



## End Water Poverty Progress Report: 2021-22

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## Definitions

**Climate justice:** Insists on the historic obligation of countries and corporations who caused the climate crisis to address intergenerational injustices and impacts. Justice depends on climate mitigation; on reducing greenhouse gas emissions to limit the impacts of the climate crisis, and on climate adaptation; strengthening the resilience of affected communities to cope with these impacts through the provision of socio-economic rights like water and sanitation.

**Marginalised communities:** Marginalised groups who are typically excluded from water and sanitation services include among others, asylum seekers and refugees, undocumented migrants, indigenous communities, informal settlement residents, LGBTQI+ communities, rural communities, sanitation workers, waste pickers, and women and girls.

**Members:** Refers to End Water Poverty's coalition members. Our members include grassroots groups, community-based organisations (CBOs), social movements, trade unions, national/regional networks, non-government organisations (NGOs) and international non-government organisations (INGOs).

**NHRIs:** Stands for National Human Rights Institutions. In different countries [NHRIs](#) are referred to as national human rights commissions/committees/councils/ombudspersons.

**Special Rapporteur:** Refers to Pedro Arrojo-Agudo, the United Nations special rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation.

**Water rights:** We use this term as shorthand for 'the human rights to water and sanitation'. We are aware that the phrase 'water rights' more commonly refers to water permit rights in certain countries, which is emblematic of the preferential water access corporations enjoy.

**WASH:** Stands for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

## Introduction

Within an often homogenous water and sanitation sector, Claim Your Water Rights continues to offer an alternative approach.

Claim Your Water Rights was initially met with opposition and scepticism from some WASH sector actors. We were told that human rights were too difficult to communicate, that they didn't produce results. We were warned about trying to hold private companies accountable to the same standards as governments. Some described our approach as 'polemical', 'confrontational' or 'uncollaborative'. Others said the word 'claim' was too provocative.

Our members' achievements over the last 3 years have belied these concerns.

Claiming water rights has traction, its demonstrating impact. We've learned that popular rights-based education and information is crucial for duty bearers and rights holders alike, and we can see clearly that community mobilisation underpins all this work. We're reaching the point where communities are self-mobilising, and they always have.

In the end its communities who are on the frontline, claiming their rights, engaging their politicians, standing up to the police and corporate power, defending their rivers and groundwater sources. It is community action, holding the line on human rights standards and principles, that results in change.

Our campaigns embolden, inform and mobilise and support, and our organisations need funding and profile, but our first job is to enable rights holders to activate laws, polices, to counter regression and repression and to hold the space for civic action.

The progress report documents exceptional examples of ways we've done this.

We're shifting the needle. This work is transformative. Together with our global and regional allies, and with members' creativity employing diverse and context specific strategies, we're operationalising the human rights to safe water and sanitation.

## Our work

- End Water Poverty (EWP) welcomed nine new coalition members since our previous general assembly in November 2020: Manushya Foundation (Thailand); We Own It (United Kingdom); Global Society for Anti-Corruption (Nigeria); WASH Rights Network (Nigeria); WEMNET (Uganda); African Water Commons Collective (South Africa); Centre for Applied Legal Studies (South Africa); Centre for Peace Without Borders (Nigeria); Population and Development Initiative (Tanzania).
- 81.22% of EWP's operational budget between 2020 and 2022 (£129,354.37) has gone to members - specifically 28 different members in 13 different countries. This has primarily funded members' grassroots advocacy through Claim Your Water Rights and Government, Pay Your Water Bills!
- EWP published 30 articles on our website - 15 with members.
- Between January 2021 and August 2022 EWP has generated 678,400 Twitter impressions (33,920 impressions a month = 1,138 impressions a day) at an engagement rate of 2.43%. This period includes six months where EWP's engagement officer could not fulfil social media responsibilities, leading to a significant drop in engagement that is still taking time to correct.

## Amplifying and platforming members

- Shared members' Claim Your Water Rights actions on WaterAid's [interactive platform](#) exploring how the climate crisis affects water access.
- Co-convened a [session](#) on 'Financing accountability' at AfricaSan/ Africa Water Week 2021. Panellists included the Kenya Water and Sanitation Civil Society Network (KEWASNET), Zambia NGO WASH Forum, and Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation (CFCF), while EWP international coordinator Alana Potter closed the session by stressing that services provision and accountability to consumers are inseparable.
- Co-hosted a [session](#) at Africa Water Week on 'Integrity and Informal Settlements' with Water Integrity Network (WIN) and ICLEI.
- Celebrated two years of Claim Your Water Rights on International Human Rights Day 2021 by gathering members' campaign highlights into a [Twitter mega-thread](#).
- Shared members' Claim Your Water Rights successes in an [interview](#) with Making Rights Real.
- Published a [blog](#) by African Center for Advocacy (ACA) examining attempts to undermine trust in Cameroon's state-run water services.
- Sponsored a delegation of seven members from Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe to attend the Alternative World Water Forum (FAME) in Dakar. EWP simultaneously sponsored a workshop in Pakistan for journalists and FANSA members. Alana visited both the official and alternative forum, meeting members from various continents.
- Published a long read by Manushya Foundation on the [Justice for Phichit](#) campaign.
- Submitted a Claim Your Water Rights case study to WaterAid's new Advocacy Handbook.
- Facilitated members' participation in WaterAid's vibrant discussion on elections advocacy ('How to make WASH a vote winner'), inviting Asif Aqeel from Centre for Law & Justice (CLJ) and Attah Benson from the Nigerian Society of Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN) to speak. Many members contributed to the session Q&A with EWP [live tweeting](#) the highlights.
- Invited the Zimbabwean National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) to speak at WaterAid's monthly 'Water and Climate' campaign committee meeting.

## Building alliances

- Joined the [Economic, Social & Cultural Rights Network](#) (ESCR-Net), a network of 280 grassroots groups, social movements, NGOs, academics and activists, to harness their collective power and connect with advocates working on other economic, social and cultural rights and.
- Alana gave a presentation on [human rights and integrity in informal settlements](#) at Water Integrity Network's members meeting.
- Shared funding opportunities for grassroots groups and climate campaigners through the [Fund for Global Human Rights](#) and [International Climate Initiative](#).
- EWP was proposed and endorsed as an interim member of the African Water Justice Network's interim steering committee.
- Promoted Making Rights Real's discussion with WaterAid's Head of Advocacy and Sector Strengthening Programmes Tseguereda Abraham on how to hold governments accountable to the UN resolutions on the human rights to water and sanitation, publicising key information and members' contributions on [social media](#).
- Met Pedro Arrojo-Agudo's office to discuss how EWP can support the Special Rapporteur's mandate, such as by organising an online event in October to promote an upcoming report on the rights of people living in rural areas.
- Joined an introductory meeting with organisations who produced the [Global Review of National Accountability Mechanisms for SDG 6](#) to discuss the creation of a shared civil society learning agenda.
- Established relations with CIVICUS who will join our general assembly to share knowledge on the global state of civic space and equip human rights defenders with tools to mitigate the risks of working in repressive states. After the assembly, EWP and CIVICUS' members will exchange experience and expertise on rights claiming and upholding civic space.

## Coalition enabling environment

- Sent monthly newsletters in English, French and Spanish.
- Published [granting guidelines](#) for member funding.
- Developed a standardised concept note form, mid-campaign report form and final campaign report form for members who receive mini-grants.
- Opened calls for Claim Your Water Rights mini-grants via [our newsletter](#) while updating our [campaign FAQs](#) to guide members' proposals.
- Drafted an updated strategy for the second phase of Claim Your Water Rights.
- Hired The Ethical Agency to design brand tools and refresh EWP's website.
- Secured a commitment to fund the salary of an EWP researcher for 12-18 months who can undertake research that members can use to strengthen their water rights claiming strategies.
- Met Butterfly Effect, European Pact for Water, ONGAWA and the Special Rapporteur to discuss meaningful civil society participation at the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York. Agreed join partners in advocating for a civil society dialogue and a permanent UN mechanism for water and sanitation. More recently, EWP helped organise a meeting between numerous civil society networks and the delegation for the Kingdom of Netherlands - who are co-hosting the conference with the government of Tajikistan - to raise concerns that civil society have been largely excluded from participating in the conference.

## Collective publications

- Ahead of World Water Day 2021, EWP coordinated and contributed to an [international declaration](#) with Coalition Eau and Foundation Danielle Mitterrand condemning the commodification of water after the listing of water on the California stock exchange. Over 550 civil society representatives signed the declaration.
- Published a [report](#) with WaterAid offering a blueprint to governments and donors on how to finance safe, sustainable water and sanitation services. The report proposes various measures, including: debt cancellation; an end to fossil fuel subsidies; increased tax revenues; and international investments in the form of grants - not loans.
- Signed an [open letter](#) with WaterAid, Water Witness and the UK WASH Network calling for the UK government to reverse savage cuts to international water and sanitation projects.
- In solidarity with a number of African members, EWP endorsed the Our Water, Our Right coalition's [position paper](#) on water privatisation.
- On World Toilet Day 2021, EWP joined Sweepers Are Superheroes in demanding legal justice for Nadeem and Faisal Masih, who died after being forced to enter a toxic sewer without protective equipment in Sargodha, Pakistan by publishing Asif Aqeel's superb [report](#) documenting their families' fight for justice.
- EWP, Survivors of Lesotho Dams (SOLD) and The Freshwater Action Network Mexico (FANMex) made a [joint submission](#) to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the water rights of indigenous peoples and people living in rural areas.
- Contributed to ESCR-Net's collective submission to the special rapporteur for human rights and climate change on the 'promotion and protection of human rights in the context of mitigation, adaptation, and financial actions to address climate change, with particular emphasis on loss and damage'.
- Promoted Redes Del Agua's international press conference and [statement](#) exposing state violence against human rights defenders resisting privatisation in Mexico.

## Exchanging experience and expertise

- To mark the publication of our [Compilation of Good Practices for National Human Rights Institutions and Water Governance](#), EWP organised a webinar with Human Right 2 Water to explore how civil society can work with National Human Rights Institutions to support people to claim their rights to safe water and sanitation.
- In April EWP published its [2019-20 progress report](#), documenting members' remarkable work and achievements from the first year of Claim Your Water Rights.
- Coalition Eau featured EWP's Claim Your Water Rights campaign in their [study](#) on how a human rights-based approach can improve accountability, address structural inequalities and realise marginalised communities' rights to water and sanitation.
- Alana joined the second episode of Making Rights Real's MRR Talks [podcast](#) to discuss rights claiming, legal activism to highlight the false binary between 'polite' or 'polemical' campaigning and stress the importance of embracing a variety of tactics, referring to diverse examples of community mobilisation documented in the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa's [Claiming Water Rights](#) series and our [advocacy toolkit](#). Alana's interview was later published as an [article](#).
- EWP used World Toilet Day 2021 to reflect members' national realities and advocacy demands by publishing videos and statements.

