



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Permanent Mission of Burundi to the United Nations &
Permanent Observer Mission of WSA to the United Nations

HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (HLPF) SIDE EVENT

*WATERHer: Advancing SDG 6, Women-Led Water Access, Safety & Climate
Resilience within Gender-Responsive Community Innovation for Sustainable Development*



Thursday July 16, 2026 | 4:15PM-6:00PM
Conference Room 8, UN HQ, New York



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WATERHer: Advancing SDG 6 Women-Led Water Access, Safety & Climate Resilience within Gender-Responsive Community Innovation for Sustainable Development *Official Side Event Report | 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)*

SDG 6 — Clean Water & Sanitation | SDG 5 — Gender Equality | SDG 13 — Climate Action | SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities | SDG 17 — Partnerships

Executive Summary: WATERHer at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

Purpose

WATERHer is a gender-responsive, community-driven initiative advancing **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)** through women-led water access, safety, and climate-resilient systems. Presented at the **2026 HLPF** side event hosted by the **Mission of the Republic of Burundi** and the **Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation to the UN**, WATERHer demonstrates how women's leadership and innovation accelerate sustainable development outcomes. The event was held in contributing a focused gender and water lens to the broader 2026 HLPF Forum's deliberations while exploring the critical and often overlooked nexus between gender equality, women's leadership, and water access, safety, and climate resilience particularly at the level of community-based innovation.

Presentations, expert panel discussions, and open-floor interventions collectively highlighted that globally, 2.1 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water, and women and girls spend an estimated 250 million hours every day collecting water a burden that perpetuates cycles of poverty, educational exclusion, and disempowerment.

Participants called urgently for gender-responsive water governance, increased women's leadership in water management institutions, and recognition of community-driven innovation as an integral and irreplaceable component of SDG 6 achievement by 2030. The event produced a set of eight forward-looking recommendations, intended for transmission to relevant UN bodies, Member States, and development partners, and affirmed the WATERHer initiative as a platform for sustained advocacy within the UN system.

Background and Context

The 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

The 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2026) was convened at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 7 to 15 July 2026, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The Forum brought together Heads of State and Government, ministers, intergovernmental organizations, civil society actors, and the private sector to assess progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The overarching theme of HLPF 2026 "Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all" reflected the growing urgency of accelerated action as the 2030 deadline approaches. The Forum's in-depth review focused on five Sustainable

Development Goals: SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The High-Level Segment of ECOSOC, including the three-day ministerial segment, ran from 13 to 16 July 2026.

With the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals now only four years away, HLPF 2026 carried extraordinary weight. Progress across multiple SDGs remains significantly off-track, and the Forum underscored the imperative of transformed ambition, innovative financing, and inclusive governance providing the essential backdrop against which the WATERHer side event made its contribution.

The WATERHer Initiative — Rationale and Framing

WATERHer is a purpose-driven advocacy and engagement initiative that places women at the center of water governance, access, and climate resilience. It responds to a documented and persistent global gender water gap: despite being the primary water collectors and household water managers across the Global South, women remain structurally underrepresented in water policy formulation, governance bodies, and technical leadership positions at every level from community water committees to national water ministries and international river basin authorities.

The authoritative intellectual backdrop for the WATERHer side event was provided by the UN World Water Development Report 2026, titled *“Water for All People: Equal Rights and Opportunities,”* produced by UN-Water and UNESCO. This landmark report documents in comprehensive detail how gender inequalities continue to undermine global water security and how, conversely, advancing gender equality in water governance and access is one of the highest-leverage interventions available to the international community for accelerating SDG 6 progress. The report affirms that climate change, water scarcity, and natural disasters are intensifying pre-existing gender inequalities in water access, making timely and targeted action more essential.

The WATERHer side event sought to amplify women-led community innovation as the critical missing link in the global water agenda and to translate community-level evidence into policy-relevant, actionable recommendations for the international community.

Burundi’s Leadership and the Hosting Context

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Burundi to the United Nations and the Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation to the United Nations jointly organized and hosted the WATERHer side event. Burundi’s leadership in convening this dialogue reflects the country’s

lived experience with water access challenges and its commitment to advancing gender-responsive solutions at the international level.

As a landlocked nation in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, Burundi grapples with climate-induced water stress, limited WASH infrastructure, and gender-differentiated impacts of water insecurity making its voice in this conversation both deeply relevant and inherently credible.

The Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation to the United Nations brings a specialized advocacy lens focused on WASH rights, equitable access, and sanitation justice, enriching the event with both technical expertise and grassroots grounding. Together, the two organizing partners embody the complementarity of national experience and international advocacy that defines the WATERHer approach

The Global Gender-Water Crisis: Key Data and Evidence

The scale of the global water and sanitation crisis, and its disproportionate burden on women and girls, is unambiguous. The following evidence base, drawn from the UN World Water Development Report 2026, UN-Water, and associated intergovernmental bodies, informed all discussions at the WATERHer side event.

Callout 1 — The Scale of the Crisis

- **2.1 billion people** still lack safely managed drinking water globally (*UN World Water Development Report 2026*)
- Women and girls spend an estimated 250 million hours every single day collecting water, time lost to education, economic activity, and personal development (*UN-Water, 2026*)
- In sub-Saharan Africa, women and girls bear 71% of the total water collection burden
- 3.6 billion people lack safely managed sanitation services a figure with disproportionate safety and dignity implications for women and girls

Callout 2 — The Gender Governance Gap

- Women represent less than 17% of water sector professionals globally
- Women are underrepresented in water governance bodies in over 80% of UN Member States
- Gender-responsive water policies are in place in fewer than 30% of countries

- Climate change is projected to reduce freshwater availability by up to 40% in some vulnerable regions by 2040, with women-dependent rain-fed agriculture among the primary casualties

Callout 3 — The SDG 6 Progress Deficit

- At current rates of progress, the world will not achieve SDG 6 by 2030
- 703 million people lack even basic drinking water services
- Open defecation with severe physical safety consequences for women and girls is still practiced by 419 million people
- Only 54% of the global population has access to safely managed sanitation

Key Evidence Table — SDG 6 Targets and Gender Dimensions

SDG 6 Target	Global Status (2026)	Gender Dimension
6.1 — Safe Drinking Water	74% access (safely managed)	Women are primary water collectors in 80% of water-scarce households; their time cost is unquantified in national accounts
6.2 — Sanitation & Hygiene	54% safely managed sanitation coverage	Lack of facilities directly endangers women's physical safety, dignity, and menstrual health
6.3 — Water Quality	Millions exposed to contaminated water sources	Women and girls are the primary health victims of waterborne diseases, including cholera and typhoid
6.4 — Water Use Efficiency	Overextraction in 56% of river basins globally	Climate-driven water scarcity falls hardest on women farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture
6.5 — Integrated Water Resource Management	60% of countries with only partial IWRM frameworks	Women are excluded from 83% of river basin management bodies globally
6.b — Community Participation	Inconsistent and uneven community engagement across Member States	Women-led community water innovation remains systematically unrecognized and underfunded

Event Overview and Program

Event Structure

The WATERHer side event was structured across three sequential programmatic segments, each designed to build progressively from framing and evidence through expert dialogue to collective outcomes and forward commitments.

Key Thematic Areas Addressed

The event program addressed six interconnected thematic areas, each reflecting a dimension of the gender-water challenge that demands renewed attention and coordinated international response.

Women as Water Leaders

Elevating women from water carriers to water decision-makers and community innovators: examining what structural change is required to transform women's roles from burden-bearers to authorities within the global water governance architecture.

Safety and Dignity

Addressing gender-based violence, harassment, and physical safety risks directly linked to inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure including distant water collection points, unlit sanitation facilities, and the absence of menstrual hygiene management provisions.

Climate-Water-Gender Nexus

Understanding how climate change exacerbates water insecurity with disproportionate and cascading impacts on women and girls including through the destruction of rain-fed agriculture, increased displacement, and the erosion of traditional water management knowledge held by women.

Community-Led Innovation

Showcasing grassroots, women-led water management and WASH innovations from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and examining the conditions under which community innovation can be successfully recognized, resourced, and scaled.

Gender-Responsive Water Governance

Advocating for legal and institutional frameworks that mandate women's meaningful not merely nominal participation in water governance at national, sub-national, and community levels, including river basin authorities, water utilities, and national water councils.

Financing for Gender-Responsive WASH

Exploring the full spectrum of climate finance, development finance, and public investment mechanisms that could prioritize and accelerate women-led water initiatives and identifying the barriers that currently prevent such financing from reaching community-level women water leaders.

