

**UN-Water
Roadmap
for the Integration
of Human Rights
to Water and Sanitation**



**United
Nations**



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Introduction

Access to safe water and sanitation for all are fundamental human rights, essential for the full enjoyment of all human rights, eradicating poverty, building peaceful and prosperous society and ensuring that 'no one is left behind' on the path towards sustainable development.

In 2010, the General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution 64/292 which gave explicit recognitions of these rights. Since then, a number of subsequent resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly gave further affirmation and clarified the human rights to water and sanitation.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, the world leaders gave explicit commitment to "[A] world where we reaffirm our commitments regarding the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation and where there is improved hygiene; and where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious".

Yet billions still lack safe water and sanitation facilities, and people are being left behind for reasons related to their gender, ethnicity, culture and/or socioeconomic status, among others. Exclusion, discrimination, entrenched power asymmetries, poverty and material inequalities are among the main obstacles to fulfilling

the human rights to water and sanitation and achieving the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The importance of the rights to adequate housing, water and sanitation, and to live a healthy and secure life has become much more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Efforts to recover better from the pandemic has to be built around a shared understanding that the rights to water and sanitation, food, health care, education, decent work and social security are fundamental human rights to which every human being is legally and equally entitled.

In his Call to Action for Human Rights, issued as the UN marked its 75th anniversary, the UN Secretary-General outlined his far-reaching vision based on human rights, that is transformative, that provides solutions and that speaks directly to each and every human being. To that end, we must broaden the base of support for human rights by reaching out to critics and engaging in conversations that reach deeply into society.

The Secretary-General's Call to Action set out some overarching guiding principles and identifies seven such domains:

1. rights at the core of sustainable development;
2. rights in times of crisis;
3. gender equality and equal rights for women;
4. public participation and civic space;
5. rights of future generations, especially climate justice;
6. rights at the heart of collective action; and
7. new frontiers of human rights.

Each of these areas offers great potentials for the UN-Water to contribute and strengthen its collaboration.

The results of surveys and consultations have put access to water and sanitation and other essential services as top immediate priority, and ensuring respect for human rights and gender equality as top priorities for medium- and long-term, along with health, climate change and access to essential services.

In his report [Our Common Agenda](#), presented in September 2021 to the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General outlined his vision for an agenda of action, designed to strengthen and accelerate multilateral cooperation – particularly around the 2030 Agenda – and make a tangible difference to people's lives. To accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Secretary-General proposed to build '*a renewed social contract anchored in human rights*' by reestablishing trust, fostering inclusion, protection and participation, and '*measuring and valuing what matters to the people and the planet*'. Leave No One Behind is placed as the first of 12 areas of action, which also include, among others, '*Place women and girls at the center*' and '*Listen to and work with youth*'.

“For millions of people around the world, poverty, discrimination, violence and exclusion are denying them their rights to the basic necessities of life: health, safety, a vaccination against disease, clean water to drink, a plate of food or a seat in a classroom.”

**UN Secretary-General ,
Our Common Agenda**

UN-Water's commitment to human rights

The [UN-Water 2030 Strategy](#) has recognized that coordinated action to tackle the complexity and magnitude of the water and sanitation challenges requires an integrated, human rights-based approach, that gives a voice to all people through non-discriminatory processes and inclusive participation.

The development of the UN-Water 2030 Strategy was built upon the past work by the UN-Water to promote the human rights to water and sanitation and gender equality. These included collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on human rights to water and sanitation including for the Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG6, the [World Water Development Report 2019 on Leaving No One Behind](#), and the [policy brief on eliminating discrimination and inequalities in access to water and sanitation \(2015\)](#).

In 2020, the UN-Water contributed to the ten-year anniversary campaign on the recognition of the human rights to water and sanitation, to take stock of the impact of the recognition of water and sanitation as human rights in the WASH sector and beyond, and to reflect together how these rights could be better promoted and integrated in the overall efforts by UN and other partners to accelerate the human rights-based implementation and SDG6 and other related goals.

In 2020, the UN-Water launched the [Sustainable Development Goal 6 Global Acceleration Framework](#) aims to deliver fast results at an increased scale as part of the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030. The international community will catalyse broad stakeholder action by dramatically improving its support to countries to achieve SDG 6 on water and sanitation through four action pillars:

1. **ENGAGE:** swift responses to country requests through leveraged expertise and mobilization;
2. **ALIGN:** coordinated approaches across sectors and actors through unified strategies and initiatives;
3. **ACCELERATE:** unlocked bottlenecks through five accelerators, and
4. **ACCOUNT:** strengthened accountability through joint review and learning.

The most recent resolution of the Human Rights Council on human rights to water and sanitation ([Res 45/8](#)) called upon States to consider making the SDGs, including SDG 6, priority at the highest level in order to ensure the progressive realization of the human rights to water and sanitation for all. It further

specifically referred to the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework, and emphasized the importance of working collaboratively with all stakeholders in a coordinated manner, in particular in the context of responding to and preventing the spread of COVID-19.