- Held a hybrid session at FAME, '[Expanding civic space - state repression of water rights claiming](#)', in which activists from various countries and continents delivered first-hand accounts of defending human rights. National Association of Youth Organisations - Zimbabwe spoke about upholding political space in an increasingly militarised police state, while Manushya Foundation shared their experience of fighting corporate impunity and Thailand's corrupt military government. EWP co-convened the session with the African Water Commons Collective (AWCC), Western Cape Water Caucus, Environmental Monitoring Group, the Anti-repression Collective and Water Action Committees. While the session was broadcast live from Dakar, EWP sponsored a parallel event at Salt River Community House in Cape Town.
- Amplified the voices of civil society and marginalised communities at Stockholm World Water Week (SWWW). EWP hosted a session, '[Hearing the unheard: mutual accountability to realise WASH rights](#)', to amplify the demands of marginalised groups with the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), the Special Rapporteur, Simavi, KEWASNET and the Rural Water Supply Network (RWSN), facilitating the participation of an informal settlements leader in South Africa and an indigenous rights expert in Cambodia.
- Also co-hosted '[Unlocking accountability: the unseen enabler of essential water services](#)' at SWWW with Water Witness International, WaterAid and KEWASNET to show how accountability and active citizenry are vital in transforming water and sanitation services.
- EWP will continue to platform groups who are often excluded from global events through the #HearingTheUnheardHRWS campaign, encouraging members to follow the campaign on social media and contribute by submitting three one-minute videos with willing representatives of marginalised communities.

## Governance

On 1 November 2021 Alana Potter was appointed End Water Poverty's international coordinator. We are grateful to Al-hassan Adam, who provided bold and astute leadership over his six years as coordinator. His innovative campaigning and tireless championing of human rights positioned End Water Poverty as an alternative voice within the water and sanitation sector, laying the foundation for members across the world to produce life-changing advocacy results.

We were also excited to welcome new energy to our Steering Committee. Ojobo Atuluku, Director of International Development at Christian Aid, was appointed Chair of our Steering Committee in her independent capacity. Hannah Neumeyer, Head of Human Rights at WASH United was elected by Europe members as our European representative, and Barbara Schreiner, Executive Director of the Water Integrity Network (WIN) came on board as an additional expert member. We are grateful to Philip Beetlestone and Catarina Fonseca for their valuable contributions over the years.

## Claim Your Water Rights

EWP envisages an engaged, emboldened and united civil society coalition employing a range of context-specific, community-led strategies under the global banner of Claim Your Water Rights.

Since launching on 10 December 2019 (International Human Rights Day) Claim Your Water Rights has been at the core of our work. The first phase of Claim Your Water Rights aimed to build members' awareness, knowledge and confidence to advocate using the international human rights framework nationally and locally. Members focused on raising public and political awareness of the rights to water and sanitation, identifying communities whose rights had been violated and informing them of their entitlements as rights-holders, while informing governments of their obligations as duty-bearers.

Members employed a range of rights claiming strategies to produce tangible results, including legal reform, influencing governments' COVID-19 interventions, infrastructure improvements and numerous communities successfully claiming their rights in multiple countries. These are just some of our members' remarkable achievements.

So what have we learnt from almost three years of Claim Your Water Rights? This document collates members' reports and interviews to explore the campaign's key thematic and strategic lessons. While advocacy takes time to fully materialise, manifest and measure, the numerous tangible results documented in the below analysis and country summaries are testament to the efficiency and effectiveness of national and local civil society activism.

### Analysis

#### Amplifying community voices

Centring the voices and actions of communities is essential to the integrity, authenticity and efficacy of Claim Your Water Rights. As Centre for Law & Justice's (CLJ) Asif Aqeel says, "it should be the people demanding their water rights - not an organisation speaking on their behalf. People will demand in their own language; they will not mince their words." Working with communities that members either know or come from lends extra legitimacy: "we knew the issues because we lived them", says Aqeel who conducted CLJ's Vote for Water campaign in the same Christian minority neighbourhood in Lahore where he grew up.

Working with community leaders is another way of building trust and solidarity. Community Emergency Resilience Initiative's (CERI) Attah Benson recommends that civil society invest time building relationships with communities. "Communities must have people they feel they can talk to - it gives them hope and encourages them to know they are not powerless and can get what is rightfully theirs."

Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights' (MIHR) Khumulani Maphosa similarly emphasises the importance of "getting the community to speak for itself as a way of catalysing action", while the Indian Institute of Youth & Development's (IIYD) P.C. Misra goes further in recommending that communities represent themselves without the visibility of non-government organisations (NGOs), whom Indian authorities are more likely to perceive as antagonistic.

## Assessing the effectiveness of NHRIs

Lodging complaints to national human rights institutions remains a relatively untested and overlooked accountability mechanism.

The first phase of the campaign shows that the effectiveness of these institutions varies from country to country. Even members who made ground-breaking progress found that their commission's impact was limited. Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation (CFCF) supported a community to lodge a complaint to the Imo State human rights commission - a national first for Nigeria. The commission's recommendations were tentative but garnered commitments from the Imo State Water and Sewerage Corporation. Yet this came after months of confidence- and capacity-building with CFCF organising numerous workshops to understand the commission's governance and operational challenges, even developing a complaints form on the commission's behalf. CFCF's Clinton Ezeigwe says candidly that the commission lacks awareness of its own power: the commission must demonstrate its effectiveness to give communities confidence to lodge further complaints.

CERI, who collaborated with CFCF, similarly reported that Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission, based in Abuja, lacked knowledge of the human rights to water and sanitation. Substantial time was spent enhancing the commission's access information. Benson recognises that commissions' power is limited - particularly at state level as the government can easily fire staff or reduce budgets. Nevertheless, he affirms that there is potential for civil society to collaborate effectively with national human rights institutions to hold governments accountable.

While Socio-Economic Rights Institut's (SERI) Ed Molopi and Lauren Royston concede that expectations of the South Africa Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) were low, they say that the commission still has a "key role" to play. "We wouldn't discount them; they would be one of our advocacy targets." In some countries members have reported that NHRIs are effective in holding government accountable to civil and political rights – but not water rights. "In other aspects of their work, they are a partner", says Molopi.

Some members hold positions within their NHRI's governance structure. After months of lobbying from the Zambia NGO WASH Forum, the Zambia National Human Rights Commission established a Thematic Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, inviting the Forum to nominate a civil society representative. The National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) similarly sit within the Zimbabwe National Human Rights Commission as the country's youth representative. NAYO use their position to submit periodic reports on young people's enjoyment of various rights - including water and sanitation - and organise investigative visits to provide residents with information on the human rights to water and sanitation, explaining that people have the power to lodge anonymous complaints of rights violations that occurred within the last three years. NAYO reported that the commission's presence at meetings between communities and duty-bearers was helpful in giving people confidence to air grievances and question councillors. Yet they would like to see stronger action and insist on the virtue of patience: "We hope to continue to leverage. It takes time."

Other members' experiences contrast greatly. Institute of Cultural Affairs' (ICA) Kassimou Issotina reported that Benin's national human rights commission were reticent to be seen as publicly promoting human rights – to the extent that they refused to be pictured with activists - due to government repression. Conversely, the Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation's (CONIWAS)

Basilia Nanbigne found that Ghana's Commission of Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) were knowledgeable and "proactive" in undertaking independent research to identify community members who can submit complaints and claim their rights. Nanbigne attributes CHRAJ's proactiveness to lack of fear: "once CHRAJ raise issues, the governments support them." Nanbigne describes the establishment of a good working relationship between CONIWAS and CHRAJ's regional and national branches as a key campaign achievement that is a testament to determined, persistent efforts to convene advocacy allies. "Civil society should not relent. We've been trying to work with CHRAJ with years; now it will yield results. Advocacy is a continuous process."

Ultimately in some countries NHRIs can be an accessible means through which marginalised groups can access justice. In Koraput, Odisha, Indian Institute of Youth & Development organised rights awareness training for an Adivasi community. Following the training, the community filed a 'representation' to the National Scheduled Tribes Commission concerning a lack of toilets (the term 'complaint' was deemed unacceptable by bureaucrats so IYD skilfully adjusted their language, yet the content of the letter remained the same). A subsequent report showed that the money allocated for toilets had been spent despite no construction work taking place - the government simply assumed the Adivasi community would not complain. Once the commission investigated the complaint, the government started constructing toilets.

It is also worth noting that sometimes the mere threat of lodging complaints is enough to compel duty-bearers to act. The first major Claim Your Water Rights success came in January 2020, when Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN) supported over 1,000 people in Mansa who had been without safe water for almost a year to demand their rights. The community first vented their frustration on regional TV and radio, imploring their member of parliament (Zambia's then health minister) to fulfil his election promise of realising their rights to safe water. They then threatened to submit complaints to Zambia's human rights commission. The combination of media scrutiny and looming complaints compelled Mansa's member of parliament to intervene. Five days later, the community celebrated the restoration of their water supply.

### **Building allies**

Building coalitions working on interrelated human rights can foster a culture of learning and solidarity that will deepen our understanding of the different ways in which civil society confront systemic injustices, power imbalances and rights violations. While it's important to connect with health, gender, environmental and social justice activists, members have also engaged civil and political rights advocates to build a broad movement of water rights defenders.

This intersectional approach enables members to better understand the complexity and specificity of the injustices different marginalised groups experience. NAYO, who partnered with resident associations in establishing climate justice youth hubs, similarly advise partnering with diverse civil society allies to accelerate actions, leverage partners' relations and widen the scope of the campaign. CFCF have prioritised partnership with networks, schools, community leaders and a broad civil society coalition to the extent that Claim Your Water Rights is now a movement in Imo State. As CFCF's Clinton Ezeigwe says, "Collaboration is key. You can do things you cannot achieve alone. Don't be afraid to ask for help." Integrated Regional Support Programme's (IRSP) Syed Shah Nasir echoes Ezeigwe's advice: "Don't work in isolation. Work in alliances, work with local government and political leaders. Our mandate is to benefit people; it's a combined effort."

## Climate justice

Climate justice is intrinsic to the struggle for water rights, yet this concept is still nascent in many countries. Zambia NGO WASH Forum's Bubala Muyovwe describes climate justice advocacy as being in its 'infancy' in Zambia, and so organised training to build Forum members' knowledge and confidence. Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN) found that Zambian policy makers and ministers also lacked understanding of the connections between the water and climate crisis – something that Muyovwe attributes to a lack of data: "there is no reliable water quality database. 60% of water is reportedly contaminated but there is no mapping, no water quality testing - only increasing cholera incidents." Muyovwe says that this is partly why Zambia's water ministry does not have a strategy to provide climate resilient water services.

NAYO, who incorporated climate justice messaging into their 2021 campaign activities, similarly reported that most communities lacked awareness of the intersection between the water and climate crisis. NAYO therefore established provincial youth hubs as a safe space for activists to organise, mobilise, unite, and resist water rights violations. This decentralised structure allowed hubs to respond swiftly to local realities, fostering community resilience and a sense of belonging. This resulted in local authorities responding supportively to community concerns, plus improved monitoring of water availability and accessibility issues. NAYO also produced online fliers and posters to raise public awareness of the nexus between climate justice and water rights.

The communities most affected by climate change have contributed the least to climate impacts and are invariably the most marginalised. The crisis will be felt most severely by people whose rights to safe water are already compromised. Either their right to water is not adequately respected, protected or fulfilled, or their access relies on surface or groundwater sources that have been polluted or over-abstracted by unsustainable, unregulated practices in major industries.

The extractive industry, including gold mining, is a key culprit in this crisis. In Thailand, Manushya Foundation have supported the Phichit community's class action lawsuit against Akara, a subsidiary of the Australian mining company Kingsgate, who polluted and depleted their water. The case is a stark reminder of the destructive consequences free trade agreements have on local communities and the environment. In raising public awareness of the Justice for Phichit campaign and supporting villagers' legal empowerment, Manushya Foundation advocate for the Thai government to address environmental damage at its source, providing human rights guarantees and compensation for loss and damage.

## Community mobilisation

A common feature of all rights claiming efforts is community mobilisation - be it public meetings, workshops/training, self-organisation or coalition building. It is ultimately the agency and actions of people that activate laws, policies, and human rights.

