650 million people live without safe water. One in three people – 2.3 billion – don’t have access to proper sanitation. Water-related diseases kill a child every minute. WaterAid

Global water crises are the biggest threat facing our planet and the global economy. World Economic Forum

The water crisis is not so much one of absolute scarcity but one of governance. It is rooted in power, poverty and inequality, particularly for women. United Nations Development Programme

70% of industrial wastes in developing countries are disposed of untreated into waters where they contaminate existing water supplies. UN-Water

Massive mismanagement and growing human needs for water are causing freshwater ecosystems to collapse, making freshwater species the most threatened on Earth. Diversitas

Water will be the teeth of climate change. Fights over water and food are going to be the most significant direct impacts of climate change in the next five to 10 years. World Bank

62% of the UK’s water footprint is sourced overseas. WWF

Water scarcity is a globally accelerating condition for 1 – 2 billion people worldwide, leading to problems with food production, human health, and economic development. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

There is enough water for all of us – but only so long as we keep it clean, use it more wisely and share it fairly. Ban Ki-moon

Among the many things I learnt as a President was the centrality of water in the social, political, and economic affairs of the country, the continent and the world. Nelson Mandela

STRATEGY 2015 – 2020
FOR A FAIR WATER FUTURE

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Welcome
let’s collaborate for a fair water future.

In 2008 a group of scientists and development practitioners founded Water Witness International to carry out research, take action and advocate for better water resource management. Having worked on water issues all over the world for many years we saw a clear opportunity to craft new solutions to tackle the world’s spiralling water resource challenges. Business-as-usual approaches by governments, donors, the private sector and NGOs weren’t working, and in some cases they were part of the problem. We envisaged a new type of NGO. One led by water resource managers with hands on experience of water politics and practice, providing on the ground, people centred action, cutting-edge research and targeted advocacy.

Our theory of change towards a fairer, more secure water future is based on our conviction that:

1. People power or, citizen agency can activate water law and improve water security for all. Helping communities to understand their rights, demand action and hold water managers to account plays a vital but neglected role in better water governance. Our innovative work on social accountability monitoring drives pro-poor activation of water policy and law.

2. Engagement with the private sector is central to ensuring a fair water future. Working constructively with businesses, harnessing the reach of markets and demand for ethical production can drive sustainable resource use alongside economic and social progress. This is why Water Witness International has been instrumental in the theoretical and practical evolution of corporate water stewardship.

3. Governments need to deliver on their responsibilities for water resource management. Government agencies need adequate funds, well-trained staff and political authority in order to manage water for the benefit of society now and in the future. We work to improve policy and action on water, and support smarter delivery through advice, training and oversight. We also challenge and help donors and NGOs to plan and deliver more effective aid.

We also see a cross-cutting need for improved knowledge and communication on water. We contribute by linking local voices and ‘on the ground’ evidence to national and global debates, by ensuring rigor, reflection and learning, and by getting the right information to the right people in the right ways.

The diagram above illustrates the tactics we use across these four core work streams. By testing and developing our approach over the last five years we have grown into a dynamic organisation with global reach at the forefront of delivering positive change in the way water is managed.

In this strategy we reflect on our achievements and map a path that will build our contribution to equitable and sustainable development. Our ability to deliver depends on the shrewd use and development of our own resources and people, so the strategy sets out plans for organisational growth, and re-emphasises our commitment to value-for-money, high impact and ethical delivery.

Our strategy goes to print as the Sustainable Development Goals are being ratified by the United Nations. It is clear that achieving many of the goals will be contingent on our collective ability to allocate, protect and use freshwater in ways which avoid depletion, degradation, conflict and vulnerability to climate change. We therefore believe that we can make an important and unique contribution to fulfilling the promise of the SDGs. Of course, we can only do this – and can only realise our vision – by working in partnership, and so we invite you to feedback on our strategy and to collaborate with us in working towards a fair water future for all.

