

AN E W

African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

WATER RISING

Advocacy in Motion Across a Continent

A year of landmark policies, transformative coalitions, and community voices elevated from local villages to the United Nations.

225+

MEMBER CSOs

30+

COUNTRIES

2063

AFRICA WATER VISION
ADOPTED

WHO WE ARE

Africa's Unified Civil Society Voice

For Water, Sanitation and Water Security

The African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW) is an autonomous, Africa-wide platform of more than 225 local and national civil society organisations operating across more than 30 countries. ANEW is recognised by governments and major sector stakeholders as a civil society voice in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and water resources management (WRM), with a mandate that runs from grassroots mobilisation to national, regional, Pan-African and international policy processes.

ANEW's mandate goes beyond advocacy for women and girls, even as gender justice remains central to its work. The Network exists to strengthen the human rights to water and sanitation, deepen accountability for public commitments, promote good governance in WASH and WRM, advance climate-resilient and nature-based approaches, support sustainable financing, and ensure that communities influence the policies, investments and institutions that shape their daily access to water and sanitation.

Through its members and partners, ANEW links community experience to continental decision-making. It builds the capacity of national CSO platforms, supports evidence-based advocacy, convenes civil society around African Union and AMCOW processes, and brings the realities of marginalised communities, youth, people with disabilities, women, girls, informal settlements and climate-affected populations into the rooms where decisions are made.

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An Africa where access to water, sanitation and hygiene is recognised as a right, and where water resources and sanitation are sustainably managed and used by all.

THE CRISIS WE FACE

Why This Work Cannot Wait

Africa sits at a critical crossroads — and the window for action is narrowing.

Despite progress since 2015, water and sanitation challenges remain staggering, and climate change, rapid urbanisation, pollution, weak governance systems and chronic under-financing are accelerating the crisis. ANEW's 2025 work responded to this reality by treating WASH not only as a service-delivery issue, but as a rights, public health, climate adaptation, economic development, accountability and social justice agenda.

Women and girls continue to face the heaviest burdens of unsafe water and inadequate sanitation, but the crisis reaches across whole communities: children lose learning time, young people inherit climate-insecure systems, households absorb the cost of unreliable services, communities face cholera and other public health threats, and local economies lose productivity when water systems fail. ANEW's approach is therefore inclusive and systemic: gender-responsive, youth-centred, climate-aware, rights-based and grounded in community accountability.

The economics are equally compelling: global analyses confirm that every US\$1 invested in water and sanitation generates roughly US\$4 in social and economic returns. ANEW's role is to ensure that investment flows to those who need it most — through advocacy, evidence, and accountability.

2.2B

People worldwide still lack safely managed drinking water — the crisis ANEW exists to solve.

UN SDG Report 2025

\$30B

Annual investment gap in Africa's water and sanitation sector — a gap ANEW is fighting to close.

SWA / AU-AIP Summit 2025

5%

Of Sub-Saharan Africa's annual GDP lost to poor sanitation — the economic case for WASH is undeniable.

SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting, 2025

6x

Acceleration in progress on drinking water needed globally to reach SDG6 by 2030 — underscoring extraordinary urgency.

SWA 2025

CORE ACHIEVEMENTS 2025

Turning Advocacy Into Policies That Endure

Six breakthroughs from the past year — each a step from rhetoric to enforceable reform.

01

POLICY & ADVOCACY

Fair Water Footprints Policy

ANEW launched and championed the Fair Water Footprints (FWF) initiative across Africa — promoting equitable and sustainable water use anchored in the Glasgow Declaration (COP26). African policymakers began integrating FWF commitments into continental WASH strategy discussions, ensuring that trade and economic development do not come at the expense of communities’ fundamental water rights.

02

HISTORIC MILESTONE

Africa Water Vision 2063 — Adopted

The Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy — described by AMCOW as “a blueprint for action, not merely aspirational” — was formally adopted at the 14th AMCOW Governing Council in Dakar on 29 September 2025. Shaped through PANAFCON-3 and ANEW’s civil society coalitions, the Vision was also recommended to the AU Assembly of Heads of State as Africa’s common position for the UN 2026 Water Conference. ANEW’s advocacy ensured women and girls are explicitly named throughout.