Association AVARA's Gèneviève Rakotonandrasana, who is attempting to mainstream the human rights to water and sanitation in Madagascar, affirms that civil society must activate the public to counter government inaction and inertia: "If we are still waiting for the government to do something, it's too late." Sometimes communities do not need prompting to mobilise. As part of Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights' campaign in Zimbabwe, residents took a collective decision to train each other and self-organise into environmental committees.

People are sometimes placed in confrontation by decisions that advantage one community over another. The Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights (MIHR) navigated such a tension when building solidarity between a rural community who were displaced during the construction of a dam and an urban community who stood to receive water from the dam. The evicted community is from the Donga ethnic group, who have been historically displaced and marginalised, while the urban community is metropolitan. The communities made joint placards, and MIHR took collective photos, sending the message that the Bulawayo communities stand together against injustice to authorities, government officials and Zimbabwe's National Water Authority.

### **Countering cost recovery and austerity**

Members have found that a lack of clarity about institutional and financial mechanisms can obfuscate accountability. The Tanzania Claim Your Water Rights consortium concluded, after approaching various duty-bearers in Geita who shifted responsibility between one another, that government's reliance on cost recovery prevented the extension of water services to households without access.

Cost recovery models must be challenged. Full cost recovery is neither feasible nor ethical, and vital public services like water and sanitation cannot be run like businesses. Water and sanitation are transformational and essential to dismantling structural inequality and poverty. Not having water is not only an indicator but a cause of poverty. The longer governments fail to provide subsidised or free services to communities who can't afford them, the more deeply poverty is entrenched. Where profit is prioritised above people's rights, water and sanitation services will remain as poor as the communities tasked with funding them.

Freshwater Action Network Mexico's (FANMex) Nathalie Seguin describes how this creates "a vicious circle of non-payment" in Mexico where inadequately regulated, poor quality services generate an understandable lack of confidence in water users who decide to stop paying for the service, thus exacerbating deficiencies under a cost recovery model. During their Claim Your Water Rights advocacy NAYO similarly called for governments to stop applying the cost-recovery market-based model to water services, to stop building financial barriers to deny low-income households safe drinking water through prepaid meters, and to put water into democratic control. Munyoro, who attended the Alternative World Water Forum in March 2022 in Dakar, Senegal, said that "the struggle for water is an intersectional, internationalist struggle that needs a solid anti-capitalist, people-centered and feminist orientation."

Targeted austerity measures must be challenged too. In Nigeria, CERI's Attah Benson said that local authorities are responsible for providing water and sanitation services but hamstrung by state and federal governments not allocating or releasing funds. Meanwhile MIHR's Khumbulani Maphosa says that the Zimbabwean government is employing a trick used by ruling parties across the world: cutting local authority budgets in opposition-controlled areas in order to win votes from disenfranchised voters who are dismayed by the state of local public services. Maphosa explains: "People in Zimbabwe are being displaced by development. 84% of communities displaced by dams, mining and agriculture live in opposition-controlled wards. They are then being pushed to local authorities controlled by the ruling party. Many development projects are gaining momentum ahead of the 2023 elections. Those getting the tenders are politically connected."

In other words, governments are already politicising water and sanitation issues that civil society is warned not to politicise. As IIYD's P.C. Misra remarks, development is only possible once people know what they can and should expect from their welfare state. While centring people's agency, we must ultimately place the onus to act on governments. The human rights obligations of states in guaranteeing people's water rights are clear - as are the obligations of contracted private companies to respect these rights. States and corporations who commit human rights violations must be held to account. In cases where local service providers are genuinely hampered by local austerity budgets, complaints must be escalated to those responsible for setting budgets and designing financing mechanisms. International human rights obligations require states to allocate maximum available resources to fulfil economic and social rights.

### **Engaging governments**

Members have supported community engagements with elected officials as well as dialogue between different government officials, branches and departments. Members who have strong working relationships with elected officials or political platforms often choose to lobby governments behind closed doors before turning to other tactics. In Nigeria's Enugu State, the WASH Rights Network combined media influencing with patient, persistent lobbying to compel their state government to pass into law the Enugu Water Bill, which stipulates that people have a right to water that is to be enforced by an independent regulator.

Petitions can be another way to engage governments. MIHR supported the Mbundane community to petition parliament, escalating their complaint to the relevant national portfolio committee. Khumbulani Maphosa elegantly describes petitions in Zimbabwe as "a means to unlocking dialogue space with decision-makers". Maphosa elaborates: "It's a way of escalating the issue and building political pressure. When you petition them, they are constitutionally obligated to meet you."

Navigating the dynamics between different levels of government can be challenging. It can also present opportunities. CERI's Attah Benson found that local government officials responded positively to the campaign's human rights angle, requesting support in raising issues with state representatives and at Nigeria's national assembly. NAYO likewise reported that local authorities in Zimbabwe were responsive to community concerns but need to be pushed to escalate matters to higher government offices. Some members even reported that certain government departments use civil society to leak information that they cannot publicise.

Governments who are receptive to the campaign can be influential campaign allies - especially in cases of corporate abuse. Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN) worked with Zambia's newly elected government in 2021 to compel two Chinese brewing companies to sign business and human rights commitments. This came after VAREN presented evidence that the companies' brewing operations had violated people's rights to safe, accessible water. Initially one of the companies rejected VAREN's findings so the government intervened, suspending the company's operations until they complied with environmental regulations. VAREN's Jackson Mwenya praised recent collaboration between civil society and government in holding to account corporations who are reluctant to acknowledge responsibility in protecting environmental rights: "Effective collaboration with government will help achieve specific goals when engaging private companies. Remember these private companies are often protected by government. When civil society have a strong collaboration with government, you can achieve more." This point illustrates that Claim Your Water Rights aims to

strengthen government institutions' accountability and efficacy. We want these institutions to work. Governments should view civil society as allies – not adversaries.

### **Evidence-based advocacy**

Conducting and collecting evidence makes for more effective advocacy. Access to clear, accurate information and transparent, up-to-date, disaggregated data is vital to gathering credible evidence for advocacy and identifying rights violations, especially among marginalised communities who have been excluded from official data. For instance, locally disaggregated data was similarly missing in India's official statistics, further excluding already marginalised rural and tribal communities.

Freshwater Action Network Mexico's Nathalie Seguin says that Mexico's national statistics "do not match reality". "Supposedly, 94% of people have clean water, but this is not true", Seguin says, explaining that these statistics have given a false impression to donors and INGOs that Mexico does not have a water and sanitation crisis. "Mexico has a huge problem with water quality. People cannot drink their tap water. Rivers are polluted. The solution? People are forced to spend a significant portion of their income on bottled water."

FANMex's solution was more considered. (FANMex) publicised the widespread contamination of water used by school communities after obtaining and trawling through official data on the levels of harmful pollutants. FANMex then created an online platform called [Calidad del Agua en las Escuelas](#) ('Quality of Water in Schools') to disseminate this information along with suggested rights claiming actions for students, parents and teachers.

Other members undertake research to build a convincing narrative, to document and amplify, and to generate and analyse evidence that can be used to raise public awareness and to advocate for changes to policies and practices. SERI documented and published different kinds of water rights claiming strategies employed in rural, peri urban and small-town communities across four provinces, and audited services in inner city occupied buildings in Johannesburg, producing novel research on the links between property rights, water and sanitation. The Social Justice Coalition (SJC) documented primary research on water and sanitation services in informal settlements to inform their advocacy with the City of Cape Town.

### **Litigation is possible**

Litigation is often a measure of last resort. It is most effective when employed in combination with other tactics including community mobilisation, social accountability and direct government engagement. The legal mobilisation that surrounds litigation, is as important as the litigation itself. For example, Manushya Foundation provide legal training and cover court costs to support the Pichit community's class action lawsuit against an Australian-owned mining company that polluted their water and environment.

Litigation can seem costly and inaccessible - especially to people working in countries where the human rights to water and sanitation are not enshrined in national law. However, members can still seek assistance from public interest legal organisations or specialist INGOs to use local, regional or international law that is 'justiciable' for water and sanitation rights, including the right to justice and procedural fairness in administrative actions and decisions. Legal systems will only change if they are challenged. Reform is possible.

## Member collaboration

Other coalition members working under the Claim Your Water Rights banner are integral allies for learning and cooperation. In our 2021-22 funding agreements we encouraged members in the same country to jointly coordinate plans and share resources, often with the intention of connecting members working at sub-national level with national networks. In most cases this facilitated fruitful collaboration. Many members responded that they were pleased to connect with other EWP members and see potential in coordinating a shared advocacy agenda.

For example, Media for Community Empowerment (MECE), Tanzania Women Empowerment in Action (TAWEA), and Tanzania's national civil society network (TAWASANET) formed a Claim Your Water Rights consortium. MECE's Mohammed Hammie praised the consortium's chemistry. "TAWEA, TAWASANET and MECE have different approaches to ensure participants understand the human rights to water. Think of it like three doctors with different approaches and expertise trying to help a patient. TAWASANET are good at publishing, providing printed materials; TAWEA conducted human rights training; I amplified the work as a journalist."

Yet some members reported that it was difficult to collaborate. Sometimes diaries simply don't align. In other cases, members conceded that it was difficult to synchronise plans due to differing advocacy approaches.

## Mobilising the media

Traditional and social media are essential accountability tools. In the first phase of the Claim Your Water Rights campaign, members working in different countries, continents and contexts made extensive and creative use of various media to inform, influence and empower. Members utilised written media, television, and press conferences to publicise human rights violations and pressure governments to fulfil commitments and obligations, while informing people of their rights and how to claim them.

Many found that community radio was a particularly effective medium for communicating directly with large rural audiences. In southern Madagascar's Fort-Dauphin, which only has one TV station, G enevi ve Rakotonandrasana described radio communication as "the most reliable means of communication". Meanwhile MECE used community radio stations to reach rural communities in Tanzania with limited internet access. "I don't air programmes through commercial radio", said Mohammed Hammie. "Commercial radio is good for business and advertising, for people who are concerned with diamonds or celebrity affairs. But community radios reach the right people."

Storytelling can be a form of activism too. Hammie wrote a book to capture the stories he documented during MECE's Claim Your Water Rights campaign. *Mandiga's Well*, which was shortlisted for the James Currey Prize for African Literature, tells one woman's story of advocating for water on behalf of her community after being raped on her way to collect water from the bush. Hammie describes the book as "literature for community development. A book is just one platform to tell the government what is happening in our country. I can reach other countries that don't speak Swahili. My friends in Zimbabwe, Malawi and India said the same thing has happened there."

Tweaking and translating communication materials to suit different audiences is key. To engage Adivasi communities who do not speak Odisha's official administrative language (English), IIYD

translated materials into local languages. IRSP did the same when visiting Mohana communities around Lake Manchar, Pakistan, generating local, national and international media coverage.

Other members turned to digital campaigning with WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook popular platforms for sharing information, connecting activists, organising events, mobilising public support and reminding duty-bearers of their responsibilities. Despite working under a “digital dictatorship”, Manushya Foundation is leading a Facebook, Twitter and Instagram campaign to raise public awareness of the Phichit community’s class action lawsuit against Akara Resources, mobilising its followers to sign petitions and donate to the community’s legal fund.

Amid poor connectivity and soaring internet costs, NAYO and MIHR similarly use WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter during the pandemic to maintain digital space, foster solidarity, spark conversation and mobilise activists. NAYO’s MacDonald Munyoro characterises the media as an “ally, influencer and protagonist” in the struggle for water while MIHR’s Khumbulani Maphosa offers advice for those interested in expanding their social media advocacy: “Digital campaigns can be effective if you have a clear action plan; staggering actions in such a way that they are creative, engaging and varied enough for people to engage. An ideal digital space is one people are comfortable participating [...] On our WhatsApp engagement platforms there are certain rules of engagement that we asked people to develop so everyone feels included and different views are cordially respected.” Maphosa recommends that civil society monitor when connectivity is high and give people flexible actions so that they do not have to be ‘glued to a screen’ to engage. “We don’t focus purely on activism - we also have social activities”.

