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## UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event

*How to make the water action agenda gender transformative:  
connecting policy, practice, and research*

23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2023, 18.30, Conference Room B

Organized by: Simavi, Ugandan Ministry of Water and Environment, Uganda Water and Sanitation Network (UWASNET), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI, HQ), African Civil Society Network for Water and Sanitation (ANEW), Water Integrity Network government (WIN)

### **Background on the event (one paragraph)**

Not everyone experiences the world the same. People of different genders and social identities have unique challenges in claiming their rights to water and sanitation. Of the billions of people who live in water stressed areas, half are women. At their homes they are often responsible for the unpaid management of water due to unequal gender relations and norms. In accessing water, women face many challenges including gender based violence and sextortion. Not all women have the same experiences, advantages and disadvantages vary by age, social status, region, disability, religion and more. How can we harness and address these different lived experiences of women towards a water secure world for all? How can we engage men as well as those with decision-making power in the process of gender transformative change? Existing issues are exacerbated by climate change, with too much water, too little water, or contaminated water putting pressure on already vulnerable water and sanitation services. And when drinking water becomes scarce, poor and marginalized women are most likely the ones who will have to spend extra time to gather it, with risks to their safety and dignity. Despite this, women and minority groups are underrepresented in decision-making about water, at the local, national and international levels. However, they are key to delivering sustainable and appropriate services, with their unique knowledge, networks, and needs.

### **Water Action Agenda**

During the session, Simavi's director Dieneke van der Wijk launched the Simavi commitment; the [Water Justice Fund](#). The fund enables Simavi's partners to accompany women and girls' groups on their journeys to establish durable solutions to water related challenges they encounter due to climate change. With the Water Justice Fund we seek to impact both the capacity and position of women groups so that they are seen as active agents and decision-makers in delivering a water secure and climate resilient future.

#### **Key Issues discussed (5- 8 bullet points)**

- Understanding the environment: The water sector has been, and is, still a largely male dominated. We need to evaluate the environment in which women and girls operate, and make decisions based on a shared understanding of the challenges marginalized groups face.
- Accountability: The panelists emphasized the need not only for ambitious commitments, but also to create a strong and systematic accountability system with effective collaboration across actors and stakeholders
- Locally Led Adaptation: For women, and those from marginalized communities, it is often difficult to access financing. That is why it is important to support locally led adaption with finance mechanism that work for those communities who are at the forefront of the water and climate crisis
- Justice: The panelists agreed that when we talk about gender, we talk about Human Rights. To be truly transformative, we need to broaden the issues, and also look at it from a justice perspective. For example, sextortion is still an issue faced by many women, but there is little legislation to effectively protect them.

#### **Key recommendations for action (5 - 6 bullet points)**

- We need to put women and girls at the center, where we understand the environment where we work
- We need commitment at the highest level
- We need to make evidence based decisions
- We need effective collaboration mechanisms