Key Discussions and Emerging Messages

Opening Segment — Framing the WATERHer Agenda

The opening segment established the moral, empirical, and policy foundation of the WATERHer event. Speakers from the Permanent Mission of Burundi and the Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation underscored that the exclusion of women from water leadership is not merely a gender equality failure, it is a development efficiency failure of the highest order. The argument was made clearly and compellingly: when women are empowered as water stewards, evidence consistently demonstrates improvements in household health outcomes, child nutrition rates, school attendance for girls, community conflict resolution, and overall community resilience. The correlation is not incidental, it is structural.

The opening remarks invoked the findings of the UN World Water Development Report 2026 *“Water for All People: Equal Rights and Opportunities”* as a call to transformative action. Speakers affirmed the WATERHer initiative as part of a broader ecosystem of gender-transformative water advocacy taking shape within and around the United Nations. The framing was unambiguous: with 2030 approaching, incrementalism is no longer an option. The opening segment set the tone for what followed a candid, evidence-grounded, and solutions-oriented exchange on one of the most consequential intersections in the sustainable development agenda.

Synthesis of Key Messages

Key Message 1 — Women Are Water Innovators, Not Just Water Carriers

Panelists forcefully challenged the persistent narrative that frames women primarily as victims of the water crisis. Evidence from community-based programs across sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America demonstrates unequivocally that when given resources, authority, and institutional support, women innovate. Women-led water committees consistently outperform male-dominated counterparts in equitable distribution, maintenance of infrastructure, conflict resolution, and the long-term sustainability of water systems. Community water enterprises established and managed by women in Kenya, Bangladesh, Bolivia, and rural Burundi were cited as compelling proof-of-concept models. The challenge, panelists agreed, is not a question of women’s capacity — it is a question of systemic exclusion, resource denial, and institutional bias. The frame must shift from “women as beneficiaries” to “women as authorities.”

Key Message 2 — Climate Change Is a Water Gender Crisis

Climate-induced water stress — encompassing prolonged droughts, erratic and intensifying rainfall patterns, flooding, and aquifer depletion — falls most heavily on women in the Global South. Women dependent on rain-fed agriculture, traditional water sources, and informal WASH systems bear the compounded brunt of climate disruption, often without the financial resources, institutional access, or political voice required to adapt. Panelists were emphatic: no climate resilience framework for water can be considered adequate, credible, or just without explicit gender-responsive design, financing mechanisms, and accountability structures. The integration of the climate, water, and gender agendas is not a theoretical aspiration — it is a practical imperative for the survival and adaptation of the world's most vulnerable communities.

Key Message 3 — Safety and Sanitation Are Inseparable from Gender Equality

Multiple interventions drew sustained attention to the acute physical safety risks faced by women and girls in the absence of adequate water and sanitation facilities. Open defecation, remote and poorly located water collection points, inadequately lit sanitation facilities, and the complete absence of menstrual hygiene management infrastructure create environments where women and girls are regularly, predictably, and systematically exposed to harassment, assault, and gender-based violence. This is not an ancillary concern — it is a core human rights issue. Speakers called unanimously for the adoption of gender safety audits of all WASH infrastructure as a standard, mandatory component of SDG 6 design, procurement, and evaluation frameworks. Safe sanitation is not a luxury — it is the foundation of women's dignity and security.

► Key Message 4 — Community Innovation Needs Institutional Recognition and Funding

Participants highlighted a persistent and deeply frustrating gap between community-level, women-led innovation in water management and the formal recognition, financing, and scaling of those innovations by national governments and international institutions. Women who have designed and managed community water enterprises — sometimes for decades, without external funding or institutional recognition — remain invisible in national water accounts, global water data, and international financing frameworks. Calls were made for the creation of dedicated funding windows within the Global Water Fund, multilateral development banks, and UN-Water mechanisms specifically designed to identify, support, formalize, and

scale women-led community water enterprises. Recognition, the panelists argued, must precede and enable financing.

Civil Society and Member State Interventions

Representatives from civil society organizations and Member States provided a rich array of perspectives during the open floor segment. Several delegations from African nations highlighted the urgency of WASH investment as a prerequisite for achieving multiple SDGs simultaneously, noting that water insecurity cascades inexorably into food insecurity, health system deficits, and educational exclusion all of which carry profound and compounding gendered dimensions. Civil society voices placed particular emphasis on the need for sex-disaggregated data on women's water roles, calling for gender-specific indicators to be formally incorporated into the SDG 6 monitoring and review framework.

Multiple speakers referenced the SDG 6 Special Event held on 7 July 2026 as part of the formal HLPF program and affirmed that the WATERHer side event had meaningfully deepened those discussions by bringing an explicit gender and community innovation lens to bear on the broader water agenda. The interventions collectively reinforced the WATERHer framing that gender equality and water security are not parallel tracks, they are the same track.