### **Politicising water rights**

The provision of water and sanitation is an inherently political issue: it is the state’s duty to guarantee people’s rights. As Aqeel says, “rights are demanded and claimed from governments. So, by default, we are operating in a political arena.” Civil society can act as a bridge between people and power, lobbying officials while platforming public demands – or as VAREN’s Jackson Mwenya puts it, “we stand between grassroots and policy-makers”. Aqeel says that one of CLJ’s major Claim Your Water Rights achievements was politicising water and sanitation: “otherwise this issue will be on the backburner for decade”.

CERI’s Attah Benson views elections as an opportune time to make water and sanitation a political priority: “we must remind people to use their vote as a weapon. Their vote is their right - they don’t have to sell their vote.” The difficulty often comes when mitigating the risks of associating with particular political parties and, as IRSP’s Syed Shah Nasir and IIYD’s P.C. Misra both point out, holding politicians accountable for their promises once they come to power. Both recommend navigating partisan politics by using neutral language and inviting candidates from all parliamentary parties to sign commitments during elections.

### **The precarity and power of protest**

The right to assembly and protest is a vital means of political participation and expressing dissent. Protest takes many different forms: from marches to sit-ins to roadblocks. Protests can be individually or collectively organised, they can be planned or spontaneous, they can be directed at government or corporations, they can be confrontational, they can often be disruptive, and they can be driven by conservative or progressive ideologies.

We don't prescribe which forms of protest members may use. Communities often mobilise and protest as a last resort when governments are unresponsive to rights claiming actions like direct engagement. Some members may consider disruption an effective way of supporting communities to claim their rights.

After all, agitational protests can be effective. In Zimbabwe, MIHR and NAYO generated unrelenting public pressure through weekly demonstrations demanding water and climate justice. This led to various tangible successes, including infrastructure improvements, service extension, new water projects and increased dialogue between rights-holders and duty-bearers.

In south Asia, however, protests are considered inherently confrontational and anti-government. IRSP's Syed Shah Nasir explains that "protests are unwelcome. If civil society starts to propagate the issue [of water rights violations], political elites consider this agitation. Given these circumstances we very tactfully designed our activities and messages so as not to damage the relation between communities and government."

Yet Syed Shah Nasir identifies protest, education, data sharing and community mobilisation as intersecting strategies. He calls on civil society to "bring people together, brief them and give direction about how they can claim their rights to water and sanitation. Mobilise women's groups and local community-based organisations, give them data about their area and you can hold government accountable - you can write to them and pressure them through social media [...] There are many success stories where people spoke out and it was effective".

### **Resisting repression**

Members in Benin, India, Madagascar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and more encounter resistance to rights-claiming from governments.

Many countries – from India to the United Kingdom – have used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to restrict civic space. The pandemic continued to limit the scope of some members' campaign activities in 2021-22 with COVID-19 outbreaks and restrictions restricting the potential for civic action through physical mobilisations. IYD reported that their Claim Your Water Rights representations were severely delayed because the government imposed and enforced strict rules on public gatherings – including an outright ban in February 2022 ahead of local panchayat elections.

Civil society in Thailand experienced a severely constraining environment. "The Thai government misuses the COVID-19 Emergency Decree to restrict our civic space", says Emilie Pradichit of Manushya Foundation, whose Justice for Phichit campaign against government and Akara mining company exposes a culture of corruption and corporate impunity. The Thai government and Akara responded to Phichit communities' attempts to claim their rights by weaponising Thailand's criminal defamation legislation, repeatedly charging villagers with strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP) and detaining peaceful protesters unless they pay large sums of money to be granted bail.

In Benin, where jihadist attacks in the north of the country have led to even harsher restrictions on human rights defenders, ICA's Kassimou Issotina reported that neither mayors, parliamentarians, nor members of the national human rights commission agreed to appear publicly or even take pictures civil society campaigners for fear of reprisals should they displease their superiors. IRSP reported a similar attitude in Pakistan where civil society had been disturbingly cowed from propagating issues

of water rights violations as political elites consider any criticism or protest as agitational and not welcome.

SERI's Lauren Royston reflects that civil society in South Africa face increasing hostility. "We haven't experienced such pronounced, direct attacks as we experienced in recent times. It wouldn't usually escalate to threats of violence - unlike groups we work with who face worse repression; people have been assassinated." Royston says that working with marginalised groups – such as inner-city residents or informal settlement residents whose very existence is criminalised – can be particularly fraught, with communities and civil society experiencing xenophobia, dispossession and dehumanisation with the law undermined by police force: "Criminalising people for occupation is an unlawful act but has police protection. In Johannesburg this is overlaid by a history of raids by the previous mayor." One way of managing such risks is for civil society to ally with international organisations who specialise in upholding civic space. In response SERI engaged the Human Rights Defenders Network and supported actions to protest and picket human rights commissions' offices to prevent people issuing threats with impunity.

In Zimbabwe, a country classed as 'repressed' by CIVICUS Monitor, civil society experience direct attacks. Most notably the government attempted to criminalise any organisation working on civic and political rights through the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill. MIHR's Khumbulani Maphosa describes a hostile, repressive environment for civil society: "Most people try to put their head under the sand because of fear of repression. There are civil and political rights violations that are treated with impunity, less resistance and less accountability. People fear the state's response. Only a few opposition leaders have the stamina to continue to raise civil society's human rights violation. They are also cowed." In navigating increasing closed civic space in Zimbabwe, Maphosa describes MIHR's work as "non-violently confrontational", elaborating that "we put direct actions to the authorities but we are very careful that our activism is non-violent. The authorities respond very repressively to violence. We are trying to build a broad, strong, non-violent movement."

Yet even non-violent protests are sometimes met with police brutality. NAYO reported that community members were arrested for peaceful water rights demonstrations with youth activists constantly wary of entrapment and infiltration. NAYO worked with residents associations to improve dialogue between communities and local leaders, while joining other civil society organisations in lobbying policymakers to uphold civic space and stop the PVO Amendment Bill. Litigating to establish a precedent on the freedom to associate and assemble was key to the advancement of the Claim Your Water Rights campaign. In 2018 NAYO went to the Zimbabwean High Court to defend a civic demonstration that had been banned by the Police. The High Court ruled in NAYO's favour and the protest action proceeded as originally planned.

Zambia NGO WASH Forum's Bubala Muyovwe describes a less acute but still pernicious form of repression in Zambia, where civil society participation is either rare or token. As part of climate justice training, the Forum members identified numerous obstacles to advocacy – including fear of victimisation, lack of confidence, colonisation, political patronage, lack of enabling environment, selfishness and greed. Forum members agreed to build solidarity and hold each other accountable in being brave, proactive, factual and objective by sharing knowledge and practising the ethics they want to see from governments and decision-makers. Muyovwe says that building relationships with

journalists and “arming members of parliament with information to keep them abreast with the issues” is a subtle but effective way of redressing skewed power dynamics.

Other members offer examples of how governments can create an enabling environment. CONIWAS’ Basilia Nanbigne explains how the Ghanaian government proactively encourage civil society participation: “civil society can engage government at any time without any fear. In every sector the government tries to engage civil society to canvass their opinion. Our policies and laws always open the door for civil society to drive change. Every board has a civil society member.”

Other members are navigating complex, sometimes turbulent contexts. One major obstacle to CFCF’s campaign was The Indigenous Peoples of Biafra’s (IPOB) order for people in the southeast of Nigeria to stay at home every Monday. This security challenge made it difficult to hold advocacy meetings with officials in Owerri and community gatherings, exacerbated by fear of so-called ‘unknown gun men’. CFCF’s Clinton Ezeigwe finds some solace in the human rights framework, which affirms universal entitlements and freedoms to people experiencing brutal rights violations: “As a lawyer in the making, I’ve always been passionate about human rights. As we see government using legislation to shrink free speech and freedom of association, international human rights offers a legal tool – it applies to everyone, everywhere.”

For the first year and a half of the Claim Your Water Rights campaign, MECE worked under John Magufuli’s premiership, where censorship restricted people’s ability to openly criticise government. Despite this MECE’s broadcasts promoting people’s right to water reached over two million people and led to several local authorities installing boreholes and committing funds to improving services. When asked how MECE negotiated press censorship when using the media to highlight human rights violations, Hammie replied matter-of-factly: “I know the community needs me; they need people like me to reach them and make them feel comfortable to speak about their issues. The only alternative is to keep quiet. My spirit is to tell the truth - even if it is painful. Even if it annoys the government.” Sometimes civil society have no choice but to resist.

### **The role of the international community**

International organisations working in more open civic space must use their platform to expose human rights violations and amplify grassroots defenders. INGOs can help add legitimacy and visibility to national and sub-national campaigns. Effective advocacy is trusting local communities and civil society to know what approach is most effective in their country/context: listen to local civil society expertise; escalate their demands at international platforms; fund localised action.

MIHR’s Khumbulani Maphosa says that the acute challenges experienced by grassroots defenders are often overlooked: “As a grassroots defender, the other major challenge is that the focus tends to be on national civic rights defenders. Those working at the grassroots are ignored.” Maphosa notes that while there are some fellowships for grassroots defenders, they tend to skew towards those working on socio-economic rights. Meanwhile regional and global platforms and processes can be inaccessible and unrepresentative of local realities. Maphosa observed that Zimbabwe’s recent Universal Period Review, for example, was ‘silent’ on grassroots issues, especially those experienced by ethnic and linguistic minorities. Maphosa called on INGOs and UN mechanisms like the special rapporteurs and Universal Periodic Review to escalate the evidence provided by grassroots civil society.

Members skilfully stretch campaign activities beyond funding limitations. But ultimately End Water Poverty needs more funds to devote to members for grassroots advocacy. The remarkable successes documented in this report show what members can achieve with mini-grants of just £2,500 to £5,000. Imagine what they could achieve with £10,000 or even £50,000.

### **Shifting perceptions**

As observed in the first year of Claim Your Water Rights, many members continue to encounter a distinct lack of knowledge among rights-holders and duty-bearers alike. For some communities, the idea that water and sanitation are their rights was novel and even shocking. Marginalised groups are especially likely to not feel or know that they have legal rights and the power to challenge the denial of these rights. This is often because they are delegitimised or left with little recourse but to engage in “invented” rights claiming strategies that are often met with greater repression.

As CERI’s Attah Benson says, “it’s all about changing mindsets and giving people access to information. Water is not something people have to beg for - it is their right. You don’t have to use force or confrontation - but you do have to ask.” Benson explains it is equally important to spell out people’s entitlements to safe, affordable water to governments: “Because of their poverty, government thinks they are doing people at grassroots level a favour. But politicians who are not willing to serve the citizens should resign.”

Most members also reported that officials at local and national level do not understand their human rights obligations as duty-bearers. IIYD, for instance, observed that newly elected panchayat youth officials needed to be educated on their role in providing water and sanitation services. IIYD’s P.C. Misra says that civil society in India should educate politicians in private so as not to publicly embarrass and undermine.