The 2023 UN Water Conference and its preparatory process present an opportunity for the UN-Water community to reaffirm its commitment to human rights and forge partnership to catalyze action for the realization of human rights to water and sanitation for all.

Roadmap for the integration of human rights in the UN-Water

Through the SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework and the UN-Water 2030 Strategy, the UN-Water aims to contribute to the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation. In moving forward with the implementation of the Global Acceleration Framework and its four action pillars, the UN-Water will seek to further integrate human rights in its work and contribute to the realization of the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation, including in the context of humanitarian crises.

Engage

The UN-Water will **facilitate multistakeholder engagement, advocacy and dialogues on the human rights to water and sanitation**. Joint advocacy on key human rights dimensions of water and sanitation, such as equality and non-discrimination, will be promoted around key events such as Water Water Days and World Toilet Days, Menstrual Hygiene Day, but also other events not specifically focused on water and sanitation, although very relevant to the realization of the human rights to water and sanitation, including World Humanitarian Day and World Women's Day, using research, data and evidence collected through the World Water Development Reports and the Integrated Monitoring Initiative. The UN-Water

will facilitate, support and contribute to webinars and virtual discussions on the human rights to water and sanitation, including the preparatory process for the 2023 UN Water Conference and at the World Water Week, that brings together diverse stakeholders – Governments, civil society, private sector, UN system and human rights mechanisms.

Engagement should also focus on fostering the development/updating of relevant policies, laws, strategies and plans for access to water and sanitation.

The expected outcomes are that:

- Human rights will be consistently integrated in WASH multi-stakeholder engagement and policy advocacy with focus on LNOB and field partners; and
- There will be increased prominence and awareness of the human rights to water and sanitation/SDG6 (and of the links with other human rights and SDGs) in key policy advocacy arenas.

Expected outputs will include:

1. A joint UN-Water advocacy strategy and messages on the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will be developed, with active multi-stakeholder engagement;

2. A UN-Water human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB policy brief will be published and disseminated;
3. The human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will be integrated in WWDR from 2023 onwards.
4. Key policy themes and events related to the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB for UN-Water intervention will be identified;
5. Side events on specific human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB / LNOB priorities will be organized on the occasion of key policy events.

Align

The UN-Water will seek to **further strengthen the alignment of its policies and activities with international human rights principles and standards**, as well as the overall UN commitment to human rights as a key pillar of the UN Charter.

The UN-Water will **strengthen the synergy between the work of UN human rights mechanisms and other global processes on water and sanitation**. Building upon the achievements and collaborations with the previous mandate-holder (Léo Heller), the UN-Water will seek to strengthen support and collaboration with [the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation](#) (Pedro Arrojo-Agudo) as well as with other relevant mandate holders, such as the Special Rapporteur on human rights and environment. Such collaboration will include contributing data, information and analysis for thematic reports as well as supporting the preparation and follow-up to country visits. UN-Water could consider exploring the scope for a more formal partnership, looking at examples and experience of successful collaboration between other

Special Procedures mandates and UN agencies/mechanisms (e.g. UNEP and the Special Rapporteur on human rights and environment).

Beyond the Special Procedures, the UN-Water will explore ways to strengthen engagement with wider UN human rights mechanisms, particularly the Universal Periodic Review and treaty bodies, including for reporting and formulation of recommendations. A pilot initiative to strengthen SDG6 related recommendations and follow up in the Universal Periodic Review could be considered.

The expected outcomes are that:

- UN-Water collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation and other Special Procedures mandates will be enhanced; and
- JMP/GLAAS information, data and analysis will be increasingly used by UPR and treaty bodies in reporting processes; and that the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will be fully integrated in JMP and GLAAS indicators.

Expected outputs will include:

1. Mechanisms for UN-Water communication-sharing and cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation will be established;
2. Data, information and analysis is timely supplied by UN-Water to the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation for thematic and country reports;
3. Collaboration with UN field presences is increased in the frame of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation's country missions;

4. The Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation's recommendations in 1-2 selected countries will be implemented with UN-Water members and partners support;
5. Functional linkages and collaboration between key relevant Human Rights Special Procedures and the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to water and sanitation will be facilitated and the human rights to water and sanitation is mainstreamed in the action of other Special Procedures;
6. UN-Water mechanisms and members will be regularly contributing to the reporting and recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and treaty bodies;
7. JMP and GLAAS indicators will be reviewed to strengthen alignment with HRWS.

Accelerate

The UN-Water will **promote practical implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation through adoption of a human rights-based approach to water and sanitation.** Integrating human rights in UN-Water's **country engagement** will be key as this is at the core of UN-Water's contribution to the SDG6 Global Acceleration Framework and the UN reform. UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and Common Country Analyses as well as the UN socioeconomic framework for COVID-19 response provide opportunities to integrate HRBA to water and sanitation and to follow up on the recommendations from the Special Rapporteur and other HR mechanisms.

