Transcript of the first episode of the Women In Water podcast, "Crystal Clear," with Gabriela Rendón Herrera and Montserrat Santibáñez

Montserrat: Hello everyone, our dear audience listening today. How are you? I'm Montserrat Santibáñez, and I'm super excited and happy because today I can welcome you to the first episode of the new season of Women in Water, a bilingual initiative of the Permanent Forum on Binational Waters.

In this podcast, we seek female empowerment, break stereotypes, and learn together about crucial water-related topics. We aim to highlight the knowledge and experience of women leaders striving to improve the environment in which we live, particularly working with water in the border region between Mexico and the United States.

Women in Water is the continuation of the initiative previously known as Women in Science, a whole new series both in its name, logo, and scope to include women working with water from different fields, in addition to scientists. By expanding our perspectives and voices, we can address water in a more holistic, comprehensive, and cooperative way. That's why you will be able to hear from women in politics, activists, entrepreneurs, teachers, scientists, mothers, among many other professions with valuable knowledge and experiences to share related to the water that unites us.

In our first season, we will explore together the context of why and how we are experiencing the global water crisis, especially in Mexico and the United States, and explore what we can do as a society to improve the quality of our future and present.

Each month, we will have a special guest, and together we will answer your questions on crucial water-related topics. Today, I have the honor of introducing Gabriela Rendón Herrera, a biologist, researcher, writer, designer, illustrator, scientist, among many other roles, focused on the conservation of Mexican biodiversity. Gabriela is obtaining her master's in Ecology from the University of California, Davis. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology from the Autonomous University of Nuevo León. She was the director of the Communication Department of Pronatura Noreste for two years, co-founder of the College of Solidarity Biologists of Nuevo León, and a founding member of the Permanent Forum on Binational

Waters. Currently, she is our manager of Strategic Planning and Communication, and today she will talk to us about the importance of water. Gabriela, how are you?

Gabriela: Hello, Montse, I'm very well, very hot. How are you?

Montserrat: Also very hot. Where are you visiting us from?

Gabriela: Right now, I'm speaking to you from Veracruz, Mexico.

Montserrat: Oh, then I can imagine the heat is quite present.

Gabriela: Yes, the heat is intense, and the humidity is high, so it's tough.

Montserrat: Well, thank you very much for being here with us! Gaby, tell us a little about who you are. What are you working on? What do you do? What are you passionate about? and what got you involved in the field of environmental conservation?

Gabriela: Well, I always knew I was going into biology; it's something I'm passionate about. While studying biology, I wasn't very clear about which specialty I wanted to pursue. Ecology caught my attention, especially the conservation and restoration aspect within ecology. However, I had doubts about whether it was a path I wanted to take. Well, it was a path I wanted to take. But there are a lot of problems that seem big, seem too complex to solve, and can discourage you if you think about it from an individual perspective. However, I graduated from university and started working at Pro Natura, which is a conservation NGO. There, I had a glimpse of what would later clearly become my passion. I realized that although the problems are complex, there are ways to solve them, and that there's always a possibility, right? So it excited me, filled me, and gave me purpose. And here we are.

Montserrat: I mean, looking at your biography and everything you've done, you've experienced different areas, from the creative realm to research. Do you have one area that you like a little more than the others, or do you like them all?

Gabriela: Well, my two great passions in life are art and science, particularly biology. The truth is I don't like one more than the other. If I only dedicated myself to one, I would end up getting bored. So, I have also studied visual arts and a bunch of drawing and illustration techniques for many years, and I've found a way to connect them, right? That's through scientific illustration. So, I can apply scientific illustration and design in conservation and environmental education projects. Illustrating scientific outreach materials allows me to unite my two great passions and also use it as an educational resource.

Montserrat: That is so cool! Yes, I feel the same way. I identify a lot because I'm someone who likes very varied things, and when I talk to people, they always ask me, "What do you want to do with all that?" I also really like the arts and human rights, and all these very different areas. I love seeing how you've connected everything to create your projects, which combine areas that might seem completely separated to someone else. But I think that what we want to see today is that everything is connected, everything helps each other, everything can be linked, and your projects are amazing.

