

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Introduction from the President



As President of Human Right 2 Water, I am pleased to present our 2025 Annual Report.

This year has been marked by purposeful engagement and a deepening of our global convening role. In June, we co-hosted a side event at the Human Rights Council as part of the preparatory process for the 2026 UN Water Conference. Bringing together civil society voices from different regions—alongside the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation—we created space for grounded, community-driven perspectives to inform global decision-making. This moment reflected our commitment to ensuring that policy processes remain connected to lived realities.

Throughout 2025, we continued to amplify rights-based approaches at major international platforms, strengthen partnerships across networks, and expand our High Impact Plan to support grassroots initiatives such as The Watoto Programme in Kibera. We also invested in visibility and accessibility, enhancing our website and knowledge platforms to better serve policymakers, practitioners and advocates.

I extend my sincere gratitude to our members, Expert Committee, HR2W Team and our partners. Together, we are shaping a more inclusive, resilient, and accountable water future.

Dr. Pedi Obani, University of Bradford, UK

Comments from the Chair of the Expert Committee



As Chair of the Expert Committee, I am proud to reflect on a year in which rigorous research and careful legal analysis have continued to define the work of Human Right 2 Water.

In 2025, our research portfolio expanded both in depth and scope. Through peer-reviewed country legal mappings, strengthened by collaboration with academic experts, we consolidated comparative analyses on water and sanitation, menstrual health management, and the right to a healthy environment. These syntheses do more than catalogue laws; they identify structural gaps, illuminate emerging best practices, and clarify how human rights standards are interpreted and implemented across diverse legal systems.

A major milestone this year has been the development of our biodiversity and human rights methodology, designed in partnership with IUCN and supported by pro bono legal researchers. This framework enables systematic assessment of how biodiversity is embedded in national legislation and policy, addressing a critical blind spot in global governance. Our work on menstrual health legislation and culturally responsive water governance further demonstrates the value of interdisciplinary, evidence-based inquiry.

I thank our researchers, peer reviewers and partners for their intellectual integrity and commitment to excellence.

Amael Notini, Brazil

1. RESEARCH AND APPLICATIONS

Menstrual Hygiene Management

Menstrual Hygiene Management remains a taboo subject in many societies across the globe. In partnership with the Inter-American Bank for Development, we have developed a publication on Menstrual Hygiene policies and legislation in select countries of Latin America and Spain, based on our national legal and policy reports. This publication allowed us to uncover some of the legal best practices that are being implemented in the region based on human rights standards and principles and match them with community initiatives that have made a positive impact in promoting safe menstrual hygiene practices and dignified water and sanitation provision.

Cultural Heritage

Research by Dr. Anand Chiplunkar (Board and Expert Committee Member) identified that protecting access to water is connected to protecting living heritage, and that culturally responsive, rights-based water governance is critical to ensuring these traditions endure amid growing pressures from climate change, pollution, privatization, and exclusionary policies. For Indigenous Peoples and marginalized communities in particular, water sustains spiritual ceremonies, customary stewardship practices, oral traditions, agricultural heritage, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Maintaining their knowledge and traditions when implementing water-related projects is essential for the long-term impact for these communities. In partnership with Aqua Legacy, HR2W developed a Policy Brief to highlight how the human right to water protects cultural heritage.



Biodiversity

New research has focussed on biodiversity and the recognition that biological diversity is fundamental to healthy ecosystems, human well-being, and the realisation of basic human rights. Across aquatic and terrestrial environments, biodiversity underpins the natural systems that provide food, medicine, clean water, climate regulation, and cultural and spiritual value. Our work has examined how the protection of aquatic ecosystems supports both environmental integrity and the enjoyment of human rights for present and future generations.

Despite recognition in numerous frameworks, the human rights elements of biodiversity are not well understood or integrated into national law, policies or planning processes, and there is an opportunity to strengthen this connection. HR2W has therefore developed a questionnaire and methodology, in partnership with IUCN, to examine the extent to which biodiversity is embedded within national legal and policy frameworks, identifying gaps where it remains treated as a secondary or technical concern rather than a binding legal and governance priority. White & Case have generously continued to act as pro bono legal researchers to help with the application of this methodology in countries from all regions. This work is ongoing.

Throughout the year, we created advocacy opportunities to bring awareness to this topic. For example, at a televised Talkshow at SIWI's World Water Week, Amanda Loeffen was interviewed with Jennifer Molwantwa, CEO of the Water Research Commission and Alejandro Iza, Director of the Environmental Law Centre for IUCN. This conversation highlighted the importance of biodiversity for both humans and nature.

