

# DR. SWANI R. KEELSON, D.I.A.— DOCTOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Contact

Email:  
sdubuis1@jhmi.edu

URL:  
www.globalwaterpromise.org

Location: Baltimore,  
MD

## OVERVIEW

Dr. Swani R. Keelson is a scholar of international affairs and public policy, with a research specialization in deconstruction and semiotics as applied to global governance. Her academic background spans political theory, development studies, and symbolic systems of power, culminating in her doctoral thesis at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) titled *Paper Tigers: Deconstruction and Semiotics of Gender Equity as Signifier in Performative Water Governance Policies – A Case Study in Ghana*.



Dr. Keelson's research interrogates how language as a structure of governance, exposing the symbolic architecture of inclusion and the contradictions embedded in gender equity discourse across water governance policies. She is the founder of Global Water Promise, an international non-profit addressing the material realities of water insecurity and period poverty across Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. Through field-based intervention and critical policy reform, Dr. Keelson merges high theory with applied advocacy—challenging technocratic paradigms and advancing gender-responsive governance.

Dr. Keelson has presented her research at major global forums, including the 2023 United Nations Water Conference, where she addressed the intersection of water insecurity, gender injustice, and menstrual equity. She continues to bridge academic rigor with public impact, offering a decolonial, semiotic critique of development language and its performative failures.

I am committed to improving environmental sanitation and hygiene practices by providing technical guidance for clean water programs in Latin America & Caribbean, South America, Africa, and Central America. I am confident that my skills and experience will make a valuable addition to any team focused on promoting sustainable development and improving access to clean water in developing countries.

## Education

- Doctor of International Affairs
- Master's Degree- International public Policy
- Master's Degree Government Legal Studies

## Expertise

- WASH
- International Development
- Gender Development
- Policy Implementation

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## EDUCATION

- Doctor of International Affairs-, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies 2025 - Doctoral Thesis- Paper Tigers: Deconstruction and Semiotics of Gender Equity as *Signifier* in Performative Water Governance Policies: A Case Study in Ghana.
- Master of International Public Policy 2020 - Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, International Public Policy.
- Certificate-International Development/International Relations 2015 - Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, International Development May 2015, International Relations/Developing Nations.
- Master of Arts/Legal Studies 2010 - Johns Hopkins University Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences, Legal Studies/Government.

## EMPLOYMENT

Global Water Promise (WASH-Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), Founder, Water Specialist 2015-Present

- Led the development and implementation of a borehole for a remote village in the Greater Accra region 2018
- Lead on water and sanitation initiatives for remote villages in developing nations
- Oversees management and implantation of borehole drilling projects in Haiti and Accra, Ghana
  - Coordinates WASH projects with other non-governmental organizations, national and local governments
- Water sector investment and planning in rural and urban areas
  - Participates in missions on sustainable development issues in Haiti, Ghana, and Bolivia
- Guides and supports international team on borehole projects
- Gender training on water, sewage regulations in the Greater Accra

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Johns Hopkins Hospital-Regulatory Compliance 2000-Present

- Data analysis and computer/database management; liaison to network administrators and provides training to staff in the proper use of software.
- Supports the policy and procedure development for the division.
- Assists with oversight of Johns Hopkins Hospital Compliance with the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) with national and international transplant recipients
- Executes standard validation and quality assurance queries and/or reports for compliance and data - Performs audits with external data sources within defined periods and reconciles any data discrepancies.
- Reviews or audits to ensure that compliance procedures are followed by The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients.
- Responsible for providing statistical analytic support to the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN) for purposes including the formulation and evaluation of organ allocation and other OPTN policies.
- Policy formulation and evaluation, system performance metrics, economic analysis, and preparation of recurring and special reports.

## **HONORS AND AWARDS**

- Certificate 2017- United Nations Peace Operations Training Institute Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on the women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Asia and the Pacific
- Certificate 2015- United Nations Peace Operations Training Institute Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on the women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Africa
- Certificate 2015- The Global Citizens' Initiative Sustainable Resources and Development

PHI-THETA NATIONAL HONORS SOCIETY/WHO'S WHO IN AMERICAN  
JUNIOR COLLEGES 2005-08

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## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Thesis, Water Privatization Sub-Saharan Africa and South America 2010

Advisors: Dorothea Wolfson. PHD and Benjamin Ginsberg

- Water Scarcity in Developing Countries/Accomplishment/Project
- Global Securities/Policy Management/International Development
- Legal Studies in Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Global Water Promise 2015-Present

## Founder/CEO

- Provides technical guidance for programs related to clean water in remote villages.
- Provides water, sanitation, and hygiene education, development, and infrastructure in developing nations.

The .Period Poverty Project

Founder/CEO

- Provides educational outreach to teen girls in the Central Region of Ghana
- Provides menstrual hygiene products to girls in the resource-poor communities in the Central Region of Ghana.

