



## THE WORLD WATER QUALITY ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

August 2023

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*The World Water Quality Alliance is convened by the United Nations Environment Programme and supported by the Swiss Confederation. It proudly presents its monthly newsletter, YEMAYA, named after the ancient African goddess of the ocean and motherhood. She is associated with fertility, femininity, protection, healing, and childbirth. Her domains are symbolized as water creatures: the seas, rivers, and lakes. She is honoured and revered in the African diaspora, particularly in Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, and the United States.*

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We, the World Water Quality Alliance Coordination Team, welcome articles about water quality. Tell us about your experiences. Describe the challenges you and your people face. Talk to our global community; talk to people from around the World. Send your articles to [wwqa-coordination@un.org](mailto:wwqa-coordination@un.org).

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## SDG 6 Water Action Agenda Special Event



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The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes the urgent need to accelerate progress on SDG 6, which aims to ensure sustainable water and sanitation management for all.

*The Water Action Agenda, the key outcome of the UN 2023 Water Conference held at the UN headquarters earlier this year, captured over 700 commitments aiming at a water-secure world in an inclusive, cross-, and action-oriented manner. By now, total number of transformative commitments announced by governments, businesses, the UN System and civil society is over 800, which is a sign of just how critical it is for the world at large to respond to the global water crisis and get SDG 6 on track.*

*During the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) held 10-19 July 2023 the SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation was launched, as a follow up to the to the UN 2023 Water Conference and the Water Action Agenda, highlighting the interlinkages between SDG 6 and other SDGs. The UN-Water SDG 6 Synthesis Report 2023, the second one of its kind, provides policy recommendations on how to achieve SDG 6 by 2030 and serves as one of inputs to HLPF in-depth review of SDG6. The year 2023 marks an important year for the SDG6, given that the UNGA Resolution 71/222 declared 2018-2028 as the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development” and thus the year 2023 is considered the midterm of this International Decade.*

*The SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023 builds on the lessons learned from SDG 6 implementation during the first half of the 2030 Agenda. It provides a "blueprint" (such as the one used by engineers to build a machine that works - like the one the global community currently needs to put*

waste management on a sustainable course) The accelerate progress on water and sanitation. It offers actionable policy recommendations for senior decision-makers in the Member States, other stakeholders, and the United Nations System to achieve SDG 6 by 2030. Most critically, the midterm review noted that progress towards achieving SDG 6 needs to catch up and that a much higher pace of implementation and increased cooperation and partnerships are needed across all targets.

The overall message is clear: SDG 6 progress at the halfway milestone is alarmingly off-track, and that by midpoint to 2030, progress towards SDG 6 continues to be far behind the pace needed to meet the targets by 2030. Without a comprehensive change in the pace of implementation, it will not be possible to close the global gaps on SDG6 targets that remain in the seven years remaining until 2030.

For instance: with specific regards to water quality, the SDG 6 synthesis report summarizes that “A significant portion of household wastewater flows, 42 per cent, is not treated properly. Comparable data on total and industrial wastewater flows are lacking in many parts of the world. Although 60 per cent of the world's monitored water bodies have good ambient water quality, data gaps make it difficult to assess global trends and leave many at risk. (SDG target 6.3). A clear message from the SDG 6.3.2 data drivers in 2017 and 2020 is that the capacity to monitor ambient water quality is limited in low-income countries. Water quality data are not routinely collected in many of these countries, meaning that over 3 billion people could be at risk because the health status of their freshwater ecosystems is unknown (UNEP, 2021a). Of the 89 countries with data in 2020, only 52 had information about groundwater quality.

The global community needs a ‘blueprint’, which is offered by the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework (GAF), launched by UN-Water in 2020 to ensure sustainable water and sanitation management for all by 2030. The five accelerators offer blueprints for gaining momentum for SDG 6 progress and implementation of the Water Action Agenda (see below figure).



