MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dear Friends of I AM WATER,

As the fiscal year of 2019 comes to a close and we launch into this new decade I am thrilled to share with you the highlights of the last two years of I AM WATER. In 2010 the vision of I AM WATER was born and now, ten years later, the dream of ‘oceans for all’ burns even brighter in our hearts with many milestones to celebrate with you. Thank you for your support of our work, vision and growth.

After several years of pilot projects and independent outreach initiatives our main focus during this time has been on refining and embedding our two-day Ocean Guardians School Programs in the Cape Town region of South Africa, focusing on specific low income communities in close physical proximity to the ocean but experiencing vast mental emotional separation from wilderness. 2018 & 2019 has seen 2,981 Grade 7 students experience this immersive offering, with our team training over a hundred new coaches and ten new lead coordinators to facilitate excellent workshops. From September to May beaches around Cape Town are buzzing with the sound of young minds and eyes being opened to a wonderful underwater world they had never before been invited to experience. Our winter months from June - August were spent connecting with our partner schools, our coaches presenting inspiring ocean talks to school assemblies and visiting our Ocean Guardians alumni classes. Please keep reading to hear more about the emotional impact and behavioural changes these workshops have had on our young participants.

We believe that our vision for a greater connection between people and nature is even more crucial today than it was ten years ago. Humanity is standing at a great crossroads; it is crunch time for our planet and for all of us who call this beautiful blue and green dot home.

We are looking to the next decade with a deep commitment to continue this work while always dreaming bigger with plans afoot for new regions and exciting new partnership opportunities.

Thank you for being part of our story,

HANLI PRINSLOO
Founder & CEO
I AM WATER OCEAN CONSERVATION
INTRODUCTION

Much of today's ocean degradation is fundamentally due to human disconnect. Many people feel very little, or no connection to the ocean, behaving in ways that negatively affect the well being of this precious resource. From overfishing to climate change, pollution, species and habitat loss there is no doubt that our oceans are under threat. There has been a great surge globally in the search to find lasting solutions to these urgent problems, some with inspiring success rates and others falling sadly short. One of the great challenges in any conservation project is how to ensure lasting behaviour change. Facts, statistics, fear mongering and even great storytelling has been known to only have a certain impact and that it comes slowly over time, and when it comes to the wellbeing of our oceans and the people who depend on her - time is not something we have a lot of. What we do know, is that people protect what they love.

ETHOS
You protect what you love.

MISSION
Help people fall in love with the ocean and inspire lasting behaviour change through this connection.

VISION
To create a lasting impact on the democratisation of ocean experiences in South Africa and beyond.

THE I AM WATER WAY
- Ocean Guardians School Program
- Coaching Community
- Winter Programs - School Speaking Series
- Ocean Advocacy
IMPACT NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

2981
OCEAN GUARDIANS SCHOOL WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

16 729
STUDENTS ATTENDED OUR WINTER SCHOOL TALKS

100+
COACHES TRAINED

4140
OCEAN ADVOCACY MESSAGE DELIVERED TO GLOBAL AUDIENCES

KEEP READING TO SEE THESE NUMBERS COME TO LIFE THROUGH SALTY SMILES, JOBS CREATED, MINDS INSPIRED AND EYES OPENED TO THE STATE OF OUR OCEANS.
OCEAN ACCESS IN SOUTH AFRICA

> 2000

SOUTH AFRICA HAS MORE THAN 2000 KMS OF COASTLINE

~ 15%

LESS THAN 15% OF SOUTH AFRICANS CAN SWIM

> 600

MORE THAN 600 CHILDREN DROWN EACH YEAR IN SA
I AM WATER’s primary focus is inspiring new Ocean Guardians from low income coastal communities through two days of transformational ocean experiences.

Most of our participants begin the workshop fearful of their oceans, but by the end of the second day they find it difficult to leave the water having overcome their fears and fallen in love with the world below.

Over the last 10 years I AM WATER has refined our workshop experience to provide an excellent and safe space for our participants to grow in confidence and learn to enjoy their ocean. Thanks to our team of highly trained coaches and the necessary safety equipment, our participants experience their ocean as a safe and inviting space. Starting with informative presentations, allowing time for yoga and mindfulness training as well as for beach cleanup and intertidal exploration, our workshop methodology ensures the establishment of an emotional link between information and experience. The desire to protect the ocean is a natural next step.

OUR OCEANS TAKE CARE OF US WHEN WE TAKE CARE OF OUR OCEANS!
In addition to fostering a community of conservationists in low income communities, I AM WATER builds on existing academic research which shows that youth who spend time in nature experience healthy emotional development.

The following are a few of the proven emotional outcomes of spending time in nature:

- Increased ability to overcome fears
- Increased self-confidence, independence, and self-discipline
- Increased sense of belonging and connectedness to social groups
- Increased sense of peace, freedom and calmness
- Formation of emotional buffer against stress
- Reduction in the effects of ADHD
- Urban youth associate nature with a safe place to escape violence & bullying
Participants self report significant increases in self confidence and self esteem. 

