



*Towards an Intersectional Blue Peace:  
Gender in Shared Waters*

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# Capstone Final Report

## *Towards an Intersectional Blue Peace: Gender in Shared Waters*

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Partner Organization: International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva

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## Executive Summary

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Blue Peace is an ambitious objective. It calls for an equitable distribution of the natural resource of water with a long-term aim to achieve sustainable peace and cooperation, including in terms of gender equality. Recent literature and practices have demonstrated a lack of *effective* gendered analysis in transboundary water governance. This report offers an approach that accounts for the intersections of gendered identities and differences in access to decision-making about water, both in informal and formal settings.

An inclusive method of analysis and decision-making that moves beyond restrictive gender norms is essential to achieve better governance outcomes and peace objectives. This paper offers a step forward from the current gender analysis, and argues that stronger governance could be achieved by adopting an intersectional approach to the governance and management of transboundary waters. The following question is asked: ***is the current gender-responsive and mainstreaming approach sufficient to the long-term good governance of Building River Dialogues and Governance (BRIDGE) basins?***

Through both qualitative and quantitative research, our intersectional and gender-transformative approach to transboundary water governance proves to move beyond merely counting women in. It critically interrogates the intersections of power that are at play in the governance of shared basins, by drawing on political feminist literature, on interviews with practitioners and academics in the field of TWG, and by drawing on the case study of Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca.



## KEY MESSAGES

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(1) ***Gender inequality remains pervasive*** in the way in which shared waters are governed and decisions are made. Our interviews have highlighted that on the one hand, women and femininity have traditionally been excluded from decision making positions, while being socially expected to bear the majority of the burden of management and water usage.

On the other hand, men and masculinity have traditionally been associated with the technical and governance field, and reproduce such exclusionary practices. Along with LGBTQIA\* groups, indigenous groups, youth, people with disabilities and people of colour, women are structurally excluded from formal levels of TWG where policies are drafted - this entails that their interests are not represented nor valued (Interviewee J, personal communication, September 2, 2021).

(2) ***Intersectionality is culturally appropriate and context sensitive***. TWG needs an alternative that is not one size fits all, and this is why intersectionality is so important. It allows us to look at different water basins embedded in their individuality and provides tailored recommendations.

(3) ***Gender mainstreaming practices have neglected*** to take a critical, gender-transformative and context-specific approach to the governance of transboundary waters. Mainstreaming is too often reduced to box-checking, reinforcing the assumption that gender refers solely to women and is depoliticising issues that are inherently political (Prügl, 2010). Gender mainstreaming is therefore not transformative and rather risks reinforcing gender inequalities.

(4) Transboundary water governance is complex. Oversimplifying it through a siloed approach of governance comes at the risk of formulating exclusionary policies. ***An intersectionality approach addresses this complexity*** by ensuring that the various power dynamics are systematically taken into account in the development of participatory structures, policy-making, and data collection. An intersectional approach ensures community interest is heard by decision makers.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

With these key messages in mind, our research suggests that a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach is necessary. We hence put forward the following recommendations:

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### **Directed to Governments and Policy-makers:**

Establish an inclusive intersectional participatory mechanism at all stages of BRIDGE programmes and policy-making (planning, implementation and assessment process for feedback).

Ensure that participatory platforms of preparatory analysis, consultation and feedback serve the interests of minority groups.

Reform the current institutional frameworks of TWG to be more accessible to vulnerable groups through transparency and accountability mechanisms at the local, regional, national, and transboundary levels.

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### **Directed to International organizations, NGOs, practitioners, researchers in the field of Nature Conservation and Development:**

Put pressure on governmental agencies and ministries to ensure political, legal, financial support throughout projects and long-term commitments.

Invest in critical analysis of gender-disaggregated data, alongside other stratifiers of social, water and conservation inequities. This means systematically employing gender specialists that can bridge the gap between science and policy-making, and making use of existing gender analysis tools.

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### **Directed to Government officials, policy makers, international organizations, NGOs,, practitioners, researchers in the field of Nature Conservation and Development**

Reshape the language used to talk about gender and women to avoid the associations of women as being inherently closer to care and nature, known as essentialization (for more information see Chapter 2).

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These recommendations are a step towards adopting a gender-transformative approach that will advance the Blue Peace agenda. With regards to the next steps, implementing such recommendations in the next phase of BRIDGE or in other transboundary basin areas will provide useful data for further research. Our paper points to further domains of research that should be deepened: feminist assessments of international institutions in natural resource conservation, decolonial gender perspectives on TWG, indigenous methods of governance and critical environmental peacebuilding.



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Lastly, we would like to acknowledge our positionality within this research project. Each researcher from the student team holds different forms of privilege that influence our research. Awareness of our own privilege is central to understanding the operations of unequal power relations in research and in transboundary water governance. The creation of knowledge in itself is an exercise of power. With this in mind, we are positioned as four master's students studying in a semi-private institution in the Global North. We are studying international development from a Global North perspective, next door to institutions such as the UN which are heavily influenced by Western ideals and norms. We are a group of four self-identifying women, some of whom are queer. Three of us come from colonial heritage, and experience white privilege daily. All of our intersecting identities and privileges heavily influence our understanding of gender, governance and the environment.





## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Setting the Scene.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Literature Review.....</b>	<b>16</b>
Transboundary Water Governance.....	16
Gender Inequality and Water Governance.....	21
<b>Chapter 2: When Intersections Become a Lens.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Conceptual Framework.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Flowing Information.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>1) The salient struggle of representation.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2) The risk of essentialism from gender mainstreaming: conflating women with gender.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>3) Misunderstanding context and key terms: an additional obstacle.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>4) Background checks: why the data is still missing.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>5) Concrete walls: lack of transparency and institutional accessibility.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>6) The underlying issue: lack of efforts for inclusive and effective participation.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Case Studies of Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca.....</b>	<b>40</b>
Lessons learned from the comparative analysis.....	43
<b>Chapter 4: Building Bridges.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>A) Discussing the opportunities of a Bottom-Up Approach.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Collective Data.....	47
Taking a step back: Assessing participation through listening.....	49
What to do with this information: Education and sensitization.....	49
<b>B) Discussing the opportunities of a Top-down Approach.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Participatory Structures: Making Consultation Embedded.....	51
Switching Paradigms: Serving Community Interests.....	51
Fear of Commitment: Ensuring incentive and the sustainability of policies.....	52
Counter-balance: the necessary weight of Transparency and Accountability.....	53
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Glossary of terms.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>List of Acronyms.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>67</b>



## List of Figures

Figure 1: Intersectionality and Relations to Water Resources.....	27
Figure 2: IUCN BRIDGE Programme Working Area Map.....	40
Figure 3: Holistic Model for Intersectional & Gender-Transformative Approach to Transboundary Water Governance.....	56

## List of Boxes

Box 1. Transboundary Water.....	12
Box 2. What is Intersectionality? .....	13
Box 3. Integrated Water Resources Management.....	17
Box 4. Dublin Principles.....	18
Box 5. Hydro-diplomacy.....	19
Box 6. Gender-responsiveness.....	21
Box 7. Data on Gender and Transboundary Waters.....	22
Box 8. Women as Change Maker IUCN Report 2018.....	22
Box 9. Feminist Approach.....	24
Box 10. Essentialization.....	25
Box 11. Concept of Intersectionality.....	26
Box 12 Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory.....	28
Box 13. Example of Indigenous Practice in Water Management in Konso, Ethiopia.....	50



## Introduction

*“The liberation of the earth, the liberation of women, the liberation of all humanity  
is the next step of freedom we need to work for,  
and it’s the next step of peace that we need to create.”*

— Vandana Shiva

Indian scholar, environmental activist, ecofeminist and author

The challenges our world is facing nowadays are becoming more complex than ever before. Climate change and biodiversity loss are putting a heavy toll not only on our planet and ecosystems but also on humanity. Along with the pressure of climate change, freshwater ecosystems show the highest rate of decline with 13% present in 1700 remaining by 2000, leaving water scarcity issues more prevalent than ever (IPBES, 2019). People who are most affected by these environmental challenges are the most vulnerable that struggle with day to day social inequalities. It is thus fundamental to ensure that they are fully engaged in deciding on what actions to be taken to address these complex challenges for achieving social equality. The first step to achieving such social equality is implementing transformative policies, while addressing the complicated layers of climate change, biodiversity, and natural resources at once.

Among others, gender-based inequality remains a pervasive condition that determines who is given access, who can manage and who can conserve and control over natural resources. At a global scale, women and gender minorities are structurally disadvantaged in multiple and underlying ways. Despite being at the front line of the direct and indirect consequences of climate change and of natural resource mismanagement, they are systemically side-lined from the heart of decision-making processes and governance (Nellemann, Verma & Hislop, 2011). Such marginalisation is further entrenched by intersecting power relations of race, class, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, and age.

Academic researchers and practitioners in the fields of environment and development are increasingly calling for a more inclusive governance and decision-making process to ensure more sustainable and effective benefits. For instance, an empirical study carried out by OECD highlighted that inclusive water governance can ensure many economic, environmental, and social benefits. Such benefits include greater acceptance, trust building, better policy coherence, cost saving, knowledge development, eventually avoiding conflict and ensuring social cohesion (OECD, 2015). Likewise, inclusive water governance can benefit everyone with tangible and intangible assets.

Water is at the core of human agriculture, nutrition, health and sanitation, along with being at the core of ecosystem stability and sustainability. The survival of both humanity and the



### Box 1. Transboundary Waters

Transboundary waters refers to freshwaters resources, such as lakes, rivers and aquifers that are shared by two or more states.

- Almost half the land surface area of the earth comprises transboundary river basins
- 40% of the world population live in international river basins

(Akamani and Wilson, 2011)

environment depends on water governance to mitigate the tensions of climate change, biodiversity loss, and water scarcity. In particular, transboundary waters are arenas in which such tensions and gender-based invisibilities are particularly heightened. Transnational basins, such as Lake Chad or Lake Titicaca, along with transboundary rivers like the Danube or the Mekong River, are areas that are difficult to govern due to their

complex nature. The multiplicity of stakeholders and actors make coordination more difficult. So far, transboundary water governance (TWG) has often focused on centralized state-to-state approaches, with not enough attempts to take into account the lived experiences of communities and individuals that depend on them. Some gender mainstreaming efforts have been made to shed light on the gendered aspects of the livelihoods that rely on these shared water basins. Yet, TWG often continues to leave women in the dark, and struggle to adapt to the challenges of environmental, political, and socio-cultural context. The policies put in place have not been effective enough to address challenges due to the lack of deeper understanding of the local environment, and role of gender in water governance.

Before going any further into the report, defining what gender refers to is a crucial first step for good practice gender analyses. This should be done systematically whenever the term is used, as it sets a coherent basis to build up upon. We understand gender as the complex interrelationship between three dimensions: body, identity and social gender. The vocabulary used for gender research has and continues to evolve. Gender identity refers to the identification to masculinity, femininity, a blend of both, neither, or beyond this binary. This differs to the sex assigned at birth, and is a spectrum rather than a binary system. Historically, this binary has constructed gender as two opposite categories: boy/man and girl/women that are associated with expectations of behaviours and norms. However in this research, gender is used as an umbrella term for all the gender identities within it, including LGBTQIA\*, and when women are mentioned, we are referring to individuals who identify as women.

At the crossroad of water and security is Blue Peace. The Blue Peace approach is based on the understanding that water can serve as an entry point to move towards sustainable and cooperative ways of managing and accessing water, eventually contributing to peace between states sharing waterways. There are undoubtedly strong links between gender and the environment, and how this relates to broader objectives of achieving Blue Peace. More ambitious gender-transformative initiatives are becoming essential steps on the pathway for a coherent and inclusive approach for the





sustainable use and conservation of water in transboundary areas. By making Blue Peace more *intersectional* and *gender-transformative*, we can ensure more sustainable and greater benefits coming from cooperation.

In essence, the integration of gender and other social identities in TWG is vital to foster stable and sustainable peace. This research therefore sets the ground for a comprehensive overview of how TWG can become more effective and inclusive. It comes ahead of IUCN's fifth phase of the Building River

Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) programme and asks: ***how does a gender-responsive approach affect the long-term success of transboundary water governance and management in BRIDGE basins to achieve Blue Peace?***

Threats and pressures on the environment and its resources amplify gender inequality and power imbalances. The gender inequalities in transboundary water governance act as barriers to meeting conservation goals, and to enabling a better natural resource governance and peaceful environment. IUCN recognizes that to achieve sustainable development, gender equality must also be achieved. Gender equality, including through women's empowerment and valuing their unique knowledge, roles, and capacities, is believed to be key to effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable environmental solutions (IUCN, 2021a). Policies and programs require a gender-responsive approach to build climate resilience that deeply understands different social inequalities and empower minorities as change-making agents. IUCN's own gender-responsive approach attempts to identify and overcome gender gaps across sectors at all levels with the aim of improving natural resource governance and conservation outcomes (IUCN, 2021a). Through the variety of gender programmes, IUCN hence works to identify and overcome these social inequalities.

Despite IUCN's efforts to raise awareness on gender inequality as well as their active steps to achieve equality, much research and literature is still missing on gender equity in the governance of shared waters. This research answers the call for more deliberate action to address gender imbalances within TWG. While such gender and social inclusion should be done without justification, evidence shows that it can bring many benefits including better cooperation and greater social, political, and economic empowerment (IUCN, 2018a). This in turn proves that a more inclusive water governance will provide more equitable, as well as more technically-sound, sharing of water resources for all stakeholders, with long-term progress for sustainability and Blue Peace objectives.

### Box 2. What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality refers to a framework that identifies the discrimination or disadvantages based on one's intersecting social identities such as gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, and age.

Adopting intersectionality in water governance is thus to seek ways for social justice. It critically recognises systematic and structural barriers to access and control over water faced by vulnerable groups due to various social identities that intersect each other. Hence, objective of the intersectional approach is to remove these barriers and eventually achieve social equality through more inclusive and participatory water governance.