03

LEGAL REFORM

Gender & Governance: Ending Sex-for-Water

ANEW made gender justice structural. A landmark Uganda household survey of 1,200 households exposed exploitation at water points — and it worked: Kenya’s Justice Committee of Parliament endorsed a sextortion clause in the Sexual Offences Act and invited its inclusion in the Water Act. This is a concrete, enforceable legal breakthrough protecting women and girls from coercion in accessing water.

04

YOUTH & GENDER

YoGI Strategy 2023–2030

ANEW co-launched the AMCOW Youth & Gender Inclusion (YoGI) Strategy — a seven-year joint AMCOW–ANEW commitment to mainstream youth empowerment and women’s leadership in WASH governance. From village-level workshops to ministerial engagement, YoGI institutionalises inclusion as a structural priority within every tier of African water governance, not a programme afterthought.

05

NATIONAL IMPACT

SWA Heads of State Initiative — 8+ Countries

Under SWA’s Heads of State WASH Initiative (HoSI), ANEW coordinated national CSO networks across 8+ countries — CONIWAS (Ghana), KEWASNET (Kenya), TAWASANET (Tanzania), and others — to translate presidential pledges into binding compacts, amended laws, and national WASH programs with accountability structures. By end-2025, over a dozen African countries had joined HoSI.

06

INVESTMENT & FINANCE

Civil Society at the \$30B Investment Table

At the AU-AIP Water Investment Summit (Cape Town, Aug 2025), ANEW co-moderated ministerial panels before 1,700+ delegates — including Heads of State and G20 envoys. ANEW shaped the Summit Declaration to prioritise people-centred, accountable financing. The Summit also served as a key platform to promote the Africa Water Vision 2063 as the guiding continental framework for investment.

AMPLIFYING AFRICA'S VOICE

Present at Every Critical Table in 2025

From Lusaka to Stockholm, Cape Town to Madrid — ANEW carried Africa's civil society voice into the rooms where global water policy is shaped.

PANAFCON-3 · Lusaka, Zambia · 27–29 May 2025

Africa's most significant water policy gathering in over a decade, convened under the theme "Assuring Inclusive and Climate-Resilient Water Security and Sanitation for the Africa We Want." Co-convened by the AUC, AMCOW, AfDB/AWF, UNECA, and SADC, PANAFCON-3 brought together Heads of State, ministers, civil society, and development partners to review and build consensus on the draft Africa Water Vision 2063. ANEW led the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) session, elevating women's leadership and safety as core tenets. PANAFCON-3 reached consensus on the Vision's policy goals — outcomes that directly informed the document adopted in Dakar four months later. ANEW also mobilised 100+ CSOs into a Pan-African Declaration that shaped the Vision's language on human rights and gender equity.

AU-AIP Water Investment Summit · Cape Town, South Africa · August 2025

The African Union summit dedicated to closing Africa's \$30 billion annual water investment gap. ANEW was the high-level civil society voice in the room — its Executive Secretary co-moderated ministerial panels before 1,700+ delegates including Heads of State and G20 envoys. ANEW's contribution to the Summit Declaration ensured investment frameworks prioritise people-centred, accountable models. The Summit served as a key platform to promote the Africa Water Vision 2063 as the governing framework for climate-resilient, equitable financing across the continent.

Stockholm World Water Week (SIWI) · Stockholm, Sweden · August 2025

The world's foremost gathering on water. As a SIWI Board member, ANEW's Executive Secretary shaped strategic dialogues on the water-climate nexus and cross-sector innovation. ANEW co-convened the landmark "Feminist Water Futures" session, underscoring that women's rights-based approaches are non-negotiable for sustainable WASH. On the sidelines, ANEW engaged Senegal's team preparing Africa's input to the UN 2026 Water Conference — building the continental solidarity needed for a unified African voice at this once-in-a-generation global event.

SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting 2025 · *Madrid, Spain · October 2025*

Nearly 50 ministerial delegates worldwide gathered to integrate water, sanitation, and climate goals at the governmental level. For participating African delegates — coordinated in part through ANEW — the forum offered a platform to inject African civil society perspectives ahead of COP30 and the UN 2026 Water Conference. The meeting reiterated a stark finding: Sub-Saharan Africa loses an estimated 5% of GDP annually to poor sanitation — making WASH not just a humanitarian issue but a macroeconomic imperative.

