



NILE BASIN DISCOURSE

THE REGIONAL NILE WOMEN'S NETWORK

“WATERING WOMEN” WEBINAR SERIES

EPISODE 2 - 16TH AUGUST 2023

EVENT SUMMARY:

Event Date: 16th August 2023

Duration: 1 hr 18 mins

Topic/Speaker:

- “Roles of Women in Water Governance and Sustainable Environmental Management in the Nile Basin”; By Ms Josephine Mihama - Governance Links, Tanzania

Moderator: Ms Ghada Ahmedein (Chairperson of the RNWN)

No. of Participants: 30 (from Burundi, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, UAE/Sudan, Uganda)

Technical Support for the Webinar: NBD Secretariat

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

TOPIC:

Roles of Women in Water Governance and Sustainable Environmental Management in the Nile Basin

OUTLINE:

- Gender inequity
- Narratives about women in water and environmental management
- Women professionals in the water sector
- Spaces for transformation (Roadblocks and Opportunities)
- Conclusions
- Take-away Action Points

	The Situation	Proposed way forward
Gender Inequity!	<p>Communities are still biased about women and see them as a weaker gender which intensifies the exclusion by men.</p> <p>Existing policies on women empowerment have good promises but are not enforced to realise the envisioned results.</p>	<p>We should not only stop at empowering women but also get them in control and be part of the decision-making processes.</p> <p>Seek and pursue Operationalization of existing policies on women empowerment.</p>
Narratives About Women in Water and Environmental Management	<p>In households, women are still regarded as social care attendants, a narrative that is strongly reinforced by cultural norms.</p> <p>At community level, women are often absent in strategic positions thereby excluded in managing collective natural resources. Efforts to address barriers to women participation are merely out of sympathy – to “reduce the burden on women”.</p> <p>Policy tokenism at institutional level – Only encouraging women to participate in pre-planned programs without their input and control – just to mention big numbers of women participants whose input is not considered when decisions are made.</p>	<p>Cultural norm narratives against women should be discouraged starting with the lower communities.</p> <p>Women do not need sympathy, but rather need access to opportunities, recognition and unconditional support to contribute to the Water and Environment management sector.</p> <p>Communities and Institutions should deliberately and inclusively involve women in programs beyond the participation for gender numbers. Women too deserve to be considered for strategic positions wherever they deserve it.</p>

<p>Women Professionals in Water Sector</p>	<p>Women are underrepresented in water sector - the World Bank report 2019: Only 18% of all water utility workers are women; only 23% of water engineers are women; and only 23% of managers in the water sector are women</p> <p>There is effort in attracting, recruitment and retention of women professionals but very few chances for advancement to higher ranks that make decisions.</p>	<p>More effort is needed in training and mentoring more women in the water sector. Put in place all initiatives and policies that encourage them to pursue water management professions.</p> <p>Mentor the exiting professionals in the sector and give them safe space to rise to higher ranks.</p>
<p>Spaces For Transformation</p>	<p>Roadblocks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social norms and stereotypes against women are still a big challenge, power and control skewed to the benefit of men and women misrepresented. • Evidence to support women empowerment is still generic • Occupational segregation is still in abundance and poses threat. • Inadequate critical mass for transformation. More effort is needed to get more actors aboard to increase momentum of transformation. • Pro women rights organisations are fragmented and working in silos. 	<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in mindset change and deliberate pro women support at organizational, community and local governance levels. • Synergy of role models; working together at all levels to build critical mass influence • Base on concrete evidence and effectively use it to influence at all levels. Claims of women’s participation in decision making should be supported with evidence. • Using outreach campaigns to claim space for control and accountability beyond just women participation
<p>Conclusion:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transformation is possible; Women too should be put in control positions to influence decision making than just being participants. 2. Quest for the right data by asking the right questions on natural resource control to support advocacy 3. Affirmative action is clouded by sympathy; this narrative should be discouraged. Women do not need sympathy, but opportunities, recognition and unconditional support. 4. The critical mass is available but not sufficiently organised, there’s need to consolidate/synergise efforts from all stakeholders. 5. Women empowerment is fuzzy; well aligned policies, guidelines, and action points are required to achieve tangible results! 	

TAKEAWAY ACTION POINTS:

1. Women should amplify strength in projects and activities they are doing to generate evidence and build confidence that: women at all levels can do and are successfully delivering on their work and thus can deliver given more opportunities and responsibilities especially in the water sector.
2. Educate masses (mostly youth) and organise/synergize women rights organizations to claim leadership space in water and natural resources governance.
3. As a lead way, locally work to influence cultural beliefs and practices concerning water and natural resources than waiting for statutory laws
4. Women should not work in isolation, invest in male champions and engage them to help in the mobilisation and working towards claiming spaces for women in water leadership.
5. Develop appropriate data and indicators for women empowerment so that it is easier to gauge transformation
6. Putting together a Position Paper for COP28 – National networks to prepare messages based on their challenges and situation and these will be compiled to form a consolidated position paper to be presented at COP28. For purposes of planning, the NBD Secretariat will compile a list of who within the network will be attending COP28 so that the team can coordinate and make participation more meaningful.