18.2% increase in individual self confidence post workshop.

95.2% of participants want to tell their friends and family about their ocean experience.

The secondary impact from our work multiplies the initial impact to affect entire low income communities.
I am thrilled by the work you are doing with I AM WATER inspiring the kids to go splash around... they are water!

The ocean needs them and of course they need the water, understanding and developing that comfort, that recognition about how everything connects to everything else.

If we fail to invest this knowledge, this experience in the children, nothing else is going to matter... we are going to lose. But I know we are not going to lose! Because you are doing what you’re doing and it is reflected in the joy that you see on the faces and in the lives of these kids. It is so worth it!

- Dr. Sylvia Earle
May, 2019
OCEAN GUARDIANS WORKSHOPS IN NUMBERS

"Data monitoring (monitoring, evaluation & learning) is a critical process we use proactively in reviewing and evaluating our programme quality to ensure that it is fit for purpose."
1,519
Amount of girls who have participated

2,981
Number of Ocean Guardians graduated

5,966
Healthy nutritious meals provided
Breathing, yoga & mindfulness sessions

Beach Cleanups conducted

Ocean Conservation educational sessions taught by our I AM WATER Coaching Community
OCEAN GUARDIANS

OCEAN EXPERIENCES

82%
First Time Ocean Snorkelers
Where? ... why there?

South African urban areas all have sprawling low income communities that have very little access to nature and the ocean. In 2018 & 2019 our main focus has been partnering with public schools in these areas that have close proximity (geographically) to the ocean but with great mental, emotional barriers.

The importance of (MPAs) Marine Protected Areas

All of our Ocean Guardians Workshops are hosted in established Marine Protected Areas. During our conservation presentations to our young participants we explain how protected areas work and why this is crucial to the continued wellbeing of animals and ecosystems. Seeing this biodiversity thrive first hand is the best way to underpin our conservation ethos.

Poaching and the I AM WATER response

Illegal poaching of abalone, rock lobster and various other protected species is a huge problem in South African coastal waters. For Abalone poaching alone poachers get paid around USD 33 a kilogram and is sold for USD 540 a plate in China. Poverty drives desperation and desperate men enter an ocean they hardly know to harvest this white gold. Powerful cartels drive the sales and export, seeing over six million illegal abalone leave the country each year, an underground industry worth USD 60 -120 million.

Several of the communities we work with have a presence of poaching, and we train our coaches in how to have culturally sensitive conversations with our young Ocean Guardians about the impacts poaching has on the fragile ocean ecosystem as well as the risks involved in poaching and finally - most importantly - alternative livelihoods.
We are thrilled to have seen the trust built with our Partner Schools grow from strength to strength and the enthusiasm from the principals and teachers to have their students participate in the Ocean Guardians Workshops. 2018 to 2019 saw our Partner Schools increase from 20 to 31 as well as seeing 3 new communities join our programs.

On the map one can clearly see the proximity of the schools to the ocean. Our highest priority schools are those within 5km of the ocean where the students live within walking distance of the sea but with little to no access to their blue backyard.

Indicates the Marine Protected Areas (MPA's) where we host our Ocean Guardians Workshops.
“Our school had the opportunity to be part of an amazing workshop hosted by I AM Water Ocean Conservation. Our learners came back inspired and empowered and their hearts filled with so much joy. For our learners to experience such a workshop ignited a fire of passion and love for nature and sea life.”

Grade 7 Teacher, Partner School Mitchells Plein

“Being the Sports teacher – what a fulfilling adventure our learners experienced the past two days. The learners were at their best behaved and soaked in every activity they were taught. The two days were phenomenal and life changing. The coaches were the best. They bonded and enjoyed teaching and working with our learners. I would go back anytime the opportunity comes our way again. Thank you so much for choosing our school”

Sports Teacher, Partner School Mitchells Plein

“Wow Miss, it was the best – we saw so much under the water. It was an amazing experience”

Isobel, Grade 7

“Miss, the coaches were so friendly! They had lots of patience with us. At first I was nervous but later on I really enjoyed being in the water”

Sonwabise, Grade 7

“We saw fish and under water sea life – I wanted to stay under and not come back up”

Raydon, Grade 7
During 2018 & 2019 we trained over 60 new I AM WATER Coaches to work on our Ocean Guardians school workshops. From marine biology to water safety; yoga & breathing exercises to role modelling and leadership - our coaches are trained to deliver the best possible experience to our young beginners.

As many come from the same communities as our partner schools, they act as adult ocean advocate voices in low income communities.

