



# H2O

## HEIRS TO OUR OCEAN

ONE WATER SYSTEM. ONE JUST WORLD.

# 2024 IMPACT REPORT



**via**  
**senti**

Heirs To Our Ocean is a youth leadership and empowerment learning program of via senti, a California public benefit nonprofit corporation and an IRC 501(c)(3).

Heirs To Our Ocean is a Fictitious Business Name of via senti.

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# LETTER FROM OUR LEADHERSHIP



Dear Friends and Supporters,

I write to you at a moment of profound urgency and *extraordinary possibility*.

Today's youth are navigating a world more volatile than any generation before them. Politically, socially, and environmentally, the ground beneath their feet is shifting in ways that demand our immediate attention and action. Extreme weather events are no longer anomalies in the data—they are the lived reality of communities worldwide, occurring with a frequency and ferocity that would have been unimaginable just decades ago.

And this as we watch short-term political calculations override the long-term survival of communities and ecosystems.

This past June, I had the profound honor of standing alongside an international cohort of young leaders of Heirs to Our Ocean at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice. What I witnessed there renewed my faith in our collective future. As these young leaders boldly spoke to hundreds of change makers from around the world, they demonstrated remarkable strategic thinking in their understanding of the interconnectedness of ocean health, climate justice, and human rights. More so, they spoke with the resolute clarity that comes from knowing their future hangs in the balance.

Yet too often, these voices remain outside the rooms where decisions are made. Those currently in power continue to make damaging decisions with consequences that extend far beyond their own lifetimes. It is not only unjust, it is profoundly unwise to exclude from policy-making the very people who will inherit the results of today's choices.

We must also elevate and honor Indigenous voices, whose wisdom and deep connection to ocean and land have never been more critical. Indigenous perspective is not merely complementary to climate action—it is essential to it.

**This is why I am asking for your support of Heirs to Our Ocean.** These remarkable young people are fighting not just for their own futures, but for a livable planet for their children and for generations to come. **They deserve a seat at every table where ocean and climate policy is discussed.** To do so effectively, they need the skills and opportunity to problem solve, to amplify their voices, and to implement their vision. They deserve our commitment to step aside when necessary and to stand behind and with them always.

The question before us is simple: Will we be ancestors worthy of remembrance, or cautionary tales of a generation that knew what needed to be done but lacked the courage to do it?

**I know where I stand. I hope you will join me.**

With urgency and hope,

**Nathalie Udo**  
Chair of the Board  
Heirs to Our Ocean

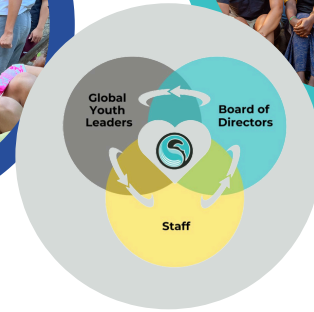
# GLOBAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP RETREAT

July 10–13, 2024

San Francisco, California, U.S.

H2OO Global Youth Leaders (GYLs) serve as a core leadership body for H2OO and act as liaisons to H2OO staff and the Board of Directors. GYLs connect H2OO to communities around the world. They form a diverse, solutions-oriented collective with unique perspectives.

In July, we held a GYL retreat where youth leaders provided valuable insights on H2OO's program priorities to best serve youth, ideas for improvements, and suggestions for engaging the UN. The GYLs exemplify H2OO's commitment as a youth-led organization, providing meaningful ways for youth to drive strategic direction, innovation, and connection.



The GYLs are tomorrow's decision makers. At this retreat, they deepened their understanding of H2OO's role in global governance spaces and did strategic planning for future engagement with UN organizations. Participants learned and practiced strategic thinking, problem solving, and goal setting.



## IMPACTS

**13** GYL participants

**7** actionable plans developed or futhered

**3-YEAR** vision for H2OO further developed



## IMPACT TESTIMONIALS: AMBER AND JULIA

The retreat's open communication built trust and strengthened team work, reinforcing the power of youth-led advocacy and inspired me to deepen connections in our global movement.

