

**ELAW**

SUMMER 2025

**advocate**

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ELAW helps communities speak out for clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet. We are a global alliance of attorneys, scientists, and other advocates collaborating across borders to build a sustainable, just future.

EDITOR: MAGGIE KEENAN

GRAPHIC DESIGN: HELIOS CREATIVE

PRINTED BY: QSL PRINTING

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper with soy-based inks.

## Protecting Communities and the Environment in Africa



The Government of Namibia has issued prospecting licenses for uranium mining in the Stampriet Artesian Basin. This internationally shared underground water resource spans the southeastern part of Namibia, as well as parts of South Africa and Botswana. ELAW partners at the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), based in Windhoek, are developing a 12-page comic strip to educate citizens about the process of proposed “in-situ” uranium mining and its substantial risks. LAC called on the ELAW Science Team to review the comic strip for accuracy.

Communities across Africa face enormous challenges protecting themselves, the climate, and local ecosystems from polluting industries, mines, fossil fuel development, and much more. ELAW is collaborating with grassroots advocates across the continent who partner with local communities to make their voices heard and build a sustainable, just future.

We are pleased to share the following examples of our recent work in Namibia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Zambia, and more.

**“The rush for oil and gas development in Namibia promises great economic prosperity despite the global cry for a clean energy transition. Local communities have the right to know and understand the real risks of developing this industry and be allowed to exercise their right to say NO to it.”**

Corinna van Wyk  
Coordinator

LAC Land, Environment &amp; Development Project

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**Defending Defenders**

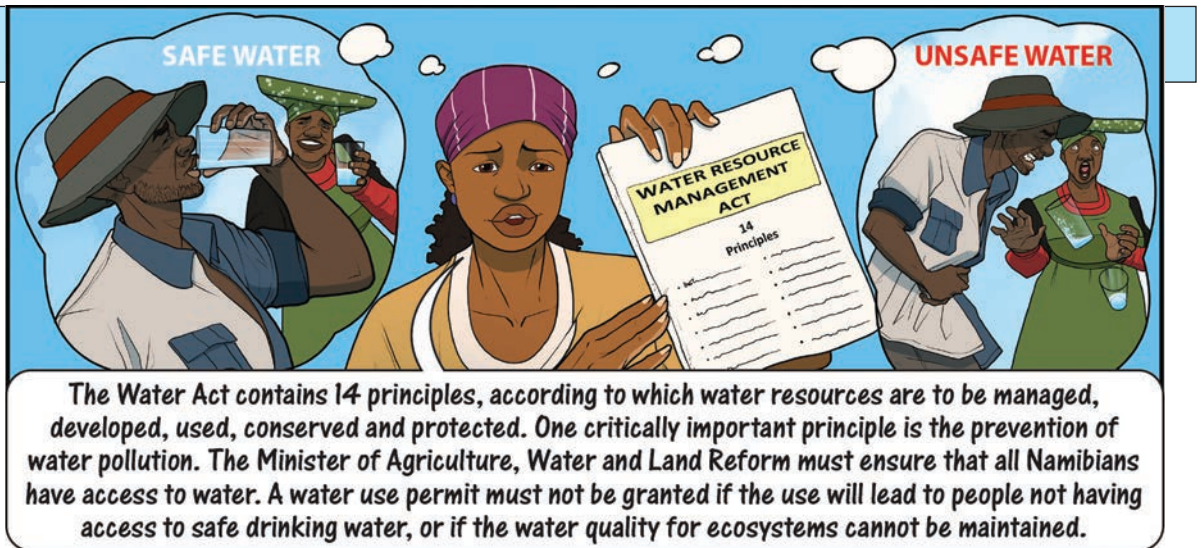
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**NAMIBIA: Protecting Communities and Ecosystems from Short-Sighted Oil & Gas Development**

Prospects for oil development in a volcanic rift off the southern South Atlantic coast of Namibia and South Africa have multinational energy giant, TGS, asking if the “Orange Basin” is an underexplored oil giant. Meanwhile, communities are concerned that short-sighted offshore oil and gas development threatens local fisheries, exacerbates the climate crisis, and fails to lift local communities.

“ELAW partners are working hard to stop oil and gas development in the Orange Basin,” says ELAW Scientist Dr. Melissa Garren. Dr. Garren traveled to South Africa and Namibia in late February to meet with partner organizations and help advance their work keeping fossil fuels in the ground and protecting communities from other short-sighted projects.

