

Co-operation Between Disciplines

Extending access to water and sanitation is a complex process involving many actors from local communities, legal practice, governance, development practice, environment, research and private sectors. The Cluster Group bridges the gap between different actors in Sweden and fosters an enabling environment for a joint understanding of how human rights standards can contribute to extending access to water and sanitation for those who need it most. Some of the issues on the Cluster Group's agenda are:

- Challenges related to realising the human right to water
- The role of Swedish actors in ensuring the right to water and sanitation
- Gendered impacts of the lack of access to water and sanitation
- Collecting best practices to improve access to water and sanitation
- Alignment of legislation with human rights obligations: exploring challenges and possibilities



Photo: Manfred Mats, SIWI

Join Us

Are you working with rights and/or water issues and want to contribute to the development of the Cluster Group? If so, please contact: ann-mari@swedishwaterhouse.se.


The group is hosted by the Swedish Water House (SWH), a networking initiative for Swedish organisations and competence in water and economics, environment, gender, governance, management and sanitation. SWH Cluster Groups are small, manageable interdisciplinary networks established around a water related theme to strengthen understanding and linkages among ongoing international processes and networks.

For more information about upcoming activities, seminars, projects and publications, visit the Cluster Group on Water and Rights at www.swedishwaterhouse.se.

Some of the Water and Rights Cluster Group members are representatives from the following organisations:



Church of Sweden 

 Swedish Society for Nature Conservation



The Swedish Water House is Administered by SIWI

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The Cluster Group
on Water and Rights

The Cluster Group

Established in 2007, the Cluster Group on Water and Rights brings together a wide range of Swedish actors to explore how human rights can help improve access to water and sanitation. The Cluster Group gathers different perspectives, raises awareness, exchanges experience and draws on international lessons learned about challenges related to implementing the right to water and sanitation in practice. This is to promote a constructive dialogue on what the right to water entails for Swedish and international actors.

Access to Water and Sanitation

There is enough water to meet everyone's essential personal and domestic needs. Yet more than 1 billion people lack access to safe water and 2.6 billion people lack access to basic sanitation. Every year 1.8 million children die as a result of diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation. Limited coverage of water facilities in slums often result in the poorest having to pay high prices for water. The need to fetch water from distant sources deprives millions of girls of their education. Poverty, inequality and unequal power relations lie at the heart of the water crisis.



Photo: Manfred Mats, SIWI



Photo: Anja-Christina Beyer, SLU

The Human Right to Water and Sanitation

The discussion about the right to water has grown to become a pressing issue as international attention to the widespread lack of access to water and sanitation increases. In 2002 the UN Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defined the "right of everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses". In March 2008, the UN Council of Human Rights decided to establish an Independent Expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation. The challenge now lies in realising the right.