



WATER ACTION DECADE

2018 - 2028

HIGH LEVEL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE
**INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR ACTION “WATER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”
2018-2028**
6 - 9 June 2022 Dushanbe, Tajikistan

WOMEN WATER FORUM: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Water Unites Us

6 June 2022, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Preamble: The Women Water Forum 2022 convening in the frame of the Second International High-Level Conference on the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (Dushanbe Water Process) and hosted by the Committee of Women and Family Affairs under the Government of Tajikistan, was organized by the UN Women Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the Royal Academy of Science International Trust (RASIT), in close cooperation with the Office of the Coordinator for the Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe’s (OSCE) Economic and Environmental Activities and supported by the European Union, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The 2022 Women Water Forum followed up on the inclusive processes and outcomes established in previous Women Water Fora that started during the Water for Life Action Decade and continue into the current Water for Sustainable Development Action Decade. Specifically, it builds on the 2018 Women Water Forum’s “Bridging Voices to Action” commitments to change in three key areas: Strengthening leadership for gender equality and inclusion; Gender and social inclusion analysis; and, equal participation for equity-deserving groups including women.

It further underscored the need for gender-centred solutions to climate change and environmental management as called for by the Commission on the status of Women 66th session in March this year. This requires stronger commitments and standards to integrate

gender perspectives into climate, environmental, and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes, provision of innovative mechanisms to build resilience of women and girls and their organizations, and the assurance of adequate financing for gender-responsive climate, environmental, and disaster risk reduction initiatives.

During the 2022 hybrid Women Water Forum, professional women from different sectors, including scientists and water sector professionals, gathered with representatives from government, grassroots, and development partners to jointly advance on water-for-sustainable-development solutions viewed through a gender lens. Emphasis was placed on identifying the pre-conditions for transformation required to further support commitments to change, which include:

- Ensuring that water management dialogues and processes are gender responsive and women inclusive at all levels.
- Applying a systems approach that is comprehensive, integrated, and gender responsive and inclusive while being sufficiently flexible to adjust to existing complexity and evolving circumstances.
- Developing and implementing innovative, trans-sectoral, trans-disciplinary, community-engaged partnership mechanisms committed to leaving no one behind.
- Investing in a suite of transformative financing models to better support a systems approach and new partnership mechanisms.
- Committing to community-driven, evidence-informed, and science-based water for sustainable development promising practices and solutions.
- Addressing the gaps in gender data in the water domain and ensuring that disaggregated data are available and accessible to all for evidence-informed decision-making and action.

The opening statements and remarks re-emphasized the importance of women's key contributions to the provision, management, and safeguarding of water; inclusion of women in science and research; investments in targeted education and awareness; and, increased women's empowerment and engagement across the policy to implementation

continuum. The statements and sessions also demonstrated the significant ongoing progress as a result of commitments and pledges made in previous Fora. These include country progress in Brazil to incorporate gender sensitivity and women's inclusion; RASIT and partner's initiatives towards collaborative transdisciplinary, multi stakeholder, and rights holder engagement mechanisms; UN Women's commitment to advancing collection and use of disaggregated data; modernization of database systems in Central Asian countries; OSCE's establishment of a Women in Water Network in Central Asia and Afghanistan; Women's groups WaSH, water management, and energy solutions across Central Asia that demonstrated how locally appropriate solutions are essential for equity; and, youth have engaged in research, advocacy, and fundraising towards water sustainability and equity.

Finally, youth representatives reminded us that we cannot and must not forget the responsibility that we have to the upcoming generation and the generations that follow.

Acknowledging the diverse representation of regions, roles, and responsibilities, the participants of the 2022 Women Water Forum commit to applying their skills, knowledge, resources, and expertise towards the common responsibility of accelerating achievement of water for sustainable development solutions.