BRIDGE aims to build water governance capacities through learning, demonstrations, leadership, and consensus building at a global scale, in transboundary river basins. The goal of this programme is to enhance cooperation among riparian countries by applying water diplomacy at multiple levels, with 13 current working areas in South East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South America. BRIDGE aims to support countries that share rivers and lakes to implement effective water management with a shared vision and benefit-sharing principles, as well as with transparent, coherent and inclusive institutional frameworks (IUCN, 2021a). BRIDGE provides an opportunity to review the gender aspects of transboundary settings through a long-term platform that works on a large spectrum in multiple geographies and at multiple levels.

This report uses BRIDGE as an entry point to close some of the gaps in knowledge, data, and practice on how an intersectional, gender responsive approach affects transboundary water governance. It strengthens the link between water cooperation and intersectional gender-responsive approaches to governance. These linkages are made through a critical recognition of women and minorities' roles in the different levels and spheres of water governance – from local to transboundary and from informal to formal levels. It puts particular attention on the variety of experiences that may arise within one identified category which amplifies the complexity of efforts for inclusive TWG. This report proceeds to put forward recommendations that, if applied systematically and critically, will improve gender equality contributions beyond IUCN operations to TWG in general for more effective and more equitable conservation and environmental outcomes.

Intersectionality in environmental governance is murky waters: the field is still emerging and moving from theory to practice and remains a significant challenge. Adopting an intersectional and gender-transformative approach in TWG is not an easy journey. There are a lot of unknown areas to be explored further. It might seem to raise more questions, ambiguities, and complexities. Challenges out there might be huge. However, bringing together women, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable groups at the heart of TWG will allow us to discover untapped huge potential for turning these challenges into new opportunities. If we embrace it with appropriate tools and active cooperation based on mutual trust, we will be guided to move towards a more sustainable, effective, resilient future of water resources and Blue Peace.



# AT A GLANCE

## Setting the Scene

Review of existing literature that guides the research methodology and analysis.

See page 16.

## When Intersections Becomes a Lens

Intersectionality as the bridge to the gap of gender-responsive work in TWG.

See page 26.

## Flowing Information

An overview of research findings and case studies from Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca:

- (1) *The salient struggle of representation.*
- (2) *The risk of essentialism from gender mainstreaming: conflating women with gender.*
- (3) *Misunderstanding context and key terms: an additional obstacle.*
- (4) *Background checks: why the data is still missing.*
- (5) *The underlying issue: lack of efforts for inclusive and effective participation.*

See page 35.

## Building Bridges

The opportunities an intersectional and gender-transformative provide TWG through two approaches: bottom-up and top-down.

See page 45.



## Chapter 1: Setting the Scene

*“In lieu of treating water scarcity as a threat to which only a narrow spectrum of efficiency-based solutions are available, we must prepare to afford the diversity of cultural, spiritual and scientific views a seat at the table.”*

– Kate Darling

Australian Lawyer specializing in Arctic affairs, Aboriginal Law and Sustainability

### Literature Review

Existing research and literature from the field, along with the learnings from existing development programmes on TWG, provide a foundation for lessons learned. In this section, the existing literature that guides the research methodology and analysis will be reviewed and examined. Transboundary water governance and management is a vast and quickly evolving field of research. However, if TWG is globally recognised as a concept, it remains difficult to practice as this review will show. The stakes are high: 276 river basins are shared between two or more countries in the world. Forty percent of the world population can be found living in these international river basins, and if we include rivers, lakes and aquifers that are on international borders, it is estimated that 70 percent of the world population is living there (Meran, Siehlow & von Hirschhausen, 2021). The chain of dependence on transboundary basins is deeply rooted. They supply water for approximately 60 percent of the global food production (Karar, 2017). Their proper governance and management therefore has a direct impact on lives and livelihoods.

### *Transboundary Water Governance*

In this chapter, we outline a number of existing frameworks and concepts that lay the foundation for programmes and interventions in the field of TWG. Governance refers to a process or system in which political, social, and economic decisions are made through the institutional, administrative, and juridical frameworks. Particularly in the context of transboundary water, water governance can be defined as “the range of political, social, economic and administrative systems that are in place to develop and manage water resources, and the delivery of water services, at different levels of society” (GWP, 2002). In a simpler sentence, IUCN sees water governance as a tool setting the ‘rule of games’ for the way water resources are managed (IUCN, 2020). TWG’s goal is to achieve Blue Peace. After going through the most used and influential frameworks, this section





will explain further the concept of Blue Peace, which is the approach we are following for this research.

The most known and utilized framework in TWG is the **integrated water resources management (IWRM)** approach. The framework was further developed and emphasized in the 1990s when there was an increasing need for multi-institutional and multi-stakeholder approaches to address the complex water issues becoming more and more “multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral, and multi regional” (Biswas, 2004, p. 249).

Some core principles of IWRM include the full participation of stakeholders, the importance of social dimensions, the adoption of the best technologies, the equitable allocations of water resources, the recognition of water as an economic good and the role of women in water management (Meran, Siehlow & von Hirschhausen, 2021). Therefore, in a nutshell, IWRM can be understood as a holistic, cross-sectoral approach that addresses the needs of human communities, water, land, and ecosystems as a whole.

However, there are still many gaps in this framework with regards to the lack of human rights element. The relationship between state sovereignty and environmental human rights needs to be deepened. A balance also needs to be found between sustainable development and the inviolability of human rights. More research should be done in geopolitical, social, economic, scientific and technological perspectives. Additionally, the influence of civil society needs to be better understood (Gao, 2014). Plus, there is a gap in the literature concerning the experience actors need to claim in order to know that integration has occurred following the IWRM approach (Ison & Wallis, 2017).

Still, despite the gap above, the IWRM approach has remained as the most acknowledged and adopted approach at the global level by the international community. Among many international and multilateral institutions, the United Nations has been such a pioneer in adopting the IWRM approach into water development and management, as notably seen in the adoption of the Dublin Principles in 1992. Several UN declarations and resolutions<sup>1</sup> have been made to

### Box 3. Integrated Water Resources Management

Global Water Partnership is one of the organisations that work on IWRM. It was established in 1996 as a global coordinating entry of the IWRM approach, provides the definition as follows, which is widely accepted by multiple institutions including the United Nations:

IWRM is a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.

(GWP, 2000).

<sup>1</sup> For instance, in the 29th session of the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in November 2002, the human rights to water was added to the principles as follows: “Water should be treated as a social and cultural good, and not primarily as an economic good. The manner of the realization of the right to water must also be sustainable, ensuring that the right can be realized for present and future generations (CESCR, 2002, p.123).”



complement limitations of the Dublin Principles and IWRM approach by adding a focus on basic human rights to water. This perspective to see water not only as a good but as a fundamental right is later reflected in shaping the goals on water in both Millenium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### Box 4. Dublin Principles

The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development, also known as Dublin Principles, was declared and adopted at the International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE) held on 31 January 1992, in Dublin. Based on the IWRM approach, the principles recognized the fact that water is a finite and crucial source for both human livelihood and environment, and most importantly paved the way for participatory approach recognizing the importance of involving all relevant stakeholders at all levels, particularly women whose role has been predominantly unnoticed in water sector. Below is the full text of Dublin principles (ICWE, 1992).

Principle 1 (Ecological): Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment.

Principle 2 (Institutional): Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels.

Principle 3 (Gender): Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water.

Principle 4 (Economic): Water has an economic value in all its competing users and should be recognized as an economic good.

ICWE (1992) & UN (1992)

The IWRM approach paved the way for participatory governance in water development and management. In follow up to its core principles, some important political frameworks that seek to move away from state-centric to participatory approaches were further developed and adapted for transboundary governance. There are two recognized frameworks for TWG that seek to move away from previous state-centric approaches: polycentric governance and multilevel governance. As discussed by Baltutis and Moore (2019), under the **polycentric governance**, multiple actors with overlapping responsibilities are coordinated with each other within different governance levels, through a shared set of rules. It calls for cooperation among multiple actors across different disciplines and levels, eventually to create a self-organised and dynamic governance for water management. The **multilevel governance** approach focuses on non-state actor engagement in the decision-making process, based on a network arrangement of institutions that cooperate for the



management of the shared water resources. By expanding the actors that are part of TWG, we can have a better picture of the full governance landscape (Earle & Neal, 2017). These two approaches highlight the growing trend of including all the stakeholders in decision making and to move to more bottom-up approaches. These approaches are all made to provide better governance for shared waters, with the aim of achieving blue peace.

**Blue Peace** is a relatively new conceptual framework that adds the peace dimension into existing frameworks focusing on multi-stakeholder cooperation such as multilevel governance. It acknowledges the global increase in conflicts over shared water resources which is being intensified by multiple factors such as demographic growth, economic development, pollution, and climate change (SDC, 2017). The Blue Peace approach thus actively seeks the intersections between water, environment, and peacebuilding, calling for more active cross-sectoral collaboration among multiple stakeholders across different disciplines. In this regard, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is actively pushing forward the Blue Peace approach since its official launch in 2010 as a global actor of best practices with regards to transboundary water management (TWM) and hydro-diplomacy<sup>2</sup>.

Leveraging its wide connection with diverse stakeholders, Switzerland is serving as a platform for multilateral dialogue for transboundary water cooperation among governments, academia, the private sector, and civil society. The Blue Peace concept is also based on the idea that water resources can provide opportunities for mutual cooperation and trust among countries for sustaining peace rather than competition and conflict if appropriate instruments are given (SDC, 2017).

#### Box 5. Hydro-diplomacy

It is an approach to shape the negotiations between riparian states by using both formal institutions (laws, treaties) and binational networks with state and non-state actors at different levels of governance. In this hydro-diplomacy approach, networks involve not only state authorities participating in high-level diplomacy, but also a wider range of actors, sub-national, civil society, water users on the ground – engaged in informal processes.

Blue Peace can be assessed via the Blue Peace Index that was co-developed by the SDC and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (EIU, 2020). However, its indicators are lacking gender and diversity dimensions. There is a need to assess whether women are actively engaged in regional, sub-national, diplomatic, technical, and financial spheres related to the water management and cooperation process. In addition, not only quantitative but more concrete qualitative indicators also need to be further developed to capture to what extent and how women and vulnerable groups are affecting the TWG.

<sup>2</sup> Hydro-diplomacy is an approach to shape the negotiations between riparian states by using both formal institutions (laws, treaties) and binational networks with state and non-state actors at different levels of governance. In this hydro-diplomacy approach, networks involve not only state authorities participating in high-level diplomacy, but also a wider range of actors - sub-national, civil society, water users on the ground - engaged in informal processes.



The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) is also an important legal framework for TWG. Its goals include the promotion of peace and the sustainable management of shared waters (UNECE, 2021). However, the Water Convention does not include gender or women in its text (UNECE, 2013). Even though UNECE assists countries in achieving gender equality, their Water Convention does not address it. This highlights once again the need for a gender dimension in instruments created for Blue Peace.

All frameworks mentioned above promote the participation of a broader range of stakeholders in the governance of managing and accessing the shared waters. The trend is clear to shift from state-centric decision-making frameworks to more inclusive, bottom-up approaches involving non-state actors. However, gender and diversity dimensions are barely addressed in these frameworks for TWG. Although the role of women was recognised by some theoretical framework such as the IWRM and the Dublin principles, there is a clear gap both in normative and practice levels. Earle and Bazilli (2013) criticizes that the discourses related to transboundary water have been shaped around hydraulic mission that puts focus on the construction, development, and control of water infrastructures. Focusing on infrastructures inevitably leads to the masculinization of water discourse, as men are often overrepresented in the engineering sector.

The problems of a masculinised discourse and a lack of inclusion of women in decision-making and negotiation processes are apparent in practice. Women are generally more included in subnational level institutions than at the international level. The international management of transboundary waters intersects with the fields of international relations and diplomacy. This can explain the underrepresentation of women at this level, because international relations is a historically masculinised field. The hydraulic mission is also masculinised, making this intersection of these two fields a challenge for women and the gender dimension (Earle & Bazilli, 2013). This diminishes the opportunities for gender issues to be considered. Since men are overrepresented in water management professions such as engineering, hydrology, irrigation, it leads to the assumption that men are the sole key actors in water governance. The absence of non-state actors, that polycentric governance and multi-level governance try to resolve, is a problem and participates in this bias found in TWM practice that focuses on masculinised and governmental approaches. This issue can even be found in research, where men-dominated fields are leading studies on water governance: engineering, hydrology, water law, or political science. Earle and Bazilli (2013) have identified three key elements to the incorporation in institutions of gender issues: the representation of women in decision-making, the incorporation of gender in the legislation, policies, and strategies of organisations, and the technical specialists working in these organisations. Another key author for gender institutionalization is Levy (1996) who developed the idea of the web of institutionalisation. She listed thirteen elements for a normative shift in institutions. These included gender awareness and organisational learning. Gendered approaches are thus more





developed at the subnational level compared to the interstate level. We now need to know how to incorporate gender issues in the current institutions, particularly at the international level for TWM. The authors propose that indicators should be developed to measure gender inclusion as part of the solution (Earle & Bazilli, 2013).

As we have seen together in this section, frameworks and approaches for TWG have evolved from state-led approaches to participatory approaches involving a wider range of stakeholders including sub-national and non-state actors. However, they have demonstrated a clear limitation in terms of including women and indigenous communities at the core of governance processes. Even though some normative frameworks such as the Dublin Principles do mention some gender dimensions, the success of TWG cannot be ensured without a social and political environment that supports and instrumentalizes a gender-responsive approach. How gender equality issues have been distant from the concerns of the water sector will be further analysed in the following section of literature review.

#### **Box 6. Gender Responsiveness**

*“Gender responsiveness is identifying and understanding gender gaps and biases, and then acting on them, developing and implementing actions to overcome challenges and barriers towards improving and achieving gender equality.”*

(IUCN, 2021b, p. viii).

In practice, this means moving from merely recognizing the role of women and other underprivileged groups to transforming the current professional and academic fields and governance institutions that perpetuate the marginalization of these populations in TWG.

### *Gender Inequality and Water Governance*

Gender inequality is pervasive across geographical, social and political contexts. Societal gender norms, sustained by laws and institutions, define who has access and who controls natural resources – including water. This is despite the fact that it is recognised by the United Nations that access to water is fundamental to the realization of basic human rights, such as sanitation, food and shelter (Hall *et al.*, 2014).