Strategic Alignment with HLPF 2026 Priorities

Transformative Action for SDG 6: WATERHer accelerates SDG 6 through community-driven, women-led water systems that improve access, reliability, and safety. By shifting women from water collectors to water decision-makers, the initiative strengthens governance through women-led water hubs, climate-resilient infrastructure, and safety training, directly contributing to SDG 6 acceleration and enhances sustainability.

Equity & Inclusion (SDG 5): The initiative addresses gender inequalities in water access and governance, advancing SDG 5 and the HLPF's commitment to leaving no one behind. Women's leadership is central to WATERHer's design and implementation.

Innovation & Gender Engagement: The initiative integrates innovation labs, digital tools, and climate-smart technologies, aligning with the HLPF's call for scalable, innovative solutions that empower women and youth.

Climate Resilience (SDG 13): Through climate-adaptive water infrastructure-including solar boreholes, filtration systems, and rainwater harvesting-WATERHer strengthens community resilience and supports coordinated climate action.

Strengthened Partnerships (SDG 17): The model mobilizes collaboration across **governments, UN agencies, academia, civil society, youth networks, and development partners**, reinforcing SDG 17 and enabling multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Evidence-Based Policy Contribution: WATERHer provides **community insights, data, and policy recommendations** to inform HLPF deliberations and follow-up processes.

Why WATERHer Matters for SDG 6 and the 2030 Agenda

Strategic Purpose

WATERHer is a gender-responsive, community-driven model advancing SDG 6 through women-led water access, safety, and climate-resilient systems. Presented at the 2026 HLPF side event hosted by the Mission of the Republic of Burundi and the Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation to the UN, WATERHer demonstrates how localized innovation can be scaled through UN agency mandates, programming, and partnerships.

Operational Entry Point for SDG Acceleration: WATERHer provides a practical, field-tested model that UN agencies can integrate into Country program, Joint UN frameworks (UNSDCF), Humanitarian–development–peace nexus initiatives and Climate adaptation and resilience portfolios. It offers a replicable pathway for SDG 6 acceleration with strong co-benefits for SDGs 5, 13, and 17.

Gender-Responsive Systems Strengthening: WATERHer shifts women from beneficiaries to decision-makers, aligning with agency mandates on Gender equality, Inclusive governance, Community-based service delivery, Protection and safety in WASH systems. This directly supports UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Habitat priorities and the 2030 Agenda prerogatives

Climate-Resilient Infrastructure for Agency Portfolios: The initiative's climate-adaptive water systems solar boreholes, filtration, rainwater harvesting offer scalable models for climate adaptation programming, resilience investments, localized infrastructure solutions **and** community-based early warning and risk reduction. This aligns with UNDP, UNEP, FAO, and UNDRR mandates.

A Ready Platform for Multi-Stakeholder Coordination: WATERHer mobilizes Governments, UN agencies, academia, civil society, youth networks and development

partners. This provides a strong foundation for SDG 17 partnerships, joint programming, inter-agency collaboration and advancement of WATERHer.

Evidence-Based Inputs for UN Policy and Programming

WATERHer generates community-level data, operational insights, gender-responsive WASH evidence and policy recommendations. This can inform HLPF follow-up on WATERHer and advancement of SDG 6, WATERHer and SDG 6 Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), UN system-wide reports and Agency-specific thematic strategies

Key Components of the WATERHer Model

Women-Led Community Water Hubs

Women-led hubs serve as the operational backbone of WATERHer. They coordinate water access, distribution, maintenance, and community engagement. These hubs function as governance platforms, training sites, and accountability mechanisms, ensuring equitable and transparent service delivery.

Climate-Resilient Water Infrastructure

WATERHer deploys climate-adaptive technologies suitable for rural and climate-stressed environments. Infrastructure includes solar-powered boreholes, filtration and purification systems, and rainwater harvesting. Women technicians are trained to maintain and manage these systems, strengthening local resilience.

Water Safety & Public Health Training

Training modules build community capacity in water quality monitoring, sanitation, hygiene, disease prevention, and safety audits for women and girls. This component reduces public health risks and supports community resilience.

Gender Water Innovation Labs

Innovation labs bring together women, youth, engineers, and local innovators to co-design solutions. Labs focus on digital tools, climate-smart technologies, gender-responsive design, and youth-led innovation challenges.

