



International
Association of Water
Service Companies
in the Danube Region



SUSTAINABILITY
IN THE WATER SECTOR



26 MARCH 2026

Women in Water: Supporting Inclusive Contributions in the Industry Danube Region perspectives.

inspiring change



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WORKSHOP INFORMATION



- This workshop will be **recorded and made available “on demand”** on the [IWA Connect Plus](#) and IWA/IAWD website, with presentation slides, and other information.
- The **speakers** are responsible for **securing copyright permissions** for any work that they will present of which they are not the legal copyright holder.
- The opinions, hypothesis, conclusions or recommendations contained in the presentations and other materials are the **sole responsibility of the speaker(s)** and do not necessarily reflect IWA/IAWD opinion.



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WORKSHOP INFORMATION



- During plenary portions of the workshop, **please mute** your microphone.
- There will be interactive breakout discussions. In these breakouts, you are **encouraged to come off mute and turn your videos** on.
- You may also use the chat box for interactive activities.
- Please keep discussions and comments respectful.



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SCAN TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE SURVEY ON WOMEN IN WASH



Questionnaire on the Topic of Women in Water: How to Support Everyone's Contribution

The IWA Specialist Group on Sustainability in the Water Sector is delivering the Women in Water Project to explore challenges faced by women in the water sector and possible solutions to address them. Since March of 2021, the Specialist Group has conducted four webinars and one in-person workshop to gather information on the challenges women in the water industry experience in relation to their efforts to contribute fully to solving the water quantity, quality, and climate change problems that affect us all. This information gathering effort identified six challenges that were commonly confronted by women world-wide in the water sector: (1) career opportunities and advancement, (2) disrespectful behaviour, (3) self-confidence, (4) impact of age on challenges experienced, (5) work-life balance, and (6) mentoring and staff development. These were illustrated and described in a book published by IWA Publishing in 2024: *Women in Water: How to Support Everyone's Contribution*.



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AGENDA



- Welcome, housekeeping and attendee survey
Ms. Katerina Schilling, Secretary General, IAWD (MODERATOR)
- Opening Remark
Ms. Maja Medenica, Head of Asset Management Center, PUC Belgrade Waterworks and Sewerage, Serbia
- Overview of Women in Water Project
Ms. Arlinda Ibranhimllari, IWA SG Sustainability in the Water Industry member, Canada
- Short brief on first 3 challenges - opportunities and advancement, disrespectful behaviour, self-confidence
Ms. Liudmyla Odud, IWA SG Sustainability in the Water Industry member, Ukraine
- Breakout discussion 1
- *Short brief on second 3 challenges - age, work-life balance, mentoring*
Ms. Siyka Radilova, IWA SG Sustainability in the Water Industry member, Bulgaria
- Breakout discussion 2
- Closing Remark
Ms. Katerina Schilling, Secretary General, IAWD



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MODERATOR & SPEAKERS



Ms. Katerina Schilling, SG, IAWD



Ms. Maja Medenica, AMC, Serbia



Arlinda Ibrahimlari, SWS IWA SG, Canada



Ms. Liudmyla Odud, SWS IWA SG, Ukraine



Ms. Siyka Radilova, SWS IWA SG, Bulgaria



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WELCOMING WORD – MS. MAJA MEDENICA



**Ms.Maja Medenica, Head of Asset
Management Center, PUC Belgrade
Waterworks and Sewerage, Serbia,
IAWD Board Member**



Focus on sustainable water use across industries, cities and agriculture, with an emphasis on economic, environmental and social factors in water policy, construction and operations.

Working groups:

- Sustainable water use by industries
- SDGs – from strategy to action, use of monitoring and reporting
- Women in water
- Climate mitigation and adaptation
- Indigenous perspectives