Gabriela: The truth is that everything is connected; everything can enrich everything. Basically, the projects that work best, that are more resilient, that have more reach, are always the multidisciplinary ones, those that consider all possible approaches, even those you might think have nothing to do with each other, right? So, it's very exciting. It's also very interesting to learn from everything. In my work, I've had to learn about politics, laws, and a bit of psychology to integrate it into the vision of the projects. So yes, I completely agree with you.

Montserrat: Gaby, I'm going to be very honest with you. I was always very good in school, but in the sciences, the truth is it was never my strong suit. In this podcast, what I want to start with—or rather how I want to start—is by going back to the basics of what water is, right? I mean, what do we use water for? How does it interact with the different aspects of our lives? What types of bodies of water exist? I wanted to see if you could explain to us, to those of us who may not be as aware of all the aspects. Maybe we're not as focused on the academic or scientific side as many other people listening, who might have many years of experience. There are also people who might just be starting on this environmental path. And we want to learn more.

Gabriela: Well, I want to start by saying that if you weren't interested in the sciences during school, it's because you had bad teachers. There's a bad habit in this country, and I think in the world, of teaching science by just throwing data at you to memorize. And who would like that? Science should be fun, it should be interesting, it should help you understand the world, to understand yourself. And if you didn't see it from that perspective, I'm sure you didn't have good teachers.

Montserrat: I think I had a few good ones, but in general, I found it to be a really complicated subject, you know? I would think, no matter how much I tried, I just didn't understand it. I had a biology teacher in my first year of middle school that I really liked; she gave us many interactive research activities and presentations. I also had another geography teacher who was very passionate, and it showed. I think when you're passionate about a subject, you become a bit more interested, but in the end, it wasn't an area I ever really grasped. Well, at least not in middle school or high school; I never could fully understand it.

Gabriela: Well, if you want, we can start talking about water then.

Montserrat: That sounds perfect!

Gabriela: You asked me what water is and why it's so essential in our lives. Well, water is a chemical compound that is crucial for life on this planet because it participates in the metabolic reactions that keep us alive. So, the water molecules in the body function to produce energy, to digest food, and they participate when your cells are building the structural material that maintains your body, and this applies to all life on this planet. That's why water is essential; that's why it sustains life; that's why without water, there is no life, because without water, there is no metabolism.

Montserrat: One of the facts that I do remember from when I studied in high school, maybe even elementary school, is that humans are made up of 60, 70, or 80% water.

Gabriela: That's right.

Montserrat: So, even for us to be here sitting and talking, we need water.

Gabriela: That's right.

Montserrat: Can you tell me a little about what types of water exist on our planet?

Gabriela: Before we move on. Water also has certain physical characteristics that participate in the regulation and functioning of ecosystems and the environment. For example, it acts as a buffer. I don't know if you've ever seen documentaries about other planets where the days and nights are extremely hot and extremely cold.

Montserrat: Mhm. Mhm.

Gabriela: And that's why life couldn't be sustained, because water acts as a buffer between temperatures. So we operate within a temperature range that makes it habitable. The amount and distribution of water also determines the characteristics of living beings, both vegetation and animals, and everything that lives in the regions. So water is also at the center of ecosystems.

What types of water are there? When we talk about "types of water", we can refer to where we find it and how we find it. If we remember the water cycle, we generally have two main categories: surface water and groundwater. Surface water is what we find on the surface of the Earth's crust—lakes, rivers, estuaries, and snow. Groundwater, on the other hand, is found beneath the soil and underground. We also have marine water, which covers the

globe. So those would be two main categories. We also have another category: saline water, freshwater, and brackish water, which refers to the amount of dissolved mineral salts in the water. Surface water found within continents and on land is usually freshwater. Sea water is saline, and in areas where freshwater and saltwater connect, we have brackish areas, such as mangroves and some estuaries, which are very special areas where we have intermediate salinity conditions.

Montserrat: And the water that we, as human beings, consume the most—which is it?

