



2025 Impact Report

Heirs To Our Ocean is a youth education, empowerment and leadership 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. Date of Incorporation is May 31, 2016. EIN 81-2945459.



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When the ground shifts, you find what's solid — a letter from our 31-year-old Executive Director on where we're going, and why now.

As we close 2025 and move toward Heirs To Our Ocean's 10-year anniversary in May 2026, I keep coming back to a simple, unsettling question:

What does it mean to build for a healthier future when the systems meant to protect it are moving in the opposite direction?

I started with Heirs To Our Ocean at 25, and I have been fortunate to grow and learn alongside an intergenerational team of women and non-binary co-founders—April, Charley, and Dakota Peebler—who have carried this organization forward not just with their leadership, but with extraordinary personal commitment, volunteering their time to ensure this work could grow and endure.

Together with them, and with young people around the world, we have refused to accept a future where women and youth are treated as afterthoughts rather than decision-makers shaping what comes next. This year, that truth became even more urgent.

In 2025, we witnessed significant political shifts in the United States that resulted in rollbacks on climate commitments, reduced funding for climate and youth programming, and growing pressure on organizations working at the intersection of climate, education, and equity. For many, these ground-shaking conditions created instability. We stepped back to take a long view of our work over the past decade, not just what we have built, but what the world is asking of us now.

We have always known that the environmental crises we face is a leadership diversity crisis, and now it is more clear than ever. The climate crisis is outpacing our ability to respond because we continue to underinvest in women, half of the population of global leaders and collaborators needed to solve. Investing in women and girls as community, national, and international leaders is a strategic imperative.

Moving into 2026 we made a decisive shift: **Heirs To Our Ocean will focus exclusively on closing the gender gap in leadership through our new LeadHERship Initiative.**



This is a sharpening of our commitment and a refusal to dilute what matters most.

Our LeadHERship Initiative is grounded in a simple conviction: Build gender-just climate action by investing in women's leadership development as one of the most powerful solutions that can meet the speed and scale of the climate crisis before us. **We are committing fully to equipping young women and girls with the training and education, life skills, leadership development, mentorship, and advanced pathways they need to drive cross-cultural climate solutions, peacebuilding, and community resilience.**

We are preparing young women and girls both to lead today and for a future in leadership collaborating across cultures and differences with empathy and care.

As we enter this next chapter, we do so with clarity and conviction. The challenges ahead are real, as is the power of the generation of women leaders we are investing in.

Moving into 2026 and beyond, we seek a partnership with another organization that aligns with our mission to support girls and young women in becoming leaders, closing today's gender gap globally. We believe in synergies and in working together to achieve a common goal. We would very much like to begin a conversation with other organizations who seek a better, safer future for generations to come through their work.

Let's work together.

Emily Berglund
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emily Berglund'.

OUR IMPACT SINCE 2016



2,908



youth leaders, 74% young women, across 65 countries and 347 communities, attended trainings increasing local leadership capacity in climate and ocean science and developing solutions.

\$2.3M+

in need-based scholarships and open-access virtual programming to expand inclusive participation.



81



stand-alone workshops delivered, building skills in filmmaking and storytelling, empathetic leadership, public speaking and presenting, policy advocacy, creative campaigning, research-based writing, goal setting, plastic pollution brand audit event organizing, and project management

30



youth, 63% young women, in internship, fellowship and staff positions on our intergenerational team.



51

international, 3-day to 6-week, immersive youth summits convening global youth for cross-cultural collaboration, peer learning, policy advocacy and engagement in-the-field with experts.



8

youth leadership councils – 7-month to 1-year-long cohorts of advanced leadership training – designed, organized and facilitated in our capacity as a Decade Implementation Partner of the IOC/UNESCO for the UN Ocean Decade initiative.



1

Heirs To Our Ocean educates and trains youth ages 16-25 to address ocean, climate and related community issues, and we support mobilizing them to lead in their communities.

2

Our impact works like a drop in still water, **one investment in one young person creates ripples of impact that move outward in every direction, growing wider and wider each year.**

We provide training and equip youth with climate and ocean education, leadership skills, and a global peer network.

Then we support them to go back to their community and lead, mentor, teach, and activate others.

One youth trained becomes ten community members activated.

Ten becomes a hundred.

The impact grows, ripping out to more and more inspired and educated people.

It's movement building.