In Namibia, the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), based in Windhoek, is working to ensure that citizens have a voice in decisions being made about many proposals for offshore oil and gas development. Environmental impact assessment (EIA) documents for proposed oil and gas development projects are supposed to enable communities to participate in decisions about permits, but can be

incredibly complex. This poses challenges for communities that want to understand the true impacts of oil and gas development and engage in decision-making processes.

For example, an EIA was approved for the Rhino Resources offshore oil project, near Oranjemund. ELAW provided expert comments on the EIA, highlighting its flaws and shortcomings. LAC used this information in community workshops it hosted in February.

ELAW's Science Team supports partners throughout the EIA process. They provide technical guidance on issues common to many offshore projects, such as seismic surveys, well capping, oil spill modeling, Scope 3 emissions, and more.

“The rush for oil and gas development in Namibia promises great economic prosperity despite the global cry for a clean energy transition,” says Corinna van Wyk, Coordinator of LAC's Land, Environment & Development Project. “Local communities have the right to know and understand the real risks of developing this industry and be allowed to exercise their right to say NO to it.”

**UGANDA: Climate Justice for Africa**

ELAW provided training to 12 lawyers across Africa in two sessions that explored legal and scientific issues related to environmental impact assessment (EIA) processes. The lawyers are participating in the African Climate Legal Fellowship Programme.

ELAW Attorneys and Scientists explored access to EIAs, community participation in the process, and best practices in presenting scientific and other expert evidence in legal processes.

The inaugural cohort of African lawyers participating in the training hailed from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda.

“The sessions were timely and transformative, equipping me with invaluable insights into the legal and scientific dimensions of environmental impact assessments and how they can be powerfully combined to challenge weak EIAs, making the training immediately relevant to our team at Greenwatch,” says Abdun Bwana Bwanadi.



Abdun Bwana Bwanadi, Climate Fellow  
Greenwatch, Uganda



## Protecting Communities and the Environment in Africa



Community members living near the Metssa Congo plant. PHOTO: Cyrille Ndembi

### REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: Noxious Battery Recycling Plant Closed

In 2024, the Congolese Ministry of the Environment ordered the closure of an Indian-owned battery recycling plant in Pointe Noire due to pollution concerns. The plant had been poisoning the community around Vindoulou in the Pointe Noire region for many years.

ELAW Scientist Dr. Rye Howard says: "Residents had tests to determine the lead levels in their blood, and every person tested showed dangerous levels of lead."

"Many thanks to ELAW for collaborating with us since 2023 to help hold this company accountable," says Me Moussounda. "We are pleased with this decision, which shows that communities can be victorious in battles against corporations trying to illegally operate polluting industries."

Now, ELAW is collaborating with its partners to ensure that the company decommissions the plant properly and decontaminates the site. The community is also seeking compensation from the company for medical treatment. We will keep you informed of our progress.

### Protecting the Climate: Partners Seek Landmark Advisory Opinion from the African Court

Less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions are attributed to Africa, but communities across the continent are facing the dangerous impacts of a changing climate: devastating floods, drought, rising temperatures, exacerbated food insecurity, and more.

In early May, ELAW partners submitted a landmark petition to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Court), calling on African states to protect rights to life threatened by the changing climate.

"We seek an advisory opinion from the African Court, to stand in solidarity with African victims of climate change and uphold the rights enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights," says Alfred Brownell, a Liberian attorney and 2019 Goldman Prize winner. Alfred works with the Global Climate Legal Defense Network.

The ELAW Law Team reviewed the petition and provided relevant case law. In February, ELAW Attorney Erick Kassongo joined Alfred and partners from across the continent in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to finalize the text. Participating organizations include the Public Interest Lawyering Initiative for West Africa, the Environmental Lawyers Collective for Africa, the African Climate Platform, and the Mano River Union Civil Society Natural Resources Rights and Governance Platform.

"This petition is a crucial step in challenging injustice and addressing devastating global warming impacts suffered by communities in Africa," says Erick. "It brings a unified voice to the discussion, from affected communities, youth, civil society organizations, lawyers, climate change research institutions, and activists' movements from across Africa."

### Growing the Corps of Public Interest Scientists in Africa

Grassroots attorneys in Africa working to protect the environment need to understand the science behind environmental problems. But public interest scientists are in short supply.

