

SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

Flagship Initiative

Workstream 1 — Promote human-rights-based approaches to water, sanitation, wastewater, and water quality across all contexts

Interactive Dialogue (a): Water for People

2026 United Nations Water Conference

Part 1 — Submission details

Submitting organisation	ONGAWA, Ingeniería para el Desarrollo Humano
Focal point	Mar Rivero
Date of submission	18 January 2026

Part 2 — Flagship Initiative

Initiative title <i>A short, clear name (maximum 15 words).</i>
Strengthening inclusive water governance in rural Senegal through evidence and civil society engagement
Guiding question(s) addressed <i>Indicate which of the guiding questions above the initiative addresses (state the number(s)). Multiple questions may be selected where relevant.</i>
Question 3 (main theme): participation, accountability, transparency and civic engagement in water and sanitation governance. Question 1 (sub-theme): progress in policies, institutional and regulatory frameworks to extend safe services to underserved populations.
Problem <i>Describe the systemic challenge that the initiative seeks to address and explain why a coordinated, multi-stakeholder response is required. Explain why this issue is important for advancing the human rights to water and sanitation. (Maximum 150 words)</i>
The rural water sector in Senegal shows significant progress in terms of aggregate coverage figures but also reveals profound disparities and challenges that prevent the realisation of the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation for large sections of the population. One of the causes is that the implementation of sector reform is taking longer than anticipated, leading to significant imbalances: processes and structures intended to be temporary are becoming entrenched without resolving the underlying shortcomings. Community management, which is central in much of the country, suffers from a lack of resources and capacity. Official indicators overlook essential aspects of HRWS — i.e. distance to the water source, waiting times, service continuity... — whilst supply cuts due to non-payment persist in the absence of social tariffs to protect vulnerable households, and accountability remains very weak. Public participation in governance is weak, partly due to the lack of verified data to substantiate their demands.
Description

Describe the initiative, its overall vision, and the shared objective it seeks to achieve. Explain why the initiative is catalytic, transformational, and capable of mobilising stakeholders around a common goal. (Maximum 250 words)

The initiative stems from the discontent felt by rural communities regarding the consequences of water sector reform. The Platform of Senegalese Civil Society Organisations for the Water and Sanitation Sector (POSCEAS) is spearheading an initiative to make governance in the rural sector more inclusive by incorporating the demands of civil society.

It is based on an **academic study** that provides an in-depth analysis of the situation of HRWS across rural Senegal and identifies the main challenges. Furthermore, it includes an analysis of the regulatory and institutional framework from a HRWS perspective, as well as of the reform process, which assigns a leading role to the private sector. The fieldwork was carried out thanks to the involvement of POSCEAS's member organisations. Furthermore, a Steering Committee comprising POSCEAS, pS-Eau and ONGAWA designed and subsequently validated the study.

Building on this evidence, a social dialogue process has brought together with other civil society organisations (Water Justice Network Senegal) to jointly review the findings and agree on a shared set of priority recommendations for the Government of Senegal.

The next phase of the initiative focuses on engagement with sector authorities based on the recommendations already agreed by civil society organisations, followed by monitoring of commitments and measures adopted.

The initiative will conclude with the **systematisation** of the process and their sharing with international networks and CSOs, in order to facilitate learning and replication in other contexts.

Guidelines set out by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on HRWR have been incorporated into the process.

Transformational impact and expected results

Describe how the initiative will drive systemic change at scale. Outline measurable outcomes, expected benefits, and accountability mechanisms. Explain how the initiative moves beyond dialogue and commitments towards concrete action and results. (Maximum 250 words)

The results of the process already achieved in Senegal provide measurable evidence: **fieldwork** has been carried out by university researchers specialising in HRWS, supported by Senegalese civil society organisations in 8 regions of the country, including more than 47 interviews with institutional, technical and community stakeholders, and visits to more than a dozen rural communities. The report [is available here](#).

A second major result has been the creation of a shared evidence base and a consensus-building process among three civil society networks — POSCEAS, pS-Eau Réseau Sénégal and the Water Justice Network Senegal. Through this process, participating organisations have jointly validated the findings and agreed on a common set of priority recommendations for public authorities.

The initiative therefore moves beyond research and consultation. Its next phase consists of structured engagement with sector authorities based on the recommendations already agreed

by civil society organisations, creating a pathway from evidence and participation to institutional action and accountability. This process will also support the monitoring of commitments and measures adopted.