In light of the mounting water challenges and increased urgency to reduce inequitable impacts within and between nation states including high income countries, ***we support and urge*** policy makers and implementers at all levels to recognize and apply their practical actions and commitments. More specifically the following commitments are required to ensure that stakeholders and rights holders act in a coordinated, coherent, collective, and inclusive manner at appropriate levels of intervention:

On gender responsive and women inclusive dialogues:

- Continue to actively remove systemic barriers and end discriminatory practices and norms that hamper women's participation, particularly marginalized women within the major group women.
- Apply gender-based analysis assessments to policies and programs to ensure that they do not sustain or create inequities for women and other equity deserving groups.

On applying a systems approach:

- Apply a coupled human and natural systems approach towards a comprehensive understanding and assessment of water uses, needs, and values at the local and watershed levels in support of sustainable and inclusive water management.
- Invest in research and tools that advance knowledge and application of coupled systems approaches, differentiated risks, sector tradeoffs, and water adaptation co-benefits to inform equitable and sustainable water management decisions.
- Introduce and apply gender responsive standards in the water sector.
- Introduce and report on the application of quotas for women's engagement in decision making at all levels.
- Think outside the 'water box' for comprehensive risk assessments and innovative solutions.

On innovative partnership mechanisms:

- Continue to invest in and demand effective and inclusive partnerships that contribute to closing the gender divide.
- Strengthen collaborations between researchers, communities, and policy-makers while emphasizing participation of people from equity-deserving groups including women.
- Invest in networks and platforms for dialogue and exchange of information to ensure women's meaningful and equal contribution to water management at all levels.
- Provide resources and support, including financial, for women activists and their grassroot organizations to engage in design and local implementation of appropriate water sustainability and WASH initiatives.

On transformative funding mechanisms

- Generate funding mechanisms that support innovative and integrated trans-sectoral, research-policy-practice partnerships, and evidence generation for informed decision-making at all levels.

- Create appropriate funding opportunities that catalyse sustainable and transformative programs in a move away from project-based funding.
- Establish funding mechanisms that demonstrate sustainable and equitable investments for social benefits, including impact investments and not for profit mechanisms.
- Support and promote access to affordable microfinance loans and sanitation grants for rural WASH.
- Continue to support entrepreneurs in their adoption of sustainable business models, particularly community-driven business models.

On community-driven, evidence-informed, and science-based solutions:

- Invest the time, capacity enhancement, and financial resources necessary to support community engagement in and leadership on sustainable and equitable solutions.
- Braid Traditional Knowledge, local knowledge, and modern science to implement the most appropriate water for sustainable development solutions.
- Emphasise the importance of exchanging good practices that show positive measureable results that can be scaled up and replicated.

On disaggregated data:

- Apply international standards for gender responsive/transformative water monitoring and assessment, including a comprehensive suite of variables, and make disaggregated datasets open and available.
- Coordinate and validate the use of existing data and data from research.
- Build capacity in and awareness of statistics and their use, creating data literate societies with the support of civil society.
- Embed disaggregated data collection in all research and monitoring projects and programs in order to facilitate a better understanding of differential costs, benefits, risks, and tradeoffs between groups, including the existence of social and

environmental injustices, particularly with respect to marginalized people within equity-deserving groups.

- Undertake targeted gender studies and research to address the Leave No-one Behind approach and better understand how to inform water policies and planning, particularly in light of the key role of women in coping with climate change and climatic extremes, especially as they impact on water.
- Commit to evidence-informed decisions and solutions that build from disaggregated data and that consider equity implications.

We request that member states and development partners publicly communicate annual progress on implementation through a monitoring system established for this purpose.

Further, given that so many communities, and therefore women and girls, rely on water derived from the mountains and glaciers, we welcome the call for 2025 to be declared as the International Year for the Preservation of Glaciers.

In turning these commitments into action, we urge nation states and the international community to unlock and use women's transformative potential. This will lead not only to the betterment of women and girls, but also reverberate across societies through appropriate and equitable water for sustainable development solutions.