1 - Source: UN-Water. Available from : <https://www.unwater.org/our-work/sdg-6-global-acceleration-framework>

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*The United Nations System can support SDG 6 acceleration through its main bodies, United Nations entities, and UN-Water. The UN System should integrate water into intergovernmental processes, hold regular intergovernmental meetings and conferences, and convene at the highest level to drive the Water Action Agenda. The blueprint for acceleration includes a more effective country-level coordination interface, a dedicated system-wide water and sanitation strategy, strengthening UN agencies' water and sanitation programs, and a United Nations coordination office to enhance UN-Water's interagency mandate.*

*Given the gaps identified in the SDG6 Synthesis report, it is clear a lot of work remains to be done. The GAF is an impressive initiative that offers solutions for the way forward, and the WWQA will continue to build on its contribution to the GAF through the 'Capacity Development' and 'Data and Information' accelerators to increase and facilitate access to specific capacity-building for generating water quality data (through its Capacity Development Consortium), and to increase country uptake of data and information through its local engagement activities and provide further proof of concept of means such as citizen science and Earth Observation to increase data collection for SDG 6.3.2.*

*Indeed, the WWQA is cited in the SDG 6 Synthesis report as one example of an inter-agency initiative of a UN-Water member to unify the international community's support to countries and accelerate progress on SDG 6. Among some of the main conclusions and recommendations of the synthesis report include the mainstreaming of water in all relevant intergovernmental processes and a more effective country-level coordination interface, where WWQA stands ready to support.*

*The SDG 6 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation 2023 is available [here](#) and you can find more information including a UN Webcast from [here](#).*

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## WWQA at the World Water Week



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The WWQA will be hosting two sessions at this year's World Water Week from 20th – 24th August 2023.

***Restoring lake ecosystems to deliver global scale socio-economic benefits, 21 August, 16:00 - 16:40  
CEST, Onsite location: 27, also available online, Session ID: 10957***

*The White Paper 'Embedding Lakes into the global sustainability agenda' prepared by the UNEP World Water Quality Alliance Ecosystems Workstream and launched on World Water Day 2023 has identified four key actions to ensure sustainable lake management. This session will be presented as an interactive 'Talk-Show' that will present and debate options around how to build capacity on monitoring and assessment, embed lake management into national policies, foster green finance, and raise global awareness on the importance of healthy lake ecosystems. These actions support the Sustainable Lake Management Resolution adopted at the resumed fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and other resolutions including Nutrient Management and Nature Based Solutions. These require feasible options in multi-sectoral and challenging political and financial landscapes. As the White Paper presents, pressures on lakes and reservoirs are still increasing in many parts of the globe, and new ideas are needed that are scientifically sound and attract societal support. Key aspects for progress are mobilising coalitions among users and new and economic models for lake protection and durable restoration.*

*The session will be moderated by Tom Jilbert (University of Helsinki), with panelists Ken Irvine (IHE Delft) Konstantina Katsanou (IHE Delft) Anham Salyani (UNEP) and Nina Raasakka (UNEP). The key purpose of the Position Paper “Embedding Lakes into Global Sustainability” will be explored in the interviews, and the audience will be invited to provide opinions and ideas for how to take forward the implementation of lake restoration.*

***Water: The Source of Future Social Sustainability, 23 August, 11:00 - 12:30 CEST, Onsite location: A2, also available online, Session ID: 10860***

*This session will discuss the results and achievements of WWQA Local Water Fora set up in over 30 countries so far and the importance of initiatives undertaken by youth representatives. Following the UN 2023 Water Conference and importance placed on local and youth engagement, the opportunities to expand the work and influence of the Social Engagement and Youth movements of the WWQA will be explored and developed including discussion about the role of citizen science. Above all, the session will seek to contribute to the establishment of permanent ties between the high-level strategist, policymaker, and donor, and the local stakeholder, between youth and society as a whole. It will promote and support the transformation of scientific knowledge into practical local actions, and it will seek to actively recruit new Local Water Fora under the network of the WWQA’s Social Engagement Platform to enhance the role of the local community as the means of resolving one of the most important global challenges of our times, water.*

*The session will be moderated by Anham Salyani (UNEP) and Nina Raasakka (UNEP), with speakers/panelists Richard Elelman (EURECAT), Lesha Witmer (Women for Water Partnership), Caterina Cacciatori (European Commission - Joint Research Centre), Noémie Plumier (Human Right 2 Water) and Ken Irvine (IHE Delft).*

