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42nd GIMAC Pre-Summit CSOs Consultative Meeting


on Gender Mainstreaming in the
African Union and Member States

Outcome DOCUMENT



SUMMARY OF GIMAC RECOMMENDATIONS

We call for a gender-transformative WASH agenda that integrates financing, evidence, governance, capacity, and accountability to advance dignity, safety, and inclusive development. This requires ring-fenced, flexible, and gender-responsive financing aligned with Africa Water Vision 2063 and the Cape Town Declaration, including dedicated climate-finance windows that prioritize underserved and conflict-affected communities and scale women and youth-led WASH innovations. The AU should promote participatory, gender-justice research and routine, intersectional sex-disaggregated data to inform women- and youth-led solutions, with the AU Gender Observatory tracking progress through annual public reporting. Governance reforms must institutionalize women's and youth leadership through quotas, capacity building, and social accountability tools. Accountability should be anchored in gender-responsive budgeting, disability-inclusive indicators, safe sanitation for women and girls, and clear youth and gender targets across WASH and climate policies.



We, the participants of the 42nd GIMAC CSO Pre-Summit Meeting and the GIMAC Young Women Advocacy Training, convened physically and virtually in Addis Ababa, on the margins of the 39th AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, under the theme “Advancing Gender-Responsive Water and Sanitation Policies for Sustainable Development in Africa”, and in alignment with the African Union Theme of the Year 2026: Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063”.

We commend the African Union for prioritizing the 2026 theme, ‘Assuring Sustainable Water Availability and Safe Sanitation Systems to Achieve the Goals of Agenda 2063,’ and recognize the Women, Gender and

Youth Directorate (WGYD), the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, and allied partners for their leadership in embedding gender equality into continental frameworks.

We recall Africa’s normative instruments, including the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the Maputo Protocol, the AU Transitional Justice Policy, and the Cape Town Declaration. These frameworks underscore the imperative of equity, reparative justice, and resilience in water and sanitation systems.

We call on Member States of the African Union to sign and ratify the Convention on Violence Against Women and Girls (CEVAWG) as a demonstration of their commitment and their desire to protect women and girls from all forms of violence as captured in the convention.

We emphasize that water and sanitation are deeply gendered domains shaping health, education, productivity, and dignity. Without deliberate gender-responsive planning, climate shocks and underdeveloped governance risk reinforcing systemic inequalities. We therefore call for urgent, evidence-based measures that ensure “Nothing for us without us” guides AU policy and practice, centering women, girls, and youth as co-designers of Africa’s sustainable future.

We urge the African Union and Member States to adopt these recommendations and mandate their integration into AU Water Vision 2063 targets, budgets, monitoring frameworks, and accountability mechanisms. By doing so, the African Union will catalyze gender-responsive, youth-led innovation and deliver dignified, climate-resilient water and sanitation systems that advance the aspirations of Agenda 2063.

1. Financing: Advocate for ring-fenced, flexible, and gender-responsive WASH financing policies that prioritize underserved, conflict-affected, and rural communities. Ensure that investments avail safe, accessible, and affordable water and sanitation infrastructure while also catalyzing local economic empowerment through regional integration and economic diversification for women and youth-led WASH enterprises. Women must be equitably represented in the design, implementation, and oversight of WASH budget frameworks at national, regional, and continental levels. Financing mechanisms should be aligned with the Africa Water Vision 2063 and the Cape Town Declaration, with clear gender indicators and accountability tools to track progress and redress historical underinvestment. Establish gender-responsive climate financing windows at national and regional levels that directly support youth and women-led WASH initiatives, and allocate a minimum share of climate adaptation funds to scale locally led WASH innovations.

2. Research: Support gender-justice, participatory research that documents the intersectional impacts of water scarcity, unsafe sanitation, and climate-driven resource competition, particularly how these dynamics heighten risks of gender-based violence, displacement, and exclusion from economic and civic life. Use this evidence to co-design gender-responsive WASH interventions that are led by women and youth, grounded in lived experience, and tailored to the needs of marginalized groups, and to embed gender-responsive WASH within SRHR policies so that national standards guarantee safe, accessible, and dignified water and sanitation services for women, girls, and adolescents in all public institutions, backed by dedicated budgets and accountability mechanisms. Mandate routine collection and use of gender-disaggregated data, with intersectionality considered, and ensure findings feed into annual public reporting, with the AU Gender Observatory serving as the continental mechanism for tracking and comparing country progress on gender-responsive WASH commitments.

3. Governance, Peace & Security: Institutionalize gender-responsive and participatory governance by mandating women's equitable representation and leadership in all WASH decision-making bodies as co-designers and co-developers. Move beyond token participation by establishing quotas and capacity-building programs that build agency and voice for women and youth to take on leadership roles in community water committees, utility boards, and national regulatory agencies. Support these governance structures with the skills, tools, and resources to design, monitor, and report on gender-responsive and inclusive service delivery. This includes training on gender-based violence risk mitigation, social accountability tools such as community scorecards, and participatory budgeting. Adopt minimum quotas for women's and youth representation in WASH decision-making bodies, climate planning platforms, and oversight committees.

Promote Youth Advisory Platforms within WASH institutions to ensure young women contribute to decision-making, monitoring, and accountability. Strengthen intergovernmental and sectoral collaboration (health, agriculture, environment, finance, education) for more sustainable and equitable WASH.

4. Capacity Building: Establish robust continental and regional learning mechanisms to accelerate the adoption of proven, gender responsive WASH governance models. Embed WASH and gender-responsive elements into national education strategies, aligned with the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 26-35) and promote multi-sector collaboration across education, water, gender, and climate ministries for coordinated service delivery. Champion inter collaboration through cross-country platforms such as peer learning networks, innovation hubs, and annual high-level forums where member states, civil society, and research institutions systematically share evidence, community-level innovations, and practical

lessons on advancing gender equality through WASH. Ensure these platforms also document and scale successful approaches to women's leadership, young women's participation, and social accountability. These platforms should also integrate cross-country learnings into standardized tools and policy briefs that strengthen WASH investments and programming.

5. Accountability: Systematically integrate the RBET framework (Reach marginalized groups (including people with disabilities, ensure Benefit for all, Empower women and disabled person's leadership, and Transform inequitable norms) as a core operational principle across continental and national WASH, gender, and climate policies. Align AU strategies, national development plans, and sector-wide approaches to explicitly incorporate RBET plus disability specific indicators for planning, budgeting, and monitoring. Move beyond gender-neutral approaches to actively dismantle structural barriers by mandating gender-responsive budgeting in WASH

ministries, designing sanitation facilities that meet the specific safety and hygiene needs of women and girls, and launching public awareness campaigns that challenge discriminatory norms. Require specific youth and gender-responsive indicators in all national WASH and climate adaptation strategies, covering equitable access, women's leadership, and gender disaggregated data. Mandate annual public reporting to enhance transparency and strengthen accountability for gender equality in WASH.

Organizers



Partners