This means members have to continuously quiz officials for information and publicise information. “People cannot hold their governments accountable to commitments if they don’t know what these commitments are”, remarks CFCF’s Clinton Ezeigwe. Building public awareness takes time but some members are beginning to witness the results. VAREN and WASH Rights Network, who have participated in Claim Your Water Rights since its inception, have observed that communities are becoming increasingly willing to hold duty-bearers accountable in claiming their rights. “People in Enugu are now coming to know that water and sanitation is their right - and they are claiming their rights”, says WASH Rights Network’s Amaka Nweke: “It gives us joy.”

MECE specialise in amplifying rural community voices in Tanzania. MECE’s Mohammed Hammie says: “One of our biggest achievements is to educate people: you don’t have to keep quiet when there is no water in your area. You can speak out at community meetings, you can participate in water projects. You don’t have to wait for donors to fix the problem. People can take action. It is your right.” Hammie succinctly summarises: “Information is power. When someone is well informed, it is easier for them to take action. When we conducted human rights training, I witnessed self-transformation from day one to day three.”

### **Translating tenacity and tactical agility into tangible results**

Claim Your Water Rights strategies are designed and delivered by our members, who create proactive, flexible context-specific campaigns comprising both formal (“invited”) and informal (“invented”) rights claiming strategies.

This diversity of approach is central to the campaign's success. In the past few years, members have employed varied and creative rights claiming actions, including community mobilisation; demonstration, occupation and protest; direct engagement with government; documenting, monitoring and publicising data; elections advocacy; litigation; lodging complaints to regulators or national human rights institutions; media influencing; and research and policy advocacy.

CFCF's Clinton Ezeigwe says that creating flexible advocacy plans that allow advocates to seize opportunities and adapt tactics to suit local contexts or changing situations is a "good practice that can be adopted by other members". Ezeigwe elaborates: "The good thing about Claim Your Water Rights is that it encourages people to adapt the campaign to their local context, to be creative and autonomous. It's not the same as other global campaigns that where they provide very stringent conditions. The campaign gave us space to be more proactive in our work and think outside the box. We could design our messages and strategy to fit our local context."

NAYO's MacDonald Munyoro concurs, suggesting that civil society "localise as much as possible". Likewise Khumbulani Maphosa advocates for "continued tenacity around an issue - continuously working an issue from different angles until you find a solution. You have to test different tactics." WASH Rights Network's Amaka Nweke has a simple recommendation to other members advocating for people's rights to water and sanitation: "be resolute".

## Country-by-country reports

### Benin

#### Key achievements

- Maintenance improvements secured water supply to Assodè, Alayomdè and Kpalang villages, which had been without water for two years. Donga authorities also extend the Assodè water supply system to Salankawa.
- CFA francs 76,000,000 (£106,000) allocated to new water supply points.
- Strengthened partnership with the Donga Safe Water Consumers Association.

#### Summary

Faced with a hostile environment toward civil society, the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) encountered numerous challenges when implementing Claim Your Water Rights in Benin where Jihadist attacks in the north have led to even harsher restrictions on human rights defenders in recent years. ICA reported that neither mayors, parliamentarians, nor members of Benin's human rights commission agreed to appear publicly or even take pictures civil society campaigners for fear of reprisals.

ICA instead formed alliances with journalists and lawyers as well as the Donga Safe Water Consumers Association, who monitor water rights at grassroots level. ICA and the Association organised community mobilisations to identify water supply issues and gather complaints that were subsequently presented to relevant authorities - including Donga's mayor, who is responsible for managing the municipality's water and sanitation budget and infrastructure. After the mayor escalated concerns to Benin's Ministry of Mines, Energy and Water, authorities made several maintenance improvements to water works in the villages of Assodè, Alayomdè and Kpalang, which had been without water for two years. Authorities also extended the Assodè water supply system to Salankawa and spent over £100,000 on new water supply points, servicing over 1,530 people.

#### What next?

- Continue to build the capacity of the Safe Water Consumers' Association, who are present in each of Benin's 77 municipalities.
- Work with journalists to publicise the human rights to water and sanitation and campaign activities countering oppression.
- Work with Human Right 2 Water to facilitate meaningful collaboration and advocacy initiatives between civil society and Benin's human rights commission.

## Ghana

### Key achievements

- Policy brief published documenting the impacts of agricultural, fishing, logging and mining activities in Wassu East, leading to increased understanding among the Wassu East district assembly of the need for water quality monitoring.
- Garnered pledges from government and the Ghana Water Company to improve water services and interventions in Wassu East.
- Media coverage of the policy brief and community demands in at least five high-profile national publications.
- Established a strong working relationship with Ghana's Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ).

### Summary

The Coalition of NGOs in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) and Water Citizens Network used Claim Your Water Rights to advocate for water and climate justice in Ghana. CONIWAS began the campaign by documenting the impacts of agricultural, fishing, logging and mining activities on water access in Wassu East District, where some communities depend on the Pra river or live in impoverished settlements with inadequate water and sanitation facilities.

CONIWAS combined policy and research advocacy with community mobilisation. After collecting water samples and interviewing residents, CONIWAS facilitated dialogue between communities and duty-bearers, organising media interviews to publicise people's concerns and demands. CONIWAS and Water Citizens Network also organised several engagements with Ghana's Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), establishing a good working relationship with the commission's regional and national branches that will culminate in the submission of a national petition with district residents.

Having randomly tested water samples, CONIWAS found that 80% of water sources did not meet international human rights standards due to high pH and e-coli levels. CONIWAS published their findings in a policy brief that was further publicised by various media outlets in May 2022. The brief recommended that the Ghana Water Company introduce community water quality testing to ensure human rights standards are met. The brief also showed that most communities in Wassu East did not benefit from the government's directive to provide free water services during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Government officials responded to the policy brief by acknowledging failures and promising to improve future interventions, while the Ghana Water Company pledged to include Wassu East communities in their plans for service extension.

### What next?

- Submit national petition with Wassu East communities demanding better services.
- Start social media campaign to share policy brief findings and further amplify water and climate justice demands.
- Continue to strengthen ties with CHRAJ, submitting a national petition on the status of water and sanitation services in schools.

## India

### Key achievements

- An Adivasi community from Koraput, Odisha, successfully claimed their right to sanitation by submitting a representation to the National Scheduled Tribes Commission.
- Human rights training for 21 marginalised communities resulted in ten representations to government authorities between January-March 2022. Workshops and representations were publicised in six local newspapers.
- Government interventions - including solid waste allocation, increased budget allocation, infrastructure renovation, and extension of piped water supply – in response to communities' representations have improved water and sanitation services for around 57,000 people in Koraput, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal.
- Sharing of advocacy approaches and achievements with Freshwater Action Network South Asia (FANSA) representatives from ten different Indian states.

### Summary

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, political inertia and entrenched inequalities, the Indian Institute of Youth & Development (IIYD) shifted from service providers to rights-based advocates over the course of their Claim Your Water Rights campaign.

IIYD started the campaign in March 2020, collecting more than 200 signatures for a petition affirming that safe water and sanitation are human rights to pressure governors in Keonjhor, Odisha. IIYD organised COVID-19 awareness and water rights training for marginalised groups like women, children, senior citizens, transgender people, people with disabilities, and sanitation workers.

After struggling to establish the campaign due to strict COVID-19 measures, IIYD began public mobilisations in earnest in 2021. Just as members adapt their strategies to their context, so too can they adapt their language and messages. IIYD organised human rights training and supported various marginalised communities to 'make representations' - a framing that was more palatable to authorities than 'lodging complaints' - to the Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, and National Scheduled Tribes Commission. IIYD took pictures of each representation to visually document the action and thus pressurise duty-bearers.

The most effective representation was made by an Adivasi community in Koraput. Tribal communities are typically excluded from WASH services: only 56% of 85,600 Adivasi habitations in Odisha receive rural water supply. After participating in rights awareness training, the community filed a representation concerning lack of toilets to the National Scheduled Tribes Commission. The commission's subsequent report showed that the money allocated for toilets had been spent despite no construction work taking place - the government simply assumed the Adivasi community would not complain. Once the commission investigated the complaint, the government started constructing toilets.

In the next stage of the campaign, IIYD built the capacity of civil society allies in Odisha and beyond to hold government accountable for managing climate risks and realising people's rights to water and sanitation. IIYD started by organising human rights training for 21 marginalised communities (7 tribal, 6 youth, 3 scheduled castes, 3 rural, 2 women) with 649 participants in total. This engendered media

coverage in six local newspapers and an emboldened generation of community leaders who later stood - in many cases successfully - in local panchayat elections.

After the training, communities submitted ten representations to different authorities, including the Block Development Offices, Child Development Project Office, and the state Rural Water Supply and Sanitation offices. The representations led forced numerous government interventions, including: the collection of 2,000 households' solid waste; increased budget allocation extending services to a further 10,000 people; the renovation of 84 ponds; the construction of 12 wheelchair-friendly ramps to improve water access; the supply of piped water to one district; the introduction of water quality testing; the repair of a defunct tube well repair; and the supply of drinking water to two tribal panchayats. In total IIYD estimate that these interventions have improved water and sanitation services for around 57,000 people in Koraput, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal. This has created what IIYD describe as a "multiplier effect" with communities in neighbouring districts adopting similar approaches to claim their rights to water and sanitation.

#### **What next?**

- Extend the campaign to other Indian states and south Asian countries through FANSA, building civil society capacity to advocate using the international human rights framework.
- Sensitise journalists to publish articles on the human rights to water and sanitation
- Continue to train and support communities to submit fresh representations to human rights commissions and duty-bearers.

## Madagascar

### Key achievements

- Around 2,000 people informed of their rights in Fort-Dauphin and Amboasary South.
- Over 35 youth groups trained to produce TV, radio coverage and YouTube documentaries on human rights and southern Madagascar's water crisis.
- Increased public and political awareness of how mining activities can contaminate drinking water leading the government and mining companies to jointly commit to providing people with safe water.

### Summary

Since 1961, the south of Madagascar has experienced severe drought and famine as a result of desertification known locally as "Tiomena". Government efforts to reduce water shortages have been limited with the concept of human rights alien to both rights-holders and duty-bearers. Association AVARA's Claim Your Water Rights activities aimed to mainstream the human rights to water and sanitation in Madagascar's public and political discourse, affirming the state's obligation to guarantee these rights.

To highlight the region's water crisis and promote the human right to water, AVARA trained its 35 youth members to produce radio programmes and video documentaries in French and Malagasy. AVARA also organised community conferences and civil society focus groups, informing around 2,000 people in Fort-Dauphin and Amboasary South of their right to water. AVARA then lobbied the government directly, meeting the mayor of Behara in Amboasary South, which has experienced water shortages for seven years due to climate crisis and poor governance.

AVARA also exposed how mining companies had discharged wastewater into rivers and streams, killing fish and contaminating people's water sources. The government conducted water quality analysis but didn't publicise its findings. Yet the Andrakaraka water company acknowledged responsibility for not providing water that was not suitable for drinking, while the government and implicated mining companies launched a joint programme to provide people with safe water. AVARA continues to monitor and verify the progress of this programme.

Despite severe social challenges - including economic inflation, COVID-19 outbreaks, civil society feeling their freedom of speech was impaired, and the government's lack of receptiveness to human rights, with some authorities blocking AVARA's access to inspect water and sanitation facilities - AVARA made considerable progress in establishing a public pressure water rights campaign in southern Madagascar.

### What next?

- Continue to produce media coverage highlighting Madagascar's water crisis and the government's human rights obligations as duty-bearers.
- Expand the campaign to neighbouring states.

## **Mexico**

### **Key achievements**

- Creation of the Calidad del Agua en las Escuelas platform, exposing the contamination of Mexican schools' drinking water and suggesting various rights claiming actions.
- Publicisation of water quality analysis via traditional and social media.

