

Charting A Feminist Pathway to Inclusive and Productive Water Use and Governance

[#feministwateragenda2023](#)

In 1977, the first Water conference held in Mar del Plata made only peripheral mention of the role of women in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The Conference report simply stated: *“In the field of community water supply and sanitation special emphasis should be given to the situation and the role of women”* ([UN, 1977](#)). Half a century later, this “women and-WASH” narrative has become mainstream, especially focused on the domestic use of water, WASH delivery and health impacts.

However, gender and productive uses of water remain poorly understood and certainly less profiled. Women’s labor and water needs are not neatly segregated into domestic, sanitation and productive uses of water. Many of the [200 million woman-hours](#) spent each day collecting water also include collecting water for productive activities, whether for WASH, subsistence farming, livestock or multiple other livelihoods in diverse rural and urban contexts. Women’s bodies, time and labor continue to bear the burden of successive failed development goals in relation to water. If this continues, a range of other SDG goals will not be met.

Since Mar del Plata, climate impacts are now establishing new norms, challenges, and losses for women as water users across diverse environments, including amongst the urban poor in marginal environments in Asia and Africa, or smallholder farmers and pastoralist women in drought-affected East Africa and the MENA region. These and other new challenges further threaten social and economic exclusions in the face of enduring patriarchal structures and masculine cultures that overshadow and shape water decision-making, management, and, ultimately, water governance.

In this event at the UN Water Conference 2023, 46 years post Mar del Plata – we signal the urgency required to rethink water and gender. Arguing for a feminist water agenda, we showcase that women’s water needs and use are plural and overlapping. Equally importantly, we argue the urgency for transformative economic and political opportunities that will allow women to take a far stronger role in hegemonically masculine water governance and decision-making spaces. Our panel of speakers will discuss diverse and embodied experiences of water insecurity, gendered challenges in and beyond WASH, and how deep-rooted power imbalances and the politics of water masculinities pose challenging questions, including for the 2023 UN conference, the preparation of which was led (yet again) by two men.

We invite your participation in person at our moderated panel discussion on March 23rd, from 10.00 to 12.00 (EST). This event is being organised by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform in partnership with Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Northwestern University, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN Women. This event will take place at [62 Orchard St. 2 Floor, Manhattan, NY 10002](#). If you are unable to attend in person, please do join us remotely via Zoom ([Click here for the link!](#))

Whether you join in person or virtually, please consider the following questions:

- Is the water-gender discourse on course or is it derailed, directionless and ultimately un-fit for purpose?
- In what ways do water institutions ignore women's access to domestic and productive water, and how does this affect women's empowerment and wellbeing?
- What will it take to achieve substantial transformative change that can tackle and disrupt patriarchal rules of the game on water management and governance?
- What might be the key entry points to establishing a truly feminist productive water agenda, whether in policy and/or practice?

Post your thoughts on the above questions on the following [concept board](#).

Please circulate widely to those who might be interested in the event.

Speakers:

Moderator: [Dr Deepa Joshi](#), Gender and Inclusion Lead, International Water Management Institute

[Dr Alan Nicol](#), Strategic Program Director – Water, Growth and Inclusion, IWMI

[Prof Lyla Mehta](#), Institute of Development Studies

[Dr. Sera Young](#), Associate Professor in Anthropology, Northwestern University

[Ilaria Sisto](#), Gender and Development Officer, FAO

[Diana Ulloa](#), Water Consultant, Activist, and Co-Founder, Adaptation Latin America

[Nathaniel Mason](#), Research Associate for Climate and Sustainability, ODI

Tbc, UN Women

When: March 23, 2023 / 10:00 – 12:00 EST

Where: Online ([Click here for the link!](#)) and in-person (62 Orchard St. 2 Floor, Manhattan, NY 10002)

Want to know more?: [Attend this event here on "Revisiting the UN Water Conference: 46 years of learning and forgetting?"](#)

RSVP for event here! Any further questions? Drop a note to:

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[International Water Management Institute \(IWMI\)](#)