

**Webinar- Innovative and Evidence-Based Water  
Initiatives that advance Water Sector Transformation and  
catalyze Systems Change for improved Gender Equity.  
What is being done? What more do we need to do?**

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## Abbreviations

AMCOW	African Ministers Council on Water
AWSPN	African Women Sanitation Professionals Network
ANEW	Africa civil society Network on Water and Sanitation
SuSanA	Sustainable Sanitation Alliance
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WIN	Water Integrity Network

## Preamble

Gender inclusion and the WASH sector are intricately interlinked. Gender mainstreaming in the WASH sector contributes to the realization of gender equality outcomes such as increased participation of women in decision making. On the other hand, effective gender-responsive programming leads to improved WASH outcomes such as a decline in open defecation. Despite this apparent importance of a gender lens in WASH, women and girls not only bear the disproportionate triple burden of production but are also under-represented in WASH-related decision-making.

Arguably, progress has been made in ensuring women have a seat at the table as evidenced by policies/commitments that support gender inclusion such as the Maputo protocol and SDG 5. However, Ada Oko Williams puts it well and simply when she quips, “[Seating at the table is not equal to having a voice. While we want to have a seat at the table, we are cognizant that it’s not enough. We also need to have a voice that is supporting us to strategically organize and contribute meaningfully](#)”. Women have not only borne the brunt of water-borne diseases but are subject to gender and sexual violence in their quest for WASH services. This is an indicator of policies that are deficient of the gender perspective necessitating a transition to innovative and evidence-based water initiatives that catalyse change for improved gender equity.

The question of gender equality in the WASH sector is one of the key thematic areas for ANEW and SuSanA and was one of the basis for the establishment of the SuSanA Africa Regional Chapter. Specifically, the focus is on hearing the voices of women and girls in the sector. This webinar, therefore, serves as the first in a series of webinars to dissect the issue of gender inclusion in the WASH sector at a pan-African level.

## Opening Remarks

The specific focus of the webinar was on innovative and evidence-based water initiatives that advance water sector transformation and catalyse systems change for improved gender equity. The webinar, therefore, aimed to dissect what was currently being done and what more could be done. Chaiwe, then invited Sareen to give her opening remarks.

In her opening remarks, Sareen Malik (SuSanA's African Chapter Coordinator), explained that this was the first of a series of webinars that will be held over the next year on different thematic areas. "The question of gender equality in the WASH sector is one of the key thematic areas for ANEW and SuSanA and was the basis for the establishment of the SuSanA Africa Chapter. Specifically, the focus is on hearing the voices of women and girls in the sector". After thanking the main speakers' presence and willingness to share their insights, Sareen explained that these insights would be disseminated via the SuSanA knowledge management platform. In the long-run, the goal is to develop an e-publication as part of advocacy on gender issues in WASH in the continent. This will include informing policy or supporting members and partners.

## **1.0 Championing the Mainstreaming of Gender and Disability**

### **Inclusive WASH**

Priya Nath, the Equality, Inclusion and Rights Advisor at WaterAid-UK gave a presentation on Water Aid's journey of mainstreaming gender equality focusing on lessons learned, successes, and challenges. The highlights of this presentation are summarized below.

- *Why WASH is a women rights issue.*

Framing of the issue of gender in WASH is important to how it is addressed. WASH-related work is gendered with women tasked with the triple burden of production (farm work), reproduction (child care/house work), and community affairs. These 3 duties are reliant on

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*WASH is a women's right issue: You can't achieve gender equality without strengthening WASH systems.*

*-Priya Nath (Water Aid)-*

WASH hence negatively impacted by water scarcity. This is an indicator of the correlation between gender and WASH; WASH goals cannot be achieved without the gender lens.

Yet women have low representation as key decision makers in the sector as evidenced by a 2018 world bank study. Gender Analysis at the beginning is, therefore, absolutely vital.

- *What are some of the Challenges Water Aid has faced in Mainstreaming Gender?*

-Intersectionality in identifying who is marginalized: how things like ethnicity or religion interact with gender.