### **Summary**

Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to access water for personal and domestic consumption with the Ministry of Health and state governments responsible for monitoring and certifying drinking water quality. Yet Mexico's national water and sanitation budget has been seriously reduced, violating the human rights principle of non-regression. At the same time international corporations - including breweries, soft drinks manufacturers and mining companies - enjoy concessions when abstracting groundwater in perennially water-stressed regions.

Freshwater Action Network Mexico (FANMex) used the Claim Your Water Rights campaign to expose water rights violations in Mexico by focusing on the widespread contamination of water used by school communities. FANMex obtained and analysed thousands of official documents that revealed high levels of heavy metals such as manganese, lead, chromium, mercury in schools' drinking water. FANMex then launching the online Calidad del Agua en las Escuelas ('Quality of Water in Schools') platform to arm communities with information about their school's water quality and suggests ways students, parents and teachers can act. FANMex disseminated their findings via traditional and social media, producing videos, postcards and informational GIFs on how to use the platform.

### **What next?**

- Continue to publicise findings through traditional and social media.
- Expand the campaign to focus on transnational corporations' abuse and abstraction of groundwater.

## Nigeria

### Key achievements

- In a national first for Nigeria, the Imo State human rights commission received and responded to the Okigwe community's complaint regarding water rights violations.
- Ratification of the Enugu State Water Law.
- Revitalisation of the Otamiri scheme in Owerri.
- Enugu State compelled to join community clean-up in Obeagu.
- Various rights training workshops in Imo State prompting the successful formation of community committees and climate justice clubs, creating community champions to demand accountability from decision-makers.
- Rights training for 250 people in six communities in Abuja and Benue State with written media coverage publicising people's experiences and obligations of governments.
- Training of - and allying with - Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission on water and sanitation with written media coverage publicising obligations of governments.
- Over 25 pieces of written media coverage across various local and national publications.
- Formation of the Claim Your Water Rights Naija movement in Imo State with a broad intersectoral civil society coalition.
- Claim Your Water Rights has become a "household name" in both Enugu and Imo States with "water is our right" a community clarion call.

### Summary

Civil society in Enugu and Imo State garnered numerous impressive advocacy achievements in the first year of Claim Your Water Rights.

In Imo, Christian Fellowship & Care Foundation (CFCF) and local civil society partners such as Centre for Peace Across Borders (CePAB) compelled the state government to truck water to communities not connected to the central water supply system and the Imo State Water and Sewerage Corporation to repair broken pipes and extend services to non-connected households as emergency COVID-19 measures.

In Enugu, a team of civil society activists led by Hope Spring Nigeria compelled the state government to reconnect a slaughterhouse next to a prominent market that had been without a reliable supply for four years, launched the 'Lockdown, Not Lock-Tap' initiative to urge the Enugu State Water Corporation to suspend disconnections during the COVID-19 pandemic, and garnered commitments from Enugu's Hospital Administrator, who declared live on air that his department would refresh Enugu's 34 health facilities.

The Enugu Claim Your Water Rights team's first success though came in January 2020 when they successfully lobbied State Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi to declare a water emergency along with a series of commitments, including the expedition of funds to complete a new 50,000 m<sup>3</sup>/day water scheme to service one million people in Enugu's capital, which commenced in May 2020.

Also among these commitments was the promise of a new law recognising water and sanitation as human rights. Over a year later the WASH Rights Network, formed by a 23-strong civil society coalition of Claim Your Water Rights advocates, celebrated the passing into law of Enugu's new Water Bill after over a year of patient, persistent lobbying and media influencing. The law stipulates

people's right to water must be enforced by an independent regulator with a new agency created to supply small towns. Both the regulator and agency have since been established.

In monitoring the status of water and sanitation rights in Enugu, WASH Rights Network met local government officials, youth leaders and women's groups to highlight the contamination of the Obeagu community's water and environment. WASH Rights Network's subsequent investigation showed that Obeagu's main water source had been used as an illegal refuse dump for more than a decade. The accumulation of waste was so great that the community's primary health centre became blocked, causing its abandonment and subsequent vandalism. After sharing their findings, local government intervened by promptly removing waste and joining a community clean-up. An independent monitoring group was established to keep the stream free from waste, while WASH Rights Network continue to lobby for policy reforms and improved budget allocation for waste management in rural areas.

Meanwhile in 2021 CFCF partnered with Community Emergency Resilience Initiative (CERI) to expand the campaign to Abuja and Benue states while escalating state level advocacy to Nigeria's federal government. CFCF held multiple workshops throughout 2021 to inform communities in Imo of their rights and how to claim them. At the end of the workshops, residents formed community committees to share knowledge and represent themselves during village meetings. CFCF also held advocacy workshops on climate justice and water rights in two secondary schools in Oguta. Both schools formed climate justice clubs to provide a platform for students to organise and mobilise in holding government accountable for realising rights and funding climate adaptation. CFCF also held a separate workshop at Ebonyi State University attended by over 100 law students, screening the film *Story of Plastic* to uncover the links between plastic pollution, fossil fuels and water rights.

During these workshops CFCF produced short films to document personal testimonies of living without water and sanitation and developed educational posters and placards on 'Climate Justice' and 'How to Claim Water Rights', sharing these materials with CERI for its community mobilisations in Abuja and Benue. CERI's Attah Benson used his media and political contacts as the coordinator of Nigeria's Society for Water and Sanitation (NEWSAN) to amplify community demands in national publications and political platforms, for example by calling for the Federal Ministry of Water Resources to implement progressive plans to fund climate adaptation and realise the human rights to water and sanitation at Nigeria's National Assembly. CERI's advocacy raised water rights concerns with three levels of government, garnering commitments from the Gender and Human Rights Unit of the Federal Ministry of Water Resources.

CERI augmented CFCF's previous efforts to strengthen the Imo State human rights commission by gaining the support of Nigeria's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC Nigeria). CFCF had spent considerable time and resources building the Imo State commission's capacity and confidence, having supported the Okigwe community to lodge Nigeria's first complaint relating to a water rights violation. The commission sent a letter of recommendation to the Imo State Water and Sewerage Corporation, who in turn committed to rectifying the situation. CFCF and the commission subsequently created a service charter with Imo State Water and Sewerage Corporation outlining their duties and how water users can hold them accountable by lodging complaints.

On International Human Rights Day 2021, CFCF and the Imo State Claim Your Water Rights team held a student workshop and rally with NHRC Nigeria in Owerri to urge the state government to respect,

protect and fulfil the human rights to water and sanitation. Shortly afterwards, the team held an advocacy and capacity-building workshop with NHRC Nigeria, the media, government agencies and a range of civil society activists. Prominent government ministers – including from Nigeria’s health ministry - participated actively in the workshop and encouraged a forum for further interaction. Most impressively, the workshop assembled a broad coalition of civil society groups working on education, health, food security, housing, extractives, disability rights, indigenous rights and women’s rights, who united to form an intersectoral water rights movement under the name of ‘Claim Your Water Rights Naija’.

#### **What next?**

- Consolidate gains from previous successes.
- Leverage the Enugu State Water Law to enforce human rights and address water pollution in rural and urban areas, using workshops and media to publicise its contents.
- Continue human rights training for rights-holders, duty-bearers and civil society.
- Support Nigeria NHRC to investigate rights violations and issue recommendations.
- Connect the Claim Your Water Rights campaign with Corporate Accountability & Public Participation Africa’s (CAPPA) ‘Our Water, Our Right’ campaign in Lagos.
- Under the Claim Your Water Rights Naija banner, leverage Nigeria’s 2023 elections to advocate for political parties and candidates to incorporate water rights and climate justice commitments in their manifestos through local town hall meetings, national platforms, radio programmes and social media.

## Pakistan

### Key achievements

- Manchar visit generated local and national media coverage, with Pakistan's state broadcaster interviewing residents, and international coverage with Voice of America and The Independent covering the lake's pollution.
- 200 residents surveyed in Bahar Colony to highlight the poor quality of services Christian minorities in Lahore receive.
- Convention held between cross-party political candidates and over 100 Bahar Colony residents, politicising Pakistan's water and sanitation crisis.
- Filtration plants installed in several Christian minority Lahore neighbourhoods, including Bahar Colony.
- 'Vote for Water' radio shows broadcast a potential audience of 3.5 million, prompting lively engagement among listeners.

### Summary

Integrated Regional Support Programme (IRSP) have demonstrated their capacity to mobilise public support since the inception of Claim Your Water Rights, reaching thousands of listeners through radio broadcasts and mobilising over 500 people to attend a water rights rally on International Women's Day in March 2020.

In late 2021 IRSP visited Manchar, one of Asia's largest freshwater lakes. IRSP met over 250 'Mohana' families who live near the lake and rely on increasingly depleted and industrially polluted water. Chemical pollution is compounded by drought and salination - effects of the climate crisis - and a lack of sanitation infrastructure, with families forced to defecate in the open or into floating toilets. During their visit IRSP organised media interviews to amplify community voices and civil society demands that the provincial and federal government take special measures to protect Pakistan's freshwater. IRSP's activities generated significant national and international coverage. Pakistan's state broadcaster interviewed residents, while Voice of America and The Independent reported on the lake's pollution, thus raising the public and political profile of water and climate issues in Pakistan. Media interest peaked again in early September 2022 when Manchar's banks burst during Pakistan's megaflood, washing away infrastructure and underlining the prescience of IRSP's calls to urgently protect freshwater sources.

Meanwhile Center for Law & Justice (CLJ) turned their attention to Pakistan's upcoming elections. CLJ had previously used Claim Your Water Rights to advance their campaign for the safety, dignity and wellbeing of sanitation workers in Pakistan. In June 2020 the Punjab Assembly passed an historic resolution recognising sanitation workers as "frontline heroes in the fight against Covid" after CLJ adapted EWP's global petition to protect sanitation workers from the pandemic by realising their rights to "just and favourable conditions of work". The resolution compelled employers to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to workers who enter sewers and shovel faeces without gloves or masks with Pakistan Supreme Court inviting CLJ's founder and human rights lawyer Mary James Gill to help create new legislation.

From November to December 2021 CLJ conducted a Vote for Water campaign in Bahar Colony, a Christian neighbourhood of Lahore. Prior to the campaign CLJ surveyed 200 residents, who reported that almost every street received dirty tap water with rusted pipelines forcing people to buy

contaminated water at a costly price from local filtration plants. CLJ held corner meetings with groups of 15-30 residents to inform them that water is their right before holding a convention between political candidates from all parties and over 100 residents, who shared their grievances and demanded that candidates prioritise water and sanitation.

IRSP complemented CLJ's elections advocacy by amplifying calls to 'vote for water' via a two-hour community radio programme broadcast to remote rural communities in five districts with a combined audience of 3.5 million. The program prompted lively engagement with 700 people submitting questions online.

During the Vote for Water campaign CLJ leveraged support from John Morris of the United Kingdom's All-Party Parliamentary Group to lobby Punjab's governor to provide new filtration plants to several minority Christian neighbourhoods, including Bahar Colony. CLJ's most significant achievement, however, was to start politicising water and sanitation, enfranchising a marginalised Christian community to actively demand their rights to water and sanitation from the state.

### **What next?**

- Ahead of Pakistan's 2023 general elections, CLJ will expand the campaign and consolidate the data gathered in Bahar Colony into a study.
- IRSP will extend the campaign to other Pakistan states, building on their success by exploiting increased media attention on water and climate issues following Pakistan's devastating megaflood, leveraging Pakistan's elections to make water and sanitation a political priority.
- IRSP to monitor water affordability in communities who have inflated prices due to privatisation and to track budgets at provincial, district and national level. Given the prevalence of mafia-run water tankers in urban areas, this may necessitate an increased focus on corruption in the water and sanitation sector.