Women's Water Leadership Academy

The academy develops leadership pipelines for women in water governance, climate resilience, and community development. It includes training in leadership, advocacy, policy literacy, technical WASH skills, and mentorship networks.

Partnership Mobilization Platform

This platform coordinates engagement across governments, UN agencies, academia, civil society, youth networks, and development partners. It enables joint programming, resource mobilization, knowledge exchange, and integration into national SDG strategies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

WATERHER RECOMMENDATIONS TO 2026 HLPF, UN MEMBER STATES, UN SYSTEM, AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Mandate Gender Parity in Water Governance Bodies

Enact legislation and institutional policies require a minimum of 40% women's representation in all national and sub-national water governance structures, including river basin authorities, water utilities, and WASH advisory committees. Representation must be accompanied by meaningful participation, decision-making authority, and accountability mechanisms.

Adopt Gender-Responsive SDG 6 National Action Plans

Integrate explicit gender targets, sex-disaggregated indicators, and women's participation benchmarks into all National Action Plans for SDG 6 implementation and Voluntary National Reviews. No SDG 6 National Action Plan should be considered complete or credible without a substantive gender chapter.

Establish a Women-Led Water Innovation Fund

Advocate within the UN system and multilateral development institutions for the creation of a dedicated financing mechanism for women-led community water enterprises, WASH innovations, and grassroots climate-water resilience programs with streamlined access pathways, simplified reporting requirements, and community-appropriate grant structures.

4. Integrate Gender into Climate Water Financing

Require all climate finance instruments addressing water including National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Green Climate Fund projects, and the water components of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to include mandatory gender impact assessments, women's leadership benchmarks, and reporting on gender outcomes.

5. Strengthen WASH Safety Infrastructure

Adopt gender safety audits as a standard, mandatory requirement in all WASH infrastructure design, procurement, and evaluation frameworks ensuring that water collection points, sanitation facilities, and hygiene stations are safe, accessible, adequately lit, and dignity-affirming for women and girls in all contexts.

6. Disaggregate Water Data by Gender

Invest in national statistical capacity to collect, analyze, and publicly report sex-disaggregated data on water access, sanitation use, water collection burden, water governance participation, and climate-water vulnerability — to ensure that gender-responsive policymaking is grounded in reliable, current, and granular evidence.

7. Scale Community Women-Led Water Models

Develop a global compendium of women-led community water innovations and establish a UN-supported platform for peer learning, knowledge exchange, and the replication of

successful models across developing nations recognizing that women-led community water innovations represent some of the most cost-effective and sustainable water management solutions available.

8. Anchor WATERHer within UN-Water and SDG 6 Processes

Formally recognize the WATERHer initiative as a contributing platform to the ongoing SDG 6 monitoring and review process, and ensure that its findings, recommendations, and community evidence feed directly into the next SDG 6 Synthesis Report, the High-Level Dialogue on Water, and relevant ECOSOC deliberations.

Action Agenda – SDG 6 WATERHer Acceleration (2026–2030 and beyond) for Mission of the Republic of Burundi & Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation to the United Nations

Purpose

To position WATERHer as a flagship gender-responsive water initiative driving SDG 6 acceleration for the remainder of the 2030 Agenda and establishing a long-term foundation for post-2030 water security, climate resilience, and women's leadership.

Call to Action: SDG 6 WATERHer Next Agenda

Strengthen Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships for SDG 6 Acceleration: The Mission of Burundi and the Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation will convene, expand, and institutionalize partnerships across UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNEP, UN-Habitat, UNFPA, FAO, UNDRR), Member States committed to gender-responsive water governance, Regional bodies (African Union, EAC, SADC, ECOWAS), Civil society and women's networks, Youth innovation ecosystems, Academic and research institutions and Development banks and climate finance partners. These partnerships will form a WATERHer SDG 6 Acceleration Consortium, enabling coordinated action, shared resources, and integrated programming.

Embed WATERHer in National and UN System Programming (2026–2030): The Missions will advocate for WATERHer integration into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs), National water and climate adaptation strategies, Gender equality and WASH sector plans, Humanitarian–development–peace nexus programming and Climate resilience portfolios and adaptation funds. This ensures WATERHer becomes a recognized implementation pathway for SDG 6, SDG 5, SDG 13, and SDG 17.