*In addition, the Global Wastewater Initiative will be hosting a session on Thursday, 24 August | 11:00-12:30 hrs: Wastewater monitoring and surveillance for sound public health and environmental management.*

*This is an open invitation for everyone to attend the sessions, in person if you will be at the World Water Week, or online ([registration](#) is free of charge but necessary to access events online). We look forward to your presence and support.*

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## The August Interview – Ruth Spencer, Co-chair of the Social Engagement Platform, Member of the Advisory Board of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration-2023-2025 and Chair, Marine Ecosystems Protected Areas (MEPA) Trust

Please tell us about yourself, your experience, and your passions and how they have inspired you to dedicate your career to environmental issues, protecting marine ecosystems, and how this relates to freshwater quality.

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*Growing up in a Christian home where both parents were Church of God ministers has shaped my values and lifestyle. I live by 2 values-do unto others as you would have them do to you, and to whom much is given, much is expected. I have always valued people and have always been stopped in the streets, in the supermarkets, and in the parking lots-people always want to have a conversation, and the conversations have always taken place wherever the people are. I have never put them off. Having and building trust and respect for their ideas have always been my hallmark.*

*When a government scholarship to Hamburg, Germany, to study nursing fell through, 13 Antiguans were forced to return home, so my parents selected a church school. In January 1974, I headed off to Anderson College in Anderson, Indiana. It was cold and the only course to me was an economics course-“Three Worlds of Development” taught by Professor Rahim Amin. I had never had any background in economics, but I was greatly impacted, and this opened me up to an understanding of development issues and people who shared the plight of countries with massive labor surplus economies.*

*I was the only female in the class, got top grades, and was offered a summer internship by an Anderson Alumnus, Fred Brewster -at the US Dept. of Commerce in Washington DC. The rewards, the benefits of the connection, and the impacts made were astonishing. I was invited to return and offered another summer internship there at the Caribbean desk, and I was treated like a queen. I drafted a publication marketing in Trinidad and Tobago and responded to investors coming in with queries.*

*I applied to Yale University for my MA in international development studies and was told my application was on hold even with a high Grade Point Average (GPA) score (a number that indicates how high you scored in your courses on average), as they did not know if A's from a church school was equivalent to the standing expected from an Ivy League, but I got selected.*

*After my graduation, receiving a master's degree in international development Economics from Yale University also postgraduate studies in Project Appraisal at Yale, I returned home to work in development, and agriculture was the sector with the most challenges, I found out it was the sector at least developed with the lowest contribution to the GDP because of the drought conditions and the unfenced areas with the crops eaten by stray and roving animals. Yet it was the main occupation of the masses of the people, especially single adult women heading households on a small plot of rented government land which their families lived off. They told me that even with one crop of potatoes their families lived from it, but it was*



*a sense of independence. I worked with the Meals for Millions Foundation in Davis, California, from 1979 until the program ended in 2000.*

*My Passion and commitment enable me to bring about real and effective socio-economic and environmental development, and the transformational change that takes place in people is realized. Such qualitative changes come from the words and actions of the people themselves-they say it, they write it, and it leads to ambitions and creates the urgency that we hear about at global levels. Approaches are people-centered when they are included and can participate irrespective of their standing and socio-status.*

*I spent some years as an Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Advisor in our national development bank-The Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank. There I encountered vulnerable and marginalized persons trying to get business loans and some house loans, but they did not understand the lending process. I had to take time to show and make them understand how the interest rate, debt service ratio, and how credit scores were arrived at. In most cases, I had to provide and suggest alternatives to adapt to their unique situation and local realities to find solutions. For their business plans, they pay any amount of monies to get it done; then, when I see their financial projections and ask them questions they don't understand so, I have to improvise and ask them to bring their record and did one on one training showing them how to do their own business plans. This was eye-opening and an empowerment exercise for them.*

*My shift to environmental issues was in 2008 when I was selected as the National focal person for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small grant program in 2013 when they decided to set up a national program, I applied and was selected.*

