

## **WOMEN - PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES IN RELATION TO WATER**

This article summarizes the Women and Perspectives and Challenges session that took place during the World Water Forum in Brasilia from March 19-23, 2018.

Thanks for participation and contribution of the invited speakers: Dr. Raquel Dodge (Attorney General of the Republic), Dr. Christianne Dias (Chief Executive Officer ANA), Rosanna Garjuli (Brazil), Asha Abdulrahman (Kenya), Khin Ni Ni Thein (Myanmar).. , Urutahi Waikerepuru (New Zealand), Arzu Ozyol (Turkey). Session coordinated by Margarida Yassuda and moderated by Alice Bawman-Dentener both representatives of WfWP - Women for Water Partnership.

### **1. CHALLENGES AND TRENDS**

The session presented the major global challenges related to water, such as: overcoming scarcity, ensuring water quality for all, ensuring food security are directly related to the lack of access and control of water resources by women. Asha Abdulhman provided daily examples of the difficulties faced by Kenyan women - a distant place to collect water, hours spent, lack of restrooms, water quality, impact on the family economy, and others. In Brazil, in the water sector, women generally work in the technical field and, despite increasing mobilization and insertion in the labor market, there is great difficulty in accessing decision positions. Through public tenders women have started working in areas traditionally dominated by men in a more balanced way, however in the water sector their main responsibility is to provide technical support, bring knowledge, experience and subsidies to decision makers. It can be said that they influence, but do not decide on the strategic issues of water resources management.

The challenges are great, as they involve a significant cultural change in the role of women in society and in water management, not only as organizing, managing, providing technical and operational support to make things happen, but also which has the power to insert, at the center of the discussions and decisions, issues relevant to women who are the majority of users and main consumers with the power to influence the quality, availability and regulation of their supply. Overcoming this challenge will involve education, training, awareness raising, articulation and mobilization. Even at the local level, you will not see a man carrying water on his head, as women do. He will have a donkey to carry the burden. A fundamental transformation is necessary, requiring action at all levels.

### **2. GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The achievements of women in Brazil over the years - the right to vote, education, work and equal pay and the struggle for full and equal participation in all spheres of society - can be connected to the Dublin Principle 3: create the preconditions so that women have a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water, including decision-making in forms defined by them. It is a timely, urgent and ongoing process to transform society and create an effective and inclusive partnership with women to achieve water security for all. Women must unite to enforce this principle, which has been agreed for over 25 years, but still lacks momentum in many parts of the world. The acceptance and implementation of Principle 3 requires positive policies to meet the specific needs of women, to equip and empower

women to participate at all levels of water resources programs, including decision-making and implementation, to play the role of actors local and international changes.

Give / create opportunities for women, bring knowledge, stimulate government to foster women's participation because she is often the head of the family and lacks support to participate. Setting up agendas can have a positive impact on men and women by helping the government avoid costly and ill-designed investments by empowering women to act in water management and to participate in decision-making at all levels.

Achieving the goals of the UN Agenda 2030 on gender equality SDG5 and universal access to water and sanitation (SDG6) will require:

- Change in mentality and recognition of the contribution of women
- Quota and division of roles, egalitarian representations and integration between men and women in management
- Equality and equity guidance
- Availability of resources

Professional technical training at different levels to empower women.

- Data indicators disaggregated by sex
- Involve all stakeholders, local community, government and civil society

Dr. Raquel Dodge - Attorney General - referred to the legal basis of women's rights and human rights for water and sanitation, which not only stipulate the right to access to adequate and accessible water and sanitation, but also the right participation in modeling the provision, management and safeguarding of water in a sustainable way

### **3. PRACTICES / PROJECTS / ACTIONS**

It is worth highlighting the important role of the National Water Agency in creating the institutional and support structure for inclusive and gender sensitive management and the commitment to continue efforts to implement the Dublin Principle 3 in Brazil and the Americas through the Gender and Water Committee established in 2017

The Kenya Rainwater Collection Project illustrated the struggle of the Mwihoko Women Group, which turned a project initially unsuccessful into a success story, bringing water and sanitation to a needy community for economic development. It increased access to drinking water in 80 households, benefiting 480 people and 2040 school-aged children with clean water and better sanitation, 3 eco-restrooms and showers. It relieved the burden of the community from needing to walk long distances to fetch water, freeing up time for the economic development of families and community. Although they have made great progress, poverty has not ended for all. Through this project, awareness, transparency, governance, leadership, empowerment and economic development were observed. Education - SDG4 - was the pre-condition aimed at increasing the success of Mwihoko women since people with knowledge about their specific

situation, their rights and their options can take their first important steps towards empowerment and low action up.

Myanmar's experience shows the need for governments to work with civil society actors, but in a flourishing democracy this is not always easy where the roles and responsibilities of non-state actors are not clearly defined and understood. Regarding the engagement of women in decision-making at local levels according to the Dublin Principle 3, the non-governmental organization Water Mothers of Myanmar stands as an intermediary to bridge the gap between bottom-up and top-down action to develop water resource policies. On the one hand, by encouraging and supporting local women's groups to act in their own communities, and by making the country and decision-makers aware of the importance of working and supporting women's groups and other non-state actors. It is a continuous and gradual process of transformation.

#### **4. LESSONS / EXPERIENCES**

From New Zealand we had the contribution of the Maori culture that watered in a holistic way, emphasizing that we are water and demonstrating the personal connection with the source of life. Women are protective, have a tendency for preservation and peace, this look is necessary for water management. Although women have acquired rights, there is still a lot of room to be won, and it is considered that when women are employed, there will be more benefits to the environment and management with greater guarantees for future generations. This assertion is supported by the understanding of women as caregivers by nature, by promoting peace and being links with water. The final document of the High Level Panel on Water was attached, in which the 12 Heads of State outlined a plan of action to achieve SDG 6. Water valorization is one of the axes of action, giving importance to the different values of different groups of society. But reconciling these different values as demands continue to increase is becoming increasingly difficult and trade-offs are inevitable. In order to restore balance, each individual must be called upon to value water as the source of life and practice water management. Women have the potential to accelerate the transformations that will lead to a more sustainable resource for humans and nature, have the power to satisfy the aspirations for peace, prosperity and well-being, and to preserve the planet.

Promoting the participation not only of women, but of all water users, society entities, public bodies can contribute to bring new solutions to water problems, avoid investment wastage, achieve more sustainable projects, set goals to reduce hunger , child mortality and improving gender equality.

"We, women, should take up our agenda at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which is the equality agenda. What we want is to participate with equality and we will do this through education and with a heart full of hope. Let's go together, let's move forward with courage. "

Raquel de Dodge