Country Legal Mappings

We have benefitted from the support of three legal experts from Bradford University to peer review our country legal mappings. Thanks to research from Kay Windle, Grace Anarfi Wadieh and Chelsea Agbasiere we have been able to peer review and write short syntheses of the national studies on the topics of MHM and the right to a healthy environment for all our national reports. This work has helped us to identify trends, gaps, and best practices in access to safe, affordable water and sanitation services and menstrual products, education, and waste management systems.

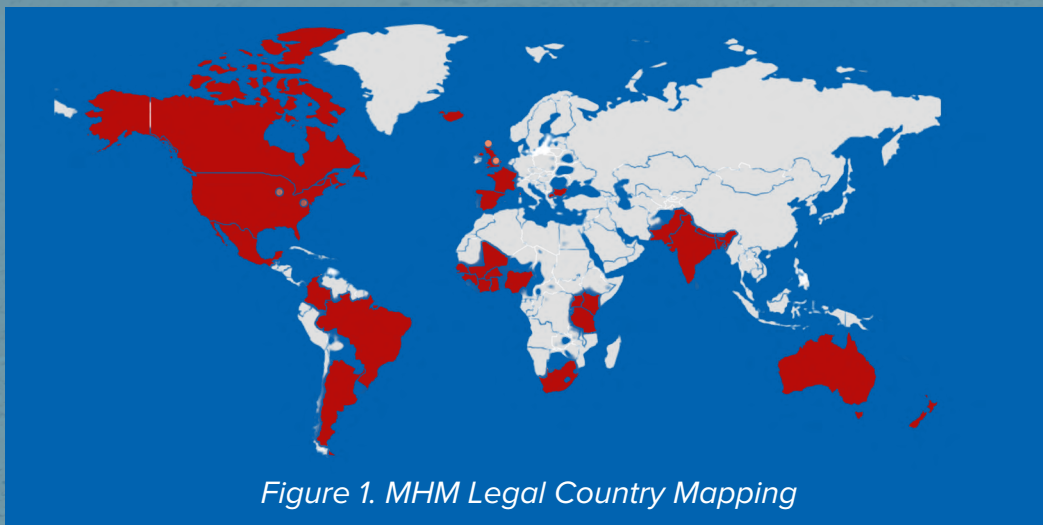


Figure 1. MHM Legal Country Mapping



44

COUNTRIES WITH REPORTS



73

REPORTS PUBLISHED



9

EVENTS HOSTED



4

NEWSLETTERS



+3286

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



2. CAPACITY BUILDING

Women in Water Research and Inclusivity

At the XIX World Water Congress in Marrakesh, themed Water in a Changing World: Innovation and Adaptation, HR2W strengthened its commitment to capacity building through active participation in two Special Sessions focused on inclusivity and research innovation. Discussions addressed empowering women in water research and advancing North–South collaboration to protect cultural heritage from hydroclimatic extreme events. By contributing to dialogue on gender-responsive, rights-based approaches and highlighting practical enablers such as training, co-creation, governance reform, and technology transfer, HR2W supported knowledge exchange across regions and disciplines. These engagements reinforced our mission to promote equitable participation in water science and to build the skills, partnerships, and institutional capacity required to ensure sustainable access to safe drinking water in a changing climate.



Figure 2. Empowering Women in Water Research.

*Amanda Leoffen, Alfonso Garcia, Francesca Grecco, Raya Stephan,
Tracy-Lynn Field Ariana Rossen*

Training with Lawyers on Biodiversity as a Human Right

HR2W developed interactive training for international lawyers at White and Case to assess how different countries integrate the human right to biodiversity. Designed as an introduction to our new methodology, this online training allowed us to guide the lawyers on how to complete the new questionnaire developed to measure how biodiversity is being protected. While not yet recognized as an official human right internationally, we hope to help bring visibility to the importance of considering the human rights elements of biodiversity through the range of national reports that will be completed in 2026. These reports, once peer-reviewed, will provide a valuable database of legal information for policy makers and decision makers globally.

3. AWARENESS

High Impact Plan

In 2025, we launched our High Impact Plan to help partners increase the impact of their membership contributions through our network. In 2025 we partnered with The Watoto Programme, a non-profit organisation in Kibera, the largest urban slum in Nairobi, Kenya, dedicated to supporting children to improve their access to education and a healthier environment. Through this program we managed to increase visibility and awareness of the important work done by this programme, and thanks to the generous help of some of our members we are happy to report that we fundraised CHF 260 for the organisation, helping them cover children's access to education, food and a clean and healthy environment for children.

UN-Water Partnership

One of HR2W's strategic priorities is to enhance the visibility and reach of its work across complementary networks. Through our engagement with the UN-Water network, we amplify the impact of our initiatives and events by connecting with a broad community of like-minded organizations and stakeholders. We actively align our activities with the global campaigns led by UN-Water for World Water Day and World Toilet Day. This strategic coordination strengthens collective messaging, expands audience engagement, and enables mutual benefit through shared networks and increased visibility.