3

Our programming provides:

- **Scholarships and Direct Services** for youth who demonstrate extraordinary leadership potential but face barriers due to their circumstances.
- **Life and Leadership Skill-Training and Real-World Practice** for career and higher education preparedness – including public speaking, empathetic leadership, project management, creative and critical thinking, communications, community-building and organizing, and policy advocacy.
- **Intergenerational Mentorship** for youth to be supported by professionals including expert scientists and mentors.
- **Cross-Cultural Connection and Global Network** supporting youth to expand their networks to build relationships locally, nationally, and globally.
- **Resources for youth to further climate and ocean solutions in their communities** including tools to educate on such issues as regenerative agriculture, plastic pollution, and more, so participants may model and lead environmental stewardship projects within their communities.
- **Support for youth who founded grassroots organizations.**



4

We ensure our work:

- **Aligns with international conservation goals and UN SDGs through partnerships and endorsements**, such as through the UN Ocean Decade and UN Environment Programme.
- **Is co-designed and implemented with youth in program, youth alumni, collaborators, and partners**
- **Is measurable with indicators including leadership capacity development of youth in programs and how they are utilizing the skills gained from program to drive environmental and social impact in their communities**



**HOW WE CREATE
MULTIPLYING IMPACT**

RIPPLING IMPACT OF THE GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN WE SERVE

We see and address the gender gap in leadership. While the vast majority of the youth we serve through our programming are young women and girls, we are now explicit and intentional.

Women in leadership is a solution to ocean, climate and societal crises we see globally today.

And we aim to be a direct participant in that solution with our new LeadHERship Initiative.



JILLIAN STANTON - U.S. YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER, 5TH COHORT:

My time with the U.S. Youth Advisory Council gave me the skills and tools to turn my passion for ocean and water literacy into real policy action. Now, as a federal public lands intern with Environment America and a Hillary Rodham Clinton Center Fellow, I'm advocating for the protection of freshwater ecosystems I learned to care so deeply about, and leading research on how beavers as keystone species can restore biodiversity from the ground up.



JULIA TAPILATU – H2OO GLOBAL YOUTH LEADER AND INTERNATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER, 1ST COHORT:

Through Heirs To Our Ocean programs, I developed the technical, communication, and leadership skills to lead with compassion and truly understand my community. Today, I'm applying those skills in Indonesia as Co-Founder of ConservaSea, mobilizing local action through education, partnerships, and ocean conservation initiatives.



OONA SPAETH - U.S. YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER, 5TH COHORT:

The Youth Advisory Council didn't just teach me about water and climate, it showed me that young people have the power to lead. Today I'm organizing the Westchester Youth Climate Summit, bringing together over 100 students from 25+ high schools to take action, and serving as the youngest member of my town's Climate Smart Communities Task Force, proving that youth voices belong at every table, from the community level all the way up.



LATIFAH NANSUBUGA – H2OO GLOBAL YOUTH LEADER AND INTERNATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER, 1ST COHORT:

Through Heirs To Our Ocean, I developed the leadership skills and global perspective to turn learning into action in my own community. Today, I am leading a climate-smart urban farming project at my university and also actively advocating to prevent the closure of a composting facility that serves tens of thousands of people, mobilizing students and local leaders to protect an essential community resource. The skills I gained through H2OO continue to shape how I lead, by building solutions locally while thinking globally about their wider impact.



ISHANA SENTHIL - U.S. YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, 5TH COHORT:

H2OO's programming showed me that real change happens when young people are equipped with both knowledge and the confidence to lead. That belief drives what I am working on now building Youth-preneurs to bring eco-entrepreneurship to 8,000+ students of color across the U.S. and India, to training 150+ Amnesty International chapters to launch human rights campaigns in their own communities. I learned that entire systems can change when young people have the tools, the network, and the belief that their actions matter.

2025 IMPACT BY PROGRAM

Heirs To Our Ocean is a Decade Implementation Partner of UNESCO-IOC's Ocean Decade. Our programs, the U.S. Youth Leadership Council and International Youth Leadership Council, the first advanced-leadership youth councils furthering solutions to the Decade's 10 Challenges in the world.

The youth we support seek seats at the high-level decision-making tables wherein they are the greatest stakeholders to decisions being made.

Often youth find access isn't available.

So we support them if they want to seek access to global climate and ocean conversations.

