



**MALE CHAMPIONS  
FOR WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT**  
A CIWA INITIATIVE

# After Action Report

Experience Exchange Seminar:

## How can men support the challenges women face in transboundary water institutions?

**Sep 17, 2024**

(Online)



WOMEN IN  
WATER DIPLOMACY  
NETWORK & PARTNERS



WORLD BANK GROUP  
Water



## Experience Exchange Seminar: *How can men support the challenges women face in transboundary water institutions?*

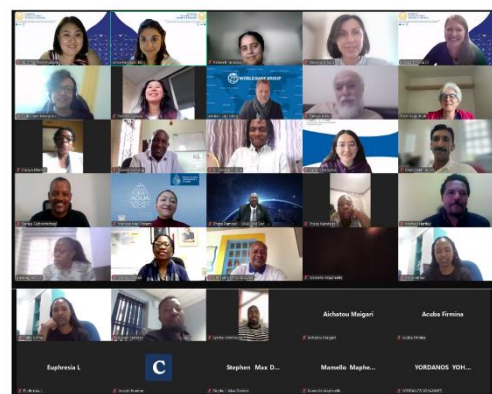
### After Action Report

September 17, 2024 | Online

#### Summary:

On September 17, 2024, the Cooperation International Waters in Africa (CIWA) Male Champions for Women's Empowerment initiative and Women in Water Diplomacy Network (WWDN) co-convened an online experience exchange seminar for members and supporters from CIWA's Africa network and WWDN's global network. The objective of the seminar was to introduce CIWA's Male Champions for Women's Empowerment and the Women in Water Diplomacy Network to each other in order to foster deeper collaboration. The event also sought to identify challenges and barriers women face in taking leadership and decision-making roles within transboundary water related processes and institutions while examining the role that Male Champions can play to address identified challenges and barriers.

Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA) & Women in Water Diplomacy Network  
Experience Exchange Seminar: Experience Exchange Seminar: How can men support the  
challenges women face in transboundary water institutions?  
Tuesday 17 September, 2024



**For a full recording of the event, go to this link:** <https://vimeo.com/1010501752?share=copy>

The event was attended by 56 participants from more than 40 countries. Participant evaluations confirmed that the event was seen as being relevant and applicable to professional work. It was also considered an excellent opportunity to gain a more in-depth understanding of the challenges women face being leaders in the transboundary sphere. It was seen as a source of ideas on how to recruit and engage men on gender equality. Because of the interactive nature of the event, participants also viewed it as a chance to share experiences and to learn from peers. One participant noted that the event confirmed that it is possible to mobilise male champions to promote women's empowerment.

The session was opened by **Elizabeth Koch**, Senior Manager for International Programs at the Environmental Law Institute (ELI) and Process Support Team Lead for the Women in Water Diplomacy Network and **Ellen Hagerman**, CIWA's Senior Gender and Social Inclusion Expert. Following the introduction to the session's theme and convening organizations, **Jesse Ferraioli**, Research Associate, Environmental Law Institute and Women in Water Diplomacy Network Process Support Team Member facilitated an interactive online participant exercise which enabled participants to learn a bit about participants including their geographic origins and their role in the field of transboundary water.

To lay the foundation for small group discussions, an **Ignite Exchange** with three expert panellists elevated initial thoughts and experiences around the challenges and obstacles women face in becoming leaders and decisionmakers within transboundary water management processes and institutions as well as providing ideas of strategies male champions can adopt to assist in removing barriers to gender equality. **Donald Kasongi (Tanzania)** former Secretary General at Nile Basin

Discourse and a Researcher and Policy Analyst noted major challenges including an inability to move from policy development to implementation which is linked to insufficient financial resources to enable the effective implementation of women's empowerment and minimal learning about ways to overcome barriers to gender equality. **Phera Ramoeli** (Botswana), Executive Secretary of the Okavango River Basin Commission, acknowledged the ongoing challenges of operating in an environment dominated by male engineers. However, he offered up his own organization as an example where efforts have been made to prioritize the participation of women. **Dr. Zodwa Dlamini** (South Africa), an international transboundary water management specialist, development professional, and senior infrastructure projects manager, observed that women's empowerment tends to be get pushed aside when a crisis erupts while highlighting that there are insufficient support structures for women overall. She called for men to be intentional and focused on creating a conducive environment to enable women to flourish. The call for intentionality was a message that resonated with participants with one participant encouraging others to make it intentional for women-led organizations to have a seat at the table.