Gabriela: That would be freshwater, surface water.

Montserrat: What is the current state of our water, would you say?

Gabriela: The situation is tough; the percentage of water that is available for our consumption is less than 2% of all the water on the planet. And well, the rest of the water we have for consumption, for example, groundwater, a large part needs treatment before it can be consumed. And if we want to consume seawater, it requires a complex, expensive, and difficult desalination process.

I mentioned that depending on the distribution of water, we have different conditions on the planet, right? There are regions in the world that have a certain amount of water according to the seasons of the year and their geographical position. So, there are regions that have a great abundance of water, to the point that their problem is excess water, like flooding, for example.

Montserrat: Okay.

Gabriela: And there are other regions in the world where the biggest problem is scarcity and pollution. When we look at our geographical region, which is the border between Mexico and the United States, we can say that the general problem we have there is scarcity. In our geographical region, the area could generally be described as desert or semi-desert. So our rainfall regime isn't very large, and we also have very high agricultural development in that region. So we not only consume a lot of surface water but also a lot of groundwater to compensate for the whole season when we don't have rain. The situation in this area is a bit critical. Scarcity is aggravated by population growth, economic growth, and we also have another factor, which is climate change. When we make modifications to the globe's vegetation and atmospheric emissions, we also alter the overall climate of the planet.

What does that mean for our region? It means we have more intense and prolonged droughts, and we also have more intense but shorter rains.

Montserrat: Okay.

Gabriela: So, we not only have the challenge of distributing and sharing water between two nations and different human groups, but we also have this aggravating factor, which is the changing patterns of rainfall.

Montserrat: It seems that every year we hear "this is the year with the most rain", or "this is the year" – "this year is hotter than last year" and hotter than the year before. And every year it's more heat, and more heat, and more heat, and less water, and less water.

Gabriela: That's right.

Montserrat: Or more floodings!

Gabriela: Yes.

Montserrat: We can see the pattern; every year we hear "this is the year", and you just think, "mmm, I don't want to know how next year is going to be."

Gabriela: Every year it rises, yes.

Montserrat: "Thank you."

Gabriela: That's right, that's right. Yes, we have a big problem because we're depleting the groundwater, which is our reserve of water during droughts, and we are in trouble; we are in trouble in our region.

Montserrat: And from your experience, what would be some tactics we could have to combat this problem of water scarcity or the overuse of water that we don't have?

Gabriela: Well, it has to be an integrated strategy with various approaches. As I was saying, most of the water—about 70%—is used for agriculture. Just to give you an idea!

Montserrat: I can imagine.

Gabriela: I think they manage – I am not sure on the exact number – but around 25% of the industry. But when I say agriculture, I'm referring to industrial agriculture, meaning large-scale monocultures, super productive, right? So yes. For example, from my experience, I know we have a problem. From the Mexican side, we have a problem with the expansion of the agricultural frontier, meaning the territory used for cultivation is expanding, even into areas where it shouldn't be, such as protected natural areas. We have an invasion of

protected areas, so there's illegal expansion happening. We also have legal expansion, but it's still covering more territory. In the U.S. as well, there's agricultural expansion. I'm not aware of the legality of their agricultural expansion, but I know it's growing. So, one or two strategies, let's say two or three strategies within agriculture would be to limit territories. There really needs to be an authority monitoring and ensuring that these territorial limitations are enforced.

Montserrat: -between nations.

Gabriela: Exactly—society must participate in monitoring to prevent the invasion of protected natural areas. There's a lot of talk about the efficiency of irrigation in agriculture, meaning using less water to produce the same amount. Currently, there are still many fields that are irrigated using flood irrigation, which literally floods your field and lets the plants absorb the water. But this causes a lot of waste due to evaporation of the unused water. You also have issues with humidity and infections in the plants. So, they're trying to shift from flood irrigation to drip irrigation, having a more efficient irrigation system with moisture sensors to know exactly how much your crops need and when, instead of just using a large amount to flood the area. Within the industry, the industry is generally very efficient in using water in its processes, but there's always a push to improve efficiency in all mechanisms and processes where it's used. There's a great need for implementing water treatment plants in the area. We have very few water treatment plants to recycle the water we use. We also need projects to recharge aquifers when it rains. Aquifers are the reserve of groundwater, and they refill very slowly over time. So it's essential that we ensure they are being recharged. There are specialized techniques specifically for recharging aquifers, and there are ways to prevent them from stopping the recharge, through the conservation of vegetation. Vegetation helps the rainwater filter into the soil instead of running off and disappearing.