## South Africa

### Key achievements

- Novel research produced documenting the water and sanitation services that inner-city building residents in Johannesburg receive.

### Summary

In 2020 the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) documented four different kinds of claiming water rights strategies used by four different kinds of communities in four different provinces of South Africa. SERI then partnered with the South Africa Mail & Guardian for the launch of its Claiming Water Rights research series to publicise findings. SERI's research into the specific struggles of the Makhanda and Marikana communities formed the basis of a [paper](#), published by the International Water Association periodical H2Open Journal, examining the effectiveness of litigation, protest and community mobilisation in sustaining the fight for water justice.

SERI's policy and research advocacy continued in 2021 when they partnered with Social Justice Coalition (SJC) to document the water and sanitation services that inner city building residents in Johannesburg receive. Approximately 60% of people in South Africa live "off-register", whether in informal settlements, customary areas, unregistered state-subsidised houses or in inner cities. This creates a data gap in identifying whose water rights have been violated. Having conducted qualitative interviews with residents and gathered data on the standard of water and sanitation services in over 50 buildings, SERI produced novel research on the seldom-explored intersection between water, sanitation, and property. SERI conclude that their findings are "a clear indication of the state's failure and the market's inability to provide poor households with affordable accommodation options".

In documenting both the state of inner-city water and sanitation services and the range of rights claiming strategies employed by communities in South Africa, SERI observed a significant number of communities resorting to self-supply. Self-supply is a complex issue that has various implications on the human rights to water and sanitation. As SERI cautioned, we must be careful not to romanticise nor criminalise self-supply: it is possible to support communities who self-supply, preventing potentially negative impacts, without promoting self-supply and thus allowing governments to abnegate their duty.

### What next?

- Develop a claiming water rights advocacy strategy, including by exploring the possibility of engaging with the South Africa Human Rights Commission and using litigation to give strength and visibility to inner city communities without services.
- Advocate for the use of the Emergency Housing Programme and its funds to upgrade living conditions and services in inner city buildings.
- Ally with the International Budget Initiative to support communities who self-supply.

## Tanzania

### Key achievements

- Communities trained on their entitlements as rights-holders with Geita District Council recognising ten agents of change as ambassadors for water and climate issues.
- 53 community interviews with six radio shows broadcast on Rubondo FM to air the water and sanitation concerns of small-scale mining communities.
- Report on social accountability disseminated to various duty-bearers at a national convention, garnering various commitments and national headlines.
- Strengthened collaboration with the Commission of Human Rights and Good Governance.

### Summary

Media for Community Empowerment (MECE) began the Claim Your Water Rights campaign in Tanzania by interviewing rural communities who live without safe water, airing their stories on community radio. Despite working under John Magufuli's premiership, where censorship restricted people's ability to openly criticise government, MECE's 'Sauti Yangu' ('Your Voice') programme reached over six million people and led to several local authorities drilling wells and boreholes as well as committing funds to improving services. In April 2020 - just one month after Media for Community Empowerment's radio show on Mteгани Fm - the local Mkuranga government successfully drilled a well in response to residents airing complaints about the village's decade-long water crisis. Three days after MECE's broadcast from Kikwawila village in Ifakara, the local government drilled a borehole after residents started pestering their village chairperson to realise their water rights.

In 2021 MECE, Tanzania Women Empowerment in Action (TAWEA) and Tanzania's national civil society network TAWASANET formed the Tanzania Claim Your Water Rights Consortium. Member collaboration had previously proved effective in Tanzania after MECE trained staff at Tanzania League of the Blind (TLB) to independently produce interactive radio shows enabling people with disabilities in Morogoro to assert their rights and voice water accessibility challenges.

The consortium decided to share resources and jointly campaign for social accountability for water and sanitation, climate adaptation and human rights in Geita. Despite contributing significantly to the national economy exports and tax, mining communities receive inadequate, unsafe water services as a result of deforestation and companies contaminating water sources with mercury and cyanide when processing gold. In August 2021, TAWEA held a three-day human rights workshop with small-scale miners and mining communities in Nyarugusu and Lwamgasa to understand their entitlements and responsibilities as rights-holder, training ten agents of change to represent the community in advocating for their rights. During these meetings MECE interviewed 53 community members to amplify their voice through six radio shows broadcast on Rubondo FM, while TAWASANET produced and disseminated 550 educational brochures and posters.

The agents of change used community scorecards to collect data on water sources and services that would form the basis of a social accountability monitoring report. The consortium then facilitated dialogue between the agents of change and various duty-bearers, including Geita District Council, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASA), the Geita Regional Miners Association, the Lake Victoria Basin Water Board, and the Energy and Water Regulatory Authority Consumer Consultative Committee (EWURA). Following the dialogue, RUWASA committed to properly manage

water and sanitation services, ensuring supply is free from mercury, and providing educational sessions on user rights and water price setting.

The consortium's efforts to address the human rights violations experienced by small-scale gold miners in Geita culminated in a national meeting in September 2021 where they presented their social accountability monitoring report. The meeting was attended by RUWASA, EWURA, the Lake Victoria Basin Water Board, the Geita District Council, the National Environmental Management Council (NEMC), the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) and the Commission of Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) among others. The consortium garnered several commitments, including EWURA's pledge to channel complaints, CHRAGG's pledge to support the realisation of small-scale miners and adjacent communities' rights to water and health, and the Geita District Council's pledge to improve social services such as water and sanitation under the 1982 Local Governance Act. The report findings were publicised by well-known Tanzanian media houses such as Nipashe and ITV.

### **What next?**

- Further investigative journalism and thorough media coverage to understand the root cause of water and climate challenges.
- Expand the campaign to small-scale mining communities in other regions.
- Follow up commitments with duty-bearers and agents of change.
- Consult civil society in a national action plan to reduce mercury contamination resulting from gold-mining.
- More nationally-focused advocacy to lobby ministers to increase water and sanitation budgets and issue directives to RUWASA to realise funds.

## Thailand

### Key achievements

- Continued support to the legal empowerment of the Phichit community in their class action lawsuit against Akara Resources and the Thai government.
- The beginning of a digital campaign to raise public awareness of the #JusticeForPhichit campaign in Thailand and internationally, motivating people to act by donating to the villagers' legal fund and signing petitions to the UN Special Procedures.

### Summary

For years Manushya Foundation has supported the Phichit community's fight against corporate impunity and government corruption through the [Justice for Phichit campaign](#).

In 2001 Akara Resources, a subsidiary of the Australian mining company Kingsgate, began commercial operations in the Chatree Goldmining Complex on the border of Phichit and Phetchabun provinces. Akara's operations soon resulted in water shortages and contamination, affecting the health and livelihoods of around 6,000 villagers. Over the years villagers have made numerous attempts to hold Akara and the Thai government accountable for loss and damage caused. In response Akara and the Thai government have weaponised Thailand's criminal defamation legislation against the villagers, particularly community leader Preamsinee Sintontammach, who has repeatedly faced strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP). Several villagers were also arrested and detained for legitimate peaceful protests and had to pay large sums of money to be granted bail.

Though the government closed the mine in 2017, villagers received no remedy or compensation. In October 2019, the Ratchada Civil Court in Bangkok accepted a class-action lawsuit filed by 362 villagers in May 2016 demanding adequate compensation as well as the restoration of their environment. Six years after filing the lawsuit, Phichit villagers are only steps closer to receiving the compensation they are owed. The COVID-19 pandemic and Akara's claim that they lacked time to gather documentation have been used as excuses to repeatedly delay court hearings. The first hearing finally took place on 18 November 2021. After only deciding procedural matters at the second hearing in January 2022, first witness testimonies are now scheduled for 2023. It is expected that the final verdict will be further delayed due to the ongoing ISDS (Inter-State Dispute Settlement) arbitration proceedings between Kingsgate and the Thai government.

As part of Claim Your Water Rights, Manushya Foundation is using this judicial deadlock to raise public awareness of the #JusticeForPhichit campaign in Thailand and internationally. Most activities will take place on social media with Manushya Foundation leading a digital campaign on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to mobilise its young, progressive following to act by donating to the community's legal fund and signing petitions. As well as petitioning the Thai government, Manushya Foundation is undertaking advocacy before the UN Special Procedures. In March 2022 Manushya Foundation started developing a complaint that will be submitted to the Working Group on Business and Human Rights as well as the special rapporteurs on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, on human rights and the environment, and on freedom of expression and opinion.

The remainder of the budget provided through the Claim Your Water Rights campaign has been allocated to the villagers' legal fund to cover travel to Bangkok and court fees. Manushya Foundation

supports the Phichit community's legal fight by providing financial assistance for costs incurred during the trial, monitoring court hearings, and providing legal empowerment and security training so communities can stay safe both online and offline.

### **What next?**

Activities are ongoing but expected results include:

- The Thai public's knowledge the Phichit goldmining case among will increase – as will their motivation to act.
- The community will be able to participate more effectively in legal proceedings.
- The UN Special Procedures will issue a strong statement condemning the Thai Government's inaction and giving targeted recommendations for the Government's next course of action.
- The Government will react to the increased pressure on the domestic and international level by ensuring a fair trial for the villagers' class-action lawsuit that respects due process throughout the case.
- The Government will better ensure a procedurally sound Environmental Impact Assessment process and start taking steps towards the mandatory due diligence legislation.

DRAFT

## Zambia

### Key achievements

- Organised school workshops on water rights and climate justice.
- Compelled two Chinese brewing companies to sign human rights, climate change and businesses commitments, securing media coverage in local and national outlets.
- Met civic and traditional leaders to discuss climate justice, the right to water and river pollution prevention.
- Climate justice training for Zambia NGO WASH Forum members.
- The Forum has built a strong alliance between climate and WASH advocates as well as the newly formed Ministry of Green Economy and Environment.

### Summary

Our first major Claim Your Water Rights success came in Zambia. In January 2020, Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN) supported over 1,000 people in Mansa who had been without safe water for almost a year to demand their rights. The community vented their frustration on regional TV and radio, imploring their member of parliament (Zambia's then health minister) to fulfil his election promise of realising their rights to safe water and threatening to submit complaints to Zambia's Human Rights Commission. After hearing the broadcasts, Mansa's member of parliament instructed authorities to act. Five days later, the community celebrated the restoration of their water supply.

In the next phase of their campaign, Zambian civil society utilised the August 2021 general elections and subsequent establishment of the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment to campaign for water and climate justice. During Zambia's general election in August 2021, Vision Africa Regional Network lobbied aspiring candidates to commit to respecting and promoting people's water rights once elected to office. VAREN then leveraged the fresh political will of Zambia's new regime to urge policy makers to protect surface- and groundwater from pollution, building strong relations with Zambia's new Ministry of Water and Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA).

VAREN compelled two Chinese brewing companies to sign business and human rights commitments after exposing their pollution of Mansa's Kakomwe stream. VAREN conducted physical inspections to assess the companies' adherence to environmental regulations before engaging community leaders to understand how brewing operations affected people's water rights. After gathering evidence, VAREN shared videos on social media documenting river pollution and visited the company offices with local government authorities to present their findings. The companies had enjoyed cosy relations with the previous government regime, who allowed them to violate regulations with impunity. After one company rejected the findings, government inspectors penalised them with sanctions, suspending operations. The companies eventually signed business and human rights commitments to respect people's water rights and protect the environment in the presence of Mansa's mayor and permanent secretary. The commitments stipulate that companies who violate human rights obligations must engage in grievance mechanisms.