Women play a central role in the provision, management and safeguarding of water and by extension of the biodiversity that water holds. This makes them holders of undervalued knowledge on the ways in which water is and should be used. However, this is not reflected in decision-making for water management and governance. At this stage, a distinction between management and governance is useful. Management refers to the planning of what is done and the means that are



taken to pursue objectives with regards to water. Governance refers to who decides how these objectives are set, and what to do to pursue them. It is about who holds the authority, accountability and responsibility for those decisions. All in all, governance is about who holds the power (Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.*, 2013).

#### Box 7. Data on Gender and Transboundary Waters

- (1) Only 15% of countries have a gender policy in their water ministry
- (2) Only 35% of countries have included gender considerations in their water-related policies and programmes

(IUCN, 2018)

Evidence shows a multiplicity of linkages between gender and water: two thirds of the worlds' poorest, who do not have regular access to clean water, are women (IFAD, 2007). The burden of water collection disproportionately falls on women and girls, who are responsible for fetching water in 8 out of 10 households in areas where it is not available on the premises (Castañeda Camey *et al.*, 2020). This has implications on women and girls' health and education, particularly as women compose an estimated 70 percent of formal and informal health care workers (WEI, 2015). Limited access to water is also coupled with limited access to land, the two of which are intimately linked to gender-based exclusion (IFAD, 2001). Access to and control over natural resources like water are sources of tensions that further exacerbate the risk of sexual exploitation and lead to gender-based violence (GBV). Inequalities of access of water in transboundary basins are sustained in cultural and traditional gender norms that perpetuate and reinforce the use of GBV to maintain disparities in power relations, in which women and girls are most often found at the receiving end of the chain of violence (Castañeda Camey *et al.*, 2020). Gender identities and their expectations therefore shape water vulnerabilities.

The **pivotal role of women** as providers and guardians of water was recognized in the Dublin principles<sup>3</sup> of 1992, in a declaration that facilitated a shift in engaging with water governance with a

#### Box 8. Women as Change Makers IUCN's 2018 Report

- (1) The practical experiences and innovation of women in use and sharing of resources;
- (2) Women's technical and socio-cultural knowledge about water;
- (3) Women's abilities to disseminate and contribute their knowledge towards cooperative solutions and dialogue;
- (4) Women's leadership and meaningful role in cooperation and change-provoking decision-making

(Fauconnier *et al.*, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> The Dublin Principle No. 3 states "This pivotal role of women as providers and users of water and guardians of the living environment has seldom been reflected in institutional arrangements for the development and management of water resources. Acceptance and implementation of this principle requires positive policies to address women's specific needs and to equip and empower women to participate at all levels in water resources prograssirnes, including decision-making and implementation, in ways defined by them." (ICWE, 1992)



gender-sensitive perspective (ICWE, 1992). Women are gradually getting recognized as predominant water managers that play a major role in the planning for household use, irrigation, storage, negotiations and evaluation of water source quality, as exemplified in a research on women's participation in water and sanitation in Asia (Travers, Khosla & Dhar, 2010).

But there remains a clear **gap between knowledge, policies and practice** of gender and TWM. Strategies of gender mainstreaming are not always accompanied by adequate funding and fully implemented mechanisms, and the data collected is not always satisfactory to truly transform gender power dynamics occurring in TWM (GWP & UNEP-DHI, 2021). In a research conducted by IUCN on 65 countries in 2013 demonstrated, only 35 percent of countries include gender considerations in water-related policies and programmes. Additionally, the ministries of water sources record only 22 percent of ministries of water resources with gender focal points (IUCN, 2013a).

But if indeed women generally hold the burden of water provision for domestic work, their inclusion in the water governance and decision-making process should not be based on an essentialist idealized role of women as providers and guardians of the living environment, as stated in the Dublin principles. Such a projection **reproduces patriarchal societal expectations** of feminine roles in the domestic sphere. Systematically including women in decision-making and implementation of water management and governance therefore needs to equip and empower women to participate in all levels of water resources programmes in ways that are truly defined by them (Fauconnier *et al.*, 2018).

The aim of **gender mainstreaming** practices seeks to fully integrate gender perspectives in water planning, management and decision-making. Yet, often this can be done in superficial ways, by using women as tokens (Mandara *et al.*, 2017). Experiences of womanhood and transboundary water may vary dramatically from one context to another, and this diversity is not reflected when it is resumed under the broad and essentializing category of "women." A **gender-transformative** approach hence seeks to *go beyond* the homogenizing categories of women and men established as a dichotomy (HC3, 2014). It is rather an attempt to deconstruct gender binaries and roles to interrogate societal expectations and enable greater inclusion and equality. It is about showing which gender differences are seen as significant, how significant, and how these differences are acted upon (Carver *et al.*, 2003). A gender-transformative approach goes well beyond merely increasing physical representation, as it attempts to encompass integrating gender differences in all policies in a crosscutting manner.

Such an inclusive integration of the multiplicity of perspectives could stay clear of the traps of essentialization, enable solidarity and agency across gender and social categories, which is at the core of successful inclusive management of water management and conservation. It illustrates the ways that power hierarchies can be reinforced but most importantly how they can be challenged



and renegotiated (Kajiser & Kronsell, 2014). Suggested renegotiations are more so crucial in the realities of climate change. While it is important to recognize the differences in vulnerabilities and adaptations of the gendered impacts of climate change and hydraulic stress, it is also important to avoid restricting the idea of climate vulnerabilities as passive victimhood (Cannon, 2008). Instead, the power complexities and agencies of societal relations need to be recognized, especially as climate change and global warming are exacerbating strains over water, which amplifies social injustice (Burks and Burke, 2020). To avoid this risk, investigating the interconnectedness and human dependency on climate change and analyzing human-environment relationships alongside relations amongst humans is essential. eca

Recent literature on gender inequality in accessing water in the era of climate change is increasingly aware of the varieties of experiences that the broad categories of women or men entail. The experiences of the Global South and the decolonial strands of literature also participate in going beyond gender binaries, which are more systematically recognized as socially reproduced. This is a too-good-to-be-missed opportunity for the application of a feminist approach to environmental issues to provide inclusive solutions to climate change and social injustice. In the case of our research objectives, the recognition of contextualized gender complexities are specific to the case of transboundary waters. Shared basins are inscribed in particular geographical and political situations that make the gaps and risks of an application of a gender-responsive approach more specific, as the next part will enlighten.

The links between gender inequality in TWM are well documented, but the risk of falling into the trap of *essentializing* the role of women is high. An intersectional gender-responsive approach is the way forward to avoid this trap. The implications of restrictions of access and management of water for women are numerous and disadvantageous - to say the least. But this enumeration on the burdens faced by women with regards to access to water can quickly frame the issue with a projection of women being singled out as victims (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Such a victimization discourse blurs the complexities of gendered power dynamics and can take away from agency of women and minorities.

#### **Box 9. Feminist Approach**

A feminist approach looks at the differentiated power relations based on gender. It presumes that gender identities are historically, socially and politically constructed.



By looking at previous literature on transboundary water governance and management, along with both theories and examples from practices, we are able to conclude that TWG is still lacking a transformative gender-responsive framework. Gender mainstreaming has established the links between gender and TWG. It has pushed forward the gender agenda, despite the many structural obstacles. This therefore represents an incredible opportunity to go a step further, because it shows that the incentive is there. The aim is to build on what has been done to successfully construct a better approach going forth. This provides reasons to be hopeful, as the problems are becoming easily identifiable and as solutions to improve the governance of natural resources by constantly becoming more inclusive.

#### **Box 10. Essentialization**

In the association of women and of female-ness as being inherently closer to nature:

*“Essentialism in the context of environmental feminism translates into an irreducible essence, an innate quality in women that connects them to nature, which is not present in or available to men” (Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993, p. 383).*

This is problematic because it is oversimplifying and exclusionary.

This literature review is relevant to our research question as it draws on the existing research to set the scene of where TWG is at today. It also indicates the existing gaps to fill and the possible leads to take on in further research. What has been written and researched beforehand is extremely useful to set good and bad practice examples. This strengthens our argument that gender mainstreaming has been a first step towards integrating a necessary gender perspective to TWG. To bring this a step further, we will explore the concept of intersectionality, which is framing our research, along with our methodology.





## Chapter 2: When Intersections Become a Lens

*“There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle  
because we do not live single-issue lives.”*

— Audre Lorde

American Poet and Activist for the Civil rights movement

### Conceptual Framework

Defining a conceptual framework is the first step to assess the effectiveness of gender-responsive approaches to TWG. This came following the creation of a clear problem statement, stating that gender mainstreaming has so far failed to successfully integrate a systematic and critical gendered approach to the management and governance of transboundary basins. The foundation of this research rests upon the concept of **intersectionality**.

A useful tool is the IUCN Gender Analysis Guide, which seeks to inform environmental programming for IUCN, its members, partners and peers on gender - and it includes notions of intersectionality. This guide provides a useful overview of what a gender analysis in environmental development programmes entails, and describes the added value of intersectionality. Interlinked factors determine diverse people’s lives, and treating intersectionality as the core of gender analysis provides inestimable added value (IUCN, 2021b).

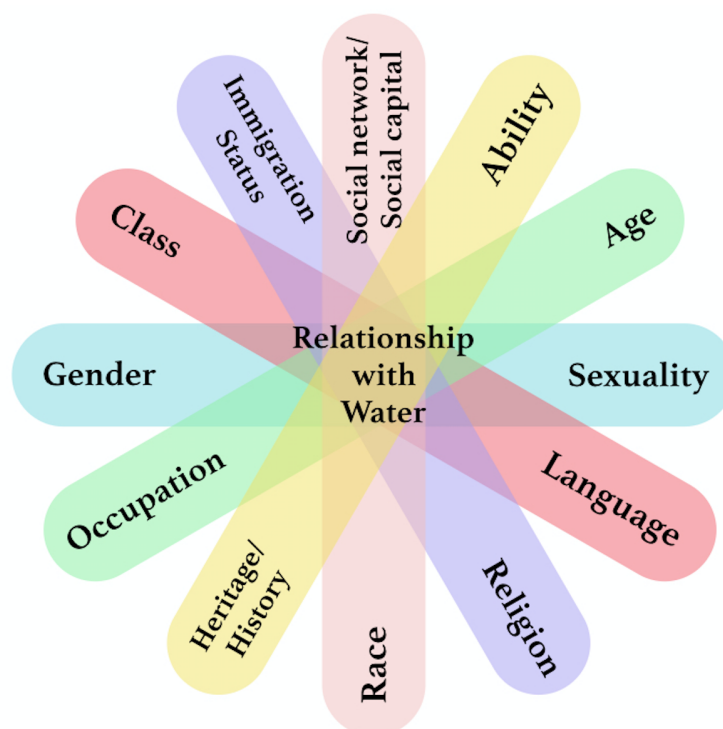
#### Box II. Concept of Intersectionality

“Treating intersectionality as the core of the gender analysis is an added value as it helps capture the diversity of women’s and men’s lives and provides a fuller understanding of gendered power relations. It allows for the analysis to go beyond reducing gender to roles or relations to capture other forms of inequality and recognizes that:

- (1) Women’s lives are not all the same; the interests that women have in common may be determined as much by their social positioning or their ethnic identity as well as being a woman;
- (2) Life experiences, needs, issues and priorities vary for different groups of women depending on age, ethnicity, disability, income levels, employment status, material status, sexual orientation and whether they may or may not have dependents;
- (3) Different strategies may be necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for women and men and different groups of women and men” (MFF, SEI & SEAFDEC, 2018).



Intersectionality has been diversely described as an analytical tool, a buzzword, a concept, a perspective and a paradigm. Intersectionality is used in this research as a conceptual framework, highlighting the importance of a complex system of methodology that sees everything as interactions. This approach is key, as it allows tailored recommendations for water basins that are culturally appropriate and context sensitive. The governance and management of transboundary waters must be appropriate to each region, meaning that a rigid approach will not be successful for blue peace. This section seeks to define and to justify the use of intersectionality specifically to set recommendations for improved TWG and TWM.



*Figure 1: Intersectionality and Relations to Water Resources*

As highlighted in the diagram above, intersectionality can be seen as a crossroad where various factors are linked together. The analogy of intersectionality as a crossroad is useful in which for example, race and gender are street corners. They meet and have multiplicative effects. Social processes like sexism or racism are the streets in this model. These streets can cross other streets without transforming themselves. Intersectionality allows us to see a phenomenon through its interactions and not its main effects as coined by Crenshaw (2001). Kimberle Crenshaw coined the term ‘intersectionality’ in 1989 in the course of her contributions to critical legal scholarship and Black feminist thought. The term was developed to describe how Black women experience sexism and racism in an interconnected manner, which is fundamentally different from the type of oppression White women experience, or Black men experience. At its very core, intersectionality recognizes that to address complex inequalities, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.



Intersectional research offers a lens through which we better understand one another and strive towards a more just future for all. Intersectionality goes beyond the intersections of gender, race and class to include social categories of sexuality, culture, ethnicity and larger structures of power, such as government, media, and capitalism (Thompson, 2016). Through this approach, we are better suited to see the ways people's social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination.

With regards to the particular context of TWG, an intersectional approach is based on the idea that the ways that individuals manage, access, and interact with water resources are duly affected by the intersections of their different identities. It also means recognizing the historical contexts surrounding women's involvement in TWG. By looking through the intersectional lens, we see how different communities are battling various, interconnected issues, all at once. Intersectionality is thus a fundamental analytical tool to improve the governance of transboundary waters.

**Box 12. Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory**

- (1) Race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, age and other markets of power, which are all independent and mutually construct one another.
- (2) Intersecting power relations produce complex, interdependent social inequalities.
- (3) The social location of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations shape their experiences within and perspective on the social world.
- (4) Solving social problems within a given local, regional, national or global context requires intersectional analysis.

Collins *et al.*, 2021.

Intersectionality is our primary tool for theorizing identity and oppression. In many research practices, intersectionality is an underdeveloped concept, due to the relative newness of the approach, and the conceptual complexity of it (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). However, intersectionality is being recognized as an important research paradigm, and increasingly being applied to research practices across a variety of disciplines. What is extremely useful about intersectionality is its ability to move beyond a single-axis framework to examine multiple categories of difference and the experiences of people at the intersection of differences (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011).