Expand WATERHer Hubs and Climate-Resilient Water Systems: The next agenda prioritizes scaling Women-Led Community Water Hubs, Solar boreholes and off-grid water systems, Filtration and purification technologies, Rainwater harvesting and drought-adaptive

systems, Women-trained maintenance and safety teams. This expansion will target high-vulnerability communities in Burundi and partner countries, strengthening resilience to climate shocks.

Institutionalize Women's Leadership in Water Governance: The Missions will champion the Women's Water Leadership Academy, Leadership pipelines for local, regional, and national governance, Policy literacy and advocacy training, Representation of women in water boards, committees, and climate councils. This ensures women's leadership becomes structural, not symbolic.

Advance Innovation Through Gender Water Innovation Labs: The next agenda will support Digital Water Monitoring Tools, Youth-led climate innovation challenges, Gender-responsive technology design, Partnerships with universities and tech incubators: These labs will serve as regional innovation engines for SDG 6 solutions.

Establish a WATERHer Knowledge & Evidence Platform: To support evidence-based policymaking, the Missions will coordinate community-generated data systems, best-practice documentation, policy briefs for HLPF and UN processes, research partnerships with academic institutions and monitoring frameworks aligned with SDG indicators. This platform will ensure WATERHer contributes to global SDG reporting and HLPF follow-up.

Mobilize Financing for SDG 6 Acceleration: The Missions will work with partners to unlock climate adaptation financing, gender-responsive WASH funding, blended finance models, development bank partnerships, private-sector co-investment. This financing strategy will sustain WATERHer through 2030 and into the post-2030 agenda.

Leadership Commitment Statement

WATERHer offers UN agencies a scalable, evidence-based, gender-responsive model that strengthens community systems, accelerates SDG 6, and reinforces cross-cutting commitments to equity, climate resilience, and partnership. It is ready for integration into UNSDCFs, country programs, resilience portfolios, and joint UN initiatives.

WATERHer demonstrates how women-centered innovation, climate resilience, and inclusive governance can accelerate SDG 6 and strengthen cross-sector partnerships. Its contributions to the 2026 HLPF highlight a scalable model for gender-responsive, community-driven water solutions that advance global sustainable development priorities.

The Mission of the Republic of Burundi and the Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation commit to advancing WATERHer as a flagship SDG 6 acceleration initiative, strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, expanding women-led water systems, and ensuring that

gender-responsive water governance remains central to global sustainable development efforts through 2030 and beyond.

Further Action:

The side event recommends a panel conference at 2026 Water Conference to advocate for gender equality on access to clean water and sanitation for all women as well as integrate concerns on risks and experiences on women and girls in rural communities on water and sanitation across the world.

Secondly, Mission of the Republic of Burundi and the Observer Mission of Water and Sanitation to hold WATERHer: Advancing SDG 6 Women-Led Water Access, Safety & Climate Resilience within Gender-Responsive Community Innovation for Sustainable Development conference on March 22, 2027 to mark the 2027 UN Water Day.

Speakers and Panelists

The side event acknowledged the presentations from

H.E. Dr. Nabhit Kapur, Permanent Observer, Observer Mission on Water and Sanitation for Africa to the UN

H.E. Mr. Zéphyrin Maniratanga, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary /Permanent Representative, Mission of Burundi, Represented by Ambassador **Landry Sibomana**

Ambassador Prof. Ada Okika, Deputy Permanent Observer, Observer Mission of WSA

Hon. Mohlomi Moleko, Minister of Water, Kingdom of Lesotho

Onneetse Ramogapi, Minister of Water and Human Settlements, Botswana

Hon. Carlson Mael, Former Minister of Plenipotentiary, Curacao

Hon Fitore Pacolli , Minister of Environment,

Hon. Mathew Samuda, Minister of Water, Environment and Climate Change, Jamaica

Dr. Linda Salvin, Veteran Radio Talk Show Host, and Metaphysician, Creator of Wicks of Wisdom

Dr. Lynda Folan, Managing Director, Inspired Development Solutions Pty Ltd

John A. Tarantino, Senior Counsel & President Emeritus, Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C. | CEO, Ilyon Precision Oncology, LLC

Tina Newsome-Lee, Esq, National Practice Lead & Vice President, The Travelers Indemnity Company

Kwabena Osei-Sarpong, President & CEO, RIFE International

Irah Singal, Indian Administrative Service

Gregory D. Kuns, Senior Adviser Observer Mission on Water and Sanitation for Africa to the UN

Ambassador Dr Jay Patel, President, WSA Stakeholders Forum

Dr. Raul Handa, Adviser, Observer Mission on Water and Sanitation for Africa to the UN



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