



Women in WASH

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

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1 How does the program work?

The Women in WASH Mentorship Program is designed to foster meaningful connections and provide tailored support for women at different stages of their careers in (or adjacent to) the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector. This initiative facilitates mentoring relationships while also encouraging near-peer connections for those interested in shared learning and peer support.

The program connects junior and senior women in WASH, focusing on skill development, career guidance, and professional growth. Experienced mentors provide advice, feedback, and insights to support mentees in navigating their careers with confidence. Mentors share their experiences, help mentees set professional goals, offer guidance on career development, and provide encouragement to overcome challenges in the sector. In addition to traditional mentorship, participants will have the option to express interest in near-peer mentoring. Those interested will receive a list of others within the program who share this interest, encouraging them to take the initiative in building peer support relationships. This approach creates a space for mutual learning, collaboration, and career development among women at similar stages of their professional journey.

The program will have an online format that is free of charge. For this phase, we expect a maximum of 150 participants – approximately 100 mentees and 50 mentors – and typically **each mentor will mentor two mentees**. The mentoring relationship is expected to last for 6 months; though, engagement between mentors and mentees can continue beyond that period if both parties agree. At the end of the program, mentees will receive a certificate of participation; mentors could also receive a certificate of participation upon request.

To address power and privilege imbalances in the global development sector, the program will place emphasis on mentoring young women originating from the following focus regions:

- Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia (85% of participants);
- North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand (15% of participants).

1.1 Who can be a Mentee?

Mentees are young professionals or students with 0–4 years of professional experience who identify as women.

1.2 Who can be a Mentor?

For the Traditional track, mentors are senior professionals who identify as women, with a minimum of 5 years of work experience in the WASH sector. There is no age limit.

1.3 Near-Peer Mentoring:

Near-peer mentoring is an option available to all participants. This provides an opportunity for those who are at similar stages in their careers to connect, learn, and support each other.

2 The role of the mentee

Agenda for Change's Women in WASH Mentorship Program is focused on supporting the learning and career development of mentees. A good mentoring relationship depends mainly on the mentee's commitment to act autonomously, seeking assistance from their mentor when needed.

For the mentee, it is important to make your expectations and needs clear and take the initiative to set up meetings, ask for feedback, information, resources, etc. The mentorship relationship is a safe space to share your professional challenges and seek advice from senior or mid-career women; please be open to discussing your ideas, raising questions, making mistakes, listening to constructive feedback, and learning from it.

Suggestions:

- Make sure you and your mentor have a common understanding of the following:
 - Confidentiality: there might be some information that cannot be shared without consent, be clear about your boundaries and respect each other's limitations.
 - How often, using what method, and how long will you meet. We recommend a minimum of one hour/month.
 - Your communication preferences (email, WhatsApp, Zoom calls, etc.). Ask whether it is fine to contact your mentor at other times.
- We will help you to draft a mentoring plan and review it with your mentor during your first meeting. This will include introductions, and key points to guide your discussion on career goals and activities you would like to accomplish during the program.
- Alongside each mentorship session, you will be asked to track your progress and ensure learning continuity. **It is compulsory that you complete requested progress updates before you can receive a certificate of completion.** We will make this easy for you to do via Google forms or a similar platform.
- Come prepared for your mentoring meetings. Be sure to work ahead on any projects or homework that you and your mentor have agreed on and try to plan your meetings so that the time is well spent and productive for you both.

2.1 What to expect from your mentor

Your mentor is interested in contributing to developing your professional skills by sharing advice and constructive feedback based on their professional experiences.

2.2 What not to expect from your mentor

Your mentor is your career guide, but she will not make decisions or work on your behalf. Your mentor does not have an answer to all your questions and has no

obligation to finish your assignments, solve your problems, or find you a job/internship. Mentors may provide targeted advice and support towards your career goals and help you chart a path forward, potentially even introducing you to core peers and helping you grow your network. It is recommended that you discuss your expectations with your mentor at your very first meeting.



Mentoring is a non-hierarchical partnership, and mentors and mentees can and should give each other feedback on the effectiveness of their actions and approaches. Remember: your mentors have as much to learn from you as you do from them!

2.3 Connecting with other mentees

During the program, you will also be able to connect with other mentees from different parts of the world. This is a great opportunity to expand your network so take the initiative to get to know one another and form lasting connections.

3 The role of the mentor

Being a mentor means that you can make a difference in a junior or mid-career woman's journey and contribute to narrowing the existing gender gap in the WASH sector.

Mentors are meant to provide guidance, career development advice, and feedback by sharing their experience and knowledge. As a mentor, you have committed to set aside some time and space to support your mentees each month. You can choose to be connected to up to ten mentees and the average for each mentor is two mentees. You should plan on meeting at least one hour per month with each mentee you commit to work with.

Mentoring is a good opportunity to reflect on your career path, gain new perspectives, and keep expanding your network. It could also help you improve your communication, leadership, and people management skills.

Suggestions:

- Think about yourself at the beginning of your career; if you had a mentor, how did you benefit from the mentoring relationship? If not, how could mentorship have supported you in your career development?
- Reflect on your professional path; how did you gain skills? What are your successes and failures?
- What has your experience been as a woman working in the WASH sector? What are the challenges you have overcome? How did you gain confidence to

raise

your

voice?

