

# WOMEN OF WATER

## NETWORK LONGEVITY GUIDE

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**WPI**



**SHUKALB**  
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# Women of Water Network

## Purpose & Introduction

The purpose of the Women of Water Network is to connect women in the wastewater sector worldwide and provide them a place to develop:

- Mentorship
- Opportunities
- Discussion on women's obstacles in the sector and possible solutions

## What do attendees want to get out of the network?

- A space to talk about issues that women face in the sector
- The opportunity to meet other women and create connections
- A chance to learn about women's experiences in other countries and workplaces
- A way to learn about "best cases" of women in the industry, which act as a way to encourage other women
  - Our team created profiles of women with this purpose in mind. These profiles have pictures, audio and video recordings, and follow a narrative of the woman's career relating to the sector
- Opportunities for mentorship
- Opportunities to discuss change or implementation of legislation that prevents gender discrimination

## Roles & Network Structure

The network will ideally be communal, with multiple women taking on the responsibility of a few volunteer executive roles (listed below).

- Admins
  - Accept new members into the group
  - Handle postings on the Facebook group and other social media platforms
  - This position will also be shared with SHUKALB, whose Facebook page is linked to the group
- Moderators
  - Generate and post discussion topics
  - Moderate discussions both in the Facebook Group and possible future forum events
- Event Managers
  - Organize and schedule future events for the network similar to the Building Bridges Over Water forum
  - Organize/expand the "Building Bridges Over Water" forum

- Members
  - Post, comment, and interact
  - Invite friends, classmates, and colleagues to join
  - Attend events
  - Contribute ideas to the network

#### Women of Water - SHUKALB Facebook Group

Purpose: The Women of Water - SHUKALB Facebook group serves to provide members of the network with a way to connect and discuss topics relating to the network or women in wastewater. It also acts as the main platform for mentorship and announcements from SHUKALB or group administrators.

- Possible discussion topics:
  - Networking tips
  - Mentorship
  - Gender inequality manifesting in the sector
  - Obstacles relating to gender inequality and how to address them
  - Improvements on gender diversity that companies are making
  - What have people seen work to improve gender diversity?
  - Job search advice
  - International experience and working/learning abroad
  - What makes people passionate about the sector?
    - New technology, processes, etc.
  - Technological and gender diversity changes for the future
  - Improvements to the sector
  - Maintaining work-life balance
- Potential posts:
  - Weekly discussion thread
  - New opportunities in the wastewater sector
  - Personal experiences/stories
  - Wastewater news/advancements

- Additional:
  - Look more into the mentorship program/option available on FB's platform
  - Connect with other groups or pages that may have similar goals

## Events

Purpose: Provide members with opportunities for networking, discussion, and more

- Possible future events:
  - Remote:
    - Discussion forum (similar to the "Building Bridges Over Water" forum held on December 7th, 2020)
    - Smaller-scale discussion rooms on Zoom, Skype, etc.
    - Monthly "open" check-in, where members can meet informally
    - Pairing of members to be "pen pals"
      - Could switch to new pen pals every month, two months, etc.
    - Virtual plant tours
    - Webinar on issues of gender inequality, where speakers can share experiences
  - In-person (when it becomes possible):
    - Round table of women on committees for gender inclusion
    - In-person plant tours, such as for younger members
    - In-person discussion opportunities similar to the discussion forum

## Network Expectations

- Professionalism and kindness is expected
- No hate speech, harassment, or bullying
- No promotions, solicitation, or irrelevant advertisements
- Political discussion is allowed; however, no personal political viewpoints are to be projected

## **"Building Bridges Over Water" Discussion Forum**

### Overview:

This event served as a launch of the network, an opportunity to meet wastewater professionals from around the world, and a platform for conversations surrounding opportunities, successes, and obstacles in the sector.

### Who was invited?

Women and men from international wastewater sectors. This included both contacts of SHUKALB and our interviewees.

### Format:

After introductions by SHUKALB and the Women and Water Team, the forum cycled from speaker to breakout rooms to full group discussions three times.

- Speakers
  - Four speakers from Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and the United States were asked prior to the forum to speak about how discussion prompts relate to their personal experiences and were given 3-7 minutes each
  - Speakers were translated
- Breakout Rooms
  - Attendees were encouraged to go into breakout rooms to have individualized conversations with each other over the discussion prompts
  - Breakout rooms were separated by languages, had 4-7 attendees each, and were 10 minutes each
- Full Group Discussions
  - Attendees were encouraged to share with the group what they spoke about in their breakout room
  - Full group discussions were translated

### Discussion Prompts:

- What opportunities have you taken advantage of through networks and other professional organizations?
- What do you hope to gain from this network of women and what will make it successful?
- What changes have you seen regarding gender inequality that have been successful and unsuccessful?
- What changes would you like to see (i.e. from companies, legislation)?
- Have you had a mentor or other positive influence? How did they affect your career?
- How do you see mentorship opportunities being developed through this network?

### Setting up a forum event

Planning for an event with a large number of attendees began 4-6 weeks in advance.

- Allot ample time to contact speakers and attendees
- Create materials for the event (such as a flyer)
  - Send a flyer (we created one on Canva.com) AT LEAST 2 weeks in advance
- Determine the event agenda
- Promotion: utilize SHUKALB's contacts
- Registration: SHUKALB can send a registration form for the event, giving attendees a direct method to sign up and capture email addresses
- Send an agenda of the event with prompts to attendees a few days prior to the forum
  - Determine prompts with SHUKALB, speakers for the event, and other experts or interested parties

### Challenges and Successes

- Many attendees greatly enjoyed the event
- Some attendees didn't talk or had technical issues that prevented them from talking
  - Use the chat feature to invite people to talk
  - Have a moderator (occasionally) read the messages in the chat
- Inviting women from international wastewater sectors allowed participants to hear a wide range of views and experiences
- Attendees wanted more time to discuss certain topics
- Speakers were a great way to introduce topics
- Translation made most of the event accessible
  - Breakout rooms were not translated
- Breakout rooms were more effective for discussion than the large group discussion format

### Suggestions for future

- Host events dedicated to one specific topic or theme
- Distribute prompts and topics 2 days – 1 week prior to the event so attendees can prepare
- Promote profiles on SHUKALB's page and Facebook Group
- Create more profiles of model women in the wastewater sector