Meanwhile The Zambia NGO WASH Forum used its position as a national network to strengthen its members' capacity to actively and knowledgeably demand climate justice, fostering a culture of learning and solidarity. The Forum hosted climate justice training for its members in February 2022, engaging ActionAid Zambia's global office to share their practical experience of working with social

movements and youth networks on climate justice – and thus building an alliance between climate and WASH activists. Over 90% of Forum members reported that the training was useful and timely.

After the training, the Forum held a public discussion to influence policy and practice on the protection and management of groundwater following UN Water's World Water Day celebrations. The discussion assembled representatives from the government, regulators and three traditional leaders from east Lusaka. The leaders stated that wastewater discharge and upstream dams created by large-scale commercial farms had altered the ecosystem Chalimbana River, on which they depend for drinking water and crop irrigation. Reduced rainfall resulting from anthropogenic climate change had only aggravated matters. At the same meeting the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO) and Lusaka province's commercial water utility company were asked to share their organisations' action plan for enhancing water security. The Forum called for the government to hold businesses, other third parties and its own institutions accountable for respecting the human rights to water and sanitation, as well as to invest in water quality testing and groundwater monitoring to strengthen law enforcement. Following the Forum's various engagements, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment acknowledged water and sanitation as increasingly important aspects of climate adaptation.

#### **What next?**

- Forum members plan to include journalists in future climate justice workshops and host a climate justice advocacy lab with Action Aid Zambia.
- Develop a position paper on the impact of climate crisis on the right to water to lobby for increased resources for adaptation measures.
- Compel more companies in more provinces to sign – and, more importantly, operationalise - business and human rights commitments, allying with an action group to track and monitor company compliance to these commitments.
- Escalate community complaints gathered by VAREN's network of grassroots groups, strengthening water rights complaints mechanisms so that companies are forced to periodically engage.
- Mobilise and unify youth groups, women and people with disabilities to advocate for climate justice and their right to water.
- Exploit political will of new government by presenting petition paper to Ministry of Water and newly created Ministry of Green Economy and Environment to demand specific action to protect the environment and water bodies.

## Zimbabwe

### Key achievements

- Trained 30 MEMA and NAYO members from Bulawayo, Umguza; Tsholotsho, Harare and Chitungwiza on nonviolent water and climate activism.
- Water restored to Gwanda Town after disconnections; ministry of water revokes ZINWA's management of Gwanda's water treatment plants, handing control to the municipality.
- Mbundane community successfully petition parliament with their complaint escalated to the relevant national portfolio committee.
- Improved visibility of the nonviolent Bulawayo water movement with 17 news articles in mainstream media - including in the Zimbabwe Herald - and water rights documentaries from Mbundane and St Peters.
- Secured \$15,000 to resuscitate a solar-powered borehole project that serves a nutrition garden. A broader community will receive tapped water from the borehole.
- Strong partnership between NAYO and the Chitungwiza Resident Association, who later won a High Court case compelling Chitungwiza Municipality to provide safe water under the Claim Your Water Rights banner.
- NAYO secured a three-day tour from Environmental Management Agency to Chitungwiza's 25 wards to address environmental concerns and introduce a waste regulatory system.
- Ward councilors can confidently request devolution funds from Chitungwiza Municipality.
- Youth hub members' non-violent street protests pressured the Chitungwiza Council to introduce more water bowsers and drill new boreholes.
- Enhanced citizen agency in demanding the right to water and water rights justice in St Peters, Umguza, Mbundane and Binga in Bulawayo, while mobilising a critical mass of young people to claim their water rights in St Marys, Zengeza, Seke and Makoni in Chitungwiza.

### Summary

For many years the National Association of Youth Organisations (NAYO) have sustained local action to support people to claim their water rights, building community resilience through a human rights-based approach where rights-holders appreciate their entitlements and duty-bearers understand their obligations.

In the second stage of the Zimbabwe Claim Your Water Rights campaign NAYO joined forces with Matabeleland Institute of Human Rights (MIHR) to strengthen nonviolent advocacy efforts and young people's agency in advocating for water and climate justice.

Having organised daily protests and presented an ultimatum to the Zimbabwe Water Authority (ZINWA) in October 2020 after Bulawayo residents went an official 144 hours without water, MIHR continued to organise direct action in 2021. Between January-March 2021, MIHR ran the #MondayWaterAction campaign. The campaign utilised offline and online activism, raising public consciousness of water rights violations amid the spread of COVID-19, garnering media coverage and forcing the government to launch - and commit to completing - the Gwayi-Shangani dam and pipeline. Following #MondayWaterAction's success, MIHR established the citizen-led Movement for Environmental Management Action (MEMA).

MIHR organised physical and virtual training for 30 MEMA and NAYO members from Bulawayo, Umguza, Tsholotsho, Harare and Chitungwiza on nonviolent water and climate activism, fostering the

formation of environment committees and solidarity between communities who will be served by the Gwayi-Shangani Dam and Binga villagers who are being evicted due to its construction. MIHR also directly engaged duty-bearers, including Matabeleland South's member of parliament to discuss ZINWA disconnecting residents' water in Gwanda Town. This issue was raised in Parliament on 3 August 2021 with the Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water And Rural Resettlement compelled to issue a statement the following day. Water was restored in Gwanda Town a week later with the ministry revoking ZINWA's license and granting management of water treatment plants to Gwanda Municipality.

MIHR also used petitions to open dialogue between duty-bearers and communities. MIHR first supported the Mbundane Residents Forum to develop a parliamentary petition with support from Mbundane's Councilor. The petition was successful as the community's complaint has now been escalated to the national portfolio committee responsible for managing water and sanitation, who are obliged to meet Mbundane residents. MIHR also supported residents in Umguza 16 Ward residents to petition parliament after organising rights training and filming a documentary with Human Rights Watch Southern Africa to record the impact of 15 years of water poverty on over 6,000 households. MIHR continued to collaborate with Human Rights Watch Southern Africa, holding a Claim Your Water Rights dialogue between academics, the organisation's late director Dewa Mavhinga and Bulawayo's Member of Parliament to discuss water and climate change policy and activism issues in Southern Africa.

NAYO meanwhile invested in young people to advance water and climate justice nationally and locally, spotlighting Chitungwiza's water and environmental crisis to compel local authorities to take remedial action. Young people constitute 67% of Zimbabwe's population so NAYO established provincial youth hubs as a safe space for activists to organise, mobilise, unite, and resist water rights violations. This decentralised structure allowed hubs to respond swiftly to local realities, fostering community resilience and a sense of belonging. This resulted in local authorities responding supportively to community concerns, plus improved monitoring of water availability and accessibility issues. NAYO produced online fliers and posters to raise public awareness of the nexus between climate justice and water rights. The fliers were distributed on social media, directly reaching 5,562 people within Zimbabwe on WhatsApp.

Amid a wider crackdown on civic space in Zimbabwe, young people protested and demanded their water rights in Chitungwiza. The protests generated meaningful media coverage with Chitungwiza's deputy mayor meeting protestors to hear their concerns and solutions. Since then, residents have started collecting water from bowsers provided by Chitungwiza Municipality on scheduled weekdays. Zanu Pf Ward 3 Councillor John Matiyenga converted a bush pump into a solar-powered borehole that supplies thousands residents to curb perennial water problems. Other residents have successfully claimed improved services with residents in Chitungwiza Wards 12, 15 and 19 confirming that they now receive water at least once or twice a week.

However, these considerable achievements were tainted. Sometimes the water residents received is unsafe and/or only available for 30 minutes a day. This was partly because Chitungwiza does not have its own source of water, depending instead on Zimbabwe's capital Harare. NAYO encouraged youth hub members and the director of Chitungwiza's Resident Association (CHITREST) and youth hub members to attend a 2021 Budget Consultation workshop, where they called for the government to allocate budget for the construction of an independent Dam for Chitungwiza. NAYO

secured a three-day tour from Environmental Management Agency to Chitungwiza's 25 wards to address environmental concerns (i.e. fuel spillages, pollution, the building of structures on wetlands) and introduce a waste regulatory system with clean-ups on the first Friday of each month. NAYO later conducted a survey to document Chitungwiza's water woes and amplify community calls for budget to be provided for the construction of the MUDA Dam. In anticipation of the 2023 elections, the government responded to residents' advocacy by beginning a borehole drilling scheme. To date 25 boreholes have been drilled in the St Marys-Zengeza area, yet residents say that this is only a temporary measure. Some boreholes have been constructed along sewer lines; other boreholes are strictly regulated with residents unable to fetch sufficient water; others are being billed for water they don't receive. This has forced some residents to drill their own boreholes without applying for a license from the council.

NAYO states confidently that claiming water rights is now the most topical issue in every province of Zimbabwe.

#### **What next?**

- Build Zimbabwe's water movement by training civil society allies on water rights and climate justice, working with ZHRC to train monitors to report human rights violations and Activista, who started the 'Give Life to Muda Dam' project in response to Claim Your Water Rights.
- Launch of the Climate Village initiative as a space to convene discussions on water and climate concerns with activists, academics, journalists, policy-makers and politicians.
- Initiate a round table meeting with the ministry, council, and residents so that solutions are co-created to address water shortages and climate justice challenge in Chitungwiza.
- Dialogue expanded to national levels in petitioning parliament with ZINWA, EMA, and ZHRC on the right to water and environmental protection and sharing Chitungwiza findings with Zimbabwe's Ministry of Finance to secure the construction of the Muda Dam.
- As discussed with international water activists in Dakar, NAYO will assert people's power over water companies to wrestle control from international bureaucrats and businessmen.

## Claim Your Water Rights phase two

In the second phase of Claim Your Water Rights we will deepen and broaden the campaign by diversifying grantees and sharpening strategies. The short-term efficacy and long-term impacts of different strategies depends on local, national and regional contexts. Now that we have lessons and experiences to draw on from 26 different members in 14 countries, we will jointly assess what has worked, where and why. The next phase of the campaign will put far greater emphasis on peer-to-peer exchange to foreground the experience and expertise of grassroots human rights advocates. In 2022-23 we will co-design, facilitate and promote three-four learning exchanges with members on: water, climate justice and extractive industries; using the media; and collaborating with national human rights institutions. There will be further exchanges in 2023-24 on a range of different topics.

We will also build coalitions working on interrelated human rights, fostering a culture of learning and solidarity that will deepen our understanding of the different ways in which civil society confront systemic injustices, power imbalances and rights violations. While it's important to connect with health, gender, environmental and social justice activists, we should also engage civil and political rights advocates to build a broad movement of water rights defenders. This intersectional approach enables members to better understand the complexity and specificity of the injustices different marginalised groups experience. For example, in the second phase of Claim Your Water Rights we will equip members with information and tools to mitigate the risks and improve their effectiveness in increasing closed societies by partnering with CIVICUS.

Since 2019 we have funded 26 different members in 14 different countries. In the coming years End Water Poverty will prioritise fundraising so that we can raise additional financial resources to consolidate campaign gains, expand the Secretariat and provide larger mini-grants to more members.

## Conclusion

It's been another immensely difficult year. Many of us are still grappling with systemic injustice and competing crises. Many of us have lost colleagues and loved ones. Despite this, we remain remarkably resilient and resolute in our determination to hold governments accountable and support communities to claim their rights. As you will see below, our coalition has amassed a number of astonishing achievements in the last two years - it is a privilege to work with such dedicated, inspiring advocates.

Claim Your Water Rights' success stems from the creativity, versatility, determination and resilience of our members. End Water Poverty's work continues to centre people's agency and dignity. It is people who drive change, who hold governments accountable, who mobilise, organise, unify. We have a choice to either stand with people as they claim their rightful share of development or continue business as usual, fuelling a virtuous cycle of poverty and charity.

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