This framework allows us to work in two ways, first, broadly for an international scope and second, more specifically for marginalized groups. Harris (2008) argues that intersectionality offers an important, and increasingly common lens for differentiating the gendered benefits and vulnerability of water access. From an intersectional perspective, we know that there are gendered



water use, access and control that are co-implicated with other social structures. To better understand how multiple forms of inequality operate at the same time, within complex and interlocking systems, an intersectional approach is therefore required. Intersectionality is a growingly popular approach for studying how water is socialized in multiple ways, and how social structures and processes construct the inequitable distribution of water access, use, and control (Thompson, 2016). TWG is a complex topic that requires an intersectional approach to understand the interlocking system of oppression within it. Intersectionality reveals essential information that would otherwise remain hidden. It allows us to look beyond the most clearly visible dimensions of inequality to recognize multiple and intersecting disadvantages underlying the construction of subject positions (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011).

The intention of intersectionality is to hold all identities up, to bear witness to them, and to bring them into the light. Although this is the intention, intersectionality, like all concepts, have pitfalls that must be addressed, as there is no such thing as a perfect concept. For instance, methodological questions - in order to be as inclusive as possible - can lead to further problems due to the ambiguity of the concept (Nash, 2008). Additionally, the focus on categories can make it difficult to think about the relationship between those categories (Erel *et al.* 2010, p. 64). The concept of intersectionality is indeed complex but it provides a new and different approach to gender mainstreaming approaches. As mentioned previously, taking gender into account can be done in superficial ways: in tokenistic manners, by merely increasing physical representation without changing the power dynamics at play. An intersectional conceptual framework therefore is more profoundly changing. It enables an understanding of the problems surrounding gender that is centered around understanding how categories of gender, race, social class, and how these categories are created to exploit and not simply to oppress. It also prompts the question of why these categories intersect (Salem, 2018, p. 408).

Intersectionality radically and critically changes how we understand TWG and transforms the field to be more precise in its operations. Additionally, intersectionality is culturally appropriate and context sensitive. It allows us to look at different water basins and suggests recommendations that will be respectful of people's culture and that will be made based on the situation of each basin. TWG desperately needs an alternative that is not one size fits all, and this is why intersectionality is so important. River basins cannot be expected to be managed and governed the same way in each region, which makes intersectionality a great approach for tailored recommendations.

Using intersectionality as an approach to analyse TWG is therefore highly useful to transform the way we consider this type of governance and the people involved in it. One of the goals is to go beyond the association that gender means women. They are a key actor in this process and this research only acknowledges it more. But by using intersectionality as a framework, we go deeper by highlighting the role of contextual vulnerabilities experienced by shared water stakeholders in general. This means taking into account the importance of their background and



the deeper roots of structural inequalities. The idea is not to create division by making the issue more complex. More precisely, the issue *is* complex and must be recognized as such. If such a complexity is neglected, oversimplification leads to vulnerable groups being put aside from policies.

Intersectionality is thus needed to frame the new governance that is being transformed in transboundary waters. The field is already transforming from being very technical and male-dominated to more inclusive institutions and bottom-up approaches. Intersectionality can help frame this transformation to develop a new kind of governance. It is a benefit because many issues that have been male dominated for many years need to be reframed. Now that gender mainstreaming is becoming the norm in institutions, we have to use this momentum for women's voices to be deeply listened to and for them to have the same opportunities as men – and the same goes for all vulnerable groups who are key actors in TWG. Intersectionality is thus key for transformative and inclusive TWG as well as sustainable and long-term blue peace.

Intersectionality brings gender mainstreaming a step further to truly transform the governance and management of shared basins for inclusive and sustainable outcomes. It is the approach to use, because it is culturally appropriate and context sensitive, allowing customised recommendations for water basins. Expecting TWG and TWM to work on identical models for all water basins around the world is unrealistic. Intersectionality allows adaptability and fluidity in the governance process. Our research seeks to shed light on whether intersectional aspects of TWG are currently being considered in the practitioners' field and in relevant academic research. In the next section, the steps aiming to undertake an intersectional approach to our research process itself are underlined.

## Research Methodology

### 1) Setting the Scene: literature review

Conducting literature review was the first step to respond to our research question: *how does a gender-responsive approach affect the long-term success of transboundary water governance and management in BRIDGE basins to achieve Blue Peace?* It enabled us to identify the broad schemes of concepts along with the recent trends of TWG, but also to identify the existing gaps both in academic and practice fields. The process entailed looking at a wide range of academic literature from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields: gender, intersectionality, environment, environmental peacebuilding, natural resource management, water governance, international law, and international relations. Practice literature mainly came from the international organisations (IOs) with mandates on water, environment, conservation, notably including IUCN, Global Water





Partnership (GWP), and UN agencies such as UN Women, UN Environment Programme (UNEP). This set a robust base of theory to build the rest of the research on.

## 2) Conducting interviews: primary data collection

A total of eleven interviews were conducted between early August to the mid November 2021. Ten were online and one was in person in Geneva. To collect qualitative data from interviewees, we followed this methodology:

### 1. Elaboration of questions

Our questions were divided between four main themes: case studies of Lake Titicaca and Lake Chad, transboundary water governance and management, gender and intersectionality, and Blue Peace (see Appendix 1). According to the interviewee's expertise, we selected two main themes and based our discussion on the corresponding questions.

### 2. Selection of interviewees

We created a list of all potential contacts in collaboration with IUCN, based on news articles, organisation websites and personal connections. Most of the contacts were provided by the IUCN team. People met online during conferences (such as during the World Water Week) and in person at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Marseille were later added to the list. We asked for more contacts during each interview, using the snowball sampling method. This enabled us to reach a variety of stakeholders coming from different backgrounds and fields. We gave significant attention to the intersectional identities of our interviewees, to ensure that traditionally marginalised voices of TWG were heard.

### 3. Logistics

Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and an hour. They were systematically online (Zoom or Webex), except if the interviewee asked for an in-person interview. Two members of the student team were present during each interview, which enabled one person to take notes while the other interacted with the interviewee.



#### 4. Ethics

All interviews were recorded, with the consent of the participant. They were also asked their consent for the use of the data collected during their interview, along with the use of their names and organisation. We followed different principles: do no harm, protection of researchers, protection of vulnerable groups, collection of voluntary informed consent, respect of confidentiality and anonymity, principle of non-discrimination, data protection, and avoidance of conflict of interests.

#### 5. Interview structure

We conducted semi-structured interviews. We had a list of questions prepared but asked more details on certain topics and adjusted our questions based on times and the interviewee's answers. Interviews started with a background on the research accompanied with consent questions. We followed with the questions while taking detailed notes of the answers.

The research interviews aimed to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and understandings of individuals working, researching and living in transboundary waters. The goal was to generate a deepening understanding of the role gender plays in the current operations of TWG, drawing upon practitioners' experiences. Through an organized set of predetermined open-ended questions, eleven stakeholders were interviewed on the involvement of gender approaches currently used in TWG, their potential and their limits. The questions were adapted to their expertise based on the emerging dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. Importantly, all the interviewees were asked to comment on what they believed was the best way to incorporate gender issues in current institutions of TWG.

The interviewees were from an array of different expertise and locations. Statistically speaking, one of our interviewees identified as a man while the rest of our interviewees identified as women. We spoke to individuals that have experience working with BRIDGE for over a decade, with a focus on stakeholder engagement in water management. Interviewees with such profiles include a water specialist who has extensive experience as a local government counterpart in negotiation and coordination with River Basin Organization (RBO) and multilateral institutions including IUCN. Other interviewees were academic professors with a deep understanding for policies and governance of the environment and water. One of our academic interviewees held more specific knowledge on the intersection of environmental issues and social inequality. Members of non-profits and non-governmental organisations were also interviewed, with experience in advocacy and lobbying, specifically advancing the cause of women and indigenous people in water governance. One of our interviewees was engaged in the BRIDGE programme as a non-



governmental organization (NGO) representative of IUCN National Committee, with a specific focus on indigenous people's engagement. Other interviewees are policy advisers at the UN Development Programme (UNDP)'s Water and Environment, lead water specialists, and legal specialists at UNECE's Water Convention. The combination of individuals interviewed have provided the Blue Peace Team with a map of where gender in TWG once was, and where it will one day be.

### 3) Presenting initial findings: participation in World Water Week and IUCN World Conservation Congress

Our team participated in World Water Week (23-27 August 2021) as rapporteurs for a session on transboundary water cooperation. There, we had the occasion to bring up the topics of gender in breakout rooms and plenary sessions, which gave us material and insights on how gender does not appear systematically in TWG conversations. We also joined other sessions on water as attendees which opened up opportunities for potential contacts and helped us understand the way TWG is being or should be transformed.

We were also invited by IUCN to present our initial findings at the 2021 IUCN World Conservation Congress (3-7 September 2021). We had the opportunity to present our first thoughts based on desk research and primary interviews on gender-responsive approaches, with the objective of promoting the place of gender for the next phase of the BRIDGE programme. In this dedicated session organized by the IUCN Water Programme team, preliminary recommendations were presented for practitioners in the gender and water sectors. This event was an opportunity for us to interact with many different actors working on similar topics and to gain more resources and contacts for further interviews. The discussions we had there were part of our learning process and considerably helped us shape our recommendations.

### 4) Analysis of data

From the notes taken during the interviews, we separated the data into main themes and recommendations for each interview. Themes and recommendations were then compared during a brainstorming "Idea Harvest". This allowed us to use contrast and compare techniques to identify common themes and to draft recommendations.

#### *Regional case studies analysis*

Two river basins – Lake Chad (West Africa) and Lake Titicaca (South America) – were selected as regional case studies, after consultation with the IUCN team. We chose these two case



studies because the BRIDGE programme has been active in the past few years in these two basins with different thematic focuses on each region. While BRIDGE in Lake Titicaca has focused on women and indigenous involvement, no particular thematic focus has been placed on gender and intersectionality dimensions in the programme for Lake Chad. Hence, a comparative analysis of these two basins allowed us to identify which factors (regional, social, cultural, political) have affected gender and TWG in the regions. Data was collected mainly from literature review and interviews with regional experts. For the literature review, we mainly looked at the publications and reports from implementing and coordinating institutions working at the basins. For the interviews, we had discussions with four regional experts (two for each basin) with questions specifically focused on their respective regional contexts.

### 5) Limitations faced

Our study has limitations which should be recognised when using an intersectional methodology. First, our team has had limited access to the range of interviewees across the disciplines and sector. Our interviews were mainly conducted with practitioners of IOs and academics, mainly from the Global North. A number of people from non-profit and grassroots organisations were also contacted but very few interviews were conducted with these profiles. This can be linked to a variety of reasons like the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted our collection process, due to disparities in access to technical equipment or lack of responses. In addition to this, the analysis of case studies for Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca basins was mainly done through the desk review of literature, publication, and communication materials rather than stakeholder interviews. One of the reasons for such limitation is the restricted chance of physical field research in these two regions due to the current situation with the pandemic. For further research, there is a need to expand the interview scope to broader levels and disciplines, notably including NGOs, national, regional, and local government officials, policymakers, indigenous groups, and academics in the regions. These limits provide opportunities for further research.

Our methodology was thought through with an intersectionality approach. We spent significant time taking positionality exercises and interrogating our own internal biases and privileges that shape the results of our findings. This is a necessary step towards conducting research on gender and intersectionality. Based on the methodology above, Chapter 2 will analyse the data and information gathered through interviews and closely examine the current issues identified by a number of practitioners in the fields of gender and transboundary water.



## Chapter 3: Flowing Information

*“Water links us to our neighbor  
in a way more profound and complex than any other.”*

— John Thorson

American Federal Water Master.

On the first hand, the second chapter of this report seeks to highlight our findings from the interview process. The pool of findings collected highlights the major obstacles of TWG, which is essential to understanding both what is working and what is failing. On the second hand it illustrates the different issues that are brought up through a comparison of two case studies: Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca. The comparison is made from information gathered from interviewees and by drawing on literature.

Our interviews touched on a variety of topics that we have classified under six main themes. These themes reflect the different gender issues that exist in transboundary waters at different levels of governance: 1) the lack of representation of gender minorities, 2) the problem of gender mainstreaming, 3) the importance of context and language, 4) the need of data with an emphasis on qualitative data, 5) the need for transparent and accessible institutions, and 6) the necessity of including all stakeholders and promoting effective participation. We will explore each theme based on information collected from our interviews to portray the different problems TWG faced today in regards to gender.

### 1) The salient struggle of representation

The most salient issue that became evident in our findings comes back to the **lack of representation and efficient integration of gender minorities** at the different levels of governance. An interviewee who is deeply involved in water governance emphasized the entrenched and overarching absence of women in decision-making positions on TWG as emphasised by one of our interviewees. The role of women in TWG is overlooked and dismissed as less valuable (Interviewee B, personal communications, October 11, 2021). Women play a prominent role in the productive use and management of water resources, yet this is not recognized at national to global levels (IUCN, 2018a). Due to the conventional framing of TWG as a state-to-state operation, the importance of basin-level cooperation is underplayed, the area in which women tend to have more experience and voice (IUCN, 2018a). A highly informed interviewee brought up an example of Chad’s capital, N’Djamena, where more women are participating in a local decision-making





process, but compared to the Cameroon platform, women have far less access to water management. This is mostly due to the urban and rural divide, as women in rural areas have less legitimacy.

In one of our interviews with a lead water specialist, the discussion was focused on the lack of women at the decision-making level. According to him, TWG is a sector that is created by and for men, which makes it an incredibly inaccessible area for women to contribute to (Interviewee A, personal communications, August 6, 2021). When a field is created without women in mind, there are expectations, behaviours, attitudes and norms that are incompatible for any identity that isn't male. The environment created is what hinders women from advancing to decision making positions in TWG. Another interviewee, who works in hydro-politics and TWM, stated that the higher one climbs up the ladder of decision-making, the less women will be found. It was argued that having more women in decision-making positions at the government level, such as a ministry of water or foreign affairs would greatly improve the chances of peace agreements. The same interviewee mentioned that peace agreements have a 30 percent chance of being doable when women are involved (Interviewee B, personal communications, October 11, 2021). Today, the exact percentage of women in transboundary water decisions is not available because such data is not being systematically collected. However, we can see in other statistics that value added by having women represented at all decision-making levels. The current masculinist conceptions of power limits the possibilities of systematic gender mainstreaming. Unlike gender mainstreaming that has limited influence, an intersectional gender-transformative approach however, can be adapted to all levels of decision-making, whether it is on the local, transboundary or national decision-making scale. It allows for constitutional principles to be followed with concrete actions that addresses and emphasizes the importance of context. This is a useful approach that offers solutions beyond gender mainstreaming.

