

# 4TH HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH CHALLENGE

## Climate Change and the human rights to water and sanitation

Organized by Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Mr. Pedro Arrojo Agudo

Together with the Permanent Mission of Spain, the Permanent Mission of Germany, UNESCO-IHP, UNEP, UN-Water and Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, Mr. David Boyd

## Background

The water and sanitation sector is in need of new ideas on how to raise awareness that access to water and sanitation are human rights. Youth, with their creativity and different ways of thinking and expressing, can contribute to bringing innovation to this sector and advancing a much needed paradigm shift from the traditional focus on infrastructure, technology and finance to one with people at the centre. In order to involve and to hear from youth in this paradigm shift, the series of Human Rights Youth Challenge, organized by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, is an opportunity for youth to show knowledge, understanding and passion about the human rights to water and sanitation by creating original content. The former Special Rapporteur, Leo Heller, organized three Human Rights Youth Challenges (see Annex).

This year, on the World Water Day (22 March 2021), the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation- together with the Permanent Mission of Spain, the Permanent Mission of Germany, UNESCO-IHP, UNEP, UN-Water and the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, Mr. David Boyd - invites youth ages between 16 to 24 to produce a video on "the impact of climate change on the human rights to drinking water and sanitation".

## The Challenge

### SUBMISSION

Youth aged between 16 -24 are invited to produce a video (2-5 minutes) on climate change and human rights to water and sanitation.

### LANGUAGE

Any language with subtitles in English, French, or Spanish).

### SUBMISSION PERIOD

22 March 2021 – 31 May 2021 (Midnight CET)

### HOW TO SUBMIT

Mark the video by including the hashtag #Youth4Watsan and tagging the Special Rapporteur's social media account.

Submit the link to the video by filling in this [form](#).

*Disclaimer: By submitting the video, participants agree to make the submissions public on the official webpage of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation*

### WINNING PRIZE

The UN Special Rapporteur will invite the winner to join him and to speak at a side-event to Human Rights Council in September 2021. The winner will be announced in mid-June 2021.

# Why climate change and the human rights to water and sanitation?

Today, there is a general consensus that the key vector in the generation of climate change is the energy vector. However, the main vector of social impact is the water vector, as a consequence of the growing risks of droughts, heavy rainfall and river floods. As often happens, although the whole of society is and will be affected, the most impacted are and will be those already in most vulnerable situations, increasing their difficulties in accessing drinking water, causing catastrophic bankruptcies in rural economies and generating massive climatic migration phenomena.

Faced with the emergence of these climatic phenomena and their corresponding impacts on populations, we once again confirm the importance of considering and dealing with social and environmental risks in an integrated manner. The devastating socio-economic impacts derived from changes in the water cycle, on the other hand, allow us to assess the importance of developing mitigation strategies. However, from the field of water management, the fundamental challenge is to design and develop adaptation strategies. Adaptation strategies that increase the resilience of aquatic ecosystems to extreme events; and that manage, on the other hand, to increase the social resilience of populations at risk.

Increasing environmental resilience fundamentally implies recovering the good ecological status of ecosystems so that their natural capacities to cushion the impacts of droughts and floods can be recovered. Developing social resilience implies taking preventive measures (rigorously applying the precautionary principle) in hydrological, territorial and urban planning, developing awareness, education and participation of people to minimize risks and promote protection measures social for the people in most vulnerable situations. At the same time, developing social resilience not only implies the direct impacts that threaten them but also to the consequences of the socio-economic crises that climate change will generate, increasing and extending poverty and inequality.

## The Special Rapporteur's focus on climate change

The Special Rapporteur notes that climate change is one of the global threats that hinders the exercise and enjoyment of human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. In the context of climate change, the relationship between the full realization of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation and the sustainability of the environment needs further attention. Freshwater from rivers and aquifers is often the only source of drinking water and water for personal and domestic usage for those in most vulnerable situations and therefore, bankruptcy of sustainability, and especially toxic pollution, of those natural water sources have dire consequences on those who rely on them. Climate change has further aggravated the challenges faced by those who are in vulnerable situations; all existing problems have become grave and climate change has accelerated the need of sustainability on one hand and the relationship between social and environmental values, on the other hand.