Dr. Nicholas Hepworth
Executive Director, Water Witness International
nickhepworth@waterwitness.org
Helping vulnerable communities

Most countries have decent water policies and laws that prioritise the basic needs of people and the environment. Legal rights and duties are set out to protect users against degradation by pollution, depletion through unsustainable abstraction, damage from floods and droughts, and conflict.

The trouble is that implementation is often weak because those responsible lack capacity, finances, or political support. Powerful water users understand the law and use it to guard their needs and interests. Vulnerable communities reliant on water and related ecosystems for their health and wellbeing are less well connected and so less well protected. Lax water regulation disproportionately impacts the poor.

We work with communities to help them understand and activate the law. We connect them to the responsible public authorities and legal processes. We equip communities to formally challenge duty bearers so that their rights on water are realised. This approach has unlocked action to solve difficult water problems such as conflict, over-abstraction, insecure tenure, or exposure to pollution, floods and droughts. In serious cases of water mismanagement we will facilitate community access to legal redress.

Through citizen agency ¹ and community activation we strengthen water governance. Civil oversight of water law implementation is a crucial component of improved resource management and climate resilience. Tracking the responses to citizen action also helps to diagnose systemic challenges. It generates evidence that we then use to advocate for positive change so that the needs of the most vulnerable are included in water resource decision-making. This approach is termed social accountability monitoring.

What we’ve achieved

Water Equity Reporting, Tanzania

In 2009 we pioneered the use of social accountability monitoring of water management with partners in Tanzania. Our research flagged how water use by the poor was unrecognized in the eyes of the law, and was impacted by pollution and conflict. We traced these problems to poor performance of basin authorities, in turn related to late or partial receipt of budgets and skewed, unrepresentative composition of decision-making boards.

On reporting these findings to the review of the USD$ 600 million Water Sector Development Programme, the World Bank labelled our work ‘a vital oversight mechanism’, the Ministry of Water said it was a ‘welcome wake-up call’ and formal commitments were made to address the problems we identified.

Fair Water Futures, East and Southern Africa

Our Fair Water Futures programme scales up our social accountability monitoring work and will improve water security for over half a million vulnerable people in Tanzania and Zambia. Supported by UK Aid and the Scottish Government, we are on track to deliver at a cost of less than £1 per beneficiary. As well as activating and auditing implementation of water resource law, Fair Water Futures also innovates the tracking of sector budgets and human resource availability to drive improvements in performance, aid effectiveness and to combat corruption. To embed the impact of the work we have involved our regional partners from the outset. Our transferable methodology is being shared globally.

¹ ‘Citizen agency’ is about enabling people to get information quickly, cheaply and reliably; to monitor and discuss what’s going on; to speak out; and to influence society and governance (Twaweza, 2013).
Our future plans

Over the next five years we will help 10 million vulnerable people to improve their water security and tenure through direct implementation of social accountability monitoring. To scale the approach we will:

• Initiate and support social accountability monitoring initiatives on water with partners in Africa, Asia and South America
• Produce accessible guidance and provide training on the social accountability approach
• Evaluate and share knowledge on the value of social accountability monitoring – including through peer reviewed journals
• Innovate through partnering with schools and hospitals as community hubs for accountability on water
• In collaboration with ICT providers create accessible technology platforms to further the approach
• Work with partners to secure a long-term financing facility or ‘shared water risk action fund’ for social accountability monitoring
• In the most serious cases of water injustice, facilitate legal action by the communities affected

What our stakeholders say

The project is a very good idea. It looks out for the rights of the citizens and farmers. We now know we need a water permit and are in the process of getting one. Without the permit our water could be snatched away. This will help us avoid conflict as water demand is increasing.

Hamisi Mtunga, Chair of Mkula Irrigation Scheme, Kilombero Valley

Water Witness has given us new skills and information about how to activate the law and responsible authorities to address issues of pollution and flooding. This will help us to protect the health of this community.