The expected impact is the strengthening of rights-based governance in the rural water and sanitation sector through improved participation, greater accountability and the incorporation of HRWS principles into policy implementation and monitoring processes.

Another expected outcome will be the systematisation of the process, proposing a **model and a documented, transferable methodology**, thereby promoting its replicability.

Human rights and inclusion focus

Explain how the initiative advances the human rights to water and sanitation, including the AAAQ principles, and benefits people in vulnerable situations. (Maximum 150 words)

The **academic field study** is designed to highlight the gaps that official coverage statistics do not reveal, and to facilitate an evidence-based dialogue between rights-holders and duty-bearers, thereby strengthening community participation in social oversight and the governance of water and sanitation.

The **principles and categories** of the human rights to water and sanitation (accessibility, affordability, quality, participation, etc.) have been explicitly taken into account, with specific attention paid to **territorial inequalities** between rural regions and to the systematic **exclusion of women** from decision-making forums in the sector, despite their being the primary domestic water managers.

The initiative also strengthens the ability of rights-holders to engage with duty-bearers through evidence-based advocacy.

Alignment with SDG 6 Global Acceleration Framework

Explain how the initiative contributes to one or more SDG 6 accelerators: financing and investment, innovation and technology, capacity development, and data and information systems. (Maximum 150 words)

The model is primarily anchored in the Accelerator linked to **Data and Information**: the study generates rigorous, disaggregated evidence to provide organisations with tools to underpin their demands to the government for better services that comply with the human rights to water and sanitation.

It is also anchored in the **Capacity Development** Accelerator, as it empowers local civil society organisations to analyse evidence, articulate demands and monitor institutional commitments, which may continue beyond this initiative.

Furthermore, the recommendations put forward by civil society to the government can provide fair guidance for future public investment and institutional reforms, contributing to the **Financial and Investment** Accelerator.

Overall, the entire process, focused on right-holders and duty-bearers but involving different stakeholders, can be understood as a social innovative model contributing to the **Innovative** Accelerator.

Evidence Base and Strategic Rationale (Mandatory)

Provide evidence from existing or past projects, programmes, policies, partnerships, or initiatives demonstrating why the proposed approach is likely to succeed. Include measurable results, lessons learned, evaluations, and references. (Maximum 300 words)

Human rights stipulate that, regardless of the management model chosen to manage water and sanitation services, the principles and substance of these rights must be guaranteed. The aim is to identify how reform of the sector affects the guarantee of the HRWS.

The study thus reveals that:

- Access indicators do not take into account fundamental factors (distance to water sources, waiting times or service continuity, etc.)
- Water quality represents one of the most pressing challenges, with service providers failing to meet their obligations.
- Affordability is a barrier to effective access.
- Sanitation and hygiene continue to be sidelined in the sector's priorities, linked to gender gaps.
- Significant contradictions between regulatory design and practical implementation. Sector reform has been implemented without sufficient community participation, generating significant resistance in many localities.

With broad participation, these conclusions have been validated and recommendations for the Government of Senegal have been agreed upon with the aim of improving rural governance.

The report was subsequently cross-checked and reviewed, ensuring ownership by Senegalese civil society, complementing academic research and leading to the 2026 study on the human rights situation regarding water and sanitation in rural areas of Senegal.

This ongoing initiative has produced verifiable results that have sustained the commitment of three civil society organisations; on this basis, the recommendations will be submitted to the government, the measures adopted will be monitored, and the entire process will be systematised to facilitate its replication.

Beyond the research findings themselves, the process has demonstrated the ability of evidence to bring together diverse civil society actors around a shared advocacy agenda. The study findings have been validated by participating organisations and translated into a common set of recommendations, creating the conditions for constructive engagement with authorities and for the monitoring of future commitments and measures adopted.

Builds on existing efforts

Describe how the initiative strengthens, complements, or scales existing commitments, platforms, and initiatives. (Maximum 150 words)

The initiative is not starting from scratch: it builds on the networking efforts of Senegalese civil society organisations within the POSCEAS and Water Justice Network Senegal platforms, and on the dialogue that has taken place to incorporate the guidance of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation into the initiative.

It also builds on the participation of Senegalese organisations in broader international networks such as the Water Justice Network, People's Water Forum, End Water Poverty and SWA, creating opportunities for exchange, dissemination and replication.