In February, ELAW Scientist Dr. Melissa Garren had the opportunity to reach out to marine and fisheries science students at universities across Africa to share exciting possibilities for public interest environmental scientists.

She joined a team of experts on the OceanXplorer. This OceanX research vessel sailed from Cape Town, South Africa to Walvis Bay, Namibia, along with students from the Solomon Islands, South Africa,

Namibia, Tanzania, Tunisia, Mozambique, and Kenya. She led a module on the value of public interest science and how we pursue ocean justice, as part of a United Nations Ocean Decade-endorsed education program.

Three young scientists from Namibia and Mozambique followed up with Dr. Garren immediately following the program. They inquired about opportunities to work with ELAW partners in Africa and learn more about how public interest lawyers and scientists collaborate to protect coastal communities and the environment. Dr. Garren says: "This gives me hope!"

## Protecting Communities and the Environment in Africa

### GUINEA

A country rich in natural resources, Guinea is witnessing numerous large-scale projects designed to exploit these resources, notably mining bauxite in the northwest corridor, gold in the northeast, and iron at Mount Simandou in the southeast. Guinean attorney Alpha Diallo traveled to Eugene and worked with us during his 2024 ELAW Fellowship. Following his Fellowship, Alpha and his colleagues at Mêmes Droits pour Tous (Same Rights for All, MDT) have worked closely with ELAW's Law Team to ensure that mining projects do not threaten local communities.



Alpha Diallo

### ZAMBIA: Mining Industry Abuses

On February 18, a mine tailings dam at a Chinese-owned copper mine in Chambishi, Zambia, collapsed, releasing more than 50 million liters of acidic and highly toxic waste into the Kafue River Basin. The spill killed fish, destroyed agricultural crops along riverbanks, and spread fear among communities about the safety of a critical water source for approximately 60% of Zambia's population.

ELAW partners at the Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC) are working to hold polluters accountable. "Communities immediately called on us to ensure that responsible parties take immediate action to rectify the situation," said Brigadier Siachitema, an attorney and consultant at SALC. Communities want fair compensation for damages, effective cleanup and remediation, and assurance that regulatory agencies implement measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

The ELAW Science Team is working closely with Brigadier to gather information to help determine adequate payments to compensate the community for the full extent of its losses, and to identify what actions the Chinese company and the government of Zambia must take to fully restore the lands impacted by the catastrophic spill.

We will keep you informed of our progress.



Brigadier Siachitema inspects damage to an ecosystem in Kalusale. Toxic waste from a collapsed copper mine tailings dam flowed through this stream, killing vegetation.



## ELAW Fellows from Egypt and the Democratic Republic of Congo

### Shahinaz Adel

March 28-June 7, 2025

 Egypt

Shahinaz Adel is an environmental lawyer and Executive Director at a new organization, the Egyptian Foundation for Environmental Rights (EFER). Her mentor, Ahmed El Seidi, launched EFER in 2024 following his 2023 ELAW Fellowship.

"Since the dawn of time, Egyptians have been fighting for their freedom and their land," says Shahinaz.

While in Eugene, Shahinaz worked closely with ELAW's Development Team. She met with leaders at the Western Environmental Law Center and Cascadia Wildlands to learn best practices and discussed communications strategy with local experts. She honed her fundraising skills and was introduced to prospective funders. She also worked with the Law and Science Teams on EFER's cases protecting the climate and holding polluting industries accountable.

**"We are here to help people across the region use legal tools to fight for what is right, so that everyone can enjoy a safe and healthy environment."**

Shahinaz Adel

"It was my dream to meet the ELAW Team and see with my own eyes how the ELAW network operates," says Shahinaz.

Many thanks to the University of Oregon's American English Institute for providing Shahinaz with a Janet Hughes Mersereau Scholarship to participate in the Intensive English Program. And thanks to Susan Sibilia-Young and her husband Dennis for providing Shahinaz with a host family.



Shahinaz Adel and Pascal Mirindi enjoy a field trip to Oregon's Silver Falls State Park.

### Pascal Mirindi

March 27-June 7, 2025

 Democratic Republic of Congo

Pascal Mirindi has worked since 2022 to protect communities from short-sighted plans for oil and gas development in Lake Kivu and Virunga National Park. He mobilizes communities and decision-makers to promote climate justice and leadership transparency. He is Board Chair of Congo Green Solution and an activist in the international Extinction Rebellion movement.