Following the Ignite Discussion, participants were put into small groups in online breakout rooms with a representative of CIWA or WWDN acting as the facilitator for dialogue support. Each of the five groups selected a rapporteur who then reported back to plenary. A number of challenges noted were common to most of the groups. These included challenges women face navigating cultural norms that favour men and program women to be less assertive, a failure to move from commitment to implementation, and a lack of accountability. Obstacles noted for women within the workplace included the absence of child care, the tendency to hire male staff because of the preference for male-dominated backgrounds of engineering and the exclusion of women from the "brotherhood" where men are able to coalesce and support one another to advance in their careers.

The groups came up with a number of innovative ideas of actions that men can take to champion women's empowerment. Ideas included the promotion of a '*care culture*' where empathy becomes the norm, establishing and promoting men as role models and mentors and learning from the successes of other male-dominated sectors. One group was particularly creative in recommending an approach called '*Allying to Elevate*' where men can support women in all situations within the water sector.

**Anders Jagerskog**, Program Manager CIWA Trust Fund and Transboundary Waters Focal Point at the World Bank closed the meeting by acknowledging the benefits for the Male Champion for Women's Empowerment of being able to listen to the female voices and to be able to move beyond the African continent to gather perspectives and learn lessons from WWDN's global community. The event is also seen as the start of a deeper partnership between CIWA and WWDN where further collaboration and learning can be explored.

Special thanks to the small group facilitators from the CIWA and Women in Water Diplomacy Network members for their support including: **Ellen Hagerman**, CIWA Senior Gender and Social Inclusion Expert; **Charles Gilman**, CIWA Operations Officer; **Gulzhan Makhmudova**, National Projects Coordinator/Adviser in Climate Change, Environment and Energy Cluster/UNDP Kyrgyz Republic and WWDN member; **Bethlehem Mengistu**, Global Coordinator, Agenda for Change and WWDN member; **Alexandra Said**, UNEP Country Engagement Coordinator of the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans Accelerator Partnership and WWDN member.