If young people today aren't a part of the conversation, the outcome will be less diverse, less innovative and less likely to be sustainable in the long term.

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

We supported youth in developing a comprehensive Youth Inclusion Strategic Action Plan for the IOC/UNESCO's Ocean Decade.

In January 2025, we facilitated our diverse International Youth Leadership Council in collaboratively developing the very first [Youth Inclusion Strategic Action Plan for the UN Ocean Decade](#). The Plan offers a clear and comprehensive framework to achieve meaningful youth inclusion in global ocean and climate decision making and convenings.

Hear from some youth drafters
of the Plan:

PLAY VIDEO



Key Outcomes:

- **DIVERSITY:** 18 young leaders, 77% young women and girls, engaged from 11 countries, building skills in strategic planning, critical thinking, teamwork and collaboration, public speaking, communications, and movement building.
- **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:** First draft of the Plan developed and presented to over 350 cross-sector professionals at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France. Moving into 2026, the Plan will be finalized for implementation in advance of the 2027 Ocean Decade Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- **PROGRAMME COMMITTEE MEMBER FOR UN OCEAN DECADE 2027 CONFERENCE:** A 23 year old youth Board Member of Heirs To Our Ocean, Latifah Nansubuga, secured a seat as the only youth on the IOC/UNESCO Programme Committee, shaping the strategic direction of the [2027 Ocean Decade Conference](#) – a global convening that will bring together governments, scientists and civil society to set priorities to protect ocean health.

- **WORLD OCEAN CAMPAIGN REACH:** More than 8,100 people reached globally through a collaborative World Ocean Week campaign in partnership with World Ocean Day, The Ocean Project, and the UN Ocean Decade

Our International Youth Leadership Council Program Furthers UN Sustainable Development Goals:



U.S. YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The U.S. Youth Leadership Council is H2OO’s flagship youth council program established in 2021. It convenes a diverse group of young leaders, ages 16–25, from around the U.S. and territory islands to build the skills, knowledge, confidence, and mentorship networks needed to collaborate in advancing climate and ocean solutions as community leaders for a more just and sustainable future.

Alumni continue to multiply their impact beyond the program by utilizing skills they gained to mentor peers, shape policy, and lead climate and social innovation projects that reach thousands more across the U.S. and globally.

This Council is especially important given the United States’ outsized influence on global conflict, ensuring a new generation of leaders brings a commitment to equity, empathy, collaboration, and long-term climate and social responsibility.

Key Outcomes:

- **DIVERSITY:** 90 youth leaders, 84% young women and 72% BIPOC youth, trained and supported over two 7-month cohorts.
- **WOMEN IN STEM:** 79% of young women alumni from our 5th cohort are now pursuing STEM, policy or law careers and higher education.
- **SKILL BUILDING:** 9 skill-building workshops delivered, including hands-on training in plastic pollution brand audits, policy advocacy, and public speaking including a session led by George Kurian, CEO of NetApp.
- **INTERNSHIPS:** 9 youth interns engaged in advanced leadership roles, contributing content and illustrations for an ocean literacy children’s book.
- **MENTORSHIP:** 346 mentorship hours provided from H2OO’s intergenerational staff.
- **MOVEMENT BUILDING AND RIPPLING OCEAN LITERACY:** 11 youth-led climate and ocean literacy presentations delivered, including an event serving 80+ youth through Jane Goodall Institute’s Bay Area Roots & Shoots Basecamp.



- **PLASTIC POLLUTION SOLUTION:** 21 plastic pollution brand audit events, with 28,400 items audited and removed from the environment, through supporting youth across 19 communities for World Water Day to hold institutions accountable and address single-use plastic pollution at the source.
- **GIRLS & WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP:** Co-hosted a policy and advocacy panel with DemocraSHE, engaging 75+ attendees and elevating 5 young women to share their lived experience navigating eco-justice issues in their communities.
- **REAL-WORLD POLICY ADVOCACY TRAINING:** 74 in-person and virtual meetings with U.S. lawmakers supported developing real-world youth civic engagement and policy skills through “U.S. Capitol Hill Days”. 82% of in-person participants attended through our need-based scholarships, ensuring equitable access.



Our U.S. Youth Leadership Council Program Furthers UN Sustainable Development Goals:

LET'S CONNECT

Let's keep growing ripples of impact together.

Join our newsletter and follow our socials for stories, calls to action, and updates on our programs



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