Montserrat: Yes, it seems that we have a problem, we try to solve it by overusing another system we have, which then creates another problem. And that problem leads to others. Because, for example, we have water scarcity, right? And we excessively use water to grow crops, which provide us with food. So if we don't have water to irrigate those crops, it will affect what we find in our supermarkets and what is accessible for our daily lives, which will then create another problem, right? With food scarcity. And if we use more land to plant more things, we damage the vegetation, the animals, and the environment—the habitat of the animals living in that area—creating other types of problems related to climate change, water filtration, air purification. So we're accumulating issues in a negative way; we're accumulating different, more complicated steps to resolve. At least that's what I see or hear...

Gabriela: That's right.

Montserrat: — that we are in a complicated path, trying to patch holes with band-aids, and in the end, we're not solving the problem at its root, right?

Gabriela: Exactly. Yes, precisely. And the problem has been that all these issues, as you mentioned, have been addressed individually, without considering that they are all connected. So, for example, when we divert water from the river for use, there are also recharge areas where river water replenishes the aquifer, and if we divert it, the aquifer doesn't recharge. It's become a disaster that we're trying to fix little by little, but it's complex, as you've realized. It's very complex because any misstep can hit the economy, which ultimately affects all of us. Because water is used to produce the vast majority of the things we use.

Montserrat: Which I think is another thing that we may not always be aware of, right? Even, for example, the packaging of the makeup you use, the makeup you put on in the mornings; or I don't know, how the glass you drink water with is produced. It needs water in its creation process. Which I think is something we don't see—the behind-the-scenes process of the industry. We don't realize that we use water all day, at all hours, even when we're not drinking it. Everything you touch has water in its process, I think we generally don't realize or have it so consciously that water is in everything, right? It doesn't matter who you are, what you do, what you make, how old you are; water affects you. You can't escape its impact.

Gabriela: Exactly. Water is at the center of both ecosystems and the economy, and health.

Montserrat: Yes! Which also creates other types of problems. It's a domino effect.

Gabriela: Yes, that's right. Just as I said, it participates in all our metabolism; when there's water scarcity, for example, urinary infections spike. There are hygiene problems, and then all kinds of infections increase. So water is at the center of everything, and we're not aware, as you said, until we see it or someone tells us.

Montserrat: Or until it's lacking, until we're at the limit where we no longer have what we usually have. And *then* we say, "What now?" And we're at a point where it's more difficult to address all these issues, right? So I think that's exactly what we need to do: become more aware and get more involved as a society. It doesn't matter what area you work in. I believe there are ways to raise your voice from different fields, to become more conscious, to do your part, right? To get involved. Because it's something that affects everything. Everything, everything, everything.

Gabriela: Yes, as a citizen, you can participate. For example, in your personal life, you can seek reforestation projects that are dedicated to aquifer recharge and, in general, participate in reforestation as a volunteer from time to time. That helps recharge the aquifers. We need to pay attention to our laws, our rights, and our rivers in the cities or on the outskirts of the cities. For example, in Monterrey, I don't know if you knew, but there was construction in a river; it was no longer a river. I don't remember the name of the hurricane we had around 2010 or 2011, but it took all those constructions, along with streets and houses, and the river reclaimed its territory. From that point on, society organized and demanded from its leaders, and continues to demand, that no more construction be done in the river and that it remain as a river, conserving the natural vegetation and the native species that live there in the river and in their habitat. So there have been attempts to build again in the river, but society is very vigilant. Then, that's one of the things we need to do when we see a company contaminating water, rivers, or lakes: we need to report it. Gather evidence and report it. We have the ability to participate in these matters. And then, by region, for example, in Mexico, we have a legal figure called the Watershed Council. The Watershed Council is an organization where the governmental sector, the academic sector, and different water users from the watersheds come together. Each watershed has its own Watershed Council, and it is open to the public. You can go and participate, find out about the laws in place, the projects underway, and the initiatives available. And since you are in direct contact with all these organizations and entities, you can also participate in decision-making processes.