-Attitudinal barriers to inclusion

- *What is Water Aid doing: Evidence-Based Initiatives that are contributing to improved gender equity in WASH?*

Water Aid is journeying towards a more transformative approach where the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment are deemed as being central to interventions. The organization characterizes gender inclusivity as a minimum standard but strives to be more gender empowering. In Cambodia, for example, the Young professional program in WASH targets 70% of women. This involves tackling unequal relations in WASH, working with gender-focused partners, and ultimately contribute to transformation of power structures.

Example:

Categories	States			
	Emergency WASH Gender: Harmful	Fragile but strengthening Gender: Inclusion	Transitional Gender: Inclusive	Desired Gender: Empowering
<b>Coordination: Gender</b>	No coordination with Women's Groups and women's services	Some limited coordination with Women's Groups / service within the district (M) (L)	Coordination with women's groups services happens regularly, but not sustained	Full coordination with women's groups / services (e.g. referral to GBV services)
<b>Strategic planning: Gender</b>	Service providers and policies do not consult with women, or consider women specific needs (M)	No gender analysis plan. Planning addresses some specific needs of women, but women were not consulted (L)	Plan in place to target women's needs but not to sustain them (women are consulted)	National WASH policies are gender sensitive & plans to sustain gender equality and inclusion
<b>Financing: Gender</b>	No funding is provided to support specific gender equity and inclusion activities (L) (M)	No funding is currently provided to support specific gender equity and inclusion activities, but included in financing discussions	Funding is allocated to gender and social inclusion activities	Funding is allocated to gender equity & inclusion activities. Including supporting training activities of staff
<b>Institutional Arrangements: Gender</b>	Institutional Arrangements do not consider specific needs of women or coordinate with women's focused organizations (M)	Gender equality in representation exists on paper, but is not functional or happening in reality	Women are involved in Institutional Arrangements, but to "fill" a quota. Decision making & leadership is not encouraged (L)	Women have equal representation in Institutional Arrangements, and equal participation in decision-making
<b>Service deliver: Gender</b>	Service delivery does not target the specific needs of women or consult with women (M)	Project interventions target some specific needs of women, but are fractured and unsustainable (L)	Specific needs of women are addressed, but lack of post implementation support focused on whether interventions are targeting specific needs of women	Specific needs of women of addressed in implementation and post implementation support

System Strengthening Mapping- from Gender Harmful to Gender Empowering

- **Internal Transformation**

Priya concluded by explaining that Water Aid’s Gender focus is not only on its implementation/program work but what happens inside the organization. Water Aid has thus been filling gaps through continuous capacity building of competence to work on gender equality, monitoring & measurement of gender equality parameters, and strategic collaboration with women’s rights organizations.

## **2.0 Transition towards Innovative and Evidence-Based Water**

### **Initiatives.**

Dr. Azzika Tanko, senior policy advisor at AMCOW spoke on how youth and gender strategies contribute to the transition towards innovative and evidence-based water initiatives. Dr. Tanko begun by expounding on WASH-related issues facing women in Africa. These included 71% of water collection is a duty for women who spend close to 770 hours per week collecting water with negative implications on school attendance. This presentation is summarized below.

- *Continental commitments/policies to gender initiatives in WASH.*

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*SDGs 1,3,5, and 6 cannot be achieved if we do not take a serious consideration for women matters in policy formulation and implementation.*

*-Dr.Azzika Tanko {AMCOW}.*

Dr. Tanko stressed that there is a wealth of commitments that underpin gender mainstreaming and hence stakeholders have no excuse for not mainstreaming gender issues in WASH in line with the 2030 SDGs. These commitments include Sharm al Sheik 2008 declaration focusing on the inclusion of women in water provision, Africa agenda 2063, and AMCOW's 2011 gender policy among others.

- *How do the commitments help in the transition to innovative and evidence-based water initiatives for improved gender equity?*

These policies support gender equality in WASH by providing opportunities for mainstreaming gender issues into WASH policy development, collection of quality data for evidence-based advocacy, and opportunities for capacity building as well as act as platforms for holding high level decision makers accountable. These policies also help in the recognition of gender as a human rights issue as exemplified by the 2003 Maputo protocol.