— **Amber, New York, H2OO Global Youth Leader**



The Global Youth Leader Retreat held in July 2024 was a highlight of my summer, providing an incredible opportunity to learn, grow, and connect with youth from around the globe who share the same goal and vision for a better future for our ocean. The retreat combined various activities such as discussions, team-building exercises, and workshops that helped us form new friendships, generate ideas, and build confidence.

— **Julia, Indonesia, H2OO Global Youth Leader**



# 2024 PROGRAM IMPACT: NATIONAL AND GLOBAL



## IMPACTS

12

young leaders from 9 regions around the world

100%

of program costs covered by need-based scholarships

92%

reported increased self-confidence and leadership skill development

100%

reported forming positive connections

3

SEAL alumni served as counselors and assistants

## H200'S SUMMIT FOR EMPOWERMENT ACTION & LEADERSHIP (SEAL)

June 25 – July 7

South Warner River Wilderness, California, U.S.

**With your support, all 12 participants of our flagship two-week leadership intensive—2024 Summit for Empowerment, Action & Leadership (SEAL)—received full need-based scholarships. This is the first SEAL that engaged only youth who are on the front lines of the climate crisis or who are traditionally marginalized and underserved. H200 scholarships covered all program costs, including gear and travel, for every youth who attended.**

This diverse group of young leaders ages 16–23 came together from countries such as New Zealand, Spain, and Tinian in the Northern Mariana Islands on a deep-learning backpacking journey. Led by guides and counselors, the SEAL participants entered the South Warner Wilderness in Northern California as a team, bringing together their backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives to face the challenges and rewards of living in harmony with the natural world and with strangers from around the globe. They worked as a team, developed leadership skills, and practiced problem solving. The program helped participants better understand themselves, their teammates, and our interconnected one-water system. They formed cross-cultural connections that resulted in long-lasting, meaningful relationships.



### IMPACT TESTIMONIALS: NOAH AND HENRY



During SEAL 2024 I got a better grasp of global issues and why youth leadership matters. Connecting with diverse participants and experts broadened my perspective and gave me a sense of belonging.

— **Noah, New Zealand**

I would definitely recommend Heirs To Our Ocean SEAL to my friends because it gave me an incredible opportunity to connect with people from different communities, all while sharing a meaningful experience centered on living in harmony with nature.

— **Henry, Tinian Island**



TUNE IN



# IOC/UNESCO'S OCEAN DECADE ENGAGEMENTS: CREATING PATHWAYS FOR MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF YOUTH AGES 15–25

Since 2021, H2OO has proudly served as a Decade Implementation Partner of the IOC/UNESCO's Ocean Decade initiative, in recognition of our meaningful work to engage and inspire the next generation of informed and empathetic leaders. By amplifying youth voices, fostering intergenerational collaboration, and raising awareness about the connection between the ocean, climate, and humanitarian crises, H2OO has advanced inclusive environmental youth leadership. In 2024, H2OO emphasized ensuring that the next generation is represented in high-level decision-making forums to shape a just and sustainable future.

## OUR UN OCEAN DECADE PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, AND ENGAGEMENTS

### I. U.S. Youth Action Council for the UN Ocean Decade (U.S. YAC UNOD)

The U.S. YAC UNOD was formed in 2020 as an eight-month advanced leadership program available to youth leaders at no cost. It is open-access, collaborative, team-oriented, and intensive. Participants convene from around the U.S., its territories. In addition, each year, U.S. YAC UNOD alumni advance their leadership skills as Support Team Members for following cohorts.

#### • 4th COHORT: September 2023 – May 2024

- Four alumni as Support Team Members assigned
- Fifty-two participants learn how to effect change through policy advocacy training, project management, ocean literacy, movement building, and plastic brand audits.
- Committees learn specialized skill sets and goals.

#### ■ Policy

- Worked with volunteer policy advocacy experts
- Learned how to research bills and prepare to speak to lawmakers
- Planned, organized, and participated in a Hill Days event along with all other U.S. YAC UNOD members.



2021  
2030 United Nations Decade  
of Ocean Science  
for Sustainable Development



## IMPACT TESTIMONIALS: COLIN AND SOPHIA



YAC members met with the offices of Representative Huffman and Senator Cardin, both of whom led the efforts to passing H.R. 2960. This piece of legislation was especially important to pass because of its emphasis on financial assistance for habitat restoration in priority coastal areas through authorization of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Program.

