

“Water and gender: the challenge of equality in accessing water resources”

Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS

Euro-Mediterranean Water Forum 2026 · 29 September – 2 October · La Nuvola, Rome

KEY INFORMATION

Date	29 September 2026
Time	16:30 – 18:00
Room	<i>Atlante</i>
Format	Panel discussion
Language(s)	English

SUMMARY

Women and girls remain primarily responsible for water supply in many rural communities not connected to a water network, with impacts ranging from loss of educational opportunities to low participation in productive work and social life, to the risks associated with increased exposure to violence and deteriorating health.

In this contest and through the experiences shared by local authorities, UN Agencies, NGOs and private sector, the session, organized by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), **aims at stimulating the discussion on the issue of women's and girls' physical and economic access to water resources, especially in contexts of climate and social crises.**

AGENDA & SPEAKERS

Time	Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
16:30 – 16:35	Paolo Enrico SERTOLI, Water focal point	AICS	Moderator - Presentation
16:35 – 16:40	Marco Riccardo RUSCONI, Director	AICS	Speaker – Introductory remarks
16:40 – 16:50	Ersilia FRANCESCA e Valeria SAGGIOMO, UNESCO chair in Education, Gender Equality and Climate Action	University L'Orientale of Naples (UNIOR)	Speaker – Keynote speech
16:50 – 16:57	Miguel DORIA, Coordinator	UNESCO-WWAP	Panelist

Time	Speaker Name & Title	Organization	Role / Topic
16:57 - 17:04	Anna Scavuzzo, Vice Mayor	Municipality of Milan	Panelist
17:04 – 17:11	Xhemi JAUPAJ, Directorate for Water Resources Management, Director	Agency for Water Resources Management in Albania (AMBU)	Panelist
17:11 – 17:18	Aida JRIDI, Director at the General Directorate for Rural Engineering and Water Management	Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, Tunisia	Panelist
17:18 – 17:25	Anna CRESCENTI, WASH Global Expert	WeWorld	Panelist
17:25 – 17:32	Ali HAYAJNEH, Programme Manager, Water and Climate Change Programme	IUCN, Jordan	Panelist
17:32 – 17:39	Giulia GIUFFRÈ, Head of Sustainability and Member of the Board of Directors	Irritec, Italy	Panelist – Video message
17:39 – 17:55	Q&A Session, with moderation		Moderator
17:55 – 18:00	Paolo Enrico SERTOLI, Water focal point		Moderator – Closing remarks

BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Access to safe drinking water and sanitation is a fundamental human right. However, **gender inequalities profoundly affect the way water resources are managed and used.**

In this context, the United Nations **World Water Development Report 2026** (UNESCO World Water Assessment Programme – WWAP), titled "*Water for All: Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities*," presented on March 19, 2026, in New York during the World Water Day (WWD) 2026 celebrations, highlights the persistence of gender disparities in water management and access, which often exacerbate the global water crisis.

Indeed, even today, women are often excluded from decision-making processes regarding water management, despite their crucial role in agriculture and in communities' climate resilience. In this context, the **Italian Development Cooperation** is actively working, on one hand, to improve access (physical and economic) to water resources for women and girls, and on the other, to achieve improved water governance with positive repercussions for all water users.

Through the WWAP and the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP), UNESCO collects data disaggregated by sex, age, and other factors to monitor how water is used, managed, and distributed. Data analyses help identify and understand critical water resource issues and develop strategies to adequately address them through water-related planning and policy design.

The 2026 Report highlights how gender equality in access to water and sanitation, along with women's meaningful participation in water governance, **is essential for broader social participation in economic benefits and thus for building healthier and more just societies.**

OBJECTIVES

The session aims to:

- **Analyze** the impact of water scarcity and access on women and girls;

- **Promote** women's inclusion in water governance and water resources management;
- **Share** good practices and innovative technological solutions that integrate a gender perspective;
- **Stimulate** dialogue between policymakers, private sector, and civil society for more equitable investments.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Policy makers and institutional representatives;
- United Nations agencies and NGOs;
- Gender experts and academics;
- Representatives of the private sector and technological innovation.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Networking between water sector professionals and gender equality activists;
 - Raising public awareness through media and institutional channels.
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