



UN 2023 Water Conference Side Event
“Water from a Gender Lens”

Event Number: W60

Organized by: Awareness 360

Summary Report

Date and Time: 26 March 2023 (Sunday) 9-11 am EST

Venue: Virtual event (Zoom)

Speakers:

- Rijve Arefin (Co-Founder, Awareness 360 and UN Women 30 for 2030 Leader)
- Cintia Castro (El Salvador Country Director One ATTA Time)
- Sarah Syed (Fellow at The David Suzuki Foundation and Top 25 Under 25 Environmentalist in Canada)

Objectives

Water profoundly affects women's and girls' empowerment, influencing their education, health, income, and safety. Access to clean water and sanitation is often overlooked in discussions of gender equality, despite being closely interlinked and interdependent. The event was aimed to emphasise on gender-transformative approaches to water management, exploring the intersection of water and gender and its effects on communities worldwide.

Key Issues Discussed

1. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to safe water that affects millions of people worldwide.
2. Women are frequently excluded from water governance and management decision-making processes, despite their important roles in water management at the household and community levels.
3. Biggest barrier preventing women and girls from accessing safe water is lack of education.

4. Gender nonconforming people face discrimination in the community while accessing water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Key Recommendations for Action

1. Gender transformative water programs and policies are tailored to meet unique needs of different genders to avoid gender specific vulnerabilities.
2. Creating awareness within the communities is crucial and water programs should be extended to improving access to water and sanitation facilities in schools to increase girls' attendance which is directly linked to the water crisis.
3. Women and gender non conforming individuals to have key positions in leadership roles for water user committees and other WASH related decision making processes.
4. More gender and WASH research to understand the root cause of the issues and acting on it through training programs and capacity building initiatives.
5. Gender-sensitive water governance and management can help to promote equitable and sustainable water use, as well as ensure that women's voices and needs are heard and addressed.
6. Investing more in water infrastructure and projects, especially in marginalised communities and areas where women and girls face the most water-related challenges.
7. Collaboration across sectors and stakeholders including government and civil societies to work enhance the impact of work related to WASH. Governments have a key role in establishing policies and regulatory frameworks.
8. Youth can design and advocate solutions by connecting their passions (STEM, entrepreneurship, poetry etc). They can also become part of already existing organisations working for WASH issues and reduce usage of Fast Fashion brands.

Water Action Agenda:

Empower WASH-Literate Young Leaders

Awareness 360 commits to empower 500 young people in 50 countries by 2025, who through a training of trainers (ToT) approach will empower at least 5000 more youths around the world. Through a dedicated WASH literacy program, young people will better understand SDG 6 and the current water and sanitation crisis, the true value of water, and why we should act better. This intervention will be an added value to the current youth leadership programs, with a special focus on WASH, with the aim of mobilizing WASH young professionals. Their action post-program will benefit society as a whole. Special attention will be given to young girls and women to ensure more of them take up water-related decision making and leadership positions in future.