

**Statement/inputs to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference
Chemichemi Foundation, Kenya**

Water viability is an engine of sustainable development for environmental social safeguards and governance. Ensuring its availability for everyone is imperative.

Governments, non-profit organizations, and private entities have been working to create inclusive environments, provide access to essential resources and services and promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. These efforts aim to enable persons with disabilities to live full and independent lives, participate in their communities and contribute their talents and abilities to society, especially in the face of climate change.

Chemichemi Foundation takes cognizant the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG) represents a key strategy for enfranchising persons with disabilities. It promotes access to water and sanitation for health (WASH) for all. Specifically, it requires that persons with disabilities can access WASH to ensure that “no one is left behind.” To achieve SDG 6, WASH programmes must be both disability-inclusive and disability-accessible. Consequently, supporting the objectives of WASH, SDG 10 advocates for the “reduction of inequality within and among countries,” mandating the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, including persons with disabilities.

Progress, however, is not uniform. Youth with disabilities still have not enrolled for water and sanitation for health (WASH) courses and programs especially in Kenya. This thus, excludes them from the acquisition of technical skills that can enable them innovate locally lead WASH solutions. The exiting gap provides for opportunities to identify challenges exposed to youth with disabilities as well as platforms that can be extended to them to undertake WASH programs through research, design and development.

As part of the Chemichemi Foundation’s climate resilience and mitigation programme, our Water Action Agenda is to ensure accessible, inclusive water systems for persons with disabilities within rural areas in Kenya and Africa. The Foundation envisions to provide a facilitative infrastructure for youth with disabilities within learning institutions to innovate accessible water solutions. Furthermore, collaborate with institutions of learning to identify and encourage youth with disabilities to enroll for water and sanitation for health courses and programs. Additionally, advocate for improved accessible regulation on water flow controls through public, private, partnerships.

To streamline inclusion, governments, development agencies, academia and community-based organizations that oversee water resources and delivery, ought to develop harmonized inclusive policies. In addition, to a regulatory framework for accessibility standards, guidelines, specifications and audits. This will boost opportunities for effective coordination and partnership on disability mainstreamed water systems and infrastructure.

Importantly, the Foundation welcomes strategic partnerships with development agencies and institutions of learning to collaborate through exchange programs to facilitate inter-learning among youth with disabilities in different countries. This is with the goal to explore existing

locally lead accessible water solutions that will go along well to promote environmental social safeguards governance. Besides, leverage on untapped opportunities for effective youth enrolment within technical institutions to uptake water related courses and programs.

Practically, leaving no one behind implies, creating equal opportunities for all whereas advancing diversity equity and inclusion. Translating policy into practice implies, identification of talented youth with disabilities, creation and implementation of a learning curriculum for youth with disabilities on water and sanitation for health and investment in requisite equipment and systems that support their learning and innovation. Youth with disabilities are equally capable to develop accessible water solutions. We have to expose youth with disabilities to education, for them to gain requisite experiences and expertise for them to creatively experiment and innovate inclusive water systems and solutions.

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