*Recognition of myself and my strengths came from outside processes. People told me my voice and sharing made a difference in events I attended, even in webinars. As a strong Caribbean national and regional advocate for development, my work and actions seek to ensure that local community-based groups are given access to information, opportunities for inclusion and participation, and greater involvement in decision-making. I advocate for equitable, open, and inclusive processes to provide opportunities, resources, training, and relevant support to implement community-based adaptive initiatives. These provide solutions for integrated social, environmental, and economic development initiatives and ensure a pathway towards "the all of society" approach*

*Over the years, I worked with many local groups headed by women throughout the island, developing integrated development programs. I aim to empower the local groups and increase their visibility leading to national and international recognition across the GEF Focal areas. The knowledge of the local people and what exists in the various communities must become a part of the overall decision-making process. One of my interests is in appropriate technologies that make life better for people and brings about empowerment, so wind and solar energy technologies are areas I have been pursuing. The many awards I have received include the inaugural Award from the Government of Antigua-Dept. of Gender Affairs for Energy, the Environment Award on International Women's Day 2018, the 2015 Energy Globe Award, and Finalist for the 2018 Caricom Energy Personality Award, attest to my multi-disciplined work linking too many processes at local, regional, and international levels.*

*Since becoming Chair of the Marine Ecosystems Protected Areas (MEPA) Trust in 2022, as I reflect and move into the post-COVID-19 period can boldly state that my commitment to people-centered development processes has continued and grown stronger. I have continued to invest my time in empowering the local groups, for I believe that traditional knowledge and practices are necessary for sustainable development. In promoting traditional knowledge used by communities, the role of women in protecting and conserving their environment and their genetic resources has been amplified, showing solutions and results.*

*As I work voluntarily with groups and organizations to build capacities for their empowerment, God continues to favor me as many doors and opportunities continue to open.*

*One of the actions that is bearing fruit has been my proactive actions since 2015 in securing membership in organizations and accreditations to international processes and conventions. This is to ensure local communities have a continued and sustained voice. Being appointed as a Co-Host for the Global Network for Local Communities (GNLC), I have major tasks ahead to ensure we remain visible, not become a vulnerable and marginalized group.*

*Drought and water crisis has always been an issue for the people and is part of our history, and we worked with community-based groups to restore 2 reservoirs.*

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2 - Image provided by Ruth Spencer, Co-chair of the Social Engagement Platform, Member of the Advisory Board of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration-2023-2025, and Chair of Marine Ecosystems Protected Areas (MEPA) Trust

**The impact of poor freshwater quality negatively impacting the health of marine ecosystems is a good example of why the source-to-sea approach is so important for managing ecosystems in a holistic, collaborative, and interconnected manner. How has the Marine Ecosystems Protected Area Trust Fund used the source-to-sea approach to protect land, coastal, and marine ecosystems in Antigua and Barbuda?**

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*We have serious issues of freshwater contamination from chemicals, pollutants, and toxic and hazardous waste from illegal dump sites, including inland wetlands where people dump lots of rubbish of all types. All kinds and types of waste streams also go to the Cooks landfill near the oceans. These are impacting the water we drink and our marine assets and ecosystems.*

*We have serious issues of freshwater contamination from chemicals, pollutants, and toxic and hazardous waste from the Cooks Landfill near the oceans, impacting the water. The waste accumulation and build-up, including human sewage, over the past 25 years is continually contributing to these negatives, with even the soils being contaminated, which goes right down to our groundwater reserves. The water*

*contamination from human sewage in some areas has forced the water authority to close significant wells. In addition, the drought and climatic conditions have caused all of our groundwater to be dried up, so the island must turn to reverse osmosis which is costly, and the energy consumption is 8 times the cost of production –use of chemicals from making groundwater suitable for consumption.*

*We are working and supporting Wills Recycling, a small enterprise close to the Landfill that seeks to reuse, recycle, and repurpose, and we have documented and produced 2 case studies on the ongoing achievements of Wills Recycling work. His work also supports the waste pickers, who receive remuneration for every piece of metal waste brought to the facility.*