Montserrat: Where can someone go to participate? Is it by region, or how does it work? How would one find out about it?

Gabriela: I recommend searching online for the Watershed Council. It's organized by region. Each region has its own council, so I would suggest looking for the Watershed Council that corresponds to your area. In the northeast, for example, we have the Watershed Council of the Rio Bravo. There are different councils, so you can check their official websites. They even have official Facebook pages where they post information about what they're doing, when meetings are held, and where they will take place. You can go and participate.

Montserrat: Thanks to the internet, it's much easier to find this information now. There's really no excuse to say you don't know how to get involved. You'll generally find information somewhere. Wait! Ok, let's go back a bit, because I'm sure there will be someone who doesn't know. Can you explain what a watershed is?

Gabriela: Well, a watershed comes from "cuenco" (bowl). which means a concave surface. It's called a watershed because it collects water that falls as rain, snow, sleet, or hail. And due to the incline of the land, this water flows toward the center, accumulating there. In this process, rivers, streams, and brooks are formed, and usually in the center of that watershed,

there is either a large lake or a major river that flows into the sea. The territories as you know, are irregular. So, throughout the territory, you have various parts of the surface that act as these basins, these concave surfaces that collect water at their centers. The slope also directs the water in a specific direction.

Montserrat: So these are like large bodies of water where other bodies of water come together, divided by territory? Because I imagine that regions will use the water closest to them.

You had mentioned to me earlier a bit about rights, and how water is indeed a right we have, which is one of the reasons why it should matter to us.

Gabriela: In the United States, it's a bit more complex. The right to water isn't enshrined in the Constitution but is handled at the state level. In Mexico, we do have this right in the Constitution, specifically in Article 4, along with the right to a healthy environment. So whenever you see someone contaminating your rivers, forests, or ecosystems, you have the right to complain because you have the right to live in a healthy environment that provides accessible and clean water. What does it mean for it to be a constitutional right? It means that the government has the responsibility to guarantee that right for us. But for the government to take responsibility, we need to be aware of what's happening, and we must demand and respect it as well. You can't accumulate water in such a way that others don't have access to it.

Montserrat: Or contaminate the water. Which depends on where you live, I've often seen people throwing trash in rivers or lakes, and that's also a violation of the law, right? Of the Constitution. I mean, it's important to be aware that this is a shared right.

Gabriela: In the United States, for example, they have a problem. I am more familiar with water rights in California. They operate under the principle of "First in time, first in right." This means that those who arrived first in a territory have priority for water rights. They function similarly to us, having concessions for a certain amount of water. However, as more people move into the area or the population grows, the right thing would be to redistribute that volume to maintain dignity and conditions. But this doesn't happen in the U.S. due to that archaic principle of rights. Their rights are also determined by how close they are to the river. So there is a general perception that if it's on your land, it's yours. This is similar in Mexico, even though water is a federal resource. People often have the idea that if it's on my territory, it's mine and I can exploit it as I wish. But water exists within a system; the hydrological system is interconnected, both at the surface and underground. So as long as we continue to manage and appropriate it without considering that it's a connected system, we'll keep facing this problem.

Montserrat: Even if it's not nearby, it affects us in the long run. For example, oil spills and similar incidents ultimately affect either the water you receive or the quality of the fish you consume, or the pollution in nearby areas. It's a gradual process; little by little, it impacts everything, and sooner or later, it will reach you. Or even microplastics, which we now find everywhere. Initially, we didn't think much about them, but now they're in everything. As a society, I think at both governmental and industrial levels, we still lack a lot of awareness and forward planning. We need to consider the long-term effects of our actions. I think we have, as a society, this focus on the "right now." How do I solve this problem immediately? How do I make it easier, more efficient, or cheaper? Often, the focus is on money—what's the quickest solution that costs the least and works? We don't think about how this will affect society in the long term, because maybe when that problem arrives, I won't be around anymore. Someone else will have to deal with it. And unfortunately-

Gabriela: Or "I'll just move somewhere else."