— **Colin, California, 5th Cohort Co-Chair & 4th Cohort Alum, U.S. YAC UNOD**



Hill Days exceeded my expectations. We were able to have meetings with so many lawmakers and I was able to grow my confidence and public speaking skills a lot. Something that surprised me the most was the variety of countries and states represented, and getting to hear about all of their backgrounds. — **Sophia, New York, 5th Cohort Member & 4th Cohort Alum, U.S. YAC UNOD**



## ■ Education

- Learned from published authors about how to write children's books about human impacts on our ocean, waterways, climate, traditional ecological knowledge, and social sciences.
- Created a first draft children's book with 3 short stories.

## ■ Movement

- Learned how to prepare, distribute, movement-build and seek policy change through a petition.
- Engaged in petition signature drive using local outreach and social media
- Organized and held a Capitol Hill press conference to share their successes and calls during Hill Days.

## ■ Communications

- Designed and shared engaging social media and newsletter content to amplify the cohort's activities, stories, and advocacy priorities and keep global supporters, partners, and alumni informed of progress
- Highlighted individual youth leaders' stories, increasing the visibility of diverse perspectives within the movement

## ■ "Hill Days" of the 4th Cohort U.S. YAC UNOD

- 71 meetings held
- 52 youth participants met with various federal lawmakers
- 17 in-person meetings on Capitol Hill
- 35 virtual group meetings

## • 5th COHORT: September 2024 – May 2025

- Building on the 4th Cohort's strong foundation, the 5th Cohort set bold goals across their working group committees.

## ■ Policy

- Learn from experts about the congressional appropriations process

## ■ Education

- Further develop the children's book started by the 4th Cohort.

## ■ Movement

- Spearhead a national single-use plastic pollution "brand audit," collecting data for the purpose of holding corporations accountable, and amplify Indigenous perspectives on plastic pollution through interviews.



## II. Panel + Workshop at UN Ocean Decade Conference: Engaging Youth Under 25 in the Decade: A Model of Success



Partnering with the University of Barcelona, H2OO organized and facilitated a panel and workshop at the UN Ocean Decade Conference in Barcelona, Spain, in April 2024. Intergenerational workshop participants identified barriers to meaningful youth engagement and collectively explored ways to achieve youth inclusion.

The panel, a side event at the conference, featured youth and alumni of Heirs To Our Ocean from Saipan and several U.S. states; Susan Roberts of the U.S. National Committee for the UN Ocean Decade; NOAA Assistant Administrator Nicole LeBoeuf; and Paula Garcia Rodriguez, an Early Career Ocean Professional at Fugro. The side event was livestreamed by the U.S. National Committee, reaching a far broader audience than the 42 participants who attended in person.

Youth participants were not granted registration access to the conference itself. Considering the success of the side event and the need for more youth participation, Julian Barbière, Global Coordinator for the UN Ocean Decade, asked H2OO to form an international youth task force to assist the IOC/UNESCO in more meaningful youth inclusion.



## IMPACT TESTIMONIAL: CATARINA



Funded and supported by H2OO, I spent hours with other youth from around the world, ages 15 to 25, collaborating to build and plan our event: “Engaging Youth Under 25 in the Decade: A Model of Success.” In Barcelona, I was excited to share my experience in building a Youth Action Council in Brazil and meaningfully involving Brazilian youth in taking action in the Ocean Decade.

— **Catarina, Brazil, Scholarship Recipient and H2OO Side Event Panelist, 2024 UN Ocean Decade Conference**

### III. Youth Inclusion Expert Working Group for the UN Ocean Decade

Building on the momentum from the UN Ocean Conference in Barcelona, and at the request of the IOC/UNESCO's Decade Coordination Unit, we developed a new program—an international Youth Inclusion Expert Working Group for the UN Ocean Decade (YIEWG Ocean Decade) to develop a strategic action plan for meaningful youth inclusion in the Decade and beyond.

- 18 youth convened, representing 10 countries on every inhabited continent
- H2OO will convene participants of the YIEWG Ocean Decade to prepare a Youth Inclusion Strategic Action Plan, to be announced at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference. Stay tuned for more!