*Examples of innovative gender initiatives in Africa:* UNESCO gender inSITE and University of Witwatersrand's software that alerts women on where to find a safe latrine. Dr. Tanko suggested that stakeholders can build on some of these initiatives.

- *Challenges.*

The challenges of mainstreaming gender in WASH in Africa include inadequate data for policy formulation, inadequate capacity to deliver gender-sensitive WASH initiatives, harassment, and lack of initiative by women.

### **3.0 Case Studies on Innovative and Evidence-Based Initiatives for the youth in the WASH Sector.**

Sheila Ruyondo, East Africa’s regional coordinator for Young Water Solutions gave a presentation of the case studies. In her opening statement, Sheila expressed, “**innovation in the WASH sector and women is rarely discussed in the same context but each has essential value for human progress. Additionally, innovation and gender equality** require

Sheila Ruyondo’s call to action: integrating and supporting youth-led initiatives that will be key in applying a gender lens to technological, economical, and social innovations that aim to solve pressing development problems.

underpin the SDGs and both thinking beyond the existing parameters”.

Her verbal presentation is summarized below.

- *How does Young Water Solutions support innovative initiatives for the youth in the WASH sector?*

The organization through the Young Water Fellowship (YWF) empowers the youth to set up innovative water-social businesses by offering water and business training, providing grants for the projects, and mentorship support.

- *Case Studies: Impact of Young Fellows in the Community.*

The Projects are evidence-based and the young fellows have thus documented a couple of case stories. The general derivative from case stories is that young water fellows have been able to act as change agents in the community, influence policies where their initiatives are running. Young fellows have additionally forged strategic partnerships between state, non-state, and civil society actors producing transformative action on well-being and empowerment of women. In so doing, young fellows are mainstreaming gender through their projects as exemplified below:

- a. Sylvia Nyaga (Syna Consultancy-Kenya): Sylvia has actively integrated women as key actors in the design and manufacturing of mobile toilets for the disabled.
- b. Patricia Nekesa’s aqua tyres project targets farmers especially women in Nakaseke-Uganda where used car tyres are utilized as reservoirs to prevent water loss through evaporation.



## **4.0 How the AWSPN has Positioned Itself to Engage in the Sector's Transformation for Gender Equity?**

Ada Oko Williams, co-founder of the African Women Sanitation Professionals Network- AWSPN spoke on water sector transformation and systems change catalysis. Ada begun by explaining that AWSPN which was just coming to fruition is an emerging membership organization seeking to strengthen the engagement of women in the development of sanitation initially at a continent level but ultimately globally. It's a platform for women already in the sector to come together and organize.

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*Seating at the table is not equal to having a voice. While we want to have a seat at the table, we are cognizant that it's not enough. We also need to have a voice that is supporting us to strategically organize and contribute meaningfully.*

*-Ada Oko Williams-*

- *Why was the network formed?*

The importance of a gender lens in WASH cannot be undermined as evidenced by ineffective sanitation agendas at a pan-African level and specifically failure of sanitation policies to address the gender dimension. The network was thus formed to bring together women working in the sanitation sector; to advance the prominence of women in sanitation not just as users of sanitation or basic inclusion in workshops but also as key decision-makers that add value in shaping the development of sanitation in Africa.

- *How is the network going to achieve its goals?*

- a. Address the agenda from a political perspective that ensures sanitation is prioritized through policy reviews, advocacy, and position papers. Notably the platform for organizing mitigates current challenges where the value of contribution if not effective due to the absence of organizing.
- b. Formal education and capacity building.
- c. Professional development for young women in the sector to mitigate the boys club syndrome where gender inequities are perpetuated by the promotion of young men into positions of power.