Given this background, in order to plan the first three years of his mandate, the Special Rapporteur identified three crisis that we are faced with: the COVID19 crisis, the climate change crisis and the crisis of democratic governance.

The Special Rapporteur looks forward to hearing from youth and from their perspective and their thoughts on how climate change impact the drinking water, water used for personal and domestic purpose as well as sanitation facilities including sewerage network, toilet and shower facilities, hygiene products, among others.

# ANNEX: PREVIOUS HUMAN RIGHTS YOUTH CHALLENGES

## 1st Human Rights Youth Challenge (2018)

On the occasion of International Youth Day in 2018 (12 August), the former UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, Léo Heller, convened an online initiative aiming to raise awareness among the youth population on the human rights to water and sanitation. A challenge entitled "**the Human Rights Youth Challenge: Show your understanding of the rights to water and sanitation**" was held from **12 July to 6 August 2018** during which youth between the ages of **15 and 24 years** were invited to participate. They were encouraged to demonstrate knowledge of the human rights to water and sanitation and express what these rights mean to them by sharing original content via social media channels (@SRwatsan on Facebook and Twitter; @UNSRwatsan on Instagram), marking the submissions with the hashtag #Youth4watsan.

More than **150 youth** from around the world sent in submissions ranging from infographics, animated videos, videos with interviews and on-site visits, short stories, poems, songs, academic works and essays. Several youths took the opportunity to comment on the shortcomings related to access to water and sanitation at the international, national and even local levels. Also, many youths made abundant use of new technologies in preparing their submissions—video was incorporated into approximately half of all submissions.

The **winner of the Youth Challenge. Ms. Asniya Mohamad** (age 17) from the Philippines, was invited to present her submission via Skype at the side-event of the 38th session of the Human Rights Council on "#Youth4Watsan: The role of youth and the human rights to water and sanitation" held on 11 September 2018. **Asniya was also invited to travel to Geneva to speak at a side-event** of the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council on "The human rights to water and sanitation in sphere of life beyond the household" held on 11 September 2019.

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.

See an interview with Asniya.



## 2nd Human Rights Youth Challenge (2019)

On the occasion of World Water Day in 2019 and following the success of the 1st Human Rights Youth Challenge in 2018, the former Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation organised a second online challenge to raise awareness of the human right safe drinking water and sanitation. **The 2nd Human Rights Youth Challenge was organized together with the Permanent Mission of Spain, the Permanent Mission of Germany, UN-Water, UNESCO-IHP, and OHCHR.**

The theme of the challenge for the 2nd Human Rights Youth Challenge was '**Leave no one behind**', which was the theme of the 2019 World Water Day also part of the Special Rapporteur's HRC thematic report on public spaces (A/HRC/42/47). 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.

From 14 January 2019 to 28 February 2019, over **80 submissions** received. The Special Rapporteur looked for submission that demonstrated a good understanding of the human rights to water and sanitation, particularly focusing on those who are left behind in sphere of life beyond household such as public spaces. The winner, **Juliana Muller** (age 17 from Brazil), **was invited to travel to Geneva to speak at a side-event** of the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council on "The human rights to water and sanitation in sphere of life beyond the household" held on 11 September 2019.

Juliana Muller's video, "RIGHTLESS" allows you to walk a mile in the shoes of a young girl in rural Brazil who understands the consequences of being left behind first hand. Her creative, virtual reality-inspired submission centres on the human experiences that highlights the importance of the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation. She demonstrates an excellent understanding of rights, and a sensitivity for personal stories and experiences that are at the core of human rights advocacy.

See an [interview](#) with Juliana.