UN, G20 & COP30 Preparatory Processes · *Global · Throughout 2025*

Under South Africa's G20 Presidency, water security gained unprecedented prominence. ANEW leveraged the G20 Water Platform and COP30 preparatory meetings to embed African civil society priorities into global commitments on funding, human rights, and climate adaptation. Simultaneously, ANEW co-ordinated with the AU and UN on preparations for the UN 2026 Water Conference — positioning the Africa Water Vision 2063 as Africa's unified input to the world's most significant water governance moment in decades.

EXPANDED 2025 ACTIVITY RECORD

From Advocacy to Implementation

How ANEW translated continental policy moments into community-level results.

Continental policy leadership: Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy

ANEW supported the Africa Water Vision 2063 and Policy process as a civil society bridge between communities, national platforms and continental institutions. In 2025 this included contributing to consultations before and during PANAFCON-3 in Lusaka, mobilising CSO inputs on the draft Vision and Policy, and reinforcing the inclusion of human rights, gender equality, youth, accountability and community participation in the final framework. The adoption of the Vision in Dakar in September 2025 created the policy foundation for ANEW's 2026 advocacy: domestication, financing and implementation tracking.

PANAFCON-3 and civil society consensus building

At PANAFCON-3 in Lusaka, ANEW strengthened the civil society presence in one of Africa's most important water policy moments since the first Africa Water Vision. The Network contributed to the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion agenda, supported CSO coordination around the draft Vision and Policy, and helped align community priorities with Africa's common position ahead of the UN 2026 Water Conference. This work built on ANEW's long-standing role as AMCOW's recognised civil society interlocutor and as a convener of national and regional WASH networks.

Africa Water Investment Summit and people-centred finance

At the AU-AIP Africa Water Investment Summit in Cape Town, ANEW positioned civil society within the financing conversation. The Summit highlighted Africa's estimated USD 30 billion annual water investment gap and brought together heads of state, ministers, financiers, investors, private sector actors, youth, women, academia and civil society. ANEW's contribution focused on accountability, equity and ensuring that large-scale investment translates into reliable, affordable, climate-resilient services for people, not simply infrastructure announcements.

SWA Heads of State Initiative (HoSI): turning political attention into compacts

ANEW continued to support the SWA Heads of State Initiative by working with national civil society platforms including CONIWAS in Ghana, KEWASNET in Kenya, TAWASANET in Tanzania and other member networks. The focus was to move presidential attention into written compacts, legal reforms, accountability platforms and measurable commitments. ANEW's added value was to ensure CSOs were not only invited to endorse commitments, but were equipped to track them, interrogate financing and keep community priorities visible.

Legal reform and protection from sextortion

ANEW's 2025 sextortion work demonstrated how research, survivor-centred advocacy and coalition-building can produce legal change. With AVAAZ, KEWASNET, KLRC, Members of Parliament, the Ministry of Water and civil society champions, ANEW helped move the issue of sex-for-water from silence into policy and legislative debate. The campaign connected WASH governance to corruption, gender-based violence and the right to safe access to services, while showing that water-sector accountability can protect bodily autonomy and dignity.

Fair Water Footprints and responsible water stewardship

ANEW advanced the Fair Water Footprints agenda as a bridge between trade, supply chains, human rights and climate resilience. The work called for water use in production, investment and economic development to be judged not only by efficiency, but also by fairness: whether communities, ecosystems and workers are protected, whether water-related risks are transparent, and whether private and public actors invest in the river basins and communities from which value is extracted.

Stockholm World Water Week, SIWI and global thought leadership

ANEW used Stockholm World Water Week 2025 to bring African civil society perspectives into global debates on water and climate action. Through SIWI engagement and participation in sessions including Fair Water Footprints discussions, ANEW reinforced that climate action must be water-secure, accountable and locally legitimate. The Network also used the week to strengthen alliances with global partners ahead of the UN 2026 Water Conference.

SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting in Madrid

At the SWA Sector Ministers' Meeting in Madrid, ANEW contributed to African civil society engagement around the integration of water, sanitation and climate action. The meeting gave ANEW an opportunity to link national commitments under HoSI, the Africa Water Vision 2063 and global financing discussions to concrete government action, especially as countries prepared for COP30 and the UN 2026 Water Conference.

Africa Climate Summit, G20 and COP30 pathways

Throughout 2025 ANEW connected water and sanitation to Africa's wider climate diplomacy. Under South Africa's G20 Presidency, the AU-AIP Summit and global climate processes created a political opening to insist that water security, sanitation and hygiene are essential climate adaptation infrastructure. ANEW's message was consistent: climate finance must reach communities, strengthen basic services and be tied to accountability, not only large projects.

Agenda for Change Strategy Lab and systems strengthening

ANEW engaged in systems-strengthening conversations with Agenda for Change partners, including the Strategy Lab in Malawi, bringing a civil society perspective to locally led WASH systems, accountability and coalition building. ANEW's role as a "critical friend" was to connect systems thinking to community voice, national platforms and continental governance mechanisms such as AMCOW, SWA and the African Union.

Youth, gender and inclusion

ANEW continued to support the AMCOW Youth and Gender Inclusion agenda by advocating for youth leadership, women's visibility and the operationalisation of inclusion tools in policy and programming. The work emphasised that inclusion is not symbolic: it must shape budgets, institutions, data, service standards, safety, leadership and accountability.

Communications, media and agenda-setting

ANEW expanded its public voice in 2025 through policy messaging, convenings, media engagement and opinion leadership. This included framing water as essential infrastructure for Africa's future, arguing for a shift from headline projects to reliable services, and placing communities at the centre of finance and governance debates. This communication work supported ANEW's wider objective of creating demand for water and sanitation, strengthening the social licence to operate, and keeping SDG 6 visible in national and continental policy spaces.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Building a Network That Outlasts Any Single Year

Institutional alliances that turn one-off campaigns into lasting structural change.

AMCOW & the African Union

ANEW's most significant institutional relationship. As the officially recognised CSO platform to AMCOW — formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding — ANEW co-led the Africa Water Vision 2063 formulation and the YoGI Strategy, and leads the Gender & Inclusion cluster in the AU's Partners Platform. This partnership demonstrates a replicable model: civil society as a trusted co-designer of continental policy, not a peripheral observer.

Sanitation & Water for All (SWA)

ANEW serves as Vice Chair of SWA — a global partnership of 500+ organisations hosted by UNICEF, uniting governments, civil society, and the private sector. Through SWA's Heads of State WASH Initiative, ANEW led civil society coalitions in 8+ African countries, securing presidential compacts and legal reform. The organisation also participated in SWA's Sector Ministers' Meeting in Madrid, ensuring African civil society perspectives shaped global WASH financing commitments.

Simavi / WaterAid Netherlands

2025 marked the centennial of Simavi, one of ANEW's longest-standing Dutch partners in advancing gender equity in WASH. A formal MoU delivered joint advocacy wins throughout the year — from regional gender consultations to influence at ministerial forums. As Simavi transitions into the WaterAid family as WaterAid Netherlands in March 2026, ANEW's global network deepens through a partner whose mission — water justice for all — is indistinguishable from ANEW's own.

SuSanA & Research Networks

ANEW took on leadership roles in the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance (SuSanA) governance, influencing the direction of this 4,000+ member global network to better reflect African priorities. With AMCOW, ANEW co-hosted Africa Pavilion sessions at the World Water Forum on monitoring best practices. Research partners — Water Witness, KEWASNET, WIN, and others — bolstered ANEW's evidence-based advocacy, most critically the Uganda sextortion study that catalysed Kenyan legislative reform.

HEADS OF STATE INITIATIVE

Presidential Pledges Turned Into National Law

How political attention becomes binding policy, funded programs, and enforceable rights.

The SWA Heads of State WASH Initiative (HoSI) brings together Africa’s highest political leaders to champion water and sanitation. ANEW’s role is to ensure those pledges become binding policy, adequately funded programs, and enforceable law — with communities and civil society holding governments accountable at every step.