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**Why is the approach of people-centered development critical for action on improved water quality? How can your role in the Advisory Board of the UN Decade for Restoration help engage diverse stakeholders in ecosystem restoration efforts leading to improved water quality?**

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*It is the people on the ground who observe the changes in the community and the natural ecosystems, and I encourage them to report when they see abnormalities and any form of danger, harm, or injury being done that will negatively impact our ecosystems, so local advocacy has been strong. The advocacy also extends to government projects where massive land clearing occurs, chemicals used for Mosquito fogging that kill bees and other pollinators, and projects approved for in Protected Areas foreign investments.*

*All the conventions were negotiated to focus on people, and these party (government) led processes have strayed away from the Guidance / The Road Map that was provided 26 years ago at the 1992 Rio Summit when the Rio Conventions were “birthed.”*

*179 countries meeting in Rio Summit 26 years ago had decided that environmental issues, because they were cross-cutting in nature, should not be handled by governments alone, but should involve input from all requisite stakeholders, and the public, especially civil society, should be central to all levels of the decision-making process. Further, environmental information, especially the kind that may prove hazardous to the health of the environment and that of the people, that is, in the custody of public authorities, should be disseminated to the public in a timely manner.*

*These basic principles for access to information, inclusion, and participation-which are basic human rights principles, are not taking place across all the conventions, so the targets are not being met, and implementation is slow.*

*Currently, we have 19 chemicals of concern. Yet, for the past 10 years, there has been a failure to register them globally through the Basel-Rotterdam-Stockholm (BRS) processes with local implementation*

*through laws and regulations. At the same time, the health of people, women, and our environment continues to worsen.*

*One of the actions that are bearing fruit and giving me a global voice for people-centered development has been my proactive actions since 2015 in securing membership in organizations and accreditations to international processes and conventions. This has ensured that local communities have a continued and sustained voice. I note that local communities are not a part of the process across many conventions, only in name but not in practice.*

*MEPA strongly supports the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIP) at the UNFCCC. In the early days of its formation and the setting up of the Facilitative Working groups, our Antiguan voices, efforts, and advocacy, the only ones from the entire Caribbean, were strong, and being on the government delegation, we were part of the parties bringing it into being. UNFCCC is a Party led process, and until Caribbean governments see the value and contributions of the local groups and support it, Local communities will be left behind. Currently, LCs have no representation in the LCIP. As I was named Co-Host of the Global Network for Local Communities for Biodiversity (GNLC), I have a significant task ahead to ensure we remain visible, not being left behind, and becoming a vulnerable and marginalized group. We have a voice and support at the UN CBD and the UNCCD.*

*This is why the Escazu Agreement is so vital for the local groups. I am now leading robust CSO implementation of the Escazu Agreement not only in Antigua but in the other Caribbean islands to include public education and awareness of the public with special provisions in place for vulnerable and marginalized groups. The Escazu Agreement ties into the UN Resolution to guarantee rights to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, ensuring that the knowledge of the local people is valued, recognized, and becomes a part of the overall decision-making process. This is important for local actions must impact and provide solutions to meet the SDG and other global agendas and targets. The Escazu Agreement ties into the UN Resolution, which guarantees rights to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. My work is ensuring that the knowledge of the local people is valued, recognized, and becomes a part of the overall environmental decision-making process.*

*This is important for local solutions are impacting global agendas and targets. Each application for membership or accreditation has a story. Still, when I share, I am approached by persons inviting me to join their organization, which has built knowledge, and strengthened our capacities and the institution.*

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## **The WWQA BULLETIN BOARD**

### **Lake Restoration: Embedding Lakes into the Global Sustainability Agenda - Restoration Webinar Series hosted by the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER)**

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*This webinar highlights Key Action Areas advocated in the [White Paper](#) to 1) Build Capacity in Monitoring and Assessment; 2) Embed Sustainable Lake Management within National Policy; 3) Foster Green Finance*

Partnerships; and 4) Raise Global Awareness of the Benefits of Change. The webinar will be an interactive session to discuss how we can progress the ambitions of the White paper, and those of the Decades of Restoration, and how to maximise synergies across partners such as the Society of Ecological Restoration.