## **2) The risk of essentialism from gender mainstreaming: conflating women with gender**

Gender mainstreaming calls for the incorporation of gender equality perspective into all policies at all levels and all stages (Sainsbury & Bergqvist, 2009). The attempt by gender mainstreaming to add the representation of women at all levels has not been completely successful. One of the NGO interviewees described gender mainstreaming in water governance as a mistake of the 1995 feminist agenda and claimed that this depoliticised the issues. She argued that “once you mainstream something, it disappears”, and that such a technique of integration had reduced gender issues to box-checking without interrogating the bigger picture (Interviewee J, personal communication, September 2, 2021). There seems to be a disconnect between gender mainstreaming and accountability, as women's interests in TWG are still not validated and implemented, rather the default policies are based on masculine interpretations of what governance should be. Gender mainstreaming has failed to go beyond counting participation. Too often what happens is women



are given a space, through gender mainstreaming, but they are not truly listened to nor valued. Hence, clear language and common understandings of terms are important for people to understand these issues. Moreover, the context needs to be taken into account if we want an effective governance.

### 3) **Misunderstanding context and key terms: an additional obstacle**

During our interviews, as well as at our time at the IUCN World Conservation Congress, multiple individuals raised the importance of considering the social and cultural influence of water governance. Following our presentation, our team had a discussion with practitioners working in the Lake Chad region who argued that the definition of gender needs to reflect the cultural sensitivities of the local context. Hence, there is a need for questions about language, and what words can be used to make people connect to the topic. Currently, there is a lack of definition of key terms, and there tends to be misunderstanding of general concepts due to underlying assumptions. Numerous interviewees discussed the frustration of gender being used as a synonym for women's engagement in TWG. Gender mainstreaming, unfortunately, has furthered the risk of essentialization even through the use of language.

Complexity and context should not be feared, but rather valued for the knowledge it brings. This is a good place to recall the foundation of the research, intersectionality. To visualize the crossroads again, where one's identities are street corners, and their experiences of life are the roads. Intersectionality allows us to see the interactions that affect an individual, which includes gender, caste, sex, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability, physical appearance, and location. These intersecting and overlapping social identities may be both empowering or oppressing for how one engages with TWG. In certain places where religion shapes the way of life, women's issues are shaped by their specific culture. Lake Chad is an example where the population is mostly Muslim, which adds a layer of complexity to having men and women at the same meetings. Differences between urban and rural areas should also be accounted for, as women in rural areas tend to have less legitimacy. When discussing gender, or women, culture plays a crucial role that should be accounted for. Understanding the complex issues around gender in TWG is an important step forward. However, to address these issues properly, we need data as concrete proof and also as a way to see the evolution in time of the integration of women and their roles in TWG.

### 4) **Background checks: why the data is still missing**

In multiple interviews, interviewees brought up the issue of data collection. The first issue is the general lack of gendered focus data, or sex-disaggregated data. Without having the proper gendered data, the problems within water governance will not be fully understood. More sex



disaggregated data, qualitative information and analysis are needed to better characterise the extent and roles of women as resource users, managers and innovators across the range of water related productive sectors (Interviewee J, personal communication, September 2, 2021). This knowledge can be used to underpin targeted intervention to address inequalities in resource management and ownership, especially in relations to water management.

Yet, a quantitative count of women in the room is not the full solution to the problem. As previously mentioned, the situations are complex and require a qualitative approach to portray the reality behind the numbers. Currently, the data does not focus on who is sitting at what position, or what percentage of women or representatives are from marginalized groups. The numbers need to go deeper than this. As one interviewee pointed out, the data of attendance only does so much, it does not speak to those not sitting at the table (Interviewee C, personal communications, August 25, 2021). Numbers fail to convey how meaningful the connection is, if individuals' concerns being raised are being taken seriously, and listened to. But for data to be trusted, there needs to be a willingness from the people working in the water institutions to improve them and to make them more transparent.

### 5) Concrete walls: lack of transparency and institutional accessibility

Currently, access to water institutions is restricted to selected formal actors, leaving out key stakeholders and knowledge holders that find themselves invisibilized in the process. The interviewees referred to the lack of transparent process within water institutions. Some link this to the fact that TWG has long been labelled a male career, which contributes to its inaccessibility, the lack of support from peers and lack of opportunities (Interviewee B, personal communications, October 11, 2021). Others comment on the fact that the institutional structures are unclear, which creates large boundaries in access. According to IUCN's *Women as change-makers in the governance of shared waters*, Two-thirds of transboundary basins around the world do not have the cooperative management framework needed to manage shared water resources, which means basin-level actors often find informal ways to cooperate on solution-finding and implementation (IUCN, 2018a). The move of women from the informal dimension to the formal dimension needs to be fought for at all levels of water governance. The current lack of appropriate policy framework lacks the ability to create opportunities for women to be empowered. The lack of appropriate framework, along with the lack of transparency leads ultimately to the lack of participation and programs that do not reflect the reality of people living in basin regions.

Currently, the TWG process fails to reflect the views of local communities who are directly affected by water management (Interviewee F, personal communications, August 11, 2021). Blue peace is often seen as an intergovernmental issue, rather than a people issue in reality. Due to this way of thinking, everything is focused on the government, rather than what happens on the ground with local communities. After all, it is often the local communities who work with fisheries or



agriculture that are the most impacted from water management projects. Hence, local communities need to be included in the process of TWG along with all the actors involved and their voices need to be heard to adapt the water management, the programs and institutions.

## **6) The underlying issue: lack of efforts for inclusive and effective participation**

The final issue raised by interviewees is the lack of efforts made to include various stakeholders. The consultation process has failed to be consistent prior to, during and after program implementation. In the section following, the Lake Chad Basin Commission demonstrates as an example of this. As, the water charter calls for the need of engaging all genders, youths and vulnerable groups, but have yet to follow through on this process. This exclusion, whether it is a downfall of the policy or the follow through of the policy, is one of the biggest barriers to an inclusive transboundary water governance and was repeatedly highlighted by our interviewees. Even when local communities and vulnerable groups are part of the implementation of shared water programs, it was expressed that their reflections are not listened to, are not considered as relevant nor are reflected in the subsequent decision-making. This demonstrates the pitfalls of gender-mainstreaming, as it highlights box-checking women being in attendance, but it fails to genuinely, deeply listen to them and the concerns they hold. Women's involvement concerns more than merely counting the number of women represented in institutions (Parpart, 2004). There needs to be a shift in the political decision-making process that allows alternative approaches to the management of international waters (Earle and Bazilli, 2013).

So, the question must be asked: who is at the table when key decisions are being made? A gender perspective hence focuses the exploration of what effect gender representation has in decision making areas. As previously mentioned, studies have shown that women in decision-making often leads to better sustainability, as well as more effective climate change controls. One interviewee described water as a trigger to women's empowerment. They argue that when women ensure their community has water, it benefits them and gives them a better status in society. For example, in West Africa, in the social context, women play a very important role in water. If women are engaged in the process, it has a positive impact in the entire process. Ultimately, a more inclusive governance means better equity, gender inclusivity and better results for Blue Peace.

Gender mainstreaming has failed to bring recognition and inclusion to different levels of different intervention at the decision-making level. The lack of effective TWG has implications beyond high-level diplomacy between state authorities, as it affects all different sectors and peoples around the river. TWG is failing because it is too government focused, which makes people feel less connected to this process. The boat of TWG needs to turn away from government focus to people focused. To have a more concrete understanding of TWG, we will explore the case studies of Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca, illustrating the different issues highlighted by our interviewees.



### Case Studies of Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca

The BRIDGE programme is currently implemented by IUCN in 14 transboundary river and lake basins in 6 different regions in the world. The programme aims to support the capacities of riparian countries and eventually achieve sustainable peace at transboundary waters through mutual cooperation (IUCN, 2015). Out of these 14 BRIDGE Basins, two transboundary lake basins, Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca, were selected as case studies for our research. These two BRIDGE programmes have followed different trajectories in terms of incorporating gender and diversity dimensions, due to the different institutional, political, and socio-cultural contexts. For instance, there have been attempts to increase women and indigenous involvement in BRIDGE programmes in Lake Titicaca basin while no particular focus was placed on gender and intersectional dimensions in the case of Lake Chad basin. Based on the desk research and the interviews with practitioners with regional expertise, a comparative analysis was made below to identify the key factors that make such differences between these two basins.

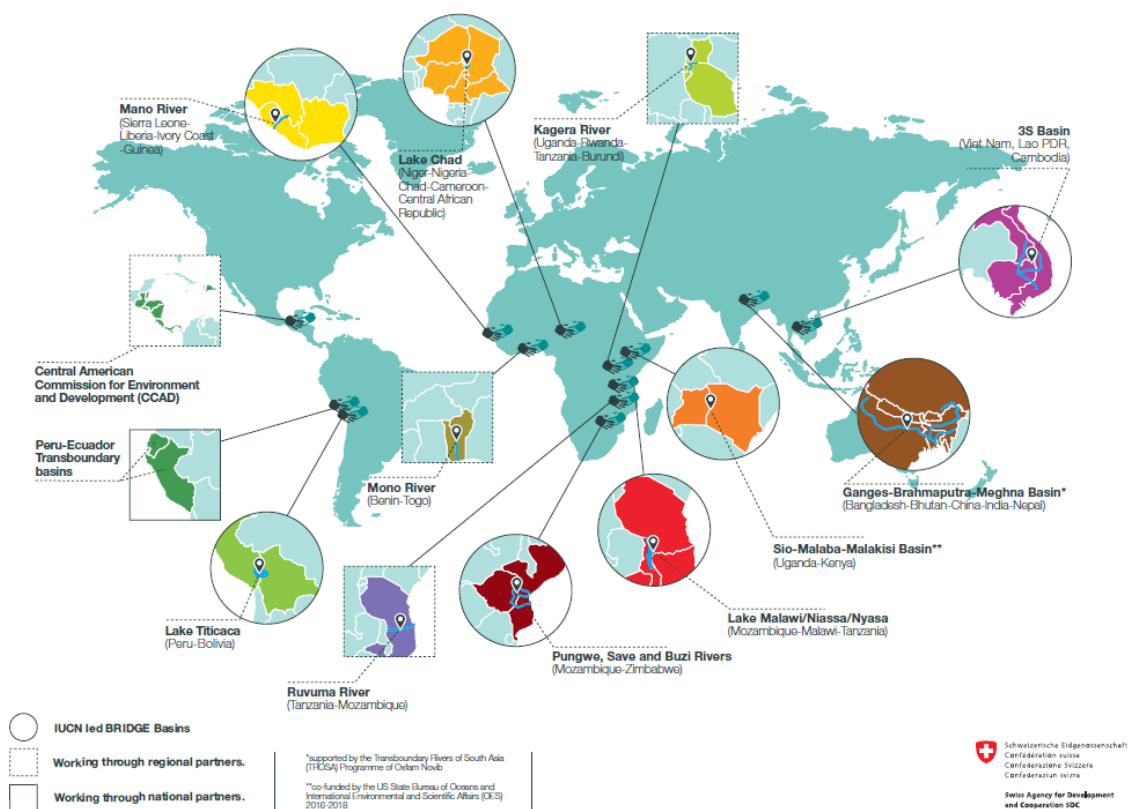


Figure 2: IUCN BRIDGE Programme Working Areas Map (IUCN, 2019a)

In the case of Lake Chad, it was confirmed by our interviewee working as coordination specialist at the Nigerian national government department that multi-level governance is a widely adopted approach in the TWG in the region. At the transboundary level, the member states ratified a wide range of international water conventions and agreements notably including the African





Water Vision for 2025<sup>4</sup> which was established by supranational organizations (Interviewee D, personal communication, November 9, 2021). At the regional level, the Economic Committee of West African States (ECOWAS), a sub-regional institution, set out institutional frameworks such as the West Africa Water Resources Policy (WAWRP) in 2008 to promote and implement regional water policies (IUCN, 2016). There are also basin-wide frameworks such as the Catchment Management Plan (CMP) to address multiple water issues including ecosystem degradation and livelihood insecurities at Komadugu Yobe Basin, upstream of Lake Chad between Niger and Nigeria. At the national level, all bordering states – Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad – of Lake Chad basin have developed national frameworks and policies for water resources management along with the ministries and governing bodies responsible for water and hydraulic affairs. In general, all the frameworks above recognize the importance of adopting the IWRM and the multi-stakeholder approaches for efficient water management.

On top of that, the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) was established by four bordering countries in 1964 as the Regional Basin Organization (RBO), which now actively serves as the regional advisory and implementing body of TWG. The Lake Chad Basin Charter was signed by 6 member states<sup>5</sup> of LCBC in April 2012, to foster sustainable development through the broader application of the IWRM approach in practice. As highlighted by one of our interviewees, the Lake Chad region has already been equipped with tools for transboundary water cooperation for more than 50 years. Hence, the IUCN BRIDGE programme has rather focused on strengthening the existing frameworks and mechanisms already put in place, including the LCBC and the Charter.