Ms. Mariam Mbaruku, Chairperson Kigogo Ward

For the first time people are demanding their rights on water. This is powerful and will help things change.

Mrs Praxeda Paul, Wami Ruvu Basin Water Officer

The Water Witness approach has great potential for improving water governance and the effective implementation of integrated water resource management. We look forward to learning lessons generated and exploring how they can be scaled up.

Nicoline De Haan, Coordinator – Gender, Poverty and Institutions, IWMI
Driving water stewardship

The private sector – from small businesses, corporations, commercial farmers, banks, commodity traders, retailers to end consumers – exerts a huge influence on water resources. Through the scale of abstraction and consumption and the quality of wastewater, private sector water users shape the availability of water resources. By extension they also shape water resource management options.

Water footprinting provides a means of measuring the volumes of water used in the value chains of commodity production. Water footprints show just how intimately the global economy and consumption is intertwined with local water use and well-being in places of production. For example, 62% of the water consumed in the UK is sourced overseas through “virtual water”, in food, clothes, and other consumables. Much of this comes from developing countries where the associated jobs and export revenue are vital contributions to economic progress. This interconnectedness presents new risks where water needed for export markets is scarce, or where use impacts the environment, economy and local people.

Water stewardship has emerged as a private sector response to such water risks. Some of the world’s most influential companies are now targeting improved water and river basin management as key components of operations and strategy. Existing potential for progress exists if the power, reach and influence of business can be harnessed to improve water security for all, rather than merely for some.

Water Witness International has played a leading role in shaping this new stewardship agenda: investigating and reporting on performance, flagging the opportunities, exposing the many risks, and shaping the debate. We have initiated and guided collective action, and developed standards and principles for measurable contributions to sustainable water management within, and beyond the fence line of company operations.

What we’ve achieved

Highlighting the local water impacts of global consumption and production

In 2010, Water Witness worked with partners to investigate the impacts of the UK water footprint in developing countries. We traced the rapid decline of groundwater levels in the Ica Valley in Peru, one of the driest places on earth, to consumption associated with horticultural exports. We highlighted how the sourcing and purchasing practices of supermarkets and the failure of market standards directly contributed to severe impacts for some of the poorest people in South America. Making front page news in the UK, our work led to a stepping up of interest, action and investment on corporate water risk management.

The International Water Stewardship Standard and Alliance for Water Stewardship

Water Witness International was the first to promote the concept of an international standard for sustainable water use. In 2009 we joined forces with WWF, the Pacific Institute and others as founding members of the Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS). Since then, the AWS has shepherded a global process of multi-stakeholder dialogue and piloting to develop the world’s first Water Stewardship Standard. The Standard guides any water user anywhere in the world towards responsible use and collective action on water risks, and through third party certification can differentiate and reward these responsible users in the market place.

1 Chapagain, AK and Orr, S. 2008. UK Water Footprint: The impact of the UK’s food and fibre consumption on global water resources, Volume 1. WWF-UK, Godalming, UK.
What our stakeholders say

Many congratulations on your publication on corporate engagement. It is a nice amalgam of comment and critique... good to see that there are scientists working on the topic. The publication is something of a landmark contribution. Well done.

Professor Tony Allan, King’s College London, Stockholm Water Prize Laureate

Water Witness International provided facilitation, reporting, and much more through their in-depth knowledge and viewpoint. This thought-provoking collaboration has provided a critical perspective on the management of water resources.

Dr James Dalton, Coordinator Global Water Programme, International Union for the Conservation of Nature

We are delighted with the outcomes of this work and the universally positive feedback we have received from our suppliers and project stakeholders. There is a very clear recognition that the AWS water stewardship standard has the potential to make a positive impact not only in Kenya but globally and across the supply chains of Marks and Spencer.

Louise Nicholls, Head of Responsible Sourcing, Marks and Spencer plc

Through this work we now understand what the Alliance for Water Stewardship standard is about. It is clear that it will help us implement Integrated Water Resource Management and our National Water Policy. It has our full support.