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WOMEN IN WATER PROJECT





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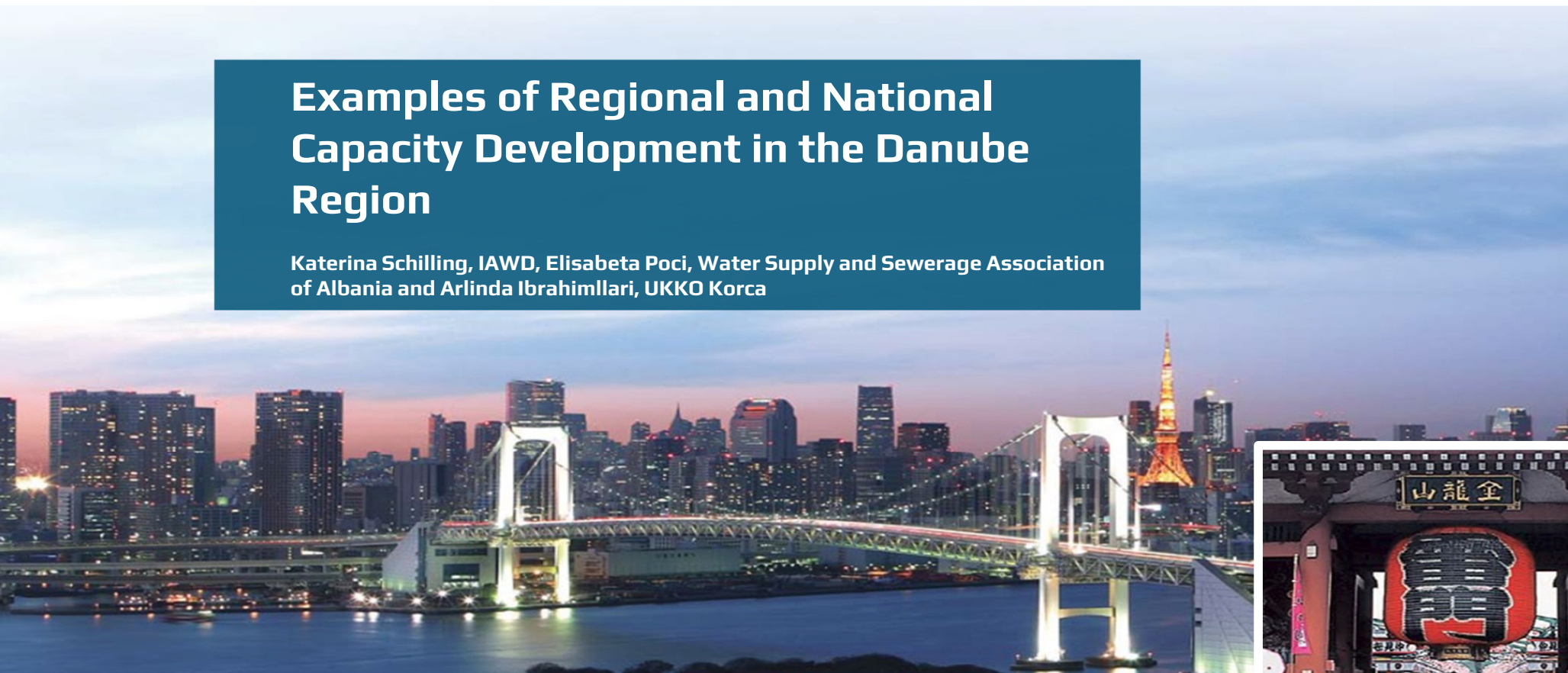
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT | WORKSHOP IWA WORLD WATER CONGRESS, TOKYO

SEPTEMBER 2018



Examples of Regional and National Capacity Development in the Danube Region

Katerina Schilling, IAWD, Elisabeta Poci, Water Supply and Sewerage Association
of Albania and Arlinda Ibrahimllari, UKKO Korca





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IWA SPECIALIST GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WATER SECTOR INTERNATIONAL WEBINAR

MARCH 2021



Empowering Women in Water

<https://iwa-network.org/learn/empowering-women-in-water/>



WEBINAR

8 March 2021 | 15:00 CET
iwa-network.org/webinars



Korpo
Jensen
Liberia



Norhayati
Abdullah
Malaysia



Elisabeta
Poçi
Albania



Diana
Ulloa
Ecuador



Suvritha
Ramphal
South Africa



Rosie
Wheen
Australia



Liudmyla
Odud
Ukraine



Arlinda
Ibrahimllari
Albania



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IWA SPECIALIST GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WATER SECTOR LAC COUNTRIES WEBINAR

MARCH 2022



Empowering Women in Water: Perspectives from Latin America and the Caribbean

Empoderando a las Mujeres en Agua: perspectivas de America Latina y el Caribe

<https://iwa-network.org/learn/empowering-women-in-water-perspectives-from-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/>



WEBINAR

8 Mar 2022 | 15:00 GMT
English & Español (live translation)
iwa-network.org/webinars



Blanca Jimenez
France



Martha Orta Zambrano
Ecuador



Juanita Ayala
Colombia



Malena Galmarini
Argentina



Geisel Sánchez Murillo
Costa Rica



Sharon Archie
Trinidad and Tobago



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WORKSHOP

IWA WORLD WATER CONGRESS, COPENHAGEN

SEPTEMBER 2022



Diane d'Arras
IWA Past President
France



Louise Dudley
AWA
Australia



Titilola Bright-Oridami
Lagos Water Corporation
Nigeria



Eugenia Ghiotto
AYSA
Argentina



Cheryl Davis
IWA Fellow and IWA SG
Chair
USA



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IWA SPECIALIST GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WATER SECTOR AFRICA COUNTRIES WEBINAR

