Watter of Life

An invitation to participate in the Ecumenical Water Network



World Council of Churches

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INTRODUCTION

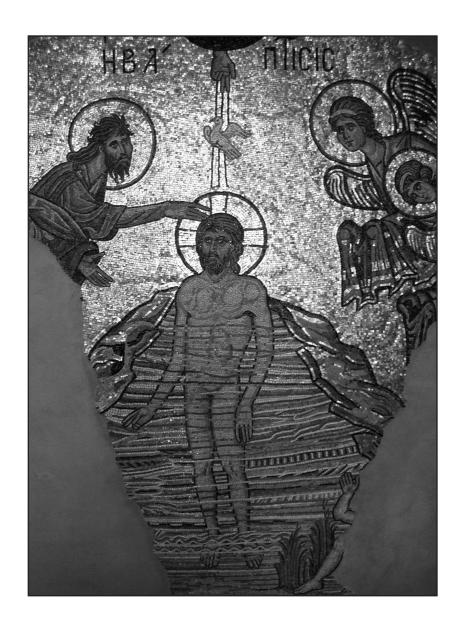
This brochure is produced by the Justice, Peace, Creation Team of the World Council of Churches to highlight the work on water concerns by many of the WCC member churches and ecumenical partners who have formed together the Ecumenical Water Network.

Emphasising the spiritual dimension of water, the Ecumenical Water Network relates to the broader water movement that includes a number of different concerns represented by different groups focusing on resistance against privatization, dams, contamination, bulk water trading etc. This brochure concentrates on the important role of community-based initiatives and the right to water.

The second part of the text, which serves as the framework for the Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) has been agreed by a working group on Water at a WCC Consultation at Mission 21, Basel, from 9-13 May, 2005

The WCC represents more than 340 member churches from all around the world with ca. 500 million members. Church related relief and development agencies mobilise around 1 billion US\$ every year for emergency relief, development and advocacy. A strong group among them advocates for water as a human right and a common good. Their position is rooted in their day-to-day efforts to provide freshwater and sanitation to impoverished communities around the world and in disaster and war stricken areas, such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Darfur.

This text refers to fundamental convictions and issues for action and advocacy that are to be shared with a wider group of member churches and ecumenical partners in an emerging Ecumenical Water Network.



THE BIBLICAL WITNESS

But he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, «Give me a drink.»... (John 4:4-7)

Stories at the well are stories of water essential for life and therefore a source of conflict (Gen 26), stories about the presence of God at this place (Gen 16:7-14 and 21:19), or stories of encounters that mark a turning point (Gen 24, 29; Ex 2:15ff etc.).

When Jesus meets the Samaritan women at the well, he is portrayed at the beginning like any other human being – thirsty and in need of help just as in the last moments of his life at the cross (John 19:28). His need and vulnerability leads him to cross the boundary that separates his own community and hers. An encounter begins through which both are transformed and brought into a new relationship with each other and God.

It is not by accident that this story is happening at the well of living water. We are led to think of Jesus in an even deeper sense of the water of life flowing from God and himself after his side was pierced on the cross (John 19:34) to transform and to nurture life in its fullness (Rev 22).

The Bible is full of water stories. It begins with the ruach, the breath of God, sweeping over the face of the waters. Water is primordial. The second creation story (Gen 2) links the creation of the human being, of Adam, with the creation of a

river so that the garden would be watered and cared for. And the Bible ends with the vision of the "river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb..." (Rev 22, which reflects Ez 47).

The Bible speaks of the destructive and chaotic character of water in the story of the flood (Gen 7) that leads to the rainbow covenant with Noah. But it also expects that at the end of times the see will be no more (Rev 21). The see here refers to the power of destruction and the medium of exploitation in long distance trade of goods essential for life and even slaves (Rev 18). Jeremiah links the drought with inequality and injustice in the society (Jeremiah 14) and observes that finally also the rich are hit by this environmental disaster and even their cisterns run empty.