Abokobi, Ghana (Nsawman Village) January 2018 to July 2018

Global Transformation towards Gender Equality and Agenda 2030-  
Research

(A global forum discussing innovative approaches to break the cycle of  
violence against women)

Organization-Global Water Promise

- Ongoing field research on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in the Abokobi village district in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana

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- Conducted research addressing the challenge of vulnerability to violence in relation to access to water and sanitation in development and humanitarian emergency contexts
- Development of gender mainstreaming strategy for the inclusion of women in policymaking and water management
- Strengthening women's leadership and participation in decision-making

Port Au Prince, Haiti August 2013, August 2016 and December 2017

Water Sanitation and Hygiene-Researcher

Organization-Global Water Promise

- Examined cholera dynamics in two remote villages in Mirebalais City, Haiti
- Provided water filtration systems to families in remote towns
- Conducted supplementary seminars for public health and hygiene for women and children; Public Health
- Helped facilitate and oversee medical clinic for more than 1,000 people

Chochabamba, Bolivia January 2018 to July 2018

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene-Researcher

Organization-Hospitals of Hope

- Collaborated with health educators in Cochabamba, Bolivia, on reproductive health and vaccination programs;
- Participated in project evaluations and assisted in the analysis of results to assess project impact and effective use of resources; Water and Public Health Researcher
- Conducted supplementary seminars for public health and hygiene for women and children; Public Health

Orange Walk Town, Belize June 2015

Outreach, Public Health Coordinator

Company Praying Pelican Missions

## DR. SWANI R. KEELSON D.I.A.— DOCTOR OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- Collaborated with health educators in Belize to help provide housing assistance to local communities
  - Built homes for impoverished communities
  - Coordination and supporting the work of volunteers
- Management of community development programs

### JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

*2024 Transactional Sex and the Water Crisis: Unveiling Gendered Vulnerability in Ghana's Water Governance.* University of Pennsylvania Water Center

### PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

#### **University of Pennsylvania | 2024– The Water Center Public Lecture Series Invited Guest Lecturer**

*Period Poverty and the Politics of Access: Semiotic Invisibility in Global WASH Frameworks*

#### **University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia *Water Center at Penn Department of Earth & Environmental Science***

Presented an invited academic lecture interrogating the symbolic absence of menstruating bodies in WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) policy architecture. Offered a decolonial critique of development language and the structural invisibility of period poverty within global water governance discourses.

#### **-UNITAR High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development | 2023 Expert Panelist – Global Water Academy High-Level Roundtable**

*Humanitarian Responses to Climate-Induced Water Crises: Governance, Equity, and Resilience*

Contributed a semiotic and deconstructive analysis of humanitarian discourses surrounding climate-related water emergencies. Challenged technocratic framings of water resilience by tracing contradictions in SDG 6 implementation and the symbolic deferment of gender justice. Hosted

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under the auspices of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

## **-United Nations 2023 Water Conference – Official Side Event**

### **Distinguished Panelist | 2023**

*Water Insecurity, Period Poverty, and Transactional Vulnerability:*

*Rethinking Gender and Human Security in Global Governance*

The nexus of water insecurity, menstrual poverty, and transactional sex in sub-Saharan Africa. Positioned original doctoral research within the context of symbolic governance, highlighting how gender signifiers are deployed rhetorically yet remain materially unaccounted for. Convened by CIFAL York (York University), Global Water Promise, Stockholm International Water Institute, and other international partners.

**- United Nations Water Conference, Speaker- Water Insecurity, Period Poverty and Transactional Sex 2024** -Water Security and Vulnerability in a Changing Climate: Challenges, Opportunities, and Solutions-Water Insecurity, Period Poverty and Transactional Sex.

**-“Women Gender and Equality in the Sokabisi Village,” Moving Towards Gender Equality 2030”, Spring 2018.** The Network of Scholars on Gender, Sexuality, and the Law (ALAS), the Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, the Center for Human Rights & Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law, and the Centre for Human Rights at the University. September 2018. Mexico City, Mexico.

**-“Fundamentals of Nonprofits and Nonprofit Management,” | 2018** Johns Hopkins University Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences.

**-Keynote Speaker Moderator, “Water-Oil of the 21st Century,” | 2011** United Nations Association of the National Capital Area (UNA-NCA).

**-Moderator, “Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT),” | Spring 2011** USAID/Maternal and Child Integrated Program.

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## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

-United Nations, General Assembly Participant, 2018, 2023

-High-level meeting on tuberculosis (TB) to accelerate efforts in ending TB and reach all affected people with prevention and care.

-World Affairs Council-Washington DC, Member 2016-Present

-Engagement in international affairs, exchange of ideas, knowledge, and understanding of global issues.

-World Bank Civil Society Policy Forum, 2011-Present

Dialogue and exchanging views with World Bank Group and IMF staff, NGOs and government delegations, and other stakeholders on a wide range of topics that affect civil society policy concerns.

United Nations Association of the National Capital Area, 2000-Present

Human Rights Committee and Director-At-Large.