Fixing the Leaks: Retaining Female Talent in the Water Sector

Equal Aqua Webinar Series #4 Retention

Welcome! We start at 9am in EST

Equal Aqua
A collaborative platform to promote gender diversity and inclusion in the water workforce

http://www.worldbank.org/equalaqua/

February 4th, 2021
Retaining female talent in the water sector

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Why should we care?

Benefits of gender diversity in the workplace

- Better financial performance
- Greater innovation
- Improved community relations
- Improved employee retention
- Better decision-making
- Improved customer satisfaction
- Better governance
- Improved employee retention
- Improved community relations

The Business for Gender Diversity

Gender diverse companies 21% more likely to be more profitable
The framework

ATTRACTION
- Gender roles marked through social norms
- Divisions of labor
- STEM graduates
- Role models

RECRUITMENT
- School-to-work transition
- Targeting candidates/job advertisements
- Hiring process

RETENTION
- Work-life balance
- Family-friendly policies
- Fair wages
- Work environment
- Sexual harassment
- Work facilities and amenities

ADVANCEMENT
- Training, mentorship, and networking opportunities
- Opportunities for leadership
Why collect evidence and what does it tell us?

https://wbwaterdata.org/breakingbarriers/home/

96 utilities

33 countries

CLOSING GENDER GAPS IN WATER JOBS

Water is a crucial source of jobs, both directly, as an employer in water services, and indirectly, through the economic opportunities that depend on water. Women remain an untapped resource for the water sector - only 1 in 5 utility employees are female. Greater diversity is linked to higher financial performance, innovation and customer satisfaction.

This dataset illustrates gender gaps in employment drawing on survey results from Women in Water Utilities: Breaking Barriers report, and additional surveys collected as part of Equal Aqua platform. Utilities can use it to compare their performance to other utilities in their region and globally.
Female employees – especially female engineers - leave utilities at a higher rate than men

Exit Rates (%)

- All employees:
  - Women: 7.2
  - Men: 5.1
- Engineers:
  - Women: 8.6
  - Men: 5.7
- Managers:
  - Women: 10.9
  - Men: 9.4
Average number of years in a position is also lower for women than men – particularly for female engineers.

Average number of years in a position

- **All employees**: Women 10.3, Men 11.8
- **Engineers**: Women 6.2, Men 8.5
- **Managers**: Women 8.8, Men 9.7
A number of barriers affect female retention:

**BARRIERS**

- Lack of work-life balance
- Inadequate family-friendly policies
- Unsupportive workplace environment
- Wage gaps
- Sexual harassment

**EXAMPLES OF PROMISING APPROACHES**

- Maternity, paternity, and parental leave policies
- Separate sanitation facilities for men and women
- On-site lactation rooms
- Regular pay gap assessments
On average, only 1 in 3 utilities offered flexible working arrangements

% of Utilities with flexible working arrangements

61 Utilities responded
58% of utilities reported having policies to prevent sexual harassment

Policies to prevent harassment

91 Utilities responded
Female friendly facilities are lacking in water utilities. Less than 1 in 10 utilities reported having lactation rooms or childcare facilities.
“In my previous job, I established a lactation room in the Ministry of Revenue’s government building in Samoa. There was nothing like that before. There are small things that you can do. They cost money, but they promote care for women.”

—Pitolau Lusia Sefo Leau, CEO, Pacific Water and Wastewater Association
1 in 4 utilities in Sub-Saharan Africa do not provide separate sanitation facilities for women

% with separate toilet facilities in Utility Offices

LEGEND

Global average
- East Asia & Pacific
- Europe & Central Asia
- Latin America & Caribbean
- Middle East & North Africa
- Sub-Saharan Africa

72 Utilities responded
Some final messages:

- **Start with an assessment** to identify the challenges and opportunities
- **Context matters** – approaches need to be customized and tested
- **Management buy-in and champions/focal points**
- **Global knowledge** – this is a universal challenge!

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THANK YOU