

UNESCO and Onewater Announce Winners of the Global Walk of Water Photography Contest

From spiritual rituals to the struggle for survival, a global photography contest lays bare the intimate connection between water and human identity.

Organized by UNESCO's World Water Assessment Programme and Onewater, the competition selected winners from a pool of nearly 1000 stories spanning 114 countries. The Identities theme serves as a visual prelude to the UN World Water Day 2026 focus on Water and Gender.

The competition awarded over €10,000 in prizes, supported by the Asian Development Bank, WEX, Calumet, the Global Environment Facility's IW:Learn Platform, and WasserStiftung.

German photographer, Kristina Steiner, won the first prize for documenting Belgium's last horse shrimpers. The youth award goes to Gastón Zilberman, for his story on the Qotzuñi people and the disappearance of Bolivia's second largest lake.

Regional winners include Giacomo d'Orlando whose story highlights the Agta peoples' fight to save the last of the Philippine Crocodile and Abyan Madani from Indonesia who documented the indispensable Blue Troops of Jakarta.



A Global Mosaic

The submissions offer a sharp look at the role of water in everyday life with images ranging from sea rescue operations and the devastating reality of Amazonian droughts to the quiet traditions of salt extraction in Viet Nam and the remarkable Haenyo (sea women) of Jeju Island. The full gallery of winning stories can be viewed online at: <https://onewater.blue/contest/identities>

Exhibition and Media

The best stories will embark on a global traveling exhibition throughout 2026, following previous showcases at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and the UN Headquarters in New York. Institutions interested in hosting the exhibition may apply until May 30, 2026.

Key Statistics 2025/2026

8,311 images submitted

114 countries represented

968 photo series

37% female participants

796 photographers

63% male participants



Two of the main protagonists in Kristina Steiner's winning story: Stefaan rides his horse, Dina, to catch shrimp in the summer waters of the North Sea.

Media Assets & Licensing

Select high-resolution images are available for publication. These images are provided under a Onewater non-exclusive license specifically for editorial use accompanying this press release. Access and download the image bank here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Q5QIHL84TdeIrl8tb6oXDWQdiNcVIAG1u?usp=sharing>

Other Languages

A Microsoft Word version of the press release can be accessed in the following languages: Arabic, Chinese, Czech, English, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Nepali, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish via this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1sIDHafmZfV6HVL7xLFVUfN9rlc3z0RJ_

Onewater gUG (haftungsbeschränkt)
Hochgernstr. 19 | 84524 Neuötting | Deutschland

www.onewater.blue

+49 151 4133 5427

VAT-ID: DE346116428

onewater.
many stories