Date: Aug 15, 2023

Time: 10:00 Eastern Time (US and Canada), 16:00 CEST, 17:00 EAT

[Register for the Webinar Here](#)

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## Innovation Workshop on Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment

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Join the 2023 Innovation Workshop on Water Quality Monitoring from 27-29 September at the JRC in Petten ( the Netherlands). The Call for participation in the face-to-face Innovation Workshop has been extended to 18 August 2023 only for self-funded participants.

The Application form can be accessed here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FGJX9K9>

For additional details, kindly refer to the website: <https://hydrohub.wmo.int/en/news-events/call-participation-innovation-workshop-water-quality-monitoring-assessment>

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## African Women in Science 2024 Program Application

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The International Institute for Sustainable Development and the African Center for Aquatic Research and Education (IISD-ACARE) are happy to announce the open application for the African Women in Science (AWIS) 2024 program. We encourage all interested and qualified applicants to apply to the program by clicking on the link below by midnight, Eastern North America time, **September 3, 2023**.



Click on the Link: [AWIS | African Women in Science](#)

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3 - Image from <https://www.agl-acare.org/>

## The GlobeWQ Webinar on September 15th, 2023

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*The GlobeWQ project, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, aimed to improve global water quality information. The webinar will present an overview of the project's results and achievements. The core product of the project, the web-based GlobeWQ platform, implements the “triangulation” of data from satellite imagery, in situ observations, and model results, providing access to global and regional water quality information.*

[Join the Webinar Here](#)

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## GlobeWQ Webinar

September 15th, 11:00-12:30 CEST

The GlobeWQ project, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, aimed to improve global water quality information. It was conducted from October 1st, 2019 to December 31st, 2022. As a workstream the WWQA, GlobeWQ will continue contributing to the world water quality assessment. The webinar will present an overview of the project's results and achievements. The core product of the project, the web-based GlobeWQ platform implements the "triangulation" of data from satellite imagery, in situ observations, and model results, providing access to global and regional water quality information.

Join the Webinar here:

<https://ufz-de.zoom.us/j/3537519686?pwd=UjY9RDVGa0hmR3MxVFllcDc3Z3BVUT09>

### Programme

11:00-11:10	Water quality known-the GlobeWQ Project Dietrich Borchardt (UFZ)
11:10-11:25	Insights from global water quality models – current state and future scenarios Martina Flörke (RUB)
11:25-11:40	Nitrogen pollution legacies in Europe Masooma Batool (UFZ), Rohini Kumar (UFZ)
11:40-11:55	Case studies - the implementation of the triangulation approach Thomas Heege (EOMAP), Christian Schmidt (UFZ)
11:55-12:10	The Lake Victoria case from a user perspective Andrew Gemmell (TheUmvotoFoundation & SLR Consulting)
12:10-12:30	Q&A

4 - An image of the webinar programme

## The Survey by Capacity Development Consortium

*WWQA Capacity Development Consortium (CDCm) offers training in water quality monitoring. The CDCm is a World Water Quality Alliance ( WWQA) workstream focused on expanding water quality training and education worldwide, and our most helpful tool is information: we need to know what training is out there, what training might be developed, and what training people need. With answers to those questions, CDCm can connect trainers and trainees, coordinate the development of training programmes where gaps exist, and increase human capacity to monitor and improve water quality.*

*If you'd like to participate, visit: <https://waterqualitycapdev.org/> and click the 'Participate' link.*

*If you'd like to go directly to our survey, visit: <https://forms.gle/HUnkVjPwmdmKEq9747>*



5 - Image from: <https://waterqualitycapdev.org/>

## In the September Issue of YEMAYA

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- *Friends of Groundwater*
  - *Outcome of the WWQA at the World Water Week*
    - *Sick Water - GWWI*
  - *The September Interview*
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\*Unless otherwise indicated, all contributions are by the WWQA coordination team.

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YEMAYA welcomes articles, opinions and audio-visual material related to the issue of water quality. Please send any contribution to [wwqa-coordination@un.org](mailto:wwqa-coordination@un.org) with a short 100-word biography, the name of your organisation and a phone number where you can be contacted.