Hope for the future life of the people comes to be expressed through the promise that rivers will spring up in the desert (Isaiah 43:19). Isaiah compares the flow of living water from heaven to nurture the earth to the flow of justice and he dreams of abundant life with enough water for everybody who is thirsty and with enough food also for those who have no money (Isaiah 55) and no purchasing power in a money-economy.

If we look at the key-word "water" in any concordance of the Bible, we find many more stories and remarks that point to other aspects of the reality and symbolism of water. Central for Christians, however, is the story of the baptism of Jesus (Mt 3 and parallels) that is at the origin of baptism as a rite initiating membership in the church as the body of Christ. In baptism the cleansing and transforming power of water as symbol of the sacredness of all life is emphasized. Made members of the body of Christ, we are also reminded that we are creatures belonging to God's creation and depending on it. We are taught that life is a sacred gift of God's overflowing loving grace.



O healing river, send down your waters, Send down your waters upon this land. O healing river, send down your waters, And wash the blood from off the sand.

This land is parching, this land is aching, No seed is growing in the barren ground. O healing river, send down your waters, O healing river, send your waters down.

Let the seed of freedom awake and flourish, Let the deep roots nourish, let the tall stalks rise. O healing river, send down your waters, O healing river, send your waters do.

African American Spiritual



WATER SACRED GIFT OF LIFE

STORIES OF HOPE

The Bible together with many other cultural and religious traditions reminds us that water is sacred, a gift of the Creator and the source of life. Water is never just a resource for human consumption. Water-justice in this perspective requires recognizing its value for all life and not just for us (justice – not just us). Water is a common and not a commodity.

Our ancestors and age-old cultures and religions knew this. It is not by accident that many symbols, rituals and stories refer to water both as a source of life and a deadly force. And it cannot surprise that many cultures gave great attention to rules and rituals regulating the supply and distribution of clean water:

- There are the old river cultures of Euphrates and Tigris, the Nile, Ganges and Yellow river. Prudent water use enabled the production of food surplus that allowed the division of labour and differentiation of society.
- Rice terraces in Asia were built and maintained over centuries by farming communities as a communal affair. The rice terraces testify to social cohesion, knowledge and creativity of these communities in an impressive way.

II

- Indigenous Peoples in the Americas and in many other places where very much aware of the interdependence of different eco-systems, the central role of water for life and the sacredness of all life.
- Arab water rights that treat water as a public good which is not to be traded because it is essential to life was copied in many other places also in Southern Europe. Right in opposition to the prevailing economic schools of today, scarcity of water was a major reason to keep water supply under public scrutiny.

A case study group from Palestine told the story of a woman who suffered under the Israeli occupation. Like many others, she too had lost family members in the fighting. One day, an Israeli soldier knocks at her door, asking her for a glass of water. For a moment, she is shocked and ready to refuse this request. But suddenly she remembers the old custom that you never deny the stranger the water he is asking for, a sacred rule that leads back even to the days of the Bible. And she says to herself, that she will not allow the enmity to destroy the values precious to her and her culture. When she gives him the water, he just takes it and disappears, probably not aware of the graciousness of the moment.

According to these traditions water should not be traded or sold as a commodity because it is essential to life. Everybody, including the poor and marginalized without any money, must have access to a certain amount of water and to control the resources that are vital for their lives. This is a principle, which is expressed in the international arena as the call for the right to water as a human right.

The following stories represent signs of hope because they show how people also today affirm these values and struggle for them in the context of economic globalization with its drive towards the commodification of water (cf. also JPC Team, Alternative Globalisation Addressing People and Earth (AGAPE), Geneva: WCC. 2005).





