. Some crucial principles like "Ensure that clean water is available and accessible to all by the year 2000 and that environmental protection and conservation plans are designed and implemented to restore polluted water systems and rebuild damaged watersheds" were already mentioned then.

However, we seem to have "reinvented the wheel" and those promises did not lead to enough tangible action on the ground.

In 2002 during the World Summit on Sustainable Development⁶, women who were present there, talked of course a lot about sustainable development, at the time a very new concept that was not well understood. We asked ourselves what would "speak" to and would combine voices and strength of all women: we concluded water. We all have a story about water, whether it's too much, too little or too polluted. For all women it is an entry point to empowerment, an enabler, I learned there and then.

It was the start of Women for Water Partnership, now 15 years young.

"Leaving no one behind" is a powerful slogan; Enabling those that have not enough voice (yet) and enable them to act on their own behalf is even more powerful.

Women's empowerment and "water" are intrinsically linked; implementing SDG5 and 6 together is a necessity.

From the World Water assessment report 2019 (<https://en.unesco.org/water-security/wwap/wwdr/2019>):

"Safe drinking water and sanitation are recognized as basic human rights, as they are indispensable to sustaining healthy livelihoods and fundamental in maintaining the dignity of all human beings. International human rights law obliges states to work towards achieving universal access to water and sanitation for all, without discrimination, while prioritizing those most in need. Fulfilment of the human rights to water and sanitation requires that the services be available, physically accessible,

¹ Womenforwater.org

² Europeanpactforwater.org

³ <http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/hwarp/documents/english/icwedece.html>

⁴ http://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf: para 92, 106x, 147f, 167d, 256 F, k and l, 258 b ii and iii

⁵ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

⁶ <http://www.globalissues.org/article/366/world-summit-on-sustainable-development>

equitably affordable, safe and culturally acceptable”, gender sensitive ... The human rights to water and sanitation are neither temporary nor subject to state approval, and they cannot be withdrawn.

For women to be able to manage water and sanitation, land rights and thus right to water are crucial and till today a big impediment all over.

The basic provision of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities including hygiene provisions at home and in the workplace, enhances workforce health and productivity. Providing similar facilities in schools enhances education outcomes by reducing absenteeism, particularly among adolescent girls and ensure female teachers on staff. WASH services in places where refugees and migrants end up in first instance, ensure health and respect. Access to safely management water and sanitations prevents (part of) violence against women.

Approx. 70% of agriculture’ work is done by women. 70% of the current water is used by agriculture: so women actually manage 50% + of our water resource.

So what we like to see and enhance: what can European Parliamentarians do since they have a crucial role to play?



Ensure that EU health, nutrition, food security, environmental, and education policies and programs, equality and prevention of violence against women comprise a WASH component

Apply a gender equality, empowerment and human rights lens to EU WASH policies and programs. For that Water and sanitation needs sex-disaggregated data for policy setting and monitoring (both qualitatively and quantitatively).

Give women a vote and a voice: Ensure inclusion of at least 30% of women in all levels of decision-making; Advocate for inclusion of women on equal footing with men throughout all stages of projects, in a multi-stakeholder approach

To achieve effective policies at the national level, women need to be at decision making tables to champion the rights of women and girls in managing their periods with dignity. This is not a small-scale women’s rights issue, it’s a global human rights issue.



Support policies and programs aiming to enhance and maintain water, sanitation and waste water treatment infrastructures, including through development finance (ODA) for all aspects of water and sanitation access, governance and management. Women’s and women’s organisations need and should get direct access to financial investments and instruments. Promote the allocation

of funds for software, i.e. capacity building, (vocational) training operation and maintenance, monitoring and evaluation at all levels for women and their organisations;

Call on the European Commission, the Council and the Member States to: Apply EU the consensus on development and external policy tools so that they contribute to fully respecting, protecting and promoting the human rights and women's rights to WASH.



<https://www.womenforwater.org/support-us.html>

www.europeanpactforwater.org

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dOgoWYG_Kyw