



Bogadi Theresa | Botswana
Director of Water Affairs

As the first Motswana woman to reach the executive cadre in Botswana’s technical water administration, Mathangwane broke barriers in a traditionally male-dominated sector. Reflecting on the challenge, she often recalls the mantra that guided her journey: “Throw me to the wolves and I’ll come back leading the pack.”

As Director of Water Affairs, Mathangwane has played a pivotal role in shaping Botswana’s water security strategy in a semi-arid nation where sustainable management of scarce resources is critical to economic stability and community wellbeing. A leading practitioner of Integrated Water Resources Management, she has championed policies that combine conservation, demand management, and equitable access. Her work ensures that water governance extends beyond infrastructure to address the social and economic realities of communities, particularly women and girls who bear the greatest burden of water scarcity. Her leadership has gained regional and international recognition, including acknowledgment by the Global Water Partnership for advancing gender-responsive water policy. Through initiatives such as the Women in Water Diplomacy Network, she also contributes to transboundary cooperation and conflict prevention across Southern Africa. Today, Mathangwane stands as a transformative voice in Africa’s water sector- demonstrating how technical expertise, inclusive governance, and bold leadership can turn water management into a driver of resilience, equity, and sustainable development.

H.E. Dr. Nilda Borges da Mata | São Tomé and Príncipe
Minister of Environment and Sustainable Tourism

“Our ‘Zero Waste’ vision is not only about sanitation but also protecting our communities and our oceans. By professionalizing waste management and linking land-based sanitation to the Blue Economy, we safeguard the ecosystems sustaining our tourism, fisheries, and national prosperity,” Dr. Nilda



Nilda has emerged as a key architect of São Tomé and Príncipe’s modern sanitation and environmental resilience strategy. Since assuming office, she has reframed sanitation from a narrow public works concern into a matter of national health, environmental protection, and economic security for the tourism-dependent island state. Da Mata has successfully mobilized

international support from partners such as the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations to safeguard river basins and coastal waters from pollution. At the community level, she champions Community-Led Total Sanitation, enabling rural districts to eliminate open defecation through locally driven hygiene initiatives. She has also advanced gender-responsive environmental policy and mandatory sanitation standards in schools, ensuring safe facilities for girls and boys. Through this integrated approach, da Mata is positioning São Tomé and Príncipe as a model for climate-resilient sanitation among small island developing states.