3.1 Making a garden of Eden wherever you live - Utooni Self-Help Group in Kenya

During a Workshop by the Lutheran World Federation in which one of the leaders of Utooni Self-Help Community Group was participating, the Moderator invited the participants to volunteer a song. Esther, the leader from Utooni, rose and taught a song. The words are very moving:

Rather than dream of going to Heaven', Wake up and make a Garden of Eden, Make wherever you are a Heaven God will bless you as you do!

Utooni Self-help Community Group in Eastern Kenya was formed in 1978 and registered with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in 1982. It was made up of 135 families, with a total population of about 1000 persons of varying ages. Not all members of the administrative division became members. The registered Group consisted of only the families whose leaders were convinced that they need to cooperate to improve their economy and their environment. Their leader and facilitator was, and continues to be Joshua Mukusya, a committed Christian who worked in the Rural Development Department of the National Council of Churches of Kenya and with several agricultural companies before he quit and went home to help his mother and the rest of the community. Since 1978 he lives with them, plans with them, and implements with them the plans they agree upon.

The Utooni Self-Help Community Group operates about thirty km south of Machakos, and about ninety km south east of Nairobi. Their local market is at Kola. Thirty years ago this area was almost completely bare, having been stripped of trees by carvers who cut them for making curios for the tourist industry. The area has no permanent river, but has many valleys covered with plenty of sand and rough stones. The area is semi-arid, with very little rainfall per year. The Group formed nine committees to deal with the various challenges they faced: water-harvesting; food; schooling; health; investment;

security; culture; afforestation; soil conservation. Each committee would plan for activities and share the plans with the rest of members for approval and implementation. Women are the majority in the committees and in daily operations of the Group. Even the artisans leading construction work are mainly women. The men participate, but they acknowledge the leadership of the women who have been elected because of competence and leadership qualities.

Every Monday each member-family sends a representative to work together with the others on a project earlier agreed upon, they work on each others farms and homes in turn once every week. This has been done since 1982. In monetary terms, the cost of this labour is worth millions of dollars. The result of this investment is there for any visitor to see. There are beautiful terraces, which conserve the soil and retain moisture on the slopes, which have now been rehabilitated into fertile farms. In addition, forty-two kilometres of terraces have been made. More than 200 sand dams have been built, serving as reservoirs for millions of litres of rain-harvested water. More than 8,500 domestic water tanks have been constructed, so that every member family has at least one tank. Some of the tanks have been built for schools and other institutions. The Group has been invited by other communities to extend its expertise to them, and now many more dams are being constructed in other areas.

Friday is the market day at Kola, when the community members meet to exchange the fruits of their labour. Sellers and buyers come from elsewhere to trade, bringing goods, which are not locally produced. It is interesting to observe the growing commerce that is evolving at Kola as the economic output continues to expand and becomes more and more sophisticated. Water consumption per family has continued to rise as the community harvests more rainwater. Thus the standard of living continues to rise. There is more brickmaking, both for local use and for sale. This is possible because of the trees, which have been planted to provide timber and fuel and for other uses.



The Community has also hosted several groups who visit them to learn. Normally, visitors are encouraged to join the Group members as they work, and to contribute some of the materials (such as cement and reinforcement steel) in appreciation of the hospitality. The local market at Kola has become a little neat town, whose main investors are the members of this Group. They have a housing scheme at the town, where they have constructed rental houses for civil servants and other tenants. There is a Post Office, which also serves as their bank. Recently, an all-weather road has been built passing though the town. This road brings more customers and visitors to Kola.

These paragraphs describe a very interesting lesson about the process of social reconstruction and economic development. The community is in control of its own present and future. Other actors have to meet the community on its own terms - including politicians, NGO, administrators and religious leaders. In the long term, this is a sustainable community, because it has set its own priorities, which it implements using its own labour and resources. If some help comes from outside, the members appreciate, but they do not wait for help in order to implement their plans. They go on as if there is no one to rely upon except God and themselves. Their Motto is: 'Without Vision We Perish.' Their investments are built to last, and when the Group members work, they know they are doing it not only for themselves, but for posterity.