Rather than creating a new platform, the initiative strengthens existing relationships, generates new evidence to support ongoing advocacy efforts and creates a common agenda for coordinated engagement with public authorities.

Partners, governance and stakeholder engagement

Describe the stakeholders involved and explain governance arrangements, leadership structures, and accountability mechanisms. (Maximum 150 words)

The study has involved stakeholders with distinct roles: independent researchers affiliated with the university have ensured methodological rigour; civil society organisations — POSCEAS, pS-Eau Réseau Sénégal and the Water Justice Network of Senegal — have ensured ownership, social legitimacy and consensus on the recommendations; and the international human rights framework, including dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, provides normative and institutional support.

A Steering Committee composed of POSCEAS, pS-Eau Senegal and ONGAWA has guided the full process and validated key outputs.

Participating organisations will also play a key role in presenting the recommendations to public authorities and in monitoring commitments and measures adopted.

The initiative places rights-holders at the centre of the process while promoting constructive dialogue with duty-bearers.

Existing Member State / stakeholder support

Identify Member States, organisations, or stakeholders that currently support, participate in, or have endorsed the initiative. (Maximum 100 words)

ONGAWA acts as a facilitator and driving force throughout the entire process. The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) is supporting the ongoing process by funding an ONGAWA long term programme in Senegal.

The member organisations of POSCEAS have played an essential role in reaching out to rural communities in the eight regions analysed and in facilitating contacts with the relevant institutions. pS-Eau Réseau Sénégal and the Water Justice Network Senegal have also contributed to validating findings and agreeing on common recommendations.

The initiative is taking place in a context of growing political attention to water governance in Senegal, including its role as co-host of the 2026 United Nations Water Conference.

Potential Member State / stakeholder support

Identify potential Member States, organisations, or stakeholders that could support, champion, finance, or participate in the initiative. (Maximum 100 words)

The results of the process will be shared through the national networks involved, as part of an accountability exercise. Furthermore, they will be disseminated through the international networks in which the lead organisations are involved, including the Water Justice Network, Peoples Water Forum, End Water Poverty and SWA, with the aim of raising awareness of the results and encouraging replication in other contexts.

Senegal is a priority partner country for Spanish development cooperation (AECID), which identifies water as a strategic sector within bilateral cooperation frameworks. AECID may therefore contribute to promoting dissemination and replication of the initiative.

Existing financing / resource mobilisation

Describe any existing funding, investments, technical assistance, partnerships, or resource-mobilisation mechanisms that currently support the initiative. (Maximum 130 words)

The project is funded by Spanish cooperation (AECID) as part of a cooperation programme implemented by ONGAWA in Senegal, which ensures the project's budgetary continuity until its completion. The presence of the lead organisations in Senegal ensures that the study's results are monitored. Approximately €25,000 has been contributed.

The main costs are related to the technical support provided by the university to carry out the study and the costs associated with the logistics of coordinating stakeholders throughout the country.

It is important to emphasize the importance of allocating resources to rightsholders coordination processes, since such processes rarely have resources set aside for this purpose and it is essential for this type of initiative.

Potential financing / resource mobilisation and financing strategy

Describe how the initiative will mobilise the financial resources, investments, technical assistance, innovation, partnerships, and political support required for implementation and scale-up. Identify potential funding sources, financing mechanisms, investment opportunities, and strategic partnerships over the medium to long term, including how it could leverage existing programmes, financing facilities, donor commitments, public budgets, private-sector engagement, or blended finance. (Maximum 300 words)

Partnerships between civil society organisations significantly reduce the costs of implementing the process. The involvement of national universities is particularly helpful during the research phase, providing local research capacity, as well as strengthening sustainability by ensuring that the information gathered in the study is continuously updated and analysed.

However, whilst the current process has received external funding, duty-bearers should facilitate and fund similar processes to achieve more democratic governance.

The involvement of established civil society networks and local academic institutions also strengthens the sustainability and scalability of the model beyond the current funding period.

Implementation horizon

The medium- to longer-term timeframe for delivery beyond the 2026 Conference. (Maximum 70 words)

The initiative follows a three-year cycle. The first year focused on evidence generation and consensus-building among civil society organisations. The following stages focus on engagement with public authorities, monitoring commitments and measures adopted, and documenting lessons learned to facilitate replication and long-term impact beyond the 2026 Conference.