

I FEEL THAT PEOPLE IN MY COMMUNITY DO NOT EVEN KNOW WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS ARE TO BEGIN WITH.

I BELIEVE THAT WE CANNOT FIGHT FOR SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW



ASNIYA MOHAMAD, 17

WINNER OF THE 1ST HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH CHALLENGE

ORGANISED BY THE SPECIAL RAPporteur ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS TO WATER AND SANITATION, LÉO HELLER

ABOUT ASNIYA

Asniya T. Mohamad is a 17-year old Filipino from the Maguindanaon tribe in the Philippines. She and her family are survivors of armed violence who are currently internally displaced in an evacuation community. The lasting effects of the armed struggle negatively impacted their access to clean water and sanitation. Up to this day, Asniya and her family has no proper toilet and is left with no choice but to drink unclean water from makeshift pumps. She has recently been elected as the Youth President of her community. Her key initiatives are mobilizing the local youth to advocate for universal health coverage and encouraging the systemic reporting of people who pollute their lands and rivers.

WINNING SUBMISSION

In her [video](#) submission, Asniya shares how access to clean water and proper sanitation can be used to achieve peace in vulnerable communities. She started the video by explaining how decades of historical injustice and armed violence in the Bangsamoro region has caused territorial disputes and clan wars that destroyed wells, pumps, and latrines, thereby cutting off any sort of reliable access to clean water and proper sanitation in their area.



The video was mostly shot in an evacuation community in Poblacion, Datu Piang, Maguindanao where Asniya and her family resides, together with over a hundred other internally displaced families.

COMMUNICATION AND RAISING AWARENESS



Asniya spoke about her experiences at a side-event where the Special Rapporteur's report on the human rights to water and sanitation in public spaces, alongside a panel of experts and NGO representatives. Her contribution focused on the importance of raising awareness of the human rights to water and sanitation.

"I feel that people in my community do not even know what human rights are to begin with," she said. "I believe that we cannot fight for something we don't know."



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She also drew attention to the need to highlight violations of the human rights to water and sanitation, and to hold authorities accountable through communication. Asniya recommended that the youth in her community be more involved in advocating for their access to clean water and sanitation by using social media as a platform to post relevant insights, pictures, and videos so that their situation will be noticed by relevant authorities. She also called for the local government to do more countryside investments that will result in the creation of bigger and cleaner water pumps and toilets in informal settlements.

HEAR FROM ASNIYA



Why did you choose to enter the Youth Challenge ?

I want to be a reporter someday, so I decided to use my reporting skills to tell our story about our community's access to water and sanitation. We deserve to be heard!

What are you doing to continue your work in learning about, and promoting the human rights to water and sanitation?

I was elected as the student body president in our school. This leadership role has given me the platform to educate my fellow students about the importance of proper handwashing and the ways on how we can stop polluting our major river system.

What has been your lived experience of the human rights to water and sanitation?

I lived through the war so I never experienced having a proper toilet. It's normal for me to take a bath out in the open because we don't have proper facilities. That's so uncomfortable for me as a female teenager. I usually get my water from an open well with unclear water and where frogs and other insects lay their eggs. I've been sick so many times because of this.

What would you like to see the human rights community do in the next few years?

I hope that we will get more information about human rights. That will be a good start because we are not being taught about our rights in school. Internet is not reliable in our refugee camp so information about human rights is hard to obtain.

How can your fellow youth get more involved in promoting the human rights to water and sanitation?

We can use social media to promote human rights awareness because we are already so active on Facebook. From there we can connect and plan on other water and sanitation projects that we can do for our community.

If you could sum up your message in one sentence, what would it be?

We are never too young or disadvantaged to make a difference!

MORE ABOUT THE YOUTH CHALLENGE

The first Human Rights Youth Challenge which took place on the occasion of International Youth Day in August 2018 aimed to raise awareness among the youth population on the human rights to water and sanitation, encouraging youth to demonstrate knowledge of the human rights to water and sanitation and express what these rights mean to them by submitting original contribution via social media channels.

The second Human Rights Youth Challenge focused on the theme 'Leave no one behind'. The goal of the challenge was to draw attention to people who lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation in spheres of life beyond the household.

The third Human Rights Youth Challenge, on privatization and the human rights to water and sanitation is currently underway.