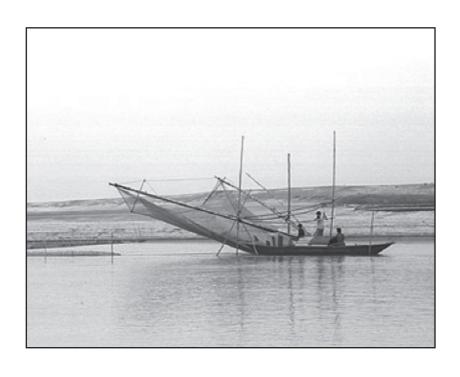
Hopefully, this approach will eventually become normative among those of us who are persuaded that economic development can best be achieved by the people themselves at local levels, not by impersonal institutions imposing themselves from the top. E.F. Schumacher's dictum seems to have been proved right by the Utooni Self-help Community Group. His insights are contained in his book titled 'Small is Beautiful - Economics as if People Mattered' (London: Abacus, 1973). Macro-economic indicators of growth are misleading, if the gap between the affluent and the destitute continues to widen. As Professor Charles Birch used to say in the 1970s, the gap can be reduced 'only if the rich can live more simply,



so that the poor may simply live.' The problem of poverty and affluence is primarily a question of Ethics and Spirituality, rather than Politics and Economics.

The leaders of this world, who are now obsessed with 'globalization' should rather heed the wisdom of the people of Kola: 'Without Vision We Perish'.

(text provided by Prof. Dr Jesse Mugambi. The Ecumenical Water Network held its Inaugural Conference on 6-13 November 2005 at Machakos, Kenya. The participants had the opportunity to be guest co-workers with the Utooni Self-Help Community Group.)



3.2 Healing nature in India with community spirit and efforts

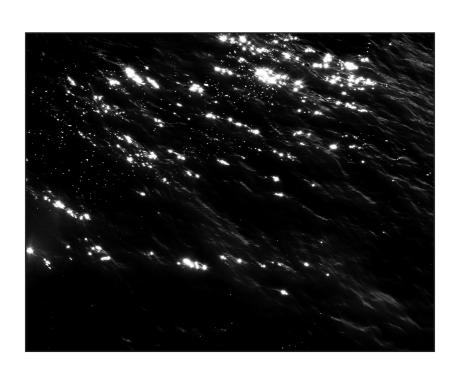
In the heart of Andhra Pradesh, a state of India with wide dry areas, lies the region of «Rayalaseema», the Land of Stones. Visitors often can not believe what their eyes see, when they come near to the working area of KRUSHI, an NGO working with indigenous and Dalit people in the state since many years - they see fresh green hills from top to the down lying areas in midst of deforested, dry and stony mountains. In this area, the rain comes down during few months, often coming not at all, which regularly causes starving periods and generates temporary migration of the local people. Also, the ecological degradation is dramatic and every monsoon season brings more soil erosion. In this challenging situation, KRUSHI together with other local NGO and with the support of the German protestant development organisation Bread for the World, generated a community based model for the ecological recuperation of small local watershed areas. It is a model, which is based on local people's knowledge and commitment. giving special attention to the active involvement of women.

The methodology includes various steps and phases and local people play the protagonist role right from the first moment. For example KRUSHI helps to draw simple maps which show where along to the observations of local people, normally the water takes its way running down the deforested hills. Guided by these community wisdom based maps, in the next phase people build smaller and larger constructions from top of the hill downwards, in order to detain and to slow the flow of the monsoon rain waters, and to allow it to enter into the ground. This construction work is supported by planting local trees and plants that will help the water to find its way into the ground, and to withhold the soil and accumulate it again on the hills. It was the women's idea and insistence to grow those plants and trees which besides their effect against erosion, offer fruits for the families' diet and fire wood for the community.