Ghana	Formalised a Presidential WASH Compact, signed by the Head of State, establishing a new Sanitation Authority and a pathway to ending open defecation.
Kenya	Amended its Water Act with equity safeguards and a landmark sextortion clause — assented to by the President.
Tanzania	Integrated HoSI goals into its national WSDP III program, with the Vice Prime Minister publicly championing WASH.
Nigeria	Issued Executive Order 009, outlawing open defecation and engaging governors on WASH as a climate resilience priority.
Liberia	Advanced HoSI through the Liberia WASH Compact 2.0 process, with civil society working alongside the National WASH Commission and the Legislature.
S. Sudan, Burundi, Malawi	Important HoSI engagement countries for ANEW’s member networks — focused on compact development, political accountability, financing and CSO coordination.

Across HoSI countries, ANEW's coordination role included drafting policy briefs, convening national networks, engaging ministries and parliamentary actors, and strengthening the ability of CSOs to monitor whether presidential commitments are translated into budgeted programmes and enforceable reforms. Across all HoSI countries, ANEW co-ordinated national CSO networks to draft policy briefs, establish multi-stakeholder accountability forums, and ensure compacts commit to equity, legal reform, financing, and measurable targets — not just political rhetoric.

H O S I C O U N T R I E S

**Ghana · Kenya · Tanzania · Nigeria · Burundi · South Sudan · Malawi +4
More**

AFRICA WATER VISION 2063

A Blueprint, Not Just an Aspiration

Adopted in Dakar, 29 September 2025 — the policy foundation for the next four decades of African water governance.

Adopted at the 14th AMCOW Governing Council in Dakar on 29 September 2025, and recommended to the AU Assembly of Heads of State as Africa’s common position for the UN 2026 Water Conference, the Africa Water Vision 2063 represents the culmination of years of inclusive, member-state-led consultation — with ANEW driving civil society participation throughout. It envisions “a water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all,” delivering on eight vision statements spanning universal access, climate resilience, groundwater security, and transboundary governance. ANEW ensured gender — specifically women and girls — and inclusion are woven structurally throughout the document, not mentioned as an afterthought, but embedded as a cross-cutting imperative.

ANEW’s contribution in 2025 was not limited to the wording of the Vision. It helped make the process more participatory by translating continental policy debates into CSO engagement, bringing national platforms into the conversation, and arguing that implementation must be monitored by the communities the Vision is intended to serve.

The next phase for ANEW is domestication: ensuring that the Africa Water Vision 2063 informs national plans, regional economic community processes, ministerial commitments, SWA compacts, climate adaptation plans and financing frameworks.

Universal Access

Safely managed water, sanitation and hygiene for every African, with explicit commitment to leaving no one behind — including women, girls, and marginalised communities.

Climate Resilience

Water systems built to withstand droughts, floods, and the accelerating unpredictability of a changing climate — moving from emergency response to structural adaptation.

Gender & Inclusion

Sustainable Finance

Women and girls explicitly named, protected, and empowered within Africa's water governance frameworks — for the first time in a continental water policy.

Innovative financing — green bonds, results-based models, and public-private partnerships — precisely targeted at the most underserved communities across Africa.

2026 AND BEYOND

The Water Is Rising. So Are We.

With the Africa Water Vision 2063 adopted, the UN 2026 Water Conference on the horizon, and civil society networks stronger than ever across 30+ African countries, ANEW is positioned to accelerate the drive for water security, sanitation access, and social justice. The work ahead is urgent. The momentum is real. No one will be left behind.

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No one will be left behind.

SELECTED SOURCES CONSULTED

ANEW official website and overview; ANEW 2025 news posts on sextortion and Africa Water Week; AMCOW 2025 recap on Africa Water Vision 2063 and PANAFCON-3; African Union and AU-AIP pages on the 2025 Africa Water Investment Summit and Cape Town Declaration; SWA 2025 Sector Ministers' Meeting materials; SIWI 2025 board and World Water Week information; Water Witness Stockholm World Water Week 2025 Fair Water Footprints session information; UN Water 2026 preparatory meeting information.

ANEW

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