**Program: All times in East African Time (EAT).**

TIME (EAT)	September 17, 2024
15:45-16:00	<p><b>Virtual Coffee Break &amp; Technical check-in</b>            Before the seminar officially starts, the online meeting space will be opened for informal check-ins. Please join us early to check your connections and ensure a seamless start!</p> 
16:00-16:15	<p><b>Welcome and Introduction to the Seminar</b>  <b>Ellen Hagerman</b>, Senior Gender and Social Inclusion Expert, Cooperation International Waters in Africa and Male Champions for Women’s Empowerment Network, and <b>Elizabeth Koch</b>, Senior Manager, Environmental Law Institute and Women in Water Diplomacy Network Process Support Team Lead</p> 
16:15-16:25	<p><b>Who is in the room? – interactive online participant exercise:</b>            Facilitated by <b>Jesse Ferraioli</b>, Research Associate, Environmental Law Institute and Women in Water Diplomacy Network Process Support Team</p> 
16:25-16:40	<p><b>Ignite Exchange:</b> <i>Representatives will be invited to briefly share thoughts and experiences about the challenges and obstacles women face in becoming leaders and decisionmakers within transboundary water management processes and institutions as well as to provide ideas or examples of good practices where male leaders have played a key role in removing barriers to gender equality.</i>            Facilitated by <b>Elizabeth A. Koch</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phera Ramoeli</b>, Executive Secretary, OKACOM and Representative of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network (TBD)</li> <li>• <b>Donald Kasongi</b>, Former Executive Director of the Nile Basin Discourse and Representative of the CIWA Male Champions for Women’s Empowerment Network</li> <li>• <b>Dr. Zodwa Dlamini</b>, Former South Africa Chief Delegate and Permanent Representative to the Lesotho Highlands Water Commission and Founding Member of the Women in Water Diplomacy Network</li> </ul> 
16:40-17:10	<p><b>Listen and Share:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ All session participants will be put into small groups in online breakout rooms with a representative of CIWA or WWDN for dialogue support.</li> <li>✓ Select a participant rapporteur to summarize the discussion for the plenary.</li> <li>✓ Participants should introduce themselves in advance of their interventions.</li> <li>✓ Discuss: What challenges and obstacles do you think women face in becoming leaders or decision makers within transboundary water management processes and institutions?</li> <li>✓ Discuss: What are some ideas or examples of concrete actions that male leaders can take to actively empower women to be leaders and decision makers?</li> <li>✓ Discuss: What can we learn from the water sector more broadly or from similar sectors where males tend to dominate about strategies and actions that can be taken?</li> </ul>
17:10-17:20	<p><b>Reporting Back to the Plenary</b>  <i>One rapporteur from each small group will be invited to report back to the plenary.</i>            Facilitated by <b>Ellen Hagerman</b></p>
17:20-17:22	<p><b>Group Screenshot/Picture: No meeting is complete without one!</b></p>
17:22-17:30	<p><b>Closing remarks and exit survey</b>  <b>Dr. Anders Jagerskog</b>, Program Manager CIWA Trust Fund and Transboundary Waters Focal Point at the World Bank</p> 

### Resources for ongoing learning:

1. [Male Champions for Women's Empowerment - CIWA program](#)
2. [Women in Water Diplomacy LinkedIn page](#)
3. [The Women in Water Diplomacy Network's Global Strategy 'A Path Forward for Women, Water, Peace and Security'. August 2022](#)
4. [Women in Water Diplomacy Network Second Global Network Forum After Action Report. March 2024 \(including the Male Champions for Women's Empowerment World Café Table summary\).](#)
5. [Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security report 'Beyond Engaging Men.'](#)

**The CIWA Male Champions for Women's Empowerment** initiative was established in recognition of the key role men play as stakeholders, influencers, and decision makers in water institutions and local organizations. CIWA launched the Male Champions for Women's Empowerment (MCWE) to provide a platform to work directly with men to identify ways to apply their influence to overcome gender inequalities and to effect positive change on women's empowerment within the transboundary water context at multiple levels and across multiple domains. By working as a collective platform, the MCWE seeks to facilitate actions Male Champions can take to overcome gender inequalities at the continental, regional, national and local level within the transboundary water sphere in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Concretely, the MCWE is working with Male Champions through a diversity of actions to advance gender equality within decision-making teams and processes as well as more broadly within the institutional and program context of transboundary water management. Since its launch in June 2023, CIWA has held monthly virtual meetings, developed an action plan, launched a web site and conducted outreach to recruit new Male Champions.

**The Women in Water Diplomacy Network** is a community of practice comprised of both formal and informal women decision-makers and experts, representing a wealth of collective experience and expertise in transboundary water management and decision-making engaged in some of the most water insecure regions of the world. Originating in the Nile Basin in 2017, the Network is now a global community of women water leaders (and male champions supporting gender equality) working collectively to strengthen women's leadership in transboundary water decision-making. The WWDN's Global Strategy 'A Path Forward for Women, Water, Peace and Security' specifically identified dialogue and exchange with male allies of gender equality as a priority activity. In addition, the WWDN's 2022 global joint statement and commitment to the UN Water Action Decade included a call to action specifically to male allies, *'To our brothers, we are grateful to those among you who even from a place of power conscientiously examine assumptions and who share our convictions. We invite your partnership and championship in actively removing barriers to gender equality, enabling, and encouraging inclusive decision making.'*