Human Rights Council Side Event and Civil Society Engagement

Hosted by the Permanent Missions of Spain and Germany in the UN and by Human Right 2 Water, this side event at the 59th HRC was designed to ensure that civil society perspectives are heard and respected in preparation of the 2026 UN Water Conference. HR2W brought together members from different regions to represent the needs of different vulnerable groups and people in different situations, speaking about their challenges for access to safe water, dignified sanitation and menstrual health management. Thank you to Noémie Plumier (moderator) Dr. Pedi Obani (keynote), Pedro Arrojo Agudo (Special Rapporteur on HRWS), Marta Zaragoza Navarro, Samira Shakya, Daniela Araya and Dallis Morris, Arundati Muralidharan, and Mary Muia for participating and sharing their knowledge and experience at the event.



Figure 3. Side Event with the Human Rights Council

2025 Events

Date	Event
May 27 th	Herramienta práctica para la implementación de los Derechos Humanos en municipalidades rurales, Webinar with IDB and AECID*
June 16 th -18 th	Human Right 2 Water at the European Climate Change Adaptation Conference in Italy
June 26 th	Voices from Civil Society: What We Expect of the 2026 UN Water Conference, 59th HRC, Geneva*
July 23 rd	Water Policies to Support Investment in Human Nature, Webinar with AfDB and Water Research Commission *
August 26 th	Biodiversity, Human Rights and Climate Adaptation Talk show at World Water Week, IUCN, WRC*
August 28 th	Adapting Nature to Protect Cultural Heritage Side Event at World Water Week, IHE-Delft*
September 3 rd	People and Nature: Research into Sustainability Workshop in University of Evora, Portugal*
September 30 th	42nd UN Water Meeting, Geneva
October 12 th -15 th	Cultural Heritage Summit, Brussels
November 10 th	Integrated WEFE Solutions in Rural Locations Workshop at the AWSISA Conference, South Africa*
December 3 rd	Empowering Women in Water Research: Data, Law and Diplomacy for Inclusive Water Governance Workshop. IWRA Congress, Marrakesh*
December 10 th	Human Rights Day Webinar*

* Events organised by HR2W

More information on our events is available on [our website News page](#).

4. LAST REMARKS

Emerging Trends 2026

As we look ahead, several emerging trends are shaping the future of the human rights to water and sanitation. The 2026 UN Water Conference has renewed global attention on water as a cross-cutting human rights, development, and environmental issue, creating opportunities to strengthen accountability and accelerate implementation of commitments. At the same time, growing recognition of the interconnectedness of water, biodiversity, climate adaptation, public health, gender equality, and cultural heritage is expanding the scope of rights-based water governance.

Recent developments have highlighted the increasing importance of integrating menstrual health management into water, sanitation, health, and education policies, as well as addressing the disproportionate impacts of water insecurity on women, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, displaced populations, and other marginalized groups. There is also growing momentum around the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, creating new opportunities to explore the relationship between environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, and the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation. At the same time, significant challenges remain. Climate change, ecosystem degradation, pollution, conflict, urbanisation, and widening inequalities continue to threaten access to safe drinking water and sanitation services worldwide. Addressing these challenges will require stronger legal frameworks, improved data and monitoring systems, greater participation of affected communities, and more inclusive governance approaches that recognise local knowledge and lived experience.

In response, Human Right 2 Water will continue to focus its research and advocacy on emerging areas where human rights can drive transformative change. Priorities include strengthening the links between water, biodiversity, and environmental rights; advancing menstrual health as a human rights issue; promoting culturally responsive and Indigenous-informed water governance; supporting inclusive participation in water decision-making; and expanding comparative legal research to identify effective policy solutions. Through these efforts, we aim to contribute evidence, dialogue, and practical tools that support a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable future for people and nature.



Amanda Loeffen, CEO

As we reflect on another productive year, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of our Board and Expert Committee for their guidance, expertise, and continued commitment to our mission. Their strategic vision and generosity of time help ensure that our work remains credible, relevant, and impactful.

I would also like to thank our members, partners, and supporters whose collaboration makes our work possible. A special thank you to White and Case, who continue to donate a huge amount of legal research.

Finally, special thanks go to our small but dedicated Secretariat team, led by Isa and Kay and our team of supportive interns and volunteer researchers. Through their professionalism, passion, and tireless efforts, they consistently deliver high-quality research, events, and advocacy that far exceed what might be expected from an organisation of our size. Together, we continue to advance the human rights to water and sanitation for all.