

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES, INCLUDING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Title: Empowerment of women and girls through access to public services, including Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Date: 14th March 2019, 1.15-2.30pm

Venue: Ex-Press Bar, 3rd Floor, General Assembly Building, United Nations

Co-hosts: The Permanent Missions of India, Norway, Singapore and South Africa to the United Nations in New York in partnership with the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

Background

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the leading global forum exclusively dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. It has a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and challenges in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in mainstreaming gender in UN activities.

The 63rd session of the CSW, taking place from 11 to 22 March 2019, has as its priority theme "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls." The review theme is "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development."

Public services include a variety of services that States are responsible for delivering to their citizens. Access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities are a vital public service. However, in many countries, a large majority of women and girls, as well as men and boys, are still not enjoying this right. According to the Joint Monitoring Programme of the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, in 2017 2.3 billion people lacked access to basic sanitation services and 892 million people worldwide still practiced open defecation. 844 million people lacked access to a basic drinking water service and 263 million people spent over 30 minutes per round trip to collect drinkable water. 159 million people still collected drinking water directly from surface water sources, 58% of whom lived in sub-Saharan Africa¹.

¹ Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2017 Update and SDG Baseline, Joint Monitoring Programme WHO/UNICEF, 2017 <https://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2017/launch-version-report-jmp-water-sanitation-hygiene.pdf>.



The lack of access to WASH services severely affects human health, women’s mobility and participation including in economic and learning activities. This in turn negatively impacts countries’ economies. Women and girls face particular barriers, especially during menstruation. The situation is worse in times of crisis and in humanitarian settings. Yet, having access to water and sanitation are human rights. Governments must take appropriate steps to ensure that their citizens enjoy WASH services including in public spaces and at home. WASH services and facilities must be available within the safe physical reach of all sections of the population without discrimination of any kind and accessible at a price that is affordable to all.

The lack of access to WASH services especially in schools, workplaces, health centres and public facilities and buildings, negatively affects gender equality and women’s and girls’ enjoyment of human rights, including the rights to education, health, safe and healthy working conditions and to participate in public affairs. Children suffer the most from interruptions in water and sanitation service. Progress on reducing child mortality, morbidity and stunting is linked to children’s and women’s access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

CSW63 offers a unique platform for representatives of Member States, UN entities and non-governmental organizations from all regions of the world to discuss access to WASH as an essential public service and infrastructure for the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Objectives

The objectives of the session are:

1. To examine the role of and challenges faced by States in delivering water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as a public service;
2. To feed into the discussions of the CSW whose priority theme this year is “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”; and
3. To contribute to advancing the discussions on WASH services for women and girls as a key priority and determinant for women’s empowerment.

Best practices and lessons learned from WSSCC country programmes will also be shared during the session.

Expected outcomes

- Contribute to the global policy debate and emphasise the importance of access to WASH as a public service.
- Increase attention to WASH in global discussions and international forums as a cross cutting issue.



Programme

PROGRAMME
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome and opening remarks by Moderator, Ambassador Burhan Gafoor, PR of Singapore to the United Nations in New York
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keynote remarks by H.E. Ms. Bathabile Dlamini, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Women, South Africa• Remarks by Ms. Merete Brattested, Secretary General, Department for UN and Humanitarian Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway• Remarks by Representative of Permanent Mission of India to the UN
Presentations by Panel <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alice Ngo Njiki MHM Trainer & Government Representative, Cameroon Ministry of Water and Energy – WASH Division – <i>The Role of the State in Delivering WASH Services: Challenges and Successes</i>• Dunja Krause, Research Officer UNRISD - <i>The role of public policies in delivering WASH-related services</i>• Martina Nee, Programme Manager WaterAid Sweden – <i>Female friendly and community toilets - experiences from the field</i>• Pr V. Srinivas Chary, Professor & Center Director at the Administrative Staff College of India - She Toilets Project - <i>Toilets for Women in Warangal: Adapting facilities to respond to women and girls' needs</i>
Q&A and moderated discussion
Close of session by moderator



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