With regards to gender dimension, one of our interviewees mentioned that gender issues have always been considered in all stages of activities of the LCBC, from planning to implementation. In fact, the Article 7<sup>6</sup> of the Water Charter clearly articulates the need for engaging all genders, youths, and other vulnerable groups. Chapter 12 of the Charter particularly stresses on the fundamental human rights to water of all basin populations. The articles under this chapter shows that LCBC member states acknowledge the importance of paying special attention to the needs of women and vulnerable groups, conducting public consultations with them, engaging more with grassroot organizations, and protecting local and traditional knowledge and skills in water resource management (LCBC, 2011, p. 31). Yet, separate policy or framework to implement gender and social inclusion is still missing within the Commission. Our other

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<sup>4</sup> It was established in 2000 by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to promote “an equitable and sustainable use and management of water resources for poverty alleviation, socio-economic development, regional cooperation, and the environment.” (UNECA, African Union Commission & African Development Bank, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Libya

<sup>6</sup> “The **principle of gender consideration**, by which the benefit and contribution of men and women, youths and vulnerable social groups are taken into account in the formulation, execution and monitoring of projects and programmes on water resource management and environmental protection in the Basin” (LCBC, 2011, p. 5).



interviewee with regional expertise also confirmed that even though the Commission recognizes the need for broader stakeholder engagement including local communities, such acknowledgement has not been formally put into concrete action yet (Interviewee G, personal communications, August 17, 2021). Nevertheless, some progress is expected to be made as the LCBC adopted a resolution at the Council of Ministers in 2020 to carry out a gender audit to formulate a policy that will push gender issues to be reflected in all aspects of TWG (Interviewee D, personal communication, November 9, 2021).

In terms of organizational structure, the highest policy, advisory, and decision-making body of the Commission is the Summit of Head of States (presidents of each member states), followed by the Council of Ministers (two ministers from the Ministry of Water/Foreign Affairs of each states), and the Executive Secretariat (LCBC, 2021). One of our interviewees highlighted that women are occasionally engaged in the Council of Ministries as ministers from member states, taking part in high-level decision-making processes (Interviewee D, personal communication, November 9, 2021). Due to lack of data available, it is not possible to verify the exact balance of gender within the governing bodies of LCBC. However, one of our interviewees mentioned that even though there are some women in high-level positions, they are often disconnected from female water users at the local level (Interviewee G, personal communications, August 17, 2021). This gives us an important implication that merely focusing on the representation of women in the decision-making process does not guarantee the reflection of voices from the ground into actual decisions and policies.

Meanwhile, Lake Titicaca region has less institutional frameworks and agreement tools compared to Lake Chad. A binational authority called *Autoridad Binacional Autónoma del Sistema Hídrico del Lago Titicaca* (ALT) was mainly in charge of managing waters in this region since its establishment in 1996 (IUCN, 2013b). One of our interviewees mentioned that this binational authority is perceived as ineffective to address multiple factors such as climate change and gender (Interviewee F, personal communication, August 11, 2021). Most interactions made between the Authority and stakeholders were limited to the information sharing, not going further to achieve broader engagement with multiple actors at all levels, particularly local water users (IUCN, 2013b). This lack of broader public participation was also constantly highlighted by another interviewee from a local NGO (Interviewee E, personal communication, November 1, 2021). Several initiatives and programmes have been introduced from multilateral organizations, including IUCN, to improve the existing mechanism in terms of multi-stakeholder engagement.

Among them, BRIDGE focused on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of TWG by bringing the IWRM approach to the Authority in its initial phase. Its work on the multi-stakeholder engagement was mostly done through the ‘Champions of Water Governance’ programme that formed advocacy groups consisting of national, regional, and local representatives since 2011 (IUCN, 2013b). As the programme evolved over time, the main target of the leadership



program was expanded from higher institutional and ministerial levels such as ALT members and ministries to local municipalities and NGOs (IUCN, 2018b). Later in 2017, a gender dimension was added to the Champions programme, leading to the formulation of female leader groups named ‘Women United in the Defence of Water’. One of our interviewees shared experiences as the NGO representative which served as a bridge between the binational authority, IUCN, and local women on the ground. Through a number of capacity building activities and workshops, they provided local women with technical information and tools for measuring the quality of Lake Titicaca. As a result, women were able to identify the challenges of Lake Titicaca such as pollution, lack of oxygen, and loss of biodiversity, and to be more empowered as advocacy leaders (Interviewee E, personal communication, November 1, 2021).

Our other interviewee working as BRIDGE Coordinator in the region particularly highlighted the success of the programme in terms of sustainability. The programme has been able to receive active cooperation and funding from other external partners besides IUCN, allowing its impacts to be sustained over time and potentially scaled up (Interviewee F, personal communication, November 8, 2021). Moreover, the interviewee added that the Champion programme helped local women and indigenous people take ownership of their Champion groups and works. Some Champion groups have been able to continue the activities with their own resources (Interviewee F, personal communication, November 8, 2021). This gives us important implications that ensuring sustainability is key. In the initial phase of BRIDGE, staff turn-over affected the programme, resulting in loss of capacities and skills learned (IUCN, 2018b). Hence, it is also important to keep sustainability not only in terms of financial aspects but also human resources. It is also noteworthy that such success of the Champion programme is being used as good practices by BRIDGE regional coordinators to motivate and sensitize higher institutions such as the ALT and national governments (IUCN, 2018b). This is indeed a good example of making women and indigenous people important agents of change that influence higher level decisions, based on a bottom-up approach.

### *Lessons learned from the comparative analysis*

In the Lake Chad basin, the IUCN BRIDGE Programme needs to put more focus on the integration of women and vulnerable groups in practice. So far, BRIDGE has focused on supporting higher level institutions for TWG in this region. The LCBC has shown its political willingness to engage women and vulnerable groups in the governance of shared water resources. This means that the challenge ahead for Lake Chad is putting it into practice. The fifth phase of BRIDGE should move on to fill the gap between these declarations and actual implementation. Most importantly, these actions need to respond to the major challenges driven from political, social, and cultural



factors that have characterized the Lake Chad region. In comparison, in the Lake Titicaca basin, BRIDGE focused on engaging women and local communities on the ground level through capacity building programmes. These efforts to integrate the gender and intersectionality dimensions into TWG needs to be further expanded to the higher level institutions too, notably including the binational authority. This means that there is a need to come up with policies and frameworks that recognize the need to respond to the realities of women, indigenous communities, and other vulnerable groups.

Our interviews allowed us to highlight the different issues in regards to gender and governance in transboundary waters. There is a need for greater involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including the water resource users on the ground, at all levels of governance. Moreover, women and local communities need to be included in these governance processes in a more transparent way. To assess the success of these changes in TWG, gender segregated data, mostly qualitative, needs to be first collected to identify the unrecognised contributors to the water governance and Blue Peace. The case studies of Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca illustrate the lack of gender-responsive approaches and the need for regional and national authorities to be transformed. The next chapter offers solutions to these challenges by transforming top-down approaches and by integrating bottom-up approaches to TWG.



## Chapter 4: Building Bridges

*“We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis.  
And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find,  
then maybe we should change the system itself.”*

— Greta Thunberg

Swedish Youth Activist and founder of the Fridays for Future movements

The qualitative data collected from our interviews helped us identify key themes to draw on conclusions and to shape recommendations for a better integration of a gender-transformative approach in TWG. The aim of this research is to answer the following question: *How does a gender-responsive approach affect the long-term success of transboundary water governance and management in BRIDGE basins to achieve Blue Peace?* In this chapter, we analyse our findings from interviews and readings through two approaches: bottom-up and top-down. A bottom-up approach needs to be developed for transboundary waters to allow everyone involved to share their opinion and experiences with people making policies. We will explore how to ensure that people are actually listened to. The top-down approach, which is the one generally applied to governance, needs transparent and participatory institutions, and needs to be oriented towards serving the interests of implicated communities. The goal is to transform the actual governance of shared waters. These approaches are part of *one vision* of TWG, one that is **intersectional and gender-transformative**. Research suggests that a gender-responsive approach is needed in TWG. However, our research has proven that it may not be applied in the most efficient way. It is often synonymous with gender mainstreaming, which does not solve the problem of the underrepresentation of voices and concerns from local communities and people affected by the management of water basins. We found that gender-mainstreaming as a policy approach only addresses the surface of the problem. Gender-responsive approaches thus do not sufficiently speak to the problems or offer the best solution for the long-term success of transboundary water governance and management with the main goal of achieving Blue Peace.

Drawing from our observations, we hence propose an alternative up-to-date approach, one that is intersectional and gender-transformative. This approach stays in line with the Blue Peace objective, which is to engage all relevant stakeholders at basins including women and vulnerable groups in fostering peace through mutual cooperation. Just as there needs to be a shift in the way we manage water, there also needs to be a shift in the way we involve women in water management.



Water and the ecosystems that depend on it, including human livelihoods, is a resource that is at a high risk of being overexploited. Its governance and management need a radical change of thought that is centered around its conservation and protection. This governance may only be efficient if it is gender-transformative and inclusive. This means going further than simply adding more women to the table. It is about understanding the complex issue of TWG by involving all the different stakeholders involved prior to, during, and after the implementation of programmes. It is about managing water *for* the local population whose lives depend on the quality and the accessibility of water basins. Intersectional and transformative approaches offer a pathway for this inclusive vision.

### ***Findings Discussion***

The theoretical background grounded on feminist and intersectional literature enables the realisation that there is an existing hierarchy of knowledge in TWG. The siloed approach that has separated the local from the governmental sphere has created a differentiated value attached to the types of knowledge taken into account in the process. A strong case therefore needs to be made: all forms of knowledge have value and need to be valued on the same level. More precisely, lived experiences are embedded in intersectionality. Gender, but also social class, race, caste, indigeneity, abilities, age, occupation, language, religion, are factors that constitute unique intersectional identities. Such identities are composed of different power relations that influence the type of knowledge one has. It also shapes the type of interactions and decision-making power one may have: one's knowledge is therefore more or less valued by the system in place. This is the foundation of inequality in TWG, and more so relevant as transboundary waters have historically been understood as a state-to-state issue, and that has negated “informal forms of knowledge” because deemed less important. What comes into play is therefore that there needs to be thorough analysis of the complex web of hierarchies of knowledge that are at play in transboundary waters. This goes in line with our proposal of a simultaneous bottom-up and top-down approach to advance objectives of Blue Peace.

#### **A) Discussing the opportunities of a Bottom-Up Approach**

A bottom-up approach is essential to transboundary water governance and management and is key to implementing intersectionality. In this section, we will explore different aspects of a bottom-up approach to transform the governance of shared waters:

- a) the collection of data;
- b) the assessment of participation through listening;





- c) the use of this information for education and sensitization.

This discussion, as well as the one on a top-down approach, draws on the feedback from experts and academics working on TWG, along with our participation in top-level discussions such as the IUCN World Congress on Nature Conservation. This approach helps transform TWG from being state-centric to being more participatory and gender-inclusive.

### *Collective Data*

Issues with data collection and the lack of sex-disaggregated data is a large obstacle to understanding the full problem of misrepresentation in water governance, as both the literature review and our interview findings have shown. This should not be confused as a call for more quantitative data, such as counting the women in the room. Rather, it would better serve TWG to account for these complex problems with a qualitative take to portray the reality of people in TWG, their concerns, how they are listened to and if the type of governance is inclusive enough. It became overwhelmingly evident in all our interviews that there is a necessity to recognize that people in transboundary water basins, particularly vulnerable groups including women, children, and indigenous people are not all impacted in the same ways. Therefore, collection and management of gender and diversity disaggregated data through the gendered analysis should be done to find out how these vulnerable groups are affected and how their different social dynamics influence their position in water governance. Like Levy (1996) suggested, women's and men's understandings and views on transboundary water governance and management need to be considered to have a true representation of reality. Tracking and monitoring these disaggregated data would enable researchers and practitioners to identify informal actors and informal processes in TWG. The information is known by those that are the most concerned. What is missing is the efforts of enabling those that detain this knowledge to express it. This also means actively finding the existing counter-narratives from the dominant and most visible information available.

One of our interviewees working on equity and sustainability practices suggested that a way to go about this would be through channelling informal networks of activism (Interviewee F, personal communications, August 11, 2021). For instance, there are strong networks of women activists in Bolivia and Peru that are working in NGO sectors in sustainability, that are not partaking into the government circle but that have strong ties to the concerned communities or that are part of them themselves. They collect information for activism purposes, which is a pool of information for better analyses of the local context.

Another useful resource to tap into for data collection processes would be through giving more credit to citizen science, which may have more critical analysis of social layers of access to water and conservation practices. This also implies value qualitative knowledge rather than quantitative, along with revaluing lived experiences and local knowledge as having the same value



as formal and bureaucratic forms of knowledge. Good practices of such a citizen science approach can be found in the Lake Titicaca basins. As part of its BRIDGE program named “Women United in the Defence of Water”, 84 women and 68 men were involved in the process of monitoring and measuring water quality at Lake Titicaca basins (IUCN, 2019b; IUCN, 2020). The series of workshops gave opportunities for these local communities not only to get their traditional knowledge revalued, but also to gain expertise in new ways of conserving and managing water using innovative tools such as drones and pH meters.

Yet, if technological solutions are increasingly being proposed as alternatives to address the future of conservation (Van der Wal & Arts, 2015), they must come along with critical thinking about the ethical questions that come into play. Indeed, access to technological tools is distributed according to structural power relations: for example, the use of drones or geospatial technologies for the mapping of waters brings forward fears of surveillance and the misuse of data. In addition, technological solutions are also highly gendered. In a talk during World Water Week 2021 on addressing the challenges for women in water climate adaptation, that a member of the research team participated in, an example of riparian management in North East India was put forward. It was explained that women were traditionally in charge of building wooden structures alongside a transboundary river to prevent erosion. However, from the moment when a new technological tool to create metal structures donated by an uninformed international donor was introduced, it was seized by the local men. The metal structures were less effective and more polluting. Additionally, the association between technology and masculinity excluded women from a role in management that they were undertaking efficiently. This also disempowered them and took away legitimacy to partake into decision making processes surrounding the management of the river.

A concrete example for assessing gender with data is with the Blue Peace Index. It needs indicators on gender and diversity. For example, data needs to be developed on the engagement of women at the different levels and spheres of transboundary water governance and management (local, regional, national, diplomatic, technical, financial). The indicators of the Blue Peace Index also need to assess the influence of women and vulnerable groups on TWG and how they affect it. This demands the use of qualitative indicators. The Blue Peace Index would therefore benefit from a transformation where gender and diversity are included. This would allow the different dimensions of Blue Peace to be reflected better.

Thus, an intersectional approach provides the different parameters to look out for to assess the ethical impact of the use of such instruments. Sex-disaggregated data needs to be completed with efficient participation where space is made for everyone to be listened to.