Philip Olum, CEO, Kenya Water Resource Management Authority

It has been a pleasure working with Water Witness International on this project. I wish they were all this straightforward and well managed and I hope the opportunity arises to work closely again in future.

Robin Farrington, Senior Advisor, Development Partnerships with the Private Sector – Africa, GIZ
Improving governance and aid

Getting water governance ‘right’ is central to our collective wellbeing, and social and economic progress at a local and global scale. In many countries the focus is on rapid development of water resources for irrigation, energy, industrial use and to meet the needs of growing cities. An absence of good water governance limits the economic benefits of development, and contributes to growing inequity, loss of ecosystems and biodiversity, and increased vulnerability to climate change.

These implications of poor water governance can take years to surface, and because impacts are sometimes felt only by poor people, problems can be hidden from view. Water resource management also competes poorly for governance attention, investment and aid when compared to issues such as health, education and roads. Added to these challenges, there is little evidence to tell us how best to manage water resources and few agreed indicators to help us track progress or target assistance.

Against this backdrop, efforts to support water security by international donors and NGOs have sometimes been inadequate. Despite the billions of dollars of aid targeting water and related issues like climate change, tangible improvements on the ground are hard to find. Investments have often been too small or short-term, or have been directed at the wrong things, in the wrong ways. Some initiatives seek to simply ‘build capacity’ and shy away from the complex political and systemic problems that hold back progress. Others impose inappropriate models or blueprints, or technical and financial control that erode local ownership and impact.

Smarter ways of supporting governance and delivering aid are urgently needed to ensure better value for money for citizens in both donor and recipient countries.

What we’ve achieved

Water Witness International has raised the profile of water resource management among governments, NGOs and donors; reviewed the available evidence base for policy and action; started to track aid spending and investigate performance to signpost opportunities for progress. Specific examples include:

Systematic map of evidence for policy makers and practitioners

On behalf of the UK government, we led a 2-year exercise with the University of East Anglia to collect and assess the global evidence on how, when and why water resource institutions contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. We identified close to 30,000 initial sources of information and on reviewing this dataset we found only 38 papers with concrete evidence. This work is a key global reference and has significant implications for research, policy and practice. It reveals the limited pool of reliable knowledge, and sets out strategic and practical responses.
Holding donors and governments to account

Tracking government and donor performance on water can diagnose where improvements are needed, ensure integrity and incentivise action to ensure a fair deal for citizens. We are pioneering this process at two levels. Internationally we are investigating spending on water by the world’s biggest donors. In sub-Saharan Africa we are engaged in participatory budget analyses at a national level and asking questions about the adequacy and end use of available funds – providing powerful advocacy material to lever change.

Investigating the role of Finance Institutions

Our investigations in Peru led to positive changes in the way the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the commercial lending arm of the World Bank does business. Our evidence of unsustainable groundwater use linked to uncontrolled abstraction by agribusiness was a major factor in the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman’s (CAO) findings against the IFC. The CAO report cited a ‘lack of effective risk management process’, a ‘failure of its due diligence and safeguard measures’, which had ‘allowed commercial interests to take precedence over social and environmental impacts’.

The IFC has now overhauled its safeguards and approach to water risk, with a specialised team in place to ensure that future global lending is based on equitable and sustainable resource use.

Providing evidence, expert advice and support

We bring evidence from the field to challenge assumptions, inform debates and influence decision makers. In 2011 we were called as an expert witness to a House of Commons Audit Committee review of UK aid, and our testimony can be traced in their recommendations. We also train, mentor and advise government, donor and NGO staff working at the forefront of water security challenges.

What our stakeholders say

Water Witness International rose to the challenge of undertaking a global review of literature on water institutions and poverty. The team trudged where others would have faltered. The Systematic Map has become a key reference document for water policy research internationally.

Dr Mark Zeitoun, Director, University of East Anglia Water Security Research Centre

Shining a light on performance, and how money and resources are used has not happened before. The work is a big step towards greater accountability.

