



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

Background and Context

The 2026 High- Level Political Forum (HLPF) convenes at a critical moment for global sustainable development. With less than four years remaining to achieve the 2030 Agenda, progress on SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) remains uneven and insufficient, particularly in Pan-African communities, Sub-Saharan Africa, and other climate- vulnerable regions. Water scarcity, contamination, and climate-induced disruptions continue to undermine health, education, livelihoods, and community stability. Water insecurity remains a major barrier to sustainable development, disproportionately affecting women and girls. Climate change intensifies these challenges, increasing droughts, floods, and water contamination. Despite their central role in water management, women remain underrepresented in water governance and climate decision-making.

WATERHer responds to these gaps by empowering women as leaders, innovators, and decision-makers in water access and climate resilience. The initiative aligns with the 2026 HLPF theme: “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all.”

Women and girls bear the greatest burden of water insecurity: spending hours collecting water, facing heightened risks of violence, and suffering the consequences of inadequate sanitation. Yet they remain underrepresented in water governance, climate decision-making, and access to water-sector financing and technology.

The WATERHer initiative responds to these gaps by positioning women and girls as leaders, innovators, and decision-makers in water access, safety, and climate-resilient water management. The initiative is anchored in community-driven solutions and aligned with the 2026 HLPF theme: “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all.”

WATERHer is built on the understanding that sustainable water solutions must be gender-responsive, climate-smart, and community-owned. The rationale includes:

- Women are central to water systems yet excluded from leadership roles.
- Climate change intensifies water stress, disproportionately affecting women and girls.
- Local knowledge and women’s leadership are essential for resilient water governance.
- Gender innovation is critical for accelerating SDG 6 progress.
- Partnerships across governments, academia, civil society, and development partners are necessary for scale.

WATERHer provides a model that integrates gender equality, climate resilience, and community empowerment into water governance.

The side event will showcase the WATERHer initiative, a transformative, women-centered model for advancing SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) through gender-responsive leadership, climate-resilient water systems, and gender innovation. The event will highlight community-driven solutions, amplify women’s voices in water governance, and mobilize partnerships for scaling WATERHer across Africa and Commonwealth regions.

Objectives of the Initiative

Our Mission’s WATERHer initiative aims to:

- Strengthen women-led water governance at community, regional, and national levels.
- Expand access to safe, reliable, climate-resilient water systems in underserved communities.
- Build technical capacity for women and girls in water technology, safety, and climate adaptation.

- Promote youth innovation through water- tech labs and sustainability challenges.
- Mobilize partnerships and financing for scalable, women-centered water programs.
- Generate evidence and policy recommendations for SDG 6 and SDG 5 implementation.

Relevance to the Objectives of the 2026 HLPF

WATERHer directly advances the HLPF's mandate for transformative, equitable, innovative, and coordinated action:

Transformative Action for SDG 6 enabling WATERHer to accelerate SDG 6 through community- driven, women- led water systems that are sustainable and climate- resilient (Accelerating SDG 6 through community- driven, women-led water systems)

Equity and Inclusion to address gender inequalities in water access and governance, advancing SDG 5 and the HLPF's focus on leaving no one behind. (Advancing SDG 5 by strengthening women's leadership in water governance.)

Innovation and Gender Engagement integrating WATERHer into innovation labs, digital tools, and climate-smart technologies, aligning with the HLPF's call for innovative solutions.

Climate Resilience by promoting climate-adaptive water infrastructure, with WATERHer supporting SDG 13 and the HLPF's emphasis on coordinated climate action. (Supporting SDG 13 through climate-resilient water infrastructure.)

Strengthened Partnerships needed to bring the Advancement of SDG 6 and WATERHer together with governments, UN agencies, academia, civil society, and development partners, contributing to SDG 17. (Strengthening SDG 17 partnerships across governments, UN agencies, academia, and civil society.).

Evidence- Based Policy Contribution on WATERHer to provide data, community insights, and policy recommendations to inform HLPF discussions and follow- up processes. (Providing evidence- based recommendations to inform HLPF discussions and follow- up processes.

Key Components of the WATERHer Model for 2026 HLPF

- Women-Led Community Water Hubs
- Climate-Resilient Water Infrastructure (solar boreholes, filtration, rainwater harvesting)

- Water Safety & Public Health Training
- Gender Water Innovation Labs
- Women's Water Leadership Academy
- Partnership Mobilization Platform

Side Event Expectation and Outcome

- Increased access to safe, climate-resilient water systems.
- Strengthened leadership roles for women in water governance.
- Enhanced youth participation in water innovation.
- Documented best practices for scaling women-led water solutions.
- Policy recommendations submitted to the HLPF.
- Strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships supporting SDG 6 acceleration.

Program Format:

Opening Remarks and Call to 2026 HLPF Side Event	Opening Statement	H.E. Dr. Nabhit Kapur Permanent Observer, Observer Mission on Water and Sanitation for Africa to the UN	
	Transformative, equitable, innovative, and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all.	H.E. Mr. Zéphyrin Maniratanga, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary /Permanent Representative, Mission of Burundi	
Ministerial Dialogue	WATERHer: Advancing SDG 6, Women- Led Water Access, Safety & Climate Resilience within Gender- Responsive Community Innovation for Sustainable Development Strengthened Multi-stakeholder Partnerships Supporting SDG 6- WATERHer Acceleration	Ambassador Prof. Ada Okika, Deputy Permanent Observer, Mission of WSA Hon. Mohlomi Moleko, Minister of Water, Kingdom of Lesotho	

Keynote Presentation: Advancing SDG 6, Women-Led Water Access, Safety & Climate Resilience within Gender- Responsive Community Innovation for Sustainable Development Presentation Dialogue	the WATERHer model as a scalable approach to women- led water governance Community experiences and evidence from WATERHer pilot sites Gender Innovation in Water and Sanitation	Onneetse Ramogapi, Minister of Water and Human Settlements, Botswana Hon. Carlson Mauel, Former Minister of Plenipotentiary, Curacao Fitore Pacolli, Kosovo/ UNMIK 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 Emeritusus, Adler Pollock & Sheehan P.C. CEO, Iylon Precision Oncology, LLC Tina Newsome-Lee, Esq, National Practice Lead & Vice President, The Travelers Indemnity Company	
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		Ira Singal, Indian Administrative Service	
Interactive Dialogue (Best Practices Approach)	Mobilize partnerships and financing for WATERHer expansion	Gregory D. Kuns, Chief Executive Officer, Valitor, Inc.	
Call to Action-SDG 6 WATERHer Next Agenda	Commissioning of the WSA Stakeholders' Forum and Presentation	H.E. Dr. Nabhit Kapur, Permanent Observer, Observer Mission on Water and Sanitation for Africa to the UN	
		Ambassador Dr Jay Patel WSA Stakeholders Forum	
2026 HLPF Side Event Key Messages	Next Steps for WATERHer: Advancing SDG 6, Women- Led Water Access, Safety & Climate Resilience within Gender- Responsive Community Innovation for Sustainable Development	Ambassador Prof. Ada Okika, Deputy Permanent Observer, Mission of WSA	
Closing Statement	Appreciation Remarks	Dr. Raul Handa, Observer Mission on Water and Sanitation for Africa to the UN	