### IV. Contribution to the Vision 2030 Ocean Decade Challenge 10 White Paper

Our Volunteer Advisor and Co-Founder, April Peebler, was invited to participate in the expert working group tasked with drafting the [Ocean Decade's Vision 2030 White Paper for Challenge 10: Restoring Society's Relationship with the Ocean](#). Nine youth from Heirs To Our Ocean contributed to the paper, which was finalized in 2024. Challenge 10 is the only one of the ten challenges that focuses on human behavior, making the inclusion of the next generation of leaders essential in identifying the steps needed to successfully restore our connection with the ocean.

### V. Workshop for and Recruitment of Students at UWC Atlantic

In November 2024, three H2OO Global Youth Leaders traveled to Wales to participate in OceanCon, a student-led conference at United World College (UWC) Atlantic, an international school with **350 students from 150 countries**. H2OO hosted three impactful workshops engaging over 80 students at UWC Atlantic's OceanCon:

- **Two workshops focused on “How to Form a Youth Action Council for the UN Ocean Decade,”** using the U.S. Youth Action Council for UN Ocean Decade as a model of success and offering H2OO's prepared toolkit.
- **One workshop centered on video-making,** empowering students to collaboratively script and conceptualize a video advocating for youth inclusion in the Ocean Decade. Through this process, UWC Atlantic students co-created with H2OO youth leaders a video for the UN Ocean Decade that amplifies youth voices from around the world and seeks meaningful youth engagement in the Decade. The video will be debuted at the 2025 Ocean Conference. Watch this [inspiring video!](#)

Two UWC students joined the inaugural cohort of the YIEWG Ocean Decade, and some are seeking internships with H2OO.



While attending the H2OO workshop during UWCA OceanCon at my school, I saw the impact of youth voices as we shared our stories about the ocean and climate change

—Linda, Ethiopia, Member 1st Cohort H2OO's Youth Inclusion Expert Working Group for the UN Ocean Decade & Student UWC Atlantic

## UN OCEAN CONFERENCE

In April 2024, Amber, one of H2OO's Global Youth Leaders, attended the Pre-Conference to the UN Ocean Conference at the UN Headquarters in New York. Our delegate spoke as part of the event and made several requests on behalf of H2OO and the stakeholders H2OO represents:

- Lower the minimum age for attendees to 15.
- Designate a number of seats in meaningful discussions to youth 15–25.
- Prioritize education initiatives that include critical skills youth will need to address the challenges we face.

The UN Ocean Conference and related venues are in a unique position to help youth achieve ocean and climate literacy and understand the intersection of environmental and humanitarian crises. By prioritizing education that helps youth develop real-world problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, empathic leadership skill building, and Indigenous knowledge, UN organizations could make a profound impact. They can inform and shape the next generation of empathetic leaders. Youth are the future, and investing in and partnering with youth today is the solution.

## CHILD RIGHTS CONNECT MEMBERSHIP

*CIVIL SOCIETY ARM OF THE UN CONVENTION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD*

In 2024, H2OO continued its advocacy for child rights—including access to quality education and a safe, livable future—through its membership and participation in Child Rights Connect (CRC). How we engage in CRC:

- Nominate and support H2OO child youth leaders on the CRC's Child Advisory Team (CAT).
- Advance youth leaders of H2OO into intern and staff positions. This year's intern, Raina Ivanova of Germany provided key support:
  - Supporting Catarina in her work with the CAT
  - Representing H2OO at the Aarhus Convention Task Force Meeting in Geneva, where she presented on the importance of youth inclusion in ocean and climate governance.

These engagements directly influenced policy discussions on youth participation in climate decision-making and strengthened advocacy for children's rights to environmental information and education at the international level.