Mr Nsaa-Iya Amaniel Kihunrwa, Secretariat, Donor Partner Group on Water, Tanzania

Water Witness stand out as one of the few organisations approaching water resources management from the bottom up. An understanding of local problems and incentives is needed to craft higher level policies and plans. I look forward to seeing how their work achieves impact at scale.

Roger Calow, Head of Water Policy, ODI

Our future plans

Over the next five years we will build our role and influence to improve water governance through greater accountability, better processes, and stronger evidence. We will:

- Draw on our fieldwork to deliver priority advocacy objectives and systemic change for more equitable and effective water governance
- Promote generation and use of evidence for policy-making on water resources, and expand and publicise our repository of evidence
- Track and analyse aid on water resource management to improve impact and value for money and positively influence the largest donor agencies working on water
- Provide high quality analysis, training, evaluation and advisory services
- Broker practitioner-to-practitioner partnerships between water resource managers and improved approaches to building capability
Advancing knowledge and communication

Across all our shared water challenges we see how a lack of evidence, poor data, false assumptions, badly communicated information or the absence of knowledge holds back progress. Responding to water insecurity requires the generation and communication of reliable knowledge. Information needs to be packaged in ways that people can understand and use. It also needs to be proactively targeted to those who need it most.

We generate information and make it available to those who need it and channel it to those who should be acting on it. We will challenge assumptions, misrepresentation and false claims and improve the understanding and capability to act of policy makers, practitioners and the public.

What we’ve achieved

Water institution landscape mapping

Law and policy on water can be confusing. There are multiple overlapping organisational responsibilities with unclear procedures and duties. In Tanzania and Zambia we have produced water institution maps that clearly set out national strategy, policy, law, regulations, procedures, standards and organisational responsibilities relating to water resources. We have also simplified and shared the procedures for accessing the law and applying for water entitlements.

Consumer awareness about water risks

Despite growing interest in the water footprint of consumption, little is known about consumer attitudes and behavior in response to water issues. We initiated market research in the UK and Germany that reveals high levels of concern about the impacts of virtual water consumption, and a willingness to take action by boycotting or preferential purchasing.

We also documented low levels of public trust in the private sector and retailers, and a clear demand for an independently certified standard and label to differentiate responsible water use.

Global review of market-based water resource management

Alongside traditional command-and-control approaches to water resource management are a growing collection of mechanisms based on the attribution of market values to water, its functions and management, and the subsequent trading, crediting, or offsetting of these. Inspired by carbon trading and neoliberal thinking, these are now being promoted globally. For our partners at WWF we led an international review of these market-based instruments, their use and implications. Our review equips practitioners, decision makers and the public with an objective evaluation of the pros and cons for water security and equity.
Our future plans

Over the next five years we will raise the public and political profile of water resource challenges. We will push evidence towards decision makers, governments, NGOs, businesses, the media and the wider public to highlight the causes and impacts of inadequate resource management, and progressive responses. We will:

- Promote, lead and publish high quality research to advance water security
- Establish an online interactive database of water resource problems and repository of water law which will support public reporting and tracking
- Establish WWI as the first choice for editors and journalists seeking informed opinions and commentary on the world water crisis
- Collaborate with media outlets and production houses to create impactful news stories, documentaries and campaigns
- Harness the strategic use of social media to advance our goals

Water Witness International has a track record of delivering high value-for-money, cost-effective results. Our core team has grown steadily in response to demand, driven by the recognition our work has gained. We will continue to grow sustainably. To guide our work we will maintain our focus through adherence to the following organisational roles, values and priorities.