- Listen to understand your mentee's goals and struggles, ask questions about their expectations and interests, and discuss what actions can be taken to achieve their goals and overcome their difficulties. Some mentees might need extra support, especially if they are new to mentoring.
- According to your mentee's interests, you can share resources and learning tools such as books, articles, and workshops and encourage them to join networking organizations, or, if you choose to do so, introduce them to new contacts within your network.
- If there is any topic where you feel you cannot help your mentee, communicate this clearly and set boundaries. Or feel free to refer your mentee to someone you know with more expertise in a certain area of interest.
- Encourage your mentee to find her own motivations/passions and to believe in herself. Feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt are common in women, especially at the beginning of their careers.

3.1 What to expect from your mentees

Mentoring is a great opportunity to connect with junior and/or mid-career professionals; be open to learning from your mentees about other points of view, working approaches, research topics, working/studying experiences, and their overall experience entering the sector.

Your mentees should take the first step of sharing their career goals and mentoring expectations with you. At this time, you can suggest other activities that you think will be useful for the duration of the program.

3.2 What not to expect from your mentees

Mentees have no obligation to accept a job or an activity they are not interested in. You can refer your mentee to any available job/internship opportunities, but they are under no obligation to apply. **Agenda for Change does not promote unpaid work and, furthermore, we do not condone it as it reinforces inequalities in our sector.** In this regard, if the mentor fails to respect the mentee's boundaries, the mentorship relationship will terminate, and the mentor will not be able to participate in any other session within the program.

4 Skills building

Some examples of skills you could work on during the mentorship program are:

1. Non-profit

If the mentee is interested in working for a Non-profit:

- The mentor can give tips on creating engaging presentations for different stakeholders, including compelling storytelling and pitching to investors/funders. Mentees can mock a presentation and ask for feedback.
- The mentee can draft a plan for a project she is interested in.
- The mentor could give planning and coordination tips and might help recommend project management or strategic planning tools, for example.
- The mentee can imagine and craft a workshop. The mentor could help define the scope, objectives, relevant topics, etc.
- You could also talk about project logistics, developing communication skills, etc.

2. Private Sector

If the mentee is interested in working in the Private Sector:

- The mentor and mentee could do a brainstorming session about business in the WASH sector and spaces for innovation.
- If the mentee has some business idea in mind, the mentor could give her insights and advice.
- The mentee could draft a business, branding, or marketing plan and review it with the mentor.

3. Academia (Student & Faculty)

If the mentee is interested in academic roles as a student or faculty member:

- The mentor could advise on picking the right academic program by explaining some strategies, like networking in advance.
- The mentee could practice her research skills and write an essay that the mentor can review.
- The mentee could present a mock class (or portion of a class in development) and receive feedback from her mentor.

4. Government

If the mentee is interested in working for the government:

- The mentee could practice her communication skills and draft a communication strategy to approach different stakeholders.
- Your mentor could give you insights on strategies for trust-building, advocacy, system strengthening, and good governance.
- You could work on your decision-making and leadership skills.

Other activities:

- Confidence building, how did the mentor raise her voice in a difficult situation?

- The mentor and mentee could check learning resources together and discuss them. You can share articles, videos, workshops, online courses, webinars, etc.
- Perhaps if you both love to read, consider doing a book club together, or read and discuss academic or other articles that interest you both.
- The mentor can review the mentees' CV, cover letters, and LinkedIn profile and provide advice and feedback.

5 The role of Agenda for Change

Agenda for Change is the lead implementor of the Women in WASH Mentorship Program and will assist you if you have questions.

During your application process, you can contact us via emilia@washagendaforchange.org if you have any doubts about how the program works or about the application process.

Once the selection process is complete, you will be notified about your admittance to the program and must confirm your spot if accepted. Once the matches are made between mentors and mentees, we will provide introductions and schedule a global kick-off session to explain more about the program and set expectations for how it will all work.

Mentors and mentees can contact us in all confidentiality if they are facing any problems, not feeling comfortable, have suggestions, or want to issue a complaint about the mentoring relationship.

5.1 Code of Conduct

Mentors and mentees are always expected to maintain respectful and professional conversations that are free of discrimination and/or harassment of any kind.

In case of any conflict, please get in touch with us to seek guidance and advice; if necessary, Agenda for Change will intervene. Either party can terminate the relationship at any time if they feel their counterparty is behaving in an unethical way that negatively affects their well-being.

This program is not intended to provide mentees with employment, and mentees are not guaranteed introduction to any professional network.

The mentorship program is intended to last for 6 months; however, if the mentor or mentee decides to terminate the mentoring relationship before that time, you can do so, but please communicate this to Agenda for Change by sending an email.

Mentors and mentees can and should communicate the inactivity/disengagement of their counterparts. If participants are not active during the program for 2 consecutive months, they will be removed. In the case of a long-term emergency or sickness that prevents either party from continuing with the program, please notify us as soon as possible, and we will do our best to work with you towards a solution.