- *How is the network currently engaging in the sector's transformation of gender equity?*

- a) Zambia: Zambia is AWSPN's flagship chapter where the women have self-organized and currently planning to undertake a baseline of key issues on women in Sanitation. The Zambian platform is also developing a mentoring program for women and supporting women sanitation entrepreneurs.



- a. Seeking partnership with Toilet board coalition to promote women in the sanitation economy.

- *What next for the network?*

Country-level chapters in all African countries to support advancement of sanitation especially for women as well as building continental and global partnerships such as with AMCOW, SuSanA and Equa Aqua and World Bank respectively.

- *What will the network's success look like?*

More women in leadership roles in sanitation, an increase of women-led sanitation businesses, capacity development trainings promoting gender equity, and influence pan-regional policies. For example, the ongoing African sanitation policy guideline process should effectively acknowledge and address gender inequalities. Ultimately, the network endeavors for greater visibility of women in the sector #atthetable #withthevoice and #heard. Ada concluded with two quotes stressing that even when a seat is provided for women, the voice should be heard, and it should count.

## **5.0 Plenary Discussion**

A plenary discussion ensued after the presentation as well as in the chat box. This discussion is summarized below:

- a. *Tasneem (WIN): Does AMCOW have any progress or evaluation reports on the gender strategy. If yes, can Dr. Tanko share them with us?*

Dr. Tanko's response: AMCOW has not yet done a review of the gender strategy. However, reviews are scheduled in the upcoming year to see how the strategies have benefitted member states across Africa.

- b. *Pendo: Dr. Tanko's presentation has been great; can he share the presentation.*

Dr. Tanko confirmed that he would share the presentation with ANEW for dissemination.

- c. *Sareen (SuSanA/ANew): It would be good to hear from the Zambian African Women Sanitation Professionals Network to replicate and mobilize.*

Chaiwe responded, "we are indeed the first chapter in the African continent and we are looking forward to other countries doing a similar step. A lot of progress has been made; we begun two weeks ago with a launch that was marked with a lot of interest from women in the sector in Zambia. We had a lot of support from the ministry and other organizations at the national level and are energetic to go".

- d. *Nelson (African Development Bank) to Dr. Tanko and Sheila Rayondo: how can African governments incentivize in a structured manner the much-needed change and engagement of youth and women especially being cognizant of the boys' club syndrome explained by Ada?*

Dr. Tanko responded, “we need to ensure that we have clear policies to support start-ups. Many youth or women with brilliant innovative ideas are limited by the lack of start-up capital. The burden of taxation is another challenge especially in Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Nigeria as exemplified by a group in Ghana that was unable to clear prohibitive fees for sanitation enhancing equipment. Governments need to be held accountable on such issues and also set up technology parks to enable the youth to gain relevant skills to embark on innovative ideas”.

## Closing Remarks

*Chaiwe, the webinar’s moderator* urged the attendees to continue with these discussions in SuSanA discussion forum as well as other knowledge management platforms.

Dr. Tanko concluded with a call for action for different stakeholders summarized below;

1. To head of states in government to recognize the essential role of women and youth in policy formulation and implementation.
2. To member states to embrace fully gender-sensitive initiatives and ensure they are well financed.
3. To AMCOW and EU to support the creation and sustenance of existing platforms such as AWSPN.
4. To African CSOs to undertake youth and gender focus initiatives to build the capacity.
5. To the African Development Bank to support the financing of innovative WASH start-ups by women and youth.
6. To ANEW to lead the formation of the Africa platform for champions and change agents. (This is distinguished from the professional network).
7. To AMCOW to establish e-learning platforms to enhance learning, sharing, and innovation.
8. To academia to ensure gender-sensitive research are undertaken to facilitate evidence-based policy formulation and planning.
9. To the EU to create space for women and youth participation at high level decision making.

Sareen concluded by thanking all the speakers for their informative and insightful presentations. She then added, “we will continue to support and strengthen our capacity to realize the dream that no woman has to suffer in accessing water. To put an end whether in this life time or the next of women walking for water and the issues that come with it. To support women and girls’ empowerment as we move forward. We will deliver this position paper and have more of the webinars to continue the conversation”.