**Our roles include:**
- Research and investigations to spotlight current performance and opportunities for progress
- Innovation to develop and test new ways to tackle water challenges
- Support to water users and managers through advice, guidance and training
- Evaluation to generate evidence and learning about what works and why
- Communication to share knowledge, advocate for change and initiate action

**Our values and beliefs include:**
- Transformative and sustainable engagement by ensuring local ownership and self-determination
- Social justice for vulnerable people through equitable processes and outcomes
- Transparency within our own work and international aid, and value-for-money for beneficiaries and donors
- Delivery based on rigorous evidence, verifiable claims and highly ethical conduct
- Constructive engagement with partners and stakeholders based on respect, trust and pragmatism

**Our priorities**
- To target where impacts of poor water resource management are felt most severely
- Focus on where capacity and accountability are weakest and the need for support greatest
- Systemic change to benefit large numbers of people in the long term
- Opportunities to make a difference through working with trusted partners
- Working in developing economies of the global south and in wealthy nations to influence the causes of water insecurity internationally

**A core team of high calibre practitioners**
In the coming years we will attract and retain a world-class team to increase the headcount across our offices in the UK and Africa. We offer an exciting, supportive and non-discriminatory workplace, with good incentives and opportunities for professional growth. Flexible, family friendly working conditions and diversity are prioritised.

**A network of leading water professionals and experts with global reach**
To meet the growing demand for our services we have developed a network of 50 Associates and Senior Advisors who can be called on to deliver work across the expanding geographies and technical areas of our operations.

We are able to deploy world-class expertise at short notice in almost any geography and on any topic. We can match team composition and skills to the specific needs of the assignment, and quickly scale-up the capabilities of our teams as work evolves. This flexibility also means that high-calibre global experts can contribute to our work on a temporary basis to suit their interests.

We are proud to be advised by such a highly-skilled pool of the most experienced and knowledgeable water experts globally. Collectively, our network has over 700 years worth of experience in 121 countries, and speaks over 35 languages. The map shows the countries where our Senior Advisors and Associates have significant experience.

*Figure below: Map of Associates professional experience.*
Our future plans

We will consolidate our status as the world’s leading NGO dedicated to improving water resource management. Over the next five years we will:

- Generate the investment and recruit the people we need to deliver our strategic goals
- Verify compliance against our internal policies and procedures
- Learn and adapt through an annual 360 degree review of our work
- Confirm our status as a stimulating, supportive and safe place to work
- Demonstrate value for money

Our model of supporting citizens to bear witness to water challenges on the ground, and hold duty bearers to account is proving effective in our African operations. By supporting a network of Water Witnesses through training, communications support and advisory services we can scale our reach, knowledge base and impact into new areas of operation.

Extending our local presence and voice

Strong leadership and governance

Our Board of Trustees will continue to evolve to support and guide our work. We will seek to include representatives from all our stakeholder groups. The Board will ensure accountability and responsiveness to the people we serve, to our partners, donors and to our staff.

Working with others

Throughout the strategy we place emphasis on working with others. We will work collaboratively in order to lever skills, resources and access; achieve scale; and maximise impact to deliver our vision. Valued partners include bilateral and multilateral donors; trusts and foundations; governments, implementing bodies and regulatory agencies; businesses; non-governmental and civil society organisations; media groups; universities and research organisations; and communities and citizens.

Core funding to keep costs low and impact high

Our experience tells us that development impact is most efficiently delivered through core funding. Short term project funding can have high transaction costs and risks undermining strategic impact. We will continue to seek short-term opportunities where appropriate, but will prioritise investment of core, unrestricted funding against our strategic goals. Core funding can dramatically improve the efficiency of delivery. We will therefore seek a small number of high value partners who share our tenacity and commitment to global water security for all.

• Generate the investment and recruit the people we need to deliver our strategic goals
• Verify compliance against our internal policies and procedures
• Learn and adapt through an annual 360 degree review of our work
• Confirm our status as a stimulating, supportive and safe place to work
• Demonstrate value for money

empowered citizens and communities

responsible water stewardship

improved governance and aid

better evidence and knowledge

water security for all
### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Influenced by water management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>End poverty in all its forms everywhere</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Reduce inequality within and among countries</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</td>
<td>✅</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</td>
<td>✅</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</td>
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