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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 30, 2014

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### ICIWaRM Hosts “Women, Water, Wells” photography exhibit at World Water Forum Symposium

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA. The “7th World Water Forum Symposium: North American Regional Event” was held in conjunction with the ASCE-EWRI World Environmental & Water Resources Congress 2014 in Portland, Oregon. The one day symposium featured fifteen speakers and panelists from the federal government, academia, and the private sector; each focusing on water resource issues, including infrastructure for sustainable water resources, water for energy, water and sanitation needs, and disaster resiliency.

IWR’s International Center for Integrated Water Resources Management (ICIWaRM), under the auspices of UNESCO, sponsored a major photography exhibit during the symposium highlighting the works of Mr. Gil Garcetti\*, UNESCO-HE Cultural Ambassador. Mr. Garcetti’s series, *African Women, Water and Wells*, tells a moving story of how clean water in villages in West Africa changes the lives, health, education, and opportunities of the people there, especially those of women and girls. Though deceptively beautiful, the images in the exhibit do not all tell a positive story as more than a billion people are without safe water. When clean water is available, entire village economics change and the lives of the inhabitants are transformed from disease and malnutrition to hope and success. Traveling in countries such as Niger, Ghana, Mali, and Burkina Faso, interviewing villagers and seeing first-hand what water means to the people, Garcetti became moved to bring the story to a wider audience and initiate a call to action to the industrialized world through his photographs.

Mr. Garcetti also participated on the symposium panel “Safe Water and Integrated Sanitation Services for All,” along with Ms. Jeanette Brown from Manhattan College. Garcetti recounted stories from his several photography projects and focused his discussion on his firsthand experiences with locals in numerous African villages. Specifically, he talked about the critical impact clean water and sanitation services have on a village and its way-of-life in regards to women and children. Ms. Brown further underscored Garcetti’s points when she gave an update on progress towards Millennium Development Goal targets to reduce the proportion of the population living without access to safe drinking water and sanitation by half. Although 116 countries have met the target for water, only 77 have met the sanitation target, with still 2.5 billion people lacking sanitation access. She also commented on the major impacts of these water projects on women; by providing safe and private sanitation facilities and reducing the time and effort spent collecting water, women are finally able to work and attend school.

The purpose of the symposium was to assist in the development of North American views on key issues of interest for the 7<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, to be held in Daegu, Republic of Korea in April 2015.

#### Learn More

For more information, visit [www.iwr.usace.army.mil](http://www.iwr.usace.army.mil) or [www.iciwarm.org](http://www.iciwarm.org).

Symposium: <http://content.asce.org/conferences/ewri2014/WorldWaterForum.html>

*\*Previously a prosecutor with the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office for 32 years, eight of which he was the elected District Attorney (1992-2000), a serendipitous photo of an ironworker working on the construction of the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles led Gil Garcetti to a new career. His photography books have led him to tell his stories in numerous photo exhibitions and presentations throughout the world, such as at The United Nations in New York, UNESCO in Paris, the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., the Fowler Museum at UCLA, and the Millennium Museum in Beijing.*