At country level, there is a lack of knowledge and awareness of HRBA to water and sanitation, as well as on the role of UN agencies with regard to human rights including on

sensitive issues. For UNCT programmatic response, it would be useful for UN-Water to **develop tools and guidance on the practical implementation of HRBA to water and sanitation for the use of UNCTs in UNSDCF/CCA.** Tools should also target Humanitarian Country Teams and Peace Missions to respond to the specific challenges of humanitarian crises, and of conflict and post conflict situations.

Where sensitive issues arise, UN-Water, with guidance from OHCHR and the Special Rapporteur, should **engage in discussion with UN Resident Coordinators and Humanitarian Coordinators or SRSGs**, in order to ensure a coordinated and coherent approach based on international standards and human rights principles.

UN-Water will engage further with the UN Security Council and with peace keeping and humanitarian operations to ensure that due attention to the human rights to water and sanitation is given in the context of conflict, post conflict and humanitarian emergencies.

For this purpose, it is essential to build capacity in this area as a key accelerator of the implementation of the human rights to water and sanitation, through a joint effort to develop a training on human rights to water and sanitation, building upon existing platforms and resources developed by UN agencies and other organizations in the area of the HRBA to WASH, LNOB and the human rights to water and sanitation.

Capacity building should not only focus on the integration of the human rights to water and sanitation in sustainable development work but also look at the human rights to water and sanitation in times of armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and ensure their integration in the action of peace and humanitarian operations, to guarantee the rights of

vulnerable and at-risk populations such as the displaced, refugees, the hard-to-reach, including children, when they most need it.

Expected outcomes are that:

- A common approach to human rights to water and sanitation and LNOB will be adopted by all UN-Water members and partners and UN teams and agencies in development, humanitarian and peace field presences;
- UN-Water capacity to support integration of the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB in country processes is enhanced through the development of revised offer (and the necessary support to it) by UN-Water members and partners; and
- Human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB are increasingly integrated in CCA, Cooperation Framework and UNCT programmes.

Expected outputs will include:

1. The UN-Water one-stop tool on the human rights to water and sanitation /LNOB will be produced and approved, consolidating previous materials by UN-Water members, which will be integrated into the UN-Water Capacity Development Initiative; specific tools will be produced as appropriate, and a dissemination strategy will be developed and approved;
2. The human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will be integrated in country level engagement and in the revised offer to the field/ Capacity Development Initiative; UN field programmes in the human rights to water and sanitation / LNOB will be mapped, and 2-3 pilot countries will be selected for implementing

UN-Water human rights to water and sanitation /LNOB capacity building support using UN-Water tools (testing of tools);

3. The human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will be integrated in CCA and Cooperation Framework and UNCT programmes and collaboration between UNCT agencies in selected countries around the human rights to water and sanitation /LNOB will be enhanced;
4. Capacity-building tools on the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will be finalized taking account implementation lessons, and will be disseminated as appropriate.

Account

It is proposed that the UN-Water will have a senior-level strategic discussion on human rights around the Secretary-General's Call to Action, from which two follow-up actions could be considered:

- **convening regular discussions on human rights at SPM meetings by making it as a standing item on its agenda;**
- **considering to adopt a UN-Water position paper/statement on human rights in 2022, following the SPM discussions.**

UN-Water may also encourage the actors of the water and sanitation sector to align their policies and activities to human rights principles and standards and SDGs.

The expected outcomes are that:

- UN-Water members will have explicitly reaffirmed commitment to human rights as central to the UN-Water strategy and the Global Acceleration Framework;

- > Human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB are mainstreamed in SPM regular discussions and decision-making;
- > UN-Water's accountability for the roadmap implementation will be ensured.

Expected outputs will include:

1. The UN-Water position paper or statement on human rights and LNOB will be adopted;
2. The human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB will become a standing agenda item in SPM meetings and the SPM will ensure regular monitoring of HRWS roadmap implementation in the frame of such standing agenda item;
3. A Community of Practice on the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB with OHCHR and the human rights focal points in UN-Water member agencies will be set-up and made operational to coordinate multi-agency action on the human rights to water and sanitation/LNOB;
4. Policy papers on key human rights issues related to global water crisis will be adopted by SPM as appropriate;
5. The implementation of the present roadmap will have been reviewed before the 2023 Water conference and recommendation will be made for further actions.

Implementation and monitoring

The implementation of the roadmap will be for the 2022-2023 period, which will be reviewed at the end of 2023. The implementation will be led and coordinated by OHCHR and the Expert Group on WASH, in consultation with other relevant mechanisms (particularly Task Team on Country Engagement), while some actions are needed by SPMs and the Management Team as indicated in the attached chart.



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