

Women, Water, Climate Change “Roles and Risks”

Tackling the Challenges

I am convinced that we are all aware that the world faces a severe and immediate triple crisis in water, which is making the achievement of SDG6 more challenging.

The 3 crises are:

1. The global Covid-19 pandemic;
2. The pursuit of economic recovery and growth
3. The devastating impacts of climate change.

All three threaten to push the achievement of SDG6 even further off track and that is not even mentioning the water crisis that the war in Ukraine is creating.

We all should realise that Water is the Solution to our crisis and not the Problem.

The battle to manage the Covid-19 pandemic requires greater efforts on hygiene and sanitation – and 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 for and by all sectors and water is a huge multiplier on investment. 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.

That is why Women for Water Partnership, together with Aquafed made a statement where we urge all stakeholders to Act on Water. Political will, partnerships, people-participation, involving women and girls and to link SDG 5 to SDG 6, are the drivers for action that will deliver the promises that have been made.

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

Poverty reduction, food and nutrition security, human development, gender equality, women's empowerment, economic independence, climate action, environmental protection, vocational training, biodiversity and ecosystem preservation, humanitarian action, and peace and stability – these all depend on water.

There are 5 challenges that all stakeholders together must achieve to significantly move forward and achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals:

1. Stronger political will

Water impacts 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.

2. Governance

Weak governance has plagued the water sector for too long and has held back development of services and access to desperately needed finances.

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.

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 like health, environment, climate change must also be recognised in financial investment and planning. Existing funding has to be better directed to reach the most vulnerable populations and Women organisations and women projects should get direct financing.

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, sex disaggregated plus it needs to be understandable and for everyone to see. Also, effective dialogue and coordination mechanisms are to be included through means and tools accessible to all, including women, marginalised voices and vulnerable groups.

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 only 30% of all States). Yet, water is a major geo-political issue and a peace issue: water knows no borders and must be managed in a coherent way, 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 actions that are necessary for water on a global scale.

It might be clear to you all that Action is needed and WfWP together with SI and its members keeps highlighting the importance of these five topics related to Women, Water and Climate Change. I sincerely hope you will join us in our fight to achieve the SDGs 4, 5, and 6.

Thanks for your attention.