## 3rd Human Rights Youth Challenge (2019–2020)

The former Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation convened the third Human Rights Youth Challenge inviting all persons **aged between 24 and 32 years old** to submit an **essay focussing on one case study** illustrating the impacts of privatization on the human rights to water and sanitation. The challenge was initially launched on 8 July 2019 with a deadline of 2 September 2019 with **the theme "private actor participation"**, but, following a need to clarify the scope of the theme, the deadline was extended to 20 April 2020. The scope of the theme of "private actor participation" was further clarified as cases related to for-profit organizations providing water and sanitation services.



From a total of **43 submissions** received, 10 essays were disqualified as they did not focus on the topic of private actors and privatization. 33 qualified submissions were anonymized and organizations that co-sponsored the Youth Challenge were invited to assess the anonymized submissions according to two criteria: “understanding of the impact of private sector participation on the human rights to water and sanitation” and on “detail and uniqueness of the case study”. Additionally, the Special Rapporteur assessed the submissions according to two additional criteria: “understanding of the human rights to water and sanitation”, and “ability to write clearly and concisely”.

The **four winners** were invited to present their essays at a virtual GA side event GA75 virtual side-event: “#OurTurnToSpeak – a youth perspective on privatization and the human rights to water and sanitation”

**Jennifer Barr (US):** *“Whose clean India is it? Private sector and the human rights of sanitation workers”*  
In her essay, she examines private sector involvement in protecting the wellbeing of sanitation workers. By creating technologies that prevent the need for close human contact with human fecal matter or by rearranging the economic configurations to improve the agency and circumstances of the sanitation workers, private sector actors can materially improve the lives of people engaged in sanitation labor. However, these approaches fail to address underlying social inequalities or the human right to nondiscrimination. As precedent has shown, without other efforts or regulations, these kinds of initiatives can actually disguise and erase social stigma and suffering.

**Dylan O’Donoghue (US)** *“Forced labour and water and sanitation as part of employment conditions in Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines”*

Dylan’s submission for this challenge is a case study of labor abuses to migrant fishermen who typically hail from Indonesia, The Philippines, and Vietnam to Taiwan. She studied how abusive employers fail to uphold employee rights to water and sanitation. When fishermen in this study raise concerns about access to these rights to their employers, employers and the brokers who represent fishermen use verbal or physical violence and other repressive tactics to silence them. As a result, these fishermen are often denied water and sanitation rights and are forced to stay with their abusive employers against their will.

**Yushi Yamada (Japan)** *“Suggestion for improving the human rights to water and sanitation through private sector participation in water services (Concession scheme in Hamamatsu City)”*

Yushi’s essay describes how Japanese municipalities are trying to solve unique water and sanitation issues, with a particular focus on private sector participation in water and sanitation in developed countries and its implications for human rights. This essay points out many positive impacts of private sector participation and what has been cared to introduce it for guaranteeing human rights in Hamamatsu city. Yushi hope this essay can serve as inspiration for solutions to similar issues experienced in other developed countries.

**Arthur Nielsen C. Demain (Philippines)** *“Multi-sectoral Analysis of the Joint Venture Model under PPP to Enhance Domestic Private Sector Participation in Solving the Water and Sanitation Crisis in Metro Manila, Philippines”*

Arthur’s essay examines the perspectives of public institutions, private operators, and urban consumers on the usage of the Joint Venture Model (JVM) among Domestic Private Sector Participants (DPSPs) under the Public-Private Partnership framework to provide safe and accessible water and sanitation services to Metro Manila residents. It analyzes the challenges, risks, and impact of the JVM on the cooperation between the national government and local government units in designing and implementing human-rights based water and sanitation mechanisms for both formal and informal urban dwellers. This essay recommends the improvement of procedural mechanisms in procurement and the wider usage of design thinking to help DPSPs in integrating human rights-centric content in their proposals to Philippine municipalities under JVM.