Montserrat: Yes, or I'll go somewhere else where it won't affect me and cover my eyes. But we can't do that anymore. We're already at a point where it's affecting us. Unfortunately, also, not everyone is affected equally; it depends on where you live. Some people are much more impacted than others. In a city with good infrastructure, you might not feel the effects as strongly as if you lived in a more rural area.

Gabriela: Even within urban areas, despite having priority, different sectors of society experience water scarcity differently. When there's a shortage, vulnerable sectors often bear the brunt of it, with their water supply cut off first. Ultimately, it doesn't matter where you are, where you come from, or how much money you have. Even though it affects us disproportionately in the long run, it's going to impact all of us.

Montserrat: Yes, because there's a limit, right? How far can you run away, and what can you do?

Gabriela: Exactly because everything is connected. There is a limit.

Montserrat: Well, Gaby, we've talked a lot about water. I've really enjoyed this conversation. I think I've learned a lot, and I hope that those listening have also gained some insight into the water system and how everything is interconnected. I hope we've sparked some interest for them to continue researching, learning, and getting involved.

I'd love to hear more about your experience as a woman in the field of water sciences and research, about the different roles you've taken on throughout your life. What has your experience been like? What have been some of the biggest challenges you've faced in your

career? Or perhaps even as a young person, since sometimes it can be tough to enter different fields when you're perceived as younger than others.

Gabriela: Starting from before studying a science career, there's this assumption that you're going to get married and have children. Right from the start, everyone is preparing you for motherhood, as if that's your purpose in life. Which if you want to have children, that's great, but it's not something that's mandatory or your sole purpose just because you're a woman. So that's one of the cultural barriers. Just entering a science field as a woman is an achievement in itself, given all the things we're taught to focus on. Once you're in the science program, there are many professors who underestimate you. Some support you, but a significant number will belittle you or even ridicule you, driven by very silly prejudices. It's crucial to have role models—other women in the positions you aspire to be in. You need to see that it's possible and find mentors, both men and women, who will support you and help you understand that you can succeed. I don't know if you're aware, but when it comes to self-esteem, women generally have lower self-esteem than men, largely because they are more explicitly underestimated. This is a difficult part to overcome. Many women sacrifice their careers or dreams to follow their partners.

For example, on a personal level, I've had to end several relationships that I really liked to pursue my dreams. That's a personal choice; you can choose to make it or not, but it's a hard decision to make. In the workplace, you face many prejudices, both for being a woman and for being young. It's harder to earn the respect of others and to be taken seriously. As a woman, you always have to give double the effort. It's exhausting because you have to prove yourself to both yourself and others in the workplace all the time. That's one of the main challenges.

Within the labor sector, especially in biology and in NGOs, you find women in field technician roles, but most positions for women tend to be administrative again because they are underestimated. My biggest obstacle, both personally and professionally, is facing this attitude of prejudice and being underestimated. You have to be very creative and put in a lot of effort to ensure that this doesn't hold you back or discourage you, and to find ways to grow in the direction you want.

Montserrat: And what has been one of your greatest achievements on this journey? In this path you have taken in your different areas of life, what would you say are? What would you say are the things you feel most proud of?

Gabriela: I'm very proud to be where I am right now. I always dreamed of studying abroad, testing myself, and enriching myself in every way possible. I'm really happy with where I am. In my time at the University of California, I've learned so much, both theoretically and

practically, from incredible people from all over the world. I'm also very proud of my work experience before going to graduate school.

