

# Water Justice NOW

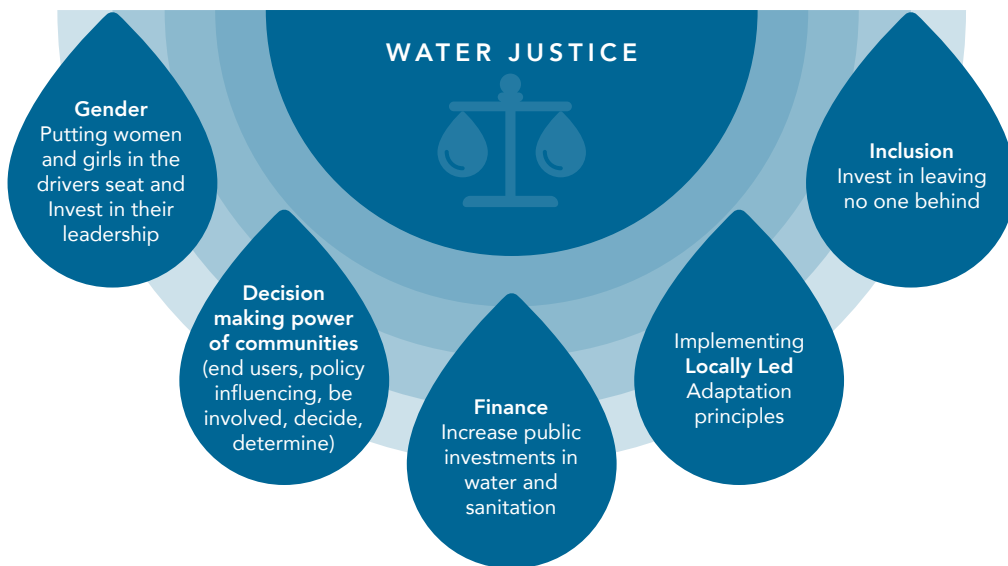
Simavi challenges world leaders to make bold commitments that focus on gender equality, human rights and climate, making the UN Water Conference a “watershed moment” for everyone everywhere. Today, 1 in 4 people – or 2 billion people – around the world lack safe drinking water, while climate change is expected to increase water scarcity around the world. The ongoing climate crisis has exacerbated the global water crisis where women and girls are particularly hit hard as they are still in most households responsible for securing water.

## WATER JUSTICE

Drinking water is a scarce resource, with only about 0.5 percent of the available water on the globe being available for drinking. The climate crisis further threatens and increases competition over sources of drinking water. Private sector opportunities often prevail over the needs of rural, marginalised and indigenous communities that already suffer from water scarcity. Especially women wear the brunt of

the consequences of the unequal distribution; they are often responsible for managing household water, but kept out of decision making positions where plans are made on how to manage and distribute the drinking water. Less than 50 countries have laws or policies that specifically mention women’s participation in rural sanitation or water resources management. We must act on these water injustices to address the global water crisis.

**In order to achieve Water Justice, the following principles should be followed;**



## BOLD COMMITMENTS DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

The UN Water Conference 2023 is more urgent than ever. That is why it is important to ensure a fair and equitable accountability mechanism to follow up on the commitments made during the UN Water Conference. Otherwise this watershed moment is a lost momentum.



What is needed for a just and equitable Water Action Agenda? Simavi urges political leaders, private sector agencies and UN organisations to take the following recommendations at heart:

### 1. Human rights should be at the centre of all water financing

Activities funded and financed by extraterritorial actors play a substantial role in peoples' access to safe drinking water and sanitation. For example, the total water- and sanitation-related official development assistance (ODA) received amounted to over 8 billion USD in 2019. In addition, the expanding financialization of development cooperation brings considerable human rights implications, in particular given the fact that financial institutions worldwide, including development finance institutions, are called upon to step in to close the finance gap of 114 billion USD to achieve universal water and sanitation coverage.

Despite this major influence, donors' policies do not systematically integrate human rights principles and the full normative content of the human rights in their policies.

**Key Message:** Governments and multilateral institutions must regulate all their extraterritorial operations impacting water and sanitation, to guarantee human rights compliance in line with the entire normative content of the human rights to water and sanitation, and related human rights principles.

### 2. Climate adaptation finance should focus on marginalised communities

Between 2016-202 only 3% of climate finance was water-related. This is shockingly low considering the increasing water scarcity. Climate change puts an enormous pressure on an already very fragile sector. Climate adaptation financing could provide financial support to the most marginalised, but according to UNEP's adaptation gap report 2022 this is prevented by elite capture of resources and exclusion of marginalised groups and limited attention to local contexts and ownership through genuine local participation in adaptation design and implementation.

**Key message:** Increase investments for climate adaptation allocated to water sustainability and safely managed drinking water. Climate adaptation funding for water should reach marginalised groups and should apply the locally led adaptation principles at ALL times.

### 3. Gender and inclusion should drive the water action agenda

People of different genders and social identities have unique challenges in claiming their rights to water and sanitation. Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 8 out of 10 households with water off premises. Additionally, people living in poverty spend a much larger percentage of their income on drinking water than people living in rich countries, a stark difference of 0.1 percent of total income in the UK to for example 54 percent in Papua New Guinea. In accessing water, especially women face many challenges including gender based violence and sextortion. Additionally, women and minority groups are underrepresented in decision making about water, at the local, national and international levels.

**Key message:** Governments and donors should include financial commitments for gender responsive WASH, specifically aimed at local, women-led, civil society organisations.

### 4. Data and Governance

The latest Joint Monitoring Report from 2021 showed that we are far from being on track worldwide to achieve SDG6 (water and sanitation for everyone by 2030). An acceleration of no less than four times is necessary to achieve the goals. We need data and governance, especially on the effects of water issues on minority groups and marginalised people.

**Key message:** National governments must ensure that a localization plan is established for all data gathering initiatives/monitoring tools, whereby local governments are provided with the financial, human, and technical capacity, to increase access to and usability of these tools and data.