Child Safeguarding and Water Safety is at the cornerstone of I AM WATER's training. All coaches have police clearance and undergo ongoing training in fields relevant to offering the high level of transformative experiences we are known for.
Empowerment and succession is a fundamental part of our methodology. Providing meaningful part time employment and training is at the cornerstone of the I AM WATER vision for both social and organisational sustainability. Throughout the year we offer ongoing trainings to our coaches; public speaking, marine biology, yoga, freediving, leadership and other topics are taught and deepened.

In 2019 we trained ten of our coaches to become Lead Coordinators while another six were given Senior Coach status. With each opportunity we see our community grow both in employment and commitment.
Say hello!

MEET TWO OF OUR INSPIRING COACHES

Marlin - Senior Coach

"I first encountered I AM WATER in 2018 at one of their conservation school talks and asked if there were ways that I could get involved, and to my surprise they welcomed me with opened arms. I trained as a coach and started working on Ocean Guardians workshops. Workshops are the best days of my life!

I get to experience amazing things and teach the kids about a whole new world beneath the surface of the ocean and show them ways that they can protect it. I remember my first time ever on a workshop, I was so excited but what amazed me most was the smiles on the learners’ faces as they saw and learnt something totally new for the first time and that made me so glad, knowing that I am making a difference in this world. Even though I am young, I would like to encourage and set an example to the youngsters out there to get out of their comfort zone, to learn and experience something new. There’s a whole

Busi - Lead Coordinator

My background before I AM WATER is that I was a lifeguard and a surf coach. My inspiration to come work with I AM WATER was the first time I was given an opportunity to see and know more about the ocean, it gave me the chance to share the information. My biggest impact as a coach is to inform the community about our oceans and to give them the experience of seeing under the ocean and the animals.

I love the fact that we respect our kids and treat each other as a family.
WINTER SCHOOL TALKS

Amount of schools spoken to
Schools are a pillar of society, and we believe by working with schools and having I AM WATER activities during school time we support the current school offering and are getting closer in having Ocean Education & Awareness within the school curriculum.

Children reached through school talks
It is very important that the participants are kept engaged during the Winter Season when there are no water activities and outings. Ocean Education is maintained - therefore what has been learnt during the ocean visits are kept top of mind as well as spike interest for the Summer Season to come!

Teachers engaged
Teachers and school principals act as the custodians of the programme. Their buy in and support is critical to secure the increased impact of the programme over and above the lesson on the beach and in the class room.
OCEAN ADVOCACY

22

Global Keynote Presentations & Events.

4140

Global Individuals heard the I AM WATER message.

96

Ocean Travellers
Supported the Ocean Guardians Workshops through travelling with I AM WATER Ocean Travel while personally experiencing the ocean connection we advocate.
I AM WATER OCEAN TRAVEL OFFERS INTIMATE WILDLIFE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OCEAN’S MOST MAJESTIC CREATURES.

Combining philanthropic giving with transformational experiences this social mission business expands the ethos of protecting what we love to a global audience. The I AM WATER team started Ocean Travel in 2016 as a fundraising vehicle for the Oceans Guardians Workshops as well as a way to broaden the work in transformational experiences and to create a benchmark for truly sustainable ocean travel.
2020 VISION

This coming year I AM WATER plans to expand to new regions while increasing our footprint in Cape Town. We already have successful pilots in nearby cities ready for more workshops this year. As we grow to offer more of South Africa’s low income coastal communities the opportunity to experience their oceans, we will also continue to expand our coaching community and their advocacy role. Equipping our team with more formal leadership training not only helps our oceans but provides many opportunities for the future.

We will also implement new River Guardian Workshops in Cape Town to help our participants understand their impact on the greater water cycle. During our winter months this new initiative will add depth to our existing speaking series.

At I AM WATER we firmly believe in collaborating with like-minded organisations where we add value to each other’s programs and impact in low income communities in South Africa and beyond.

3,000+
Ocean Guardians

19,000+
Reach via Winter Speaking Series

2
New Regions

5
Leadership Trainings

1,000+
River Guardians

50+
Teachers in Water

Through every workshop, talk, travel experience and session, we support and incorporate the mission of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals.

At I AM WATER we focus on the human element and solution to a complex environmental problem as there is no such thing as a one dimensional approach. We work closely with all 17 SDG’s with our primary focus being that of SDG 14: LIFE BELOW WATER.

Needless to say, at all times the key word being life.
THANK YOU!

To each and every one of you who has helped us achieve our goals in 2018 & 2019 we thank you from the bottom of our blue hearts!

From our amazing team and local Cape Town supporters and friends, to our generous donors and partners - there would be no young Ocean Guardians without you! Sponsors who have helped with gear, transport and other essentials, this help is so valuable in streamlining what we do. Ocean Travellers, mentors and like-minded individuals in the ocean conservation ecosystem, thank you for being part of this great big team working for everything we love and believe in.

To every person who gets up and chooses to make choices that are kind to our planet and each other, thank you!
Please stay in touch and follow our journey!

www.iamwaterfoundation.org

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IAM WATER Ocean Conservation

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