In 2022, DRC auctioned off exploration licenses for 27 oil blocks and three gas blocks across the country. The projects threatened to cause mass deforestation. After citizens mobilized to challenge the short-sighted plans, the government shelved the projects.

"The government committed to ensuring the bidding process would be fair and open, but it was not," says Pascal.

In early May, DRC opened 52 oil blocks for exploitation in peatlands and primary forests in the Congo Central Basin. Pascal is working with ELAW's Law Team to learn about the companies proposing to explore for oil and gas. "This will strengthen campaigns and legal work to protect communities and ecosystems," says Pascal. The ELAW Science Team is also collaborating with Pascal to better understand the environmental threats posed by methane extraction in Lake Kivu.

Pascal reflected on his 2025 ELAW Fellowship:

"It was not a personal benefit, but a shared opportunity — for all of us to uphold the rights of local communities, protect our ecosystem, and resist the destructive forces of fossil fuels." In addition to his work with the ELAW Team, Pascal completed the Intensive English Program at the University of Oregon American English Institute. Many thanks to The 11th Hour Project for making Pascal's ELAW Fellowship possible. And thanks to Lauren Herbert and Kenny Watkins for providing Pascal with a host family.

**I was surrounded by an exceptional team and guided by inspiring mentors. I was reminded that another world is possible — a world where social and environmental justice, human dignity, and the preservation of our forests are not just ideals, but realities that we can build."**

Pascal Mirindi

### Thank You AEI

Since 1992, nearly 100 ELAW Fellows from around the world have completed the Intensive English Program at the University of Oregon's American English Institute (AEI). AEI provided most Fellows with generous tuition scholarships.

ELAW Fellows said AEI's English classes were enormously helpful. Zuzana Caputova participated in the AEI program in 2017 and was elected President of Slovakia in 2019!

AEI closed its doors in June 2025. ELAW is now shifting its focus to collaboration with the University of Oregon's new Global Welcome program. Enormous thanks to AEI for more than three decades of high-impact collaboration, building the English language capacity of grassroots leaders around the world.

## ELAW Fellows: Growing the Movement



In early March, ELAW Fellows enjoyed a field trip with many stops along the Oregon Coast. This photo was taken at Heceta Head. L to R: Adrian Chochoł, Haley Rowlands (Law Fellow), Zuzana Dagmar Kubíková, and Viridiana Maldonado.

### Growing the Movement: ELAW Fellows from Slovakia, Poland, and Mexico

To build a green and prosperous future, we need a strong, growing corps of skilled public interest advocates working in their home countries to protect communities and the environment through law.

A key part of ELAW's mission is building this powerful movement of advocates who will carry on this work over generations.

ELAW Fellowships help bring early-career lawyers into the movement and help seasoned advocates become more effective. ELAW customizes each Fellowship to meet the Fellow's objectives. Since 1992, we have welcomed nearly 300 ELAW Fellows from 65 countries.

ELAW Fellows from Slovakia, Poland, and Mexico were here with us in February and March. Find their profiles below.

#### Zuzana Dagmar Kubíková, Slovakia

February 25-March 7, 2025

Zuzana is Legal Assistant at World Wildlife Fund Slovakia. She works with Pavol Žilinčík, a 2005 ELAW Fellow who has mentored Zuzana's work protecting bears and taking on environmental problems tied to large dams.

While in Eugene, Zuzana explored legal frameworks that address human-wildlife conflict. She met with energy consultant Mike McCann to learn about decommissioned dams in Oregon and California. She met with the ELAW Defenders Team to discuss the shrinking civic space for, and threats to, environmental defenders around the world. Finally, she presented her work on a panel at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference: "Human-Wildlife Conflict as an Elevator to Power."

Looking back on her Fellowship, Zuzana said: "I came to Eugene to soak it all up, and ELAW Team members were totally responsive to my professional needs!"

Many thanks to the Trust for Mutual Understanding for making Zuzana's ELAW Fellowship possible.

#### Adrian Chochoł, Poland

February 26-March 7, 2025

Adrian is an environmental lawyer at Frank Bold's Poland office. He was inspired to pursue public interest environmental law by 2018 ELAW Fellow Miłosz Jakubowski who has mentored Adrian's work at Frank Bold to enforce anti-smog laws that have significantly reduced air pollution in major Polish cities.

