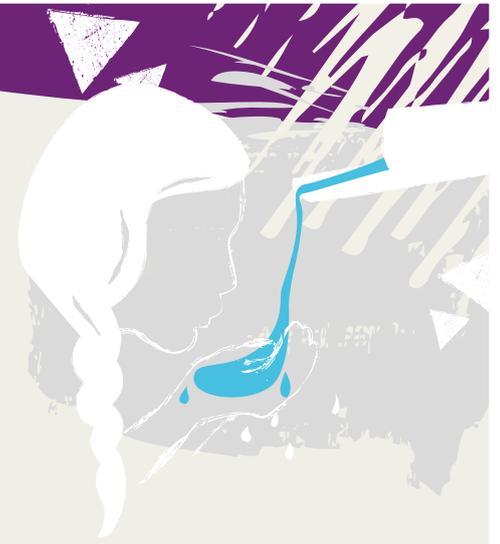


SDG 6

ENSURE AVAILABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL



Sustainable Development Goals seen from a feminist approach

Unequal access to water has a direct impact on women and girls' rights to health, housing, food and education. Additionally, this inequality is another obstacle to ensuring their Sexual and Reproductive Rights.

The Human Right to Water and Sanitation (HRWS) is recognized as essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights, and is integral to the **dignity** of every person. It entitles everyone to *sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic uses**. From a Human Rights perspective, advocating for this right means integrating the principles of the HRWS into the International Human Rights Law, which uphold the rights to: equality and non-discrimination; environmental, economic and social sustainability; transparency, and accountability.

Gender as a factor of inequality

Women's access to water and sanitation remains unequal to that of men:

- Unequal access to **property rights**.
- Democratic deficits that create inequality in **decision-making spaces** and suggest that the demands and interests of women often remain invisible.
- There are countries that still have a strong **sexual division of labor**, where the social norm dictates that women and girls assume the responsibility for bringing water into homes. They become not only the ones mainly responsible for transporting water, but for the daily management of traditional supply systems within their communities as well.

- In most societies, women do the most **unpaid and care work** and/or they perform the most precarious and low-paid work.
- Furthermore, women continue to face **gender-based violence**, human trafficking, and their autonomy and **Sexual and Reproductive Rights** continue to be limited.

All of this is driven by a predatory economic system that is sustained by rising inequality and, likewise, by the question of accessibility to water, a basic need and resource in every person's life. We know that water scarcity is increasingly becoming a problem in every society and adds another economic barrier between those who can access it and those who cannot. In any region, water has become a **luxury** that belongs to people and groups privileged under a **neoliberal and patriarchal system**.

Some impacts of HRWS on women's lives

- **Availability.** Water scarcity affects more than 40% of the world's population, mostly women. This figure is expected to increase with a rise in global temperatures due to climate change.
- **Accessibility and quality.** The shrinking availability of quality drinking water is a global problem. Women are usually more exposed to vulnerable situations, such as sexual violences, than men are. In some regions the lack of sanitation facilities within households located in rural areas lead women to being forced to use facilities that are often located far from their homes.
- **Affordability.** **Gender inequality** is also visible in economic terms. In Catalonia, the domestic supply of drinking water is included in legislation among the minimum services that all municipalities must provide.

* United Nations General Assembly, Resolution A/RES/64/292 (July 2010) and Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2002). General Comment No. 15. The human right to water.



In most households, **women assume the responsibility** for being the **primary familial caregivers**. When the conditions that lead to energy poverty occur, it is they who spend their time in search of social assistance to alleviate economic expenses related to water supply and sanitation. This inequality is amplified when one considers the unequal treatment that women suffer when accessing economic resources.

- **Acceptability.** Many women suffer **sexual violences** when they practice open defecation or use public facilities. This results in many women and girls avoiding these facilities, going to school or working, especially during menstruation.

Achieving the effectiveness of HRWS and SDG 6 is only possible through an ecofeminist agenda

Territory, water and women's **body** are conceived as prioritized areas that need to be protected. These are spaces of resistance that claim and advocate for human rights and social reproduction in the face of the current biocide system that is based on **patriarchy, colonialism, racism, capitalism** and **neoliberalism**. On the basis of this perspective, the following are proposed:

- Ensure access to water as a **fundamental right for all**, universally, avoiding and penalizing oligopolies that trade and benefit from the creation of social inequalities related to a basic need resource. During the last 15 years, 235 urban settlements around the world have carried out the remunicipalization of water and sanitation services that reflects this new way of understanding water as a basic right rather than an economic good**.
- If the lack of access to the HRWS has an impact on children, and girls in particular, **support for parenting and health**, historically assumed by women, should be enhanced. The development of these tasks must have adequate and safe access to water and sanitation.
- It is urgent and necessary to encourage and strengthen the involvement of local communities, especially those of women, in joining to **improve water and sanitation management**.
- The **women's participation** in adopting decisions related to water, sanitation, and hygienic infrastructure and services should be facilitated and increased.

Legislation in Catalonia

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- General Comment No. 15 of the ESCR Committee, The right to water (arts. 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), 2002.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- European Convention on Human Rights, 1950.
- Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 2006.
- Law 17/2015, of 21 July, on effective equality between women and men.
- Law 24/2015, of 29 July, on urgent measures to deal with the emergency regarding housing and energy poverty.
- National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, 2019.

Legislation El Salvador

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- General Comment No. 15 of the ESCR Committee, The right to water (arts. 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), 2002.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- American Convention on Human Rights, 1969.
- Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "Protocol of San Salvador", 1988.
- Law of Equality, Equity and Eradication of Discrimination Against Women, 2011.
- Environmental Law, 2012.

In El Salvador, where 90% of surface waters are contaminated, there is no Water Law that recognizes its public and community management. Therefore, in October 2019, thanks to the struggle of social movements, and especially those of women's, the municipality of Suchitoto set a precedent by holding a Popular (binding) Consultation in which people declared 'yes' to Water as a Human Right.



** Aigua és vida, '¿Remunicipalizar el agua?' (2016) <https://www.aiguaesvida.org/remunicipalizar-el-agua>

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