



**Human Rights Council 57<sup>th</sup> Session**  
ID with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe  
drinking water and sanitation  
**Water and economy nexus: managing water for  
productive uses from a human rights perspective**  
Oral Statement

Make Mothers Matter fully supports the Special Rapporteur's call for a human rights-based approach to water management, and for water to be considered as a common good.

We regret however the absence of a gender perspective in the report's analysis, which totally ignores the invisible economy of collecting water.

1.8 billion people still live in households without running water supplies on the premises. In most cases, it is women and girls who are responsible for collecting water<sup>1</sup>. Worldwide, they spend a staggering 200 million hours doing so each day<sup>2</sup>.

This unpaid work, which makes up for the lack of public infrastructure and services, negatively affects their health, and restricts the time they can dedicate to education and paid work, exacerbating gender inequalities. Women with care responsibilities, mothers in particular, are the most penalised.

Indeed, most of the water collected is 'water for life'<sup>3</sup>.

To complement the special rapporteur's recommendations, we therefore call on governments:

1. to take this invisible economy of water into account, and prioritise investments in infrastructure to ease the burden on women and girls and realise their basic right to clean water and sanitation
2. to include a gender perspective in water management and involve women at every level.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: 2023 UNICEF-WHO report – available on <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2023-women-and-girls-bear-brunt-of-water-and-sanitation-crisis---new-unicef-who-report>

<sup>2</sup> Source: see for example 2018 Story from UNICEF USA – available on <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/how-long-does-it-take-get-water-aysha-eight-hours-day>

See also World Bank data on the gendered dimension of water collection:

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/interactive/2024/03/13/gendered-burden-of-water-collection-in-afe-afw-sub-saharan-africa>

<sup>3</sup> As per the Special Rapporteur's categorisation in his report