### *Taking a step back: Assessing participation through listening*

Our interview with an expert working both at the Institute for Resources Environment and Sustainability (IRES) and the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice (GRSJ) of the University of British Columbia pointed out that the gathering of basic gender-sensitive data is indeed crucial. However, she argued that the numbers may not tell us how meaningful the connection and listening process is, despite the necessity for collaborative governance in TW. What she insisted on throughout our discussion was the concepts of listening and of recognising the validity of emotions. For instance, she discussed the possibility of having surveys following meetings that inquire about the feelings following the experience, such as:

- Do you feel like you made a difference when participating at this stage?
- Did the other attendees hear you when you spoke?
- Do you think your insights are reflected in the report of the meeting? (Interviewee C, personal communications, 25 August 2021)

Our interviewee suggested that through such an extra step of inquiring about this following consultation workshops, meetings, policy-making writing exercises, it would enable better adaptation and it would participate in making results more democratic as well as better reflections of the multiple realities of transboundary lived experiences (Interviewee C, personal communications, 25 August 2021). The information and data collected needs to be shared in networks and local communities must have access to it. This will allow sensitization over the gendered issues of TWG.

### *What to do with this information: Education and sensitization*

To strengthen the involvement of all stakeholders, including all women, the importance of sensitization and knowledge sharing activities became clear when we attended the 2020 IUCN World Congress. It seems clear that women and marginalized people should benefit from such opportunities to access knowledge on the management of their shared water resources. This however implies moving away from centralising this information in the Global North. This monopoly is playing into the processes of marginalization and invisibilisation of many communities that depend on the good governance of their shared water resources. It was advocated by youth and indigenous activists at the Congress that there should be more funding and scholarship opportunities available. This could enable the creation of best-practice sharing networks, both at the regional and international level. To remain in line with objectives of nature conservation, such funding and knowledge sharing initiatives should be articulated around principles of sustainability. What is apparent here is that there needs to be a move away from trusting only one source of institutional information and knowledge, often projected as being



neutral, or by default. Feminists like Acker have argued that this also because organizational structures, which refer to all forms of bureaucracies (governments, but also international organizations and NGO's), are not gender-neutral and are built on deeply embedded assumptions about gender differences (Acker, 1990, p. 139). This explains why many government programmes fail to take women or indigenous groups seriously: because they represent a form of doing that is deemed as foreign, unrecognized and therefore illegitimate.

### **Box 13. Example of Indigenous Practices in Water Management in Konso, Ethiopia**

Indigenous people have developed water management that has been sustainable and efficient in their own ways. Their knowledge must be valued as equally as those coming from institutions. For instance, Konso people, indigenous communities residing in southern Ethiopia, are well known to have preserved for centuries their own traditional knowledge and practices in water management (Behailu, Pietilä & Katko, 2016, p. 7).

These Konso people have developed a sustainable, and environmentally sound structure to collect flood waters into pounds by using a silt trap. Moreover, dense wooden mesh acts as a water filter which prevents debris and other impurities from coming into the pond. The collected and purified water is reused for sustaining livelihoods of Konso people, mostly for agricultural and harvesting purposes. This indigenous practice is a truly sustainable nature-based solution, since Konso people solely depend on local natural materials not using any chemicals or artificial products in engineering. Hence, institutions and authorities need to genuinely value the traditional and indigenous knowledge and practice for ensuring a more effective, sustainable, and equitable governance on water resources.

In addition, one of our interviewees argued that capacity-building activities should provide women and minorities with tools for leadership. Another testified that what is currently missing in the case of Lake Titicaca's communities is negotiation tools. She therefore argued that it is necessary to empower vulnerable groups ahead of their participation in negotiation groups. This would make them feel like they have the same legitimacy to be advocating on the same level as what she referred to as "the important males, like lawyers, ministers...". She then added: "They must feel like they have an equal status and that they can be a just-as-valid interlocutor". In the meantime, this would also create an incentive to open up the domains of public policy-making and water engineering which are still overwhelmingly male-dominated.



## **B) Discussing the opportunities of a Top-down Approach**

A top-down approach is traditionally used to analyse governance, however an intersectional approach to it requires changes in:

- a) the participatory structure at various levels of TWG;
- b) existing paradigms to redirect towards serving community interests;
- c) ensuring commitment through sustained financial incentives;
- d) demanding transparency and accountability as conditions.

A top-down approach has an added value to the bottom-up approach mentioned above, and helps to bridge the gap between politics and community-level engagement.

### *Participatory Structures: Making Consultation Embedded*

The realisation that there is a lack of participation of women and of minorities in the TWG process has led to a discussion with experts and academics on the possibilities that this can offer going forward. If the efforts for inclusion are lacking, one of the things that was pointed out was that robust, inclusive and accessible structures for participation are often missing. It was mentioned that consultation processes do not systematically take place in transboundary areas due to their complex international status (Interviewee B, personal communications, October 11, 2021). If it is the case, these consultations are rarely done at the different stages of the policy-making process: during the preparatory research, the conception of the project, the implementation and the assessment of it. It was advised in our interviews that to ensure that there is an empowerment of the stakeholders, there would need to be active efforts in providing platforms that enable the listening and consulting with all genders, along with indigenous people, youth and minorities of the concerned communities. Such platforms should operate at a transboundary level, as the communities living and depending on the same river or lake basin may have similar experiences and interests.

### *Switching Paradigms: Serving Community Interests*

A switch in paradigm is needed in the manner in which the mechanisms for participatory governance are conceived and put in place. This switch implies that the mechanisms of participation need to be directed first and foremost as serving the communities' interests. These mechanisms need to hold enough decision-making power to ensure that the participants themselves feel like their inputs are valid and are being implemented. As it was highlighted multiple times during one of our interviews: it is about how we empower those that are the most concerned to feel like their concerns are taken seriously. This entails that the mechanisms should be trusted by the participants as useful tools, and not as an instrumentalisation or a superficial box-check. This also means that the conditions of participation need to be put in place by the organising authority to be as inclusive as



possible. For instance, this means having systems of support for the special needs of women and vulnerable to assist and encourage meaningful participation. An example of this was given by one of our interviewees specialising with IUCN's mandate of water governance in Latin America whom explained that the times of participatory workshops need to be systematically adapted to the local cultures, with child support and financial incentives to ensure that the burden of domestic care that is traditionally put on women is mitigated. This enables more women to participate in such workshops. Such measures must however be critically informed to avoid falling into the trap of reinforcing expectations that women need to be in charge of the majority of domestic tasks. It is worth reminding that women are the main caregivers in most traditional patriarchal societies and that programmes must avoid reproducing such practices.

### *Fear of Commitment: Ensuring incentive and the sustainability of policies*

One of the issues that came up both throughout our review of the literature and our interviews is the difficulty of ensuring that top-level authorities maintain interest in the inclusive governance of transboundary waters. How can we ensure that governments are long-term oriented and supporting sustainable practices of water management? When put in the context of climate change and the pressures of the biodiversity crisis, this begs for solutions that are grounded in principles of adaptability and sustainability. One of our interviews brought forward the argument that the ability to drive efficient policies at the transboundary level requires human resources, time, and money. This is especially true when there is a multiplicity of actors and constraints due to spikes of tension or conflict arising from the management of the resource. He therefore demonstrated that much of the pressure comes from funding, and that this is not necessarily bad news. Indeed, he argued that this provides a pathway to know where to strike for immediate change. This echoed with another of our interviewees who emphasized the important role of donors in setting the right conditions and priorities for funding. Their main agreement point was therefore that there needs to be a shift in pushing the agenda forward by showing the added-value of an intersectional and gender-transformative approach to TWG. Further examples were put forward by both interviewees as they insisted on the big role that the private sector and international organisations can play by selecting the right projects to financially support. Showing that the gender element in this diversity is key and is value-adding is a good step forward as one of the interviewees insisted on: “the need for the involvement of a diversity of actors is a pillar in ensuring justice, equity and collaborative governance of the basins”. This does however come at the cost of framing the issue according to profit-making and mitigating rather than as a matter of environmental and social justice.





### *Counter-balance: the necessary weight of Transparency and Accountability*

A risk that was discussed between youth-led discussions at the IUCN World Congress mentioned the lack of trust in institutions. What was further mentioned in one of our interviews is that water institutions do not have a systematically transparent process. It was observed that closed processes with a pre-selection of actors that gain access to such spaces do not create optimal governance of TW. It was further argued that training for civil society and water users on facilitating access to institutional frameworks, the art of policy-writing would be highly beneficial to ensuring accountability.

The findings from this applied research have brought forward many different angles that an intersectional approach brings up to light. What is most striking is that a gender-responsive approach is a good first step but is not going sufficiently deep in understanding the variety of ways in which transboundary waters are to be managed and governed in an inclusive way. The interviews, the reviews of existing literature and the multiple case studies provide diverse perspectives on the ways in which a bottom-up and a top-down approach can be simultaneously implemented for more efficiency to achieve the objectives of Blue Peace. As it was resumed by an academic interviewee as a final word on a methodology for implementation: what would be effective is a strong top level support, with a robust inclusive policy framework that is followed by adequate funding, that supports the core bottom-up approach.



To conclude, the implications of such a simultaneous top-down+bottom-up approach are multiple: it bridges the gap between natural science and social science, and enables rethinking the notions of scale. It does so by promoting more data collection on gender and intersectional identities, through mechanisms of active listening along with educational and sensitization practices that build empowerment capacities. Finally, it entails participation as embedded in the TWG structure itself, a reframing to ensure that community interests are at the core of the bureaucratic objectives, and that these objectives are sustained by financial incentives along with transparent and accountable institutions.

Blurring the line between academia and practice can be done by including more local social scientists and experts in feminism and queer theory, post-colonialism and intersectionality in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes. Such experts may have insights on the deep interconnectedness nature of transboundary areas, along with the systems of



power and domination that are at stake. The discussion breaks away from the foundation of inequality in TWG as it moves on from what is considered as a state-to-state issue. It proposes intersectionality as inherently context-appropriate and transformative. This simultaneous approach proposed is a concrete move forward that dismantles siloes that should not have been there in the first place.



## Conclusion

*“We have been trained to see our issues in silos;  
they never belonged there.”*

— Naomi Klein

Canadian journalist and climate activist

Navigating the governance of transboundary waters is murky waters. Despite the fact that it is increasingly recognised that more inclusive and gender-responsive approaches are crucial for a better suited long-term management of shared basins, doing it in practice has proven to be a significant challenge. The stakes are high because transboundary waters are both hubs of biodiversity, core to human livelihoods. Such stakes are gradually getting higher as climate change and the loss of biodiversity put more pressure on the governance of natural resources. This study has found that the current policies and mechanisms do not properly integrate women and marginalized groups into TWG. The roles and contribution more particularly of women around river basins are not adequately recognized by both traditional state-to-state TWG approaches and recent inclusive and participatory approaches. Particularly, tokenistic approaches merely focusing on the representation of minority groups without breaking the actual barriers still leave them behind in the entire process of TWG. More particularly, transboundary waters *are* complex and their specificity must be recognized as such. If such a complexity is neglected, oversimplification leads to vulnerable groups being put aside from policies.

To address these pitfalls and further ensure the long-term success of the TWG in river basins, our study suggests that an alternative approach using concepts of intersectionality and gender-transformative efforts are the path forward. Therefore, we suggest adopting a holistic model integrating both top-down and bottom-up approaches that reflects the complex dynamics of transboundary waters. The model found below highlights two important aspects of such an intersectional and gender-transformative approach: fluid interconnections (i) between local, regional, national, and transboundary levels; and (ii) among multiple relevant actors - governments, international organisations, private sector, academia, and local communities.



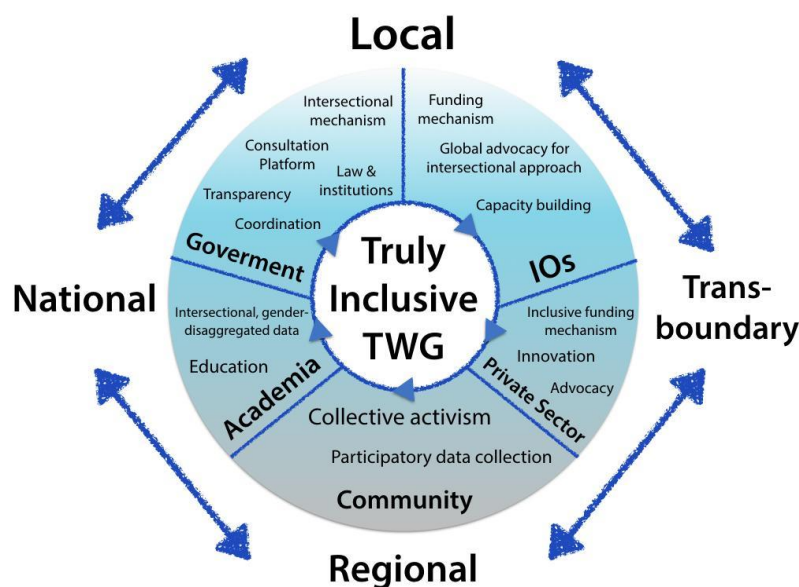


Figure 3: Holistic Model for Intersectional & Gender-Transformative Approach to Transboundary Water Governance

Our approach is based on the idea that truly inclusive TWG can be achieved only if all relevant actors work together towards ensuring the active integration of women and marginalized groups throughout the whole process of decision-making and policy implementation. Each actor (communities, governments, NGOs, IOs, academia) participates in contributing to a more coherent TWG.

Finally, it is important to re-emphasise that an effective and coherent implementation of an intersectional approach needs to be grounded in a forward-looking and climate change sensitive lens. Climate change has a huge impact on water resources at transboundary river basins with the change in water quality and availability as well as the intensification of natural disasters associated with extreme weather events. Social dimensions such as gender relations, inequality, and poverty are largely affected by climate change, as ecofeminist theorists and feminist research have demonstrated. The most vulnerable and marginalized groups including women, indigenous, and children are often the most impacted by the costs of inaction and insensitive policy tools to climate change. Therefore, it is vital to ensure flexible and adaptive policy mechanisms to respond to changes and transition in such environmental, social, political, and cultural conditions. This would also pave the way for moving beyond the rigid and siloed approaches towards a more sustainable and resilient TWG with a long-term incentive.