Adrian joined ELAW Fellow Zuzana Dagmar Kubíková on a panel at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, presenting his inspiring work cleaning up the air in Poland. He also joined Zuzana for a meeting with economic analyst Ernie Niemi to better understand the true economic costs of polluting and environmentally destructive projects.

Many thanks to the Trust for Mutual Understanding for making Adrian's ELAW Fellowship possible.

#### Viridiana Maldonado, Mexico

February 27-April 18, 2025

Viridiana Maldonado is Co-Coordinator at TerraVida, a new organization working to transform unjust structures that have exploited nature, communities, and people. She collaborates closely with Indigenous communities and environmental defenders to challenge short-sighted projects and build local capacity.

Her work includes building the capacity of Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, Morelos, Michoacán, Nayarit, Veracruz, and the Yucatán Peninsula. She is working on emblematic cases challenging silver mining in an archaeological zone in Xochicalco, Morelos; helping communities with legal processes to protect their territory from the Mayan Train and Puerta al Mar mega-developments in the Yucatán Peninsula; and protecting the Xochimilco wetlands World Heritage Site in Mexico City.

During her ELAW Fellowship, Viridiana worked one-on-one with the ELAW Team, attended the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference, and met with a tutor to strengthen her English.

Many thanks to Paul Nicholson and Ginnie Lo for making Viridiana's ELAW Fellowship possible, and to Laurie Nicholson for providing her with a host family.



## Renewing Our Connections and Commitment



### ELAW Annual Meeting

April 7-10, 2025

More than 60 ELAW partners gathered in Santa Marta, Colombia, for the 2025 ELAW Annual Meeting, followed by the International Meeting on Environmental Law at the University of Magdalena.

Grassroots lawyers collaborated in working groups on many topics, including biodiversity; rivers and dams; water quality; rights of Indigenous peoples; rights of nature; and deep-sea mining.

The Annual Meeting featured a case fair, which enabled participants to present several current cases in parallel. Small groups discussed each of the eight cases presented to learn more about the strategies and reflect on their own litigation.

During the International Meeting on Environmental Law, open to the public, ELAW partners shared lessons from their experiences defending communities and ecosystems in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, United States, Ukraine, and Uruguay.

Many thanks to the Colombian hosts and co-organizers, including Ana Lucía Maya Aguirre, Melany Velasquez Lozano, and Yolanda Zamora Ayala at Centro para la Justicia Marina; Liliana Avila and María José González-Bernat at AIDA; Vanessa Torres at Asociación Ambiente y Sociedad; and Professor Isabela Figueroa at the University of Magdalena, for organizing such an inspiring meeting. And thanks to our volunteers, Martine Coguic and Madeleine Wendling.

### 2025 Annual Meeting Plenaries

- Confronting threats to environmental defenders
- Protecting the ocean
- Legal frameworks to support human rights and environmental defense
- Extractivism, climate change, and the just transition
- Digital security

**This has been an awesome gathering of our community, and I leave with a renewed sense of purpose. Thanks to you all and the powerful way you put your love into action on behalf of Earth's life.**

**Let's continue walking together in this beautiful and tremendously challenging task that stirs our souls. I couldn't imagine better companions for this journey.**

Ezio Costa Cordella, FIMA, Chile



# ELAW

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## Growing the Movement

2025 ELAW Fellow Zuzana Dagmar Kubíková is a Legal Assistant at World Wildlife Fund Slovakia. She works with Pavol Žilinčík, a 2005 ELAW Fellow who has mentored Zuzana's work protecting bears and taking on environmental issues associated with large dams.

**"Without ELAW, the three leading legal advocacy NGOs in Slovakia would not exist. ELAW has been an invaluable partner in helping build the environmental movement in Slovakia, ensuring that communities and civil society can participate in decisions that impact them."**

Pavol Žilinčík, World Wildlife Fund



Pavol Žilinčík



Zuzana Dagmar Kubíková at Seal Rock, Oregon.

## MAKE A GIFT TODAY!

Charity Navigator and Candid give ELAW their highest rating for financial management, accountability, and transparency. You can be confident that your gift helps advance our mission of helping communities speak out for clean air, clean water, and a healthy planet. Please visit [elaw.org/give](http://elaw.org/give) to make a tax-deductible gift.