MARCH 2023



Empowering women in water –
perspectives from the African region

08/03/2023

<https://iwa-network.org/learn/women-in-water-africa/>



Chataigne
Djuma
DRC



Geraldine
Mpouma
Logmo
Cameroon



Maggie
Momba
South Africa



Leunita
Sumba
Kenya



Maha
Khallaf
Egypt



Siyka
Radilova
UK



Arlinda
Ibrahimllari
Albania



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IWA SPECIALIST GROUP ON SUSTAINABILITY IN THE WATER SECTOR

ASIA-PACIFIC COUNTRIES WEBINAR

MARCH 2024



Empowering Women in Water: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific Region

08 MARCH 2024

<https://iwa-network.org/learn/empowering-women-in-water-perspectives-from-asia-pacific/>



Nupur Bahadur
India

Gillian Blythe
New Zealand

Xiaohong Guan
China

Ginalyn Robel Marzan
Brazil
Japan

Salmah Zakaria
Malaysia

Pat McCafferty
Australia

Liudmyla Odud
Ukraine

Norhayati Abdullah
Malaysia

WOMEN IN WATER PROJECT MOVING FORWARD IWA WORLD WATER CONGRESS, TORONTO AUGUST 2024



Initiation of an IWA-wide Women's Leadership Network, through:

- Launch
- Workshop
- Networking event

Our Specialist Group, which participated in these events, will continue to support and be aligned with the Women's Leadership Network.

Examples of planned activities:

- Blogs showcasing women and champions of change
- IWA-supported webpage, including information on gender-related resources (e.g. Women in Water book published by IWA Publishing, links to the Women in Water webinars currently available through IWA Connect)



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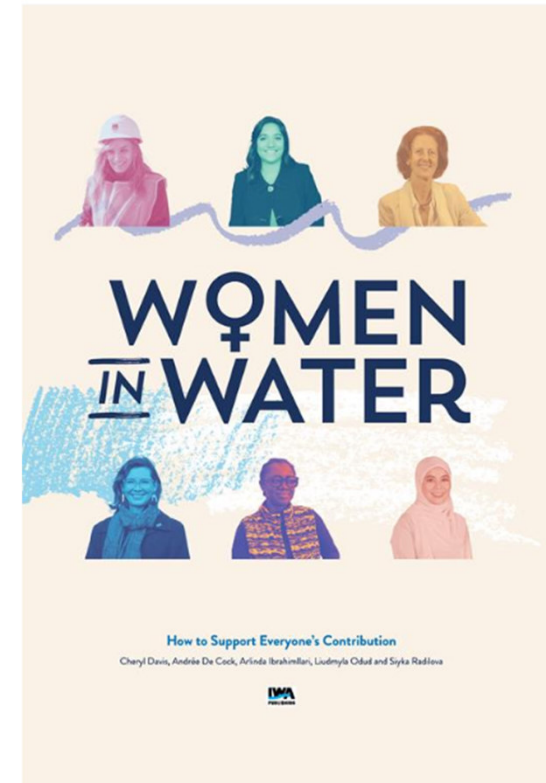
OPEN ACCESS BOOK | WOMEN IN WATER: HOW TO SUPPORT EVERYONE'S CONTRIBUTION



- Published by IWA Publishing in 2024
- Authors: Cheryl Davis; Andrée De Cock; Arlinda Ibrahimllari; Liudmyla Odud; Siyka Radilova
- **IWA Publishing**
- **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.2166/9781789064070>
- **ISBN electronic:** 9781789064070
- <https://iwaponline.com/ebooks/book/914/Women-in-WaterHow-to-Support-Everyone-s>

CHAPTERS

- Career Opportunities and Advancement
- Disrespectful Behavior
- Self-Confidence
- Impact of Age on Challenges Experienced
- Work-Life Balance
- Mentoring and Staff Development
- Attributes and Perspectives of Women
- Next Steps





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2ND PHASE OF THE “WOMEN IN WATER”



"Invite men and women across the water industry to share their ideas on how we can work together—individually and organizationally—to overcome these challenges and unlock the full potential of every water professional in addressing today's global water issues."



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Career opportunities and advancement, disrespectful behaviour, self-confidence - challenges

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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVANCEMENT

- Women face limitations in job eligibility due to gender bias
- Many are denied fair opportunities for promotions and pay increases
- Training and support for leadership roles are often lacking
- Gender-based stereotypes restrict career growth in certain fields
- Systemic barriers prevent women from reaching senior positions

Suvritha Rampal (South Africa)

“Women are still under-represented in the Water and Sanitation sector in South Africa. There are cultural, social norms that we have to change. How women perceive themselves has to change as well!”



DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOR

- Women are sometimes expected to stay silent in meetings
- Their contributions may be dismissed or met with rude remarks
- Workplace culture can discourage women from full participation
- Bias and discrimination lead to exclusion from decision-making
- The lack of respect hinders professional growth and confidence

Elisabeta Poci (Albania)

“In the early steps of my career, I had prepared for a meeting. I had prepared everything to perfection, every detail was checked. A big table in our meeting room was full of men. And there was a moment when the discussion was heated. I hadn’t spoken a word. But I felt I had to clarify something. So, I spoke up although I was intimidated. I could not even hear myself, that’s how loud the discussion was. And the man sitting right next to me turned to me and said, “You do not have the right to speak.””



SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Cultural and workplace norms can suppress women's confidence
- Fear of criticism prevents open expression of ideas
- Women may hesitate to seek support or training opportunities
- Impostor syndrome among women is common in male-dominated environments
- A supportive environment is needed to foster professional growth

Rosie Wheen (Australia)

“I’ve really come to understand for myself what some of the self-talk is that holds me back from speaking out when I want to, what keeps me from challenging issues with confidence and really holding my power. I want to be kind and respect others. But I also want to challenge how things are and to change them.”





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Breakout Discussion 1

OPPORTUNITIES AND ADVANCEMENT, DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR, SELF-CONFIDENCE

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Impact of Age, work-life balance, mentoring and staff development - challenges

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IMPACT OF AGE ON CHALLENGES FACED

- Young women may be seen as inexperienced and unqualified
- Older women may be overlooked in favor of younger candidates
- Skills and potential are often judged based on age rather than merit
- Career growth opportunities are affected by age-related biases
- Age-based discrimination limits professional development

Chataigne Djuma (DR Congo)

“At the beginning of my career, I would be told, ‘You have no experience, you are too young for this’ or ‘You are a woman, what can you do when you are working in the field?’ but I believe now that people are beginning to understand that gender equity is a non-negotiable human right.”



WORK-LIFE BALANCE

- Women face expectations to manage both work and family duties
- Employers often lack flexibility for childcare or elder care
- Workplace policies do not always support family responsibilities
- Balancing career and personal life creates additional stress
- The lack of support impacts career progression and well-being

Norhayati Abdullah (Malaysia)

“Women with family responsibilities should be seen as equally capable of taking on challenging tasks. Opportunities should be made available within the water sector for women to be much more involved, not only at the working level but also in decision-making positions.”



MENTORING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Women seek more mentoring opportunities from peers and leaders
- Limited access to technical and management training affects growth
- Organizations often fail to provide structured development programs
- Mentorship is key to fostering leadership skills in women
- A lack of support slows career advancement and retention

Juanita Ayala (Sweden)

If you don't know the person you want to have as a mentor, reach out. Politely but casually present yourself and ask what you want to know. It is important to be able to ask for help/ support/mentoring. This does not mean you are a failure or weak. In those moments of support, great ideas can be developed. Mentoring is an empowering way to support other women to progress in the sector and be an agent of change."





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Open discussion

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FUTURE ACTIVITIES



- There is more to come with planning underway for additional presentations, workshops and webinars.
- 2026 Danube Water Forum, Sofia, Bulgaria
- 20th LET, Houston, Texas
- IWA WWCE 2026 Glasgow, UK

If you would like to contribute further ideas, please complete our **ongoing online survey**



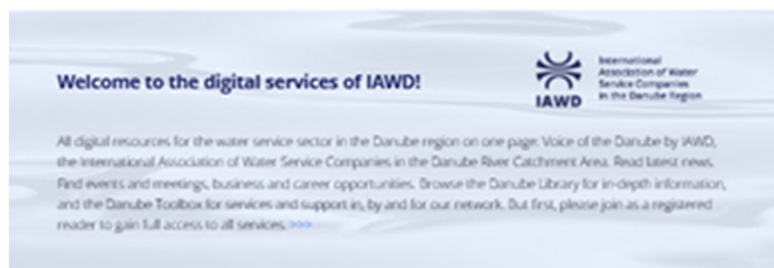


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DON'T MISS FUTURE EVENTS



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UPCOMING IAWD EVENT



**2026 DANUBE
WATER FORUM**

**FROM VISION
TO ACTION:
BUILDING A
WATER-RESILIENT
DANUBE REGION**

20-22 May 2026, Sofia, Bulgaria





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UPCOMING IWA WEBINARS & EVENTS



Learn more at
<https://iwa-let.org/>



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Learn more at
<https://worldwatercongress.org/>



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ISTANBUL TÜRKIYE

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