An intersectional approach to TWG opens up a previously-sealed Pandora Box, which means that more research is necessary. Feminist assessments of other international institutions involved in natural resource conservation, but also decolonial gender perspectives on TWG, indigenous methods of governance and critical research on environmental peacebuilding would



greatly participate to efforts of opening up a space for strengthening an inclusive and intersectional approach to TWG. The space for such opportunities to flourish exists. The interviewees that we talked to displayed unconcealed enthusiasm that TWG is being delved in and that it is a strong incentive for IUCN. This highlights the fact that it is a gap in the governance of natural resources that is core to the protection of biodiversity and human livelihoods. This offers exciting opportunities for the future of BRIDGE and for the future of transboundary waters that must be seized in the most inclusive way possible.

Blue Peace is an ambitious objective. It is ambitious to search for peace in shared waters that easily become sites of contention disconnected from policy-making as climate change pressures increase. It is equally ambitious to deploy an intersectional framework that truly seeks to go beyond gender-mainstreaming. This research has attempted to aid the achievement of these ambitions through filling the gap on gender and TWG. The field of TWG is already evolving towards a more inclusive one that takes into account more stakeholders and is less state-centric. We supported a gender-responsive and intersectional approach that allows TWG to be transformed and taken a step further. It promotes a participatory and transparent governance of shared waters and takes TWG as it is: a complex field that cannot be simplified for political purposes and needs the involvement of all its stakeholders. Intersectionality is a trail-blazing framework in the field of TWG today, but it is its future.



## Recommendations



### *Disaggregated according to stakeholders*

A gender-transformative and intersectional approach to transboundary water governance and management should imply the following recommendations.

#### **For Governments and Policy-makers:**

***1. Establish an inclusive intersectional participatory mechanism at all stages of the programme and policy-making. This robust mechanism needs to be in place in the planning, implementation and assessment process.***

Thorough engagement of community stakeholders is crucial and must go deeper than numbers. There should be engagement both at local and regional levels with sustained efforts to engage participation before implementation, consultation throughout the process. This could take the form of a coalition for gender in TWG that would be done via a bottom-up approach with the involvement of every concerned stakeholder. This means actively providing a platform enabling the listening and consulting with all genders, including LGBTQIA\* communities, indigenous people, and youth.

***2. Ensure that the conditions of participatory platforms serve the interests of minority groups.***

The idea is to not to fall into the box-checking habit or to do mainstream by counting how many women are involved. Rather, it is about listening to what is being said at all stages of engagement and taking into account people's concerns to adjust the programs accordingly. It means having an inclusive system of participation. To measure this, surveys can be done to assess the inclusivity of participation.

***3. Reform the current institutional framework to be more accessible to vulnerable groups through transparency and accountability mechanisms at the local, regional, national, and transboundary levels.***

There is a need for more inclusive, participative, and clearer institutional structures to facilitate access of women, indigenous peoples, and other vulnerable groups to the heart of





governance. This can be done *via* capacity-building and training sessions to access institutional frameworks, to learn how to make policy proposals, and on the ways in which the institution runs. Training on leadership and negotiation tools for civil society members and water users should also be developed.

**For international organizations, NGOs, practitioners, researchers in the field of Nature Conservation and Development:**

***4. Put pressure on governmental agencies and ministries to ensure political, legal, financial support throughout projects and long-term commitments.***

National, regional, and transboundary regulatory and policy frameworks need to respond to inclusive water governance and gender equality commitments. This entails adopting top-down approaches through the transformation of institutions, frameworks, agreement, policy, and financing methods. This process needs to be transparent and accessible to every relevant actor impacted by transboundary water policies and governance. Top-down approaches are needed as governments are key actors in negotiations and in the success of TWG programs. They are responsible for higher level support for more transformative policies and financing mechanisms. This can be achieved with a solid legal and institutional framework. The role of donors is also key, as they are the ones setting the conditions for water programs through their funding.

***5. Invest in more critical analysis of gender-disaggregated data, alongside other layers of social, water and conservation inequities.***

More gender critical analysis is essential for identifying the key challenges and opportunities in TWG. Both quantitative and qualitative specific data on gender and other social aspects will help portray the reality of water governance institutions and identify further the problems that need to be addressed, along with the informal actors and processes taking place across the different layers of governance. It is important to value and recognize qualitative data as much as quantitative data.

It is further important to collect and revalue local and traditional knowledge produced on the ground level. This can be addressed by actively engaging local women, indigenous, and marginalized communities in data collection and management processes through the provision of training and tools.



**For Government officials, policy makers, international organizations, NGOs, practitioners, researchers in the field of Nature Conservation and Development:**

***6. Reshape the language used to talk about gender and women to avoid essentialization.***

Language is a key because it shapes the way the issue is understood. Gender does not mean women. Gender is a more inclusive term and it needs to be used as is by all the stakeholders, and rather address gender norms and their specificities. Global, national and local health policy needs to take account of how the roles, behaviours, activities, attributes and opportunities of males and females are based on different levels of power. This understanding of gender as a social and relational construct of power amplifies inequities in access to TWG (based on gender, race/caste, social and economic class, disabilities, age). This could be addressed by systematically defining the gendered terms that are used in research, policy and reports. Particularly, such systematic review of terms can be done through the active engagement with experts from diverse fields of social science including anthropology, feminism, post-colonialism, and queer theory at all stages of programmes and policies.

**For IUCN practitioners:**

Based on the general recommendations above for a gender-transformative and intersectional approach to TWG, we further recommend the following three specific elements for the next phases of BRIDGE:

1. ***Provide further support to regional transboundary institutions such as LCBC and ALT to ensure the implementation and institutionalization of gender-transformative and intersectional approach.***

This can be done through capacity building and sensitization programmes for members of such TWG institutions. As in the case of LCBC, gender audit can be strengthened by providing tools and methodologies. Active support is needed not only for formulating frameworks but also for putting them into practice.

2. ***Provide support to continue and scale up the capacity building programs for local communities such as Champions of Water Governance.***

More capacity building programs need to focus on gender and intersectionality dimensions. Better practices, in Lake Titicaca as an example, need to be further promoted through archiving, documentation, and translation management. Such action will ensure the sustainability of programmes by engaging potential donors and partners. It is equally important to support the Champion groups to earn official legal status as advocacy groups.



**3. *Provide more opportunities for local civil society groups and NGOs working on advocacy for women, indigenous peoples, and youth to be engaged in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of programmes.***

Ensure the equal participation of intersectional civil society groups in the decision making process within the IUCN. For instance, voting power should be equally distributed to these groups in the important decision making forums including the World Conservation Congress. More gender minorities should be represented and given platforms to speak at high level dialogues. Go beyond merely inviting advocacy groups to the forums, by actively responding to their demands through the follow-up activities, and eventually considering their voices in shaping policies and programmes.



## Appendix



### Appendix I: Interview questions

#### 1) Case studies

- To what extent does gender play a role in the governance of Lake Chad / Lake Titicaca's waters? Do you have precise examples?
- What are the specific gender roles in the governance of shared waters in Lake Chad /Lake Titicaca?
- What are the different challenges faced by men and women with regards to participation in Lake Chad/Titicaca's governance?
- How are women impacted by TWG in Lake Titicaca/Lake Chad? Are women impacted the same ways in Lake Chad / Lake Titicaca? Are there social categories that are impacted differently? Do you have examples of such occurrences? (*intersectionality*)
- Practitioner: Is there a gender-responsive approach to the conservation of the waters of Lake Chad / Lake Titicaca? Is it intersectional (*provide a definition when posing the question*)?
  - If so, is it adequately implemented? How is its impact assessed and measured in the particular case study?
- What are the good practices of assessing the social impact of water governance in Lake Chad /Lake Titicaca?
- What are the possible mistakes and pitfalls of assessing the gender impacts of water governance in Lake Chad and Lake Titicaca?
- What role do cultural norms play in the repartition of power in the case study of Lake Chad /Titicaca?

#### 2) Transboundary Water Governance / Management

- What approach(es) of TWG and TWM are most used in practice and are they effective?
  - For someone working on a specific case study: what approach is used for TWG and TWM and is it effective?
- Is gender part of this approach? If yes, how is it part of the approach and what are the indicators to measure its effectiveness?
- How should the role of gender be considered in TWG and TWM for better outcomes at governance?
- Which indicators would be best to measure the gendered roles in TWG and TWM?
- Do you find a difference in gender roles depending on the level of governance (local, regional, national, international)?
- What are the main roles of women and men in TWG and TWM? Could better governance be achieved if these roles were challenged on a gender-basis?
- What are the best ways to incorporate gender issues in current institutions regarding TWG and TWM? What are the good practice examples and lessons learned that stem from applied TWG and TWM?
- What do you think is the cause for the underrepresentation of marginalized populations in TWG and TWM and how can it be changed?



### 3) Gender and Intersectionality

- Is the notion of intersectionality brought up in your work environment?
  - For locals: Generally, we think of characteristics as masculine or feminine. When you think of these characteristics, do you think you have a lot of characteristics of either masculinity or femininity? Can you tell me more about those characteristics and about how such characteristics may relate to water governance?
    - How do you identify racially and/or ethnically, what does your race and ethnicity mean to you?
- Who are the people most-impacted by the issue you are addressing? Are there subgroups and identities within this larger group that go or have gone unnoticed?
- What issues have been historically left out of discussions of TWG? Why? How would these issues benefit from recognizing their shared or overlapping concerns?
- What, if any, are the recent policies, practices, or laws in place that cause or worsen women's participation in TWG?
- What needs to be done to be vigilant to ensure that women in TWG are not further marginalized, to ensure we account for their full inclusion in other TWG? What are the power dynamics at play and how should they be accounted for and addressed?
- What role do cultural norms play in the repartition of power in TWG?

### 4) Blue Peace

- What are the linkages between gender, water resource management and peace?
- Does the approach used by your organization address such linkages?
- How does representation of marginalized groups' (women, indigenous, youth, low-income groups) contribute to mitigating conflict?
- What are the roles of marginalized groups in blue peace? How are they contributing to formal/informal water governance and to sustaining peace among riparian countries?
- Practitioner: How do you coordinate with multiple stakeholders (public, private, informal) to ensure such equal access to water resources and water governance?
- Researcher: How do you coordinate across multiple disciplines (gender, environment, water, peacebuilding) to ensure such equal access to water resources and water governance?
- (Blue Peace Index) To what extent such inclusion of marginalized groups is used as one of the indicators for measuring Blue Peace Index?
- How do you think motivation, challenges, and opportunities differ among different gender, ethnic, age, and income groups involved in blue peace/TWG?
- What recommendation do you have for more inclusion of marginalized groups in the blue peace process?



## Glossary of terms



**Blue Peace:** “refers to water cooperation among borders, sectors and generations to foster peace, stability and sustainable development. This can be in the form of shared institutions and legal frameworks which bring countries together in commitment to resolve differences peacefully – and to use their shared water as a foundation for wider economic and diplomatic collaboration. Blue Peace turns competition over limited freshwater resources into collaboration, resulting in more peaceful, cohesive and sustainable societies.” (EIU, 2020)

**Gender:** Distinct from biological sex, gender is the sociocultural construct that distinguishes, describes and generally characterises the roles, behaviours and activities that are expected and deemed acceptable for men and women and those of different genders, influencing the relationships between and among them. Generally thought of on a feminine-masculine spectrum, gender has bearing on power dynamics between individuals and groups. It is based on social, cultural, political and economic values, beliefs and structures; and thus, gender roles and relationships are dynamic, change over time, and vary widely between and within cultures (IUCN, 2021b).

**Gender-mainstreaming:** The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s and men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UNEP, 2014).

**Gender-responsiveness:** According to UNDP, gender-responsiveness refers to outcomes that reflect an understanding of gender roles and inequalities and which make an effort to encourage equal participation and fair distribution of benefits. Gender responsiveness is accomplished through gender analysis and inclusiveness (UNDP, 2015, p. 7).

**Gender-transformative:** “Gender transformative approaches (GTA) are programs and interventions that create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, promote positions of social and political influence for women in communities, and address power inequities between persons of different genders. GTA creates an enabling environment for gender





transformation by going beyond just including women as participants. GTAs are part of a continuum of gender integration, or the integration of gender issues into all aspects of program and policy conceptualization, development, implementation and evaluation.” (HC3, 2014, p. 1).

**Hydro-diplomacy:** management style mixing water diplomacy and science diplomacy following principles of social learning, sustained relationships, flexible governance mechanisms with state and non-state networks (Wilder *et al.*, 2020)

**Integrated water resources management (IWRM):** IWRM is a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems (GWP, 2000).

**Intersectionality:** crossroad where, for example, race and gender are street corners. They meet and have multiplicative effects. Social processes like sexism or racism are the streets in this model. These streets can cross other streets without transforming themselves. Intersectionality allows us to see a phenomenon through its interactions and not its main effects (Crenshaw, 2001).

**Multilevel governance:** “an arrangement where institutions operate at various levels (e.g. local, regional, state, national, global) with multiple mandates and across different, but overlapping areas.” (Earle & Neal, 2017, p. 148)

**Water governance:** “Water governance refers to the political, social, economic and administrative systems in place that influence water’s use and management. Essentially, who gets what water, when and how, and who has the right to water and related services, and their benefits.” (WGF, n.d.)



## List of Acronyms

- ALT: Autoridad Binacional Autónoma del Sistema Hídrico del Lago Titicaca
- BRIDGE: Building River Dialogues and Governance
- CMP: Catchment Management Plan
- ECOWAS: Economic Committee of West African States
- EIU: Economist Intelligence Unit
- GBV: Gender-based violence
- GRSJ: Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice
- GWP: Global Water Partnership
- ICWE: International Conference on Water and the Environment
- IPBES: Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
- IWRM: Integrated water resources management
- TWG: Transboundary water governance
- LCBC: Lake Chad Basin Commission
- LGBTQIA\*: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersexed, asexual community and other identities
- NGO: Non-governmental organization
- OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
- RBO: Regional Basin Organization
- SDC: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- TWG: Transboundary water governance
- TWM: Transboundary water management
- UN: United Nations
- UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
- UNECE: United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
- UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme
- WAWRP: West Africa Water Resources Policy



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