

Women's Water Fund

The objective of the Women's Water Fund is to support women from developing countries in advancing their managerial career in the water sector. The Fund provides participants with useful water management skills through training, internship and extensive professional networking in Denmark followed by a mentoring arrangement.

The Women's Water Fund was established in 2006 by DHI. So far it has been funded by the "King Hassan II Great World Water Prize" presented to Professor Torkil Jønch Clausen of DHI at the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico in 2006.

The Fund is managed by a Board of four members with Danish and international expertise in water resources, development and women in management. It is a 'working board' with members directly engaged in the planning and execution of all aspects of the Fund and its program. The board members receive no remuneration for their work.

The Fund offers a three-component program:

1. Danish and international water knowledge - one week of training and networking in Denmark
2. Management internship - one week in a Danish water sector company or authority
3. Mentoring relationship - one year mail and phone based interaction

The program draws upon Danish water expertise in a local and international context. It covers a wide spectrum of expertise ranging from research, academic, consulting, industrial and public organisations. There is a strong tradition in Denmark for linking knowledge generation to practical solutions to water problems. Denmark has demonstrated a global comparative advantage in this field.

The program's internship and mentoring activities are provided free of charge by the public and private businesses involved¹ as 'in kind' contributions. The intention is to create an arrangement with mutual benefits for participants and businesses involved.

The Fund operates through 'Calls for Applications' on the internet and through Danish water networks around the world. The response has been overwhelming with a total of around 200 applications.

So far 12 women² have benefited from the Fund's program. All participants have given very positive feedback and reported that their career development has been enhanced. Some have experienced fast promotions; others have embarked on a focused career plan with 'next step strategies'. All appear to have gained self-confidence and determination.

Feedback from the sponsoring businesses is equally positive. They stress the company benefits from new knowledge and ideas originating during the internship.

The Fund wants to continue and expand its activities.

¹ So far these include Grundfos, DHI, COWI and Aarhus Water.

² From Armenia, Botswana, Cameroon, Columbia, Iran, India, Morocco, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago, Zambia.