I'm particularly proud of a project we had—an intense, reactive project—when attempts were made to engage in agriculture in the Llano de la Soledad in Nuevo León. We had a strong reaction on both legal and communication levels, along with our entire technical team. And we managed to get the government involved within two days and removed the machinery from the area. It was super intense, quite risky, but seeing the community respond, everyone coming together, and how that made the authorities react to resolve the issue was incredible. I loved it!

Montserrat: If you had the power to change one aspect of our society with a snap of your fingers, what would you choose to change?

Gabriela: Something I would change in society, both in our country and worldwide, I think it's something I would change about our species: I wish we had much more empathy. We lack empathy to avoid abuse, destruction, and to promote sharing, equity, and justice. To reduce poverty and corruption. All these issues stem from individuals within systems and positions of power lacking the empathy to not harm others. We live in a structural system that incentivizes and rewards psychopathic behaviors, which is nothing but the pursuit of control and power at the expense of others. So, yes, empathy.

Montserrat: I hope and believe that step by step, the impact you have on those around you creates a ripple effect. Little by little, those people influence more people. I've always been, I don't know if I'm an optimistic pessimist or pessimistically optimistic. I see the reality we have, but I always dream of a happier, healthier, more equitable, and more loving world—more caring towards one another.

Gabriela: Yes. It's about accepting reality, acknowledging the problems, and understanding their complexity. That maybe you, as an individual, may feel limited in what you can do, but the key is choosing your side and doing your best.

Montserrat: As my last question, what advice would you give to other women listening today? those just starting their journey? or to young people in general entering this complex field?

Gabriela: First, I'd say: give it your all, pursue your dreams, not your relationships. If someone truly cares for you, they will support you and negotiate to be with you. Don't sacrifice your dreams for a relationship. Relationships will end, but we only have one chance to fulfill our dreams. So follow your dreams. Don't let anyone hold you back. Whatever your

dream is—if it's starting a family, go for it—but keep pursuing your dreams. Don't let anyone trample on you. Don't let anyone shout at you or underestimate you. Ignore those people. Work on your self-esteem, go to therapy! And you can achieve everything you want. Don't let anyone discourage you. Also, prioritize your economic independence because without it, there's no freedom. Economic independence takes work and can be exhausting, but it ensures that no one can control you. That would be my advice.

Montserrat: Thank you, Gaby. That's such powerful advice, especially in the society we live in, particularly in Mexico, where women are often taught to follow and support their partner's dreams, so it's crucial. I loved what you said that relationships come and go, and if it's meant to be they will be your partner and if it isn't they won't, but you only have one chance to chase your dreams.

Gabriela: Exactly.

Montserrat: I'll take that to heart.

Gabriela: Good!

Montserrat: Well, thank you so much for taking the time to chat with us, for sharing your story and knowledge, and reminding us that water is essential for everyone, regardless of who you are or what you do. Water affects us all. It's important for us to get involved, learn more, and see how we can help each other.

Gaby, where can we find you? Any social media, email, LinkedIn, or projects you'd like to share? If anyone has questions or wants to get in touch with you or learn about your projects?

Gabriela: You can currently find me on the website of the lab I'm part of, with Samuel Sandoval. It's called "The Water Management Lab" at the University of California. There you can find my bio, the projects I'm involved in, and information about my amazing colleagues. You can also find my contact information there. Also, on LinkedIn, but 'm not very active on LinkedIn, though. You can find me by my name, Gabriela Rendón Herrera. Maybe on Instagram. If you want scientific illustrations, I have my illustration Instagram, which is a bit elaborate. It's called GabrielaMxplt (M-X-P-L-T). There you can find my illustrations and you can also request illustrations if you need work.

Montserrat: If you need some, go ahead and ask Gaby; her illustrations are really cool.

Gabriela: Thank you.

Montserrat: Well, thank you so much. Thank you so much, Gaby. Thank you so much to our entire audience. This was the first episode of Women in Water. Don't forget to subscribe. You can find new episodes every month on Spotify and YouTube. You can also find more information and ask more questions on our social media of the Forum, which you can find as **@BinationalWater** on all platforms and on our official website binationalwaters.org. We'll see you in the next episode of Women in Water. Goodbye!