



WATER AND DEVELOPMENT CONGRESS & EXHIBITION

10-14 DECEMBER 2023 KIGALI RWANDA

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HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

IWA's Water and Development Congress & Exhibition in December 2023 in Rwanda set a new benchmark as a practical water and sanitation platform by and for stakeholders from low- and middle-income countries. Kigali was first and foremost an event for practitioners. At the heart of this was extensive participation by utilities from around the world and especially from Africa.

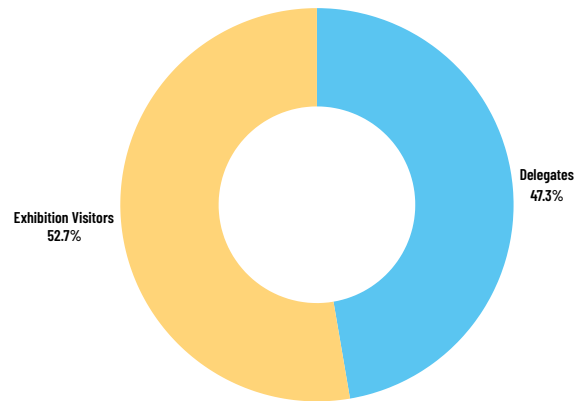


Held on 10-14 December 2023 at Rwanda's iconic **Kigali Convention Centre**, the event was exceptional, gathering almost **2700 participants** - water and development professionals, organisations, exhibition visitors, and companies, primarily from low- and middle-income countries. The Congress set a benchmark for IWA's growing presence and support for the sector in Africa.



As IWA President **Tom Mollenkopf** noted: "Africa - comprised of 54 countries and home to over 1.2 billion people - is a critical part of who IWA is and where its future lies. This Congress has been another critical step along the path of meaningful and multi-dimensional engagement, of sharing and learning, of genuine dialogue."

The week's theme was '**Water, sanitation, and climate resilience - keys to a water-wise future**'. This was evident across the extensive programme, from keynotes and technical sessions through to the 40+ workshops and the special programme features. Sanitation was high on the agenda, especially at the **High-Level Summit on Sanitation**, which convened an influential audience focused on policy. Highlights included the second edition of IWA's Climate Smart Utilities recognition programme.



2638

Total Participants from 85 countries

106

Exhibitors

HIGH SATISFACTION RATES

88.13%

satisfied with the Congress

96.61%

satisfied with the Speakers

88.14%

satisfied with the quality of Sessions

SUCCESSFUL SESSIONS

39

Technical Sessions

40

Workshops

5

Forums

A platform for participation and progress

The success of the event was founded on support from local, regional and global partners, especially our hosts – the **Government of Rwanda** and utility **WASAC** Group. A full-house Opening Ceremony saw contributions from Honourable Dr **Jimmy Gasore**, Minister of Infrastructure, Prof **Omar Munyaneza**, WASAC Group CEO, Dr **Silver Mugisha**, President of the African Water and Sanitation Association (AfWASA), and a video message from **Maimunah Mohd Sharif**, Executive Secretary of UN-Habitat. **G Mathi Vathanan**, Principal Secretary from the Government of Odisha in India, set the tone as keynote speaker in the Opening Ceremony, sharing insights into how his state is transitioning its intermittent water systems to 24/7. Key messages were that urban poor should be the priority in this transition and that success came from active involvement of women water teams (Jal Sathis).



The event put IWA at the centre of things broadly in terms of the sector and its focus on the Sustainable Development Goals – a vital agenda for low- and middle-income countries. That was evident in the partnerships and sponsorships, including WaterAid, the African Development Bank, the African Water and Sanitation Association, the World Health Organization, Water for People, the German Water Partnership, and UNICEF. It was evident too in the fantastic participation in the rich programme, with IWA providing an outstanding platform for discussion through the **International Water Regulators Forum**, **Emerging Water Leaders Forum**, and **Utility Leaders Forum**, among others, and the **Climate Smart Utilities** recognition programme.



Driving the sanitation agenda

Sanitation was high on the week's agenda, reflecting IWA's push to secure progress through its **Inclusive Urban Sanitation** initiative and accompanying **#SanitAction** campaign. The **High-Level Summit on Sanitation** convened an influential audience focused on shaping the direction of policy. IWA's first **Innovation Acceleration Forum**, which ran in parallel to this, had a strong focus on practical solutions for sanitation, and a special **#SanitAction Innovators Expo** in the exhibition showcased emerging sanitation technologies from the Africa region. To further help promote progress on sanitation, one of the week's highlights was the announcement of IWA's first Inclusive Urban Sanitation **'Champions'** – a group of outstanding, trailblazing practitioners.



2023 Inclusive Urban Sanitation Champions

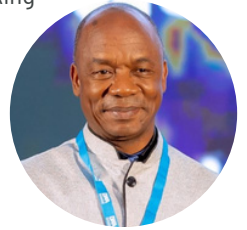
Research - Dr Veena Srinivasan

In deciding to recognise the achievements of **Dr Veena Srinivasan**, the judges noted that she demonstrated bravery and passion in her quest to follow an emerging but much-needed knowledge path in socio-hydrology, but also through advocacy for research and the establishment of WELL Labs in Bengaluru, India.



Practice - Dr Doulaye Kone

Dr Doulaye Kone's career at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has been instrumental in kicking off a paradigm shift across the water and sanitation sector. His vision has catalysed technological innovations in non-sewered sanitation through the Reinvent the Toilet Challenge, and brought new ways of approaching the sustainability of faecal sludge management at scale. Some of Doulaye's pioneering work has influenced policy and strategies in the sector, such as the importance of linking market approaches with service provision.



Water and Development Awards

The event in Kigali also served as a platform for recognition and celebration. IWA presented its 2023 Water and Development Awards. The awards recognise excellence, leadership and innovation in the water sector and aim to encourage progress in sustainable water management. The awards are judged by a diverse panel of experts and are awarded in recognition of outstanding contributions to research or practice that have led to demonstrable impact in low- and middle-income countries.

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