

NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS WATER INITIATIVE



WaterLex supports an international network of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) to strengthen their role in a human rights based water governance, in addition to enhancing water governance and human rights law enforcement/implementation through legal as well as judicial mechanisms. WaterLex supports sharing of experiences and good practices related to water governance and human rights and builds NHRI capacity.

NHRI WATER INITIATIVE CONTEXT

The human right to water and sanitation (HRWS) was acknowledged in 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council. However, it is not yet realised. In addition, water is required to realise many other rights, such as the right to food or the right to health. Due to this linkage, the successful realisation of these rights relies on good water governance which balances the competing water needs of local populations, agriculture and industry.

NHRIs, the cornerstone of national human rights-protection mechanisms, are enabled to dispose constitutional powers to promote and protect human rights in more than 100 countries. They are in a unique position to play an enhanced role in protecting and promoting water governance-related human rights and thereby contribute to a human rights-based water governance. In addition, they are well placed to play a role in the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 16).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Hungarian NHRI (the Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations) launched the NHRI Water Initiative with the support of WaterLex in 2013. The initiative envisages a more prominent role of NHRIs in broader water governance for the promotion and protection of interconnected human rights. It is an open call for collaboration by all interested NHRIs who wish to strengthen their role in contributing to an enhanced human rights-based water governance. The initiative wishes to attract NHRIs which are already active in water governance and in a position to share practices/tools/resources, and to support NHRIs whose position is currently more limited.



The objectives of the NHRI Water Initiative are twofold:

- 1. Community building: Create a network of NHRIs that can exchange experiences and best practices:**
 - Build a community of practice;
 - Systematize information, tools, resources and good practices of NHRIs;
 - Support NHRIs in monitoring water governance by supporting sharing of existing best practices.

- 2. Capacity building: Support and build the capacity of NHRIs to strengthen their role in ensuring a human rights-based approach to water governance:**
 - Offer tailor-made trainings on the ground and provide technical support;
 - Deliver publications and practical guides on HRWS to respond to specific needs of NHRIs;
 - Develop other tools and methods to support NHRIs in need
 - Creation of the “NHRI Training Manual on Human Rights-based Water Governance”.

KEY OUTPUTS

The NHRI Water Initiative is expected to lead to the following outputs for NHRIs:

- Increased understanding of scope, content and connections on water-related human rights;
- Increased capacity to monitor water governance from a human rights perspective;
- Increased capacity to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal and SDG 6, the ‘Water SDG’;
- Becoming an important stakeholder in water-governance processes (e.g. procedural guarantees, access to information, participation) and responding to alleged infringements of rights.

PAST ACHIEVEMENTS

The NHRI Water Initiative has achieved the following results:

- An expanding international network of NHRIs on water governance and human rights;
- Side events on water governance to raise awareness of the initiative among NHRIs in the margins of annual NHRI meetings (ICC) at the Geneva UN headquarters;
- The capacity of over 30 NHRIs were strengthened in water governance and human rights;
- Publication of a compilation of good practices of NHRIs worldwide in promoting and protecting water governance-related human rights (available free of charge);
- Creation of the “NHRI Training Manual on Human Rights-based Water Governance”.

ENGAGEMENT WITH NHRI PARTNERS

Partner NHRIs take a leading role in the NHRI Water Initiative, supported by the WaterLex International Secretariat. The Initiative also benefits from a strategic partnership with the Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations, the Danish Institute for Human Rights and the South African Human Rights Commission. Enhanced cooperation with regional NHRI networks (Africa, Asia-Pacific etc.) and the International Coordination Committee of NHRIs (ICC) also support the work of the initiative.

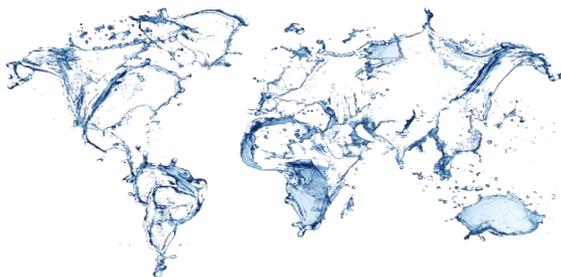
OUTLOOK FOR 2016, 2017 and 2018

*** Scaling up the NHRI Water Initiative for the realisation of Sustainable Development Goals**

NHRIs play a key role in securing the implementation and monitoring of the human rights in relation to water and therefore to realising the Sustainable Development Goals, more specifically 'Water SDG', SDG 6 and SDG 16 on 'effective, accountable and inclusive institutions'. Building on the first successful years, the initiative will maintain and expand the network, capacity and success of NHRIs on realising SDG 6.

*** NHRIs working with and benefiting Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) & Human Rights Defenders**

A big challenge for Civil Society and Human Rights Defenders is that international human rights law relating to water governance, human rights and business and SDGs is not sufficiently known and monitored at the national level. A new element to the Initiative will be training both NHRIs and CSOs (including Human Rights Defenders) from a certain country. At the same time, but at separate (close by) locations. For instance in Geneva or The Hague. After the disjointed trainings, there will be a moderated day where NHRIs and CSOs work together to work on specific water issues. All relevant parties will then bring into practise what they have learned and work towards concrete positive outcomes. They will thereby contribute to realising SDGs and to respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights in their country. This project will thus also benefit Human Rights Defenders and affected groups, like women and children, the poor and indigenous peoples.



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