### Catarina's contributions to the CAT:

- Participating as a youth delegate at a Vatican climate conference, where she asked the Pope to issue an encyclical on children and the impact of climate change
- Contributing to the international Campaign on the Right to Education, which is helping to secure free pre-primary and secondary education as a fundamental right
- Helping to adopt a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council on education
- Providing feedback on the child-friendly version of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 26 (read Catarina's feedback [here](#))
- Consulted with the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change





## IMPACT TESTIMONIALS: RAINA AND CATARINA

Representing H2OO as an intern supporting work with Child Rights Connect gave me the opportunity to experience decision making first-hand and strengthen my skills in communication, coordination, and empathetic leadership. I was able to take on new perspectives and learn how to effectively engage in a network that works closely with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child while simultaneously trying to improve the participation of children to further ensure that their voices are meaningfully heard and taken seriously in high level forums  
— **Raina, Germany, H2OO Intern, Child Rights Connect**



In 2024, I served my second and final term as a Child Advisor for Child Rights Connect, supported by Heirs To Our Ocean. Throughout the year, I worked on key initiatives, including advising the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change alongside 15 other children, helping shape her next report. I also contributed to developing and translating environmental school kits for children.

The year's biggest project was advocating for the first international commitment to free secondary education and at least one year of pre-primary education. As part of this effort, I moderated and spoke at a Human Rights Council side event in Geneva and participated in resolution debates, which successfully led to the development of a 4th Optional Protocol — with a commitment to meaningful child participation. I am incredibly grateful for this work and the support from H2OO.

— **Catarina, Brazil, H2OO-supported Child Advisory Team Member for Child Rights Connect and H2OO Global Youth Leader**

## UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

Exciting news! In March 2024, we gained accreditation to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). We plan to further amplify youth voices and pursue meaningful engagement of young leaders in UNEP forums and convenings. We have so many tools developed with youth, for youth, and we plan to use them!



## DIRECT SERVICES FOR EMERGING LEADERS

H2OO invested \$21,760 in direct support to youth leaders demonstrating extraordinary potential, ensuring these extraordinary advocates could continue their journey in ocean and climate justice. Meeting them where they are at, we covered essential needs such as housing, food, and education. This included supporting a youth leader on the Gulf South coast, a rising chief from the Marshall Islands, and a young woman from Uganda who relocated to the U.S. to pursue higher education and escape harm. These investments reflect our commitment to equipping youth changemakers with the stability and tools they need to lead for a healthier, more just future.



# OUR 2024 IMPACT IN NUMBERS

**176**

Youth received training in key skills through workshops including policy advocacy, video production, public speaking, project management, teamwork, goal setting, and empathetic leadership

**\$118,378**

Awarded in need-based scholarships for youth to participate in real-world learning opportunities such as the UN Ocean Decade Conference and U.S. Capitol Hill Advocacy Days

**43**

Youth across 17 states graduated from H2OO's 8-month intensive U.S. Youth Action Council for the UN Ocean Decade program, gaining essential skills to lead in ocean and climate justice

**2**

New multi-year strategic partnerships initiated to expand youth leadership opportunities and scale our capacity and impact

**412,567**

People engaged across our communications platforms inspiring a movement for global action to create a healthier future on our Blue Planet

**8**

Youth in program who advanced leadership through internship, fellowship and staff positions

**7**

Formal presentations and conference engagements delivered by youth and staff to advance youth inclusion in decision making spaces

## FINANCIAL UPDATES

### 1% FOR THE PLANET

In 2024, Heirs To Our Ocean became an environmental partner of 1% for the Planet, a global network dedicated to environmental impact. Businesses in the network donate 1% of their annual sales to nonprofits of their choice, contributing to the \$150 million given to environmental causes since 2002.



### RESILIENCE INITIATIVE

Through the Resilience Initiative, supported by a grant from the Packard Foundation, our team has gained access to tailored coaching and workshop opportunities that have strengthened individual and collective leadership. These experiences have helped our staff and youth leaders build practical skills, better navigate challenges, and grow as leaders. The partnership has been instrumental in supporting our ongoing leadership development and ensuring our team is equipped to sustain and scale our impact.



# REVENUE AND EXPENSES

In 2022 and 2023, for the first time, H200 put resources and revenue into much-needed fundraising and marketing campaigns to build capacity and ensure sustainability. Thanks to the success of those efforts, in 2024 we did as we intended: we powered up our youth-serving programming again. This was a year of intensives, supporting significant advanced leadership opportunities for young leaders.