After three years, the changes started to become evident. The Land of Stones first had green parches, and now has green areas. The poor Dalit people in the involved communities succeeded not only to maintain and to improve, but also to enlarge their small pieces of land. The families gain more products from their land for their own consumption and for the local market.

Basic condition for these improvements was to heal the hills and to give them back their capacity to receive and to withhold the seasonal rain and channel it into the groundwater stocks. Because there is no «blue water» without taking care for the «green water», as a traditional saying says. In this way, community wisdom and community engagement, with solidarity accompaniment by KRUSHI succeeded - at a low cost - to make the local wells give water during the whole year, and to set ground for a promising future for the Dalit families nowadays and for the future generations.

(text provided by Danuta Sacher, Brot für die Welt)





3.3 Uruguayan people change constitution for the human right to water

October 31 of 2004 became a historical day for Uruguay and the global water movement, when more than 60% of the Uruguayan people supported the Constitutional Reform in Defence of Water, adding water as a human right to the constitution and setting the basis for its exclusively public, participative and sustainable management.

This referendum was promoted by the National Commission in Defence of Water and Life (CNDAV). The commission was created in 2002 as an answer to the signing of a 'Letter of Intent' between the Uruguayan government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which committed to extend the privatization of potable water and sanitation services to the entire country. Privatizations started in Maldonado department, firstly with the presence of French multinational company Suez Lyonnaise followed by Spanish company Aguas de Bilbao. As in most cases of water privatizations performed during last years, these processes have had negative consequences.

From the social point of view, wide sectors were prevented access to potable water for not being able to afford the cost of the service, which considerably decreased its quality with respect to the services granted by water state company OSE. The conditions of the service were of such low quality that quality control bodies in that matter recommended not to consume water because it didn't comply with minimum quality standards.

The victory of the water plebiscite was actually a social one. CNDAV is a wide group of social and political organisations, which oppose a merchandising conception of water. Among their founders are neighbourhood organizations, FFOSE (water state company's trade union) and REDES-FOE (Friends of the Earth Uruguay).

However, despite its political support, the water plebiscite was secondary within the politic and media agenda. In addition to this, privatizing companies, of water and other sectors (as bottling companies) as well as conservative business sectors (large estate owners, forestry and rice) carried out a strong politic and media lobby against the reform. During the nine months previous to the campaign, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) started a public debate with the CNDAV, denying any imposition to the Uruguayan government and refusing the responsibility attributed to the content of the 2002 'Letter of Intent', which functions like a contract between government and IMF. The work, which enabled the triumph of the Constitutional Reform, was based on the grassroots, which transmitted the spirit and content of the proposed articles.

The auspicious result of the plebiscite opens the doors for a water policy designed from a vision of this particular resource as a common good, to be publicly managed on the basis of social participation and sustainability criteria. The outcome of the plebiscite also proves the viability and potential of popular efforts and alliances in defence and protection of social common goods. It was an inspiring sign of hope for the international community of defenders of the human right to water.

(text provided by Danuta Sacher, Brot für die Welt)



3.4 Vilemov - an initiative by an Orthodox Centre

The Orthodox Academy Vilemov together with its partner organization Alterna in Slovakia got involved in the cleaning of five kilometers of the river Dudvah in the beautiful scenery of Cachticka Dolina (the Small Carpathian Mountains) in Slovakia. During two days in early spring 2005 a group of 27 students and mainly young people collected more than a ton of plastic materials and other communal waste from the main stream and from the banks of the river. Also a deposit of old paint in corroded tins was found in a ditch only several meters from the river. The living-conditions for animals and fish have greatly improved thanks to this effort.

While this was a short-term initiative, the Orthodox Academy Vilemov worked also in a more intense way on the project of decentralized water supply and water treatment systems for three remote villages in the Drahanska Vrchovina Mountains in the region of Central Moravia (Czech Republic). Preparations for the project consisted of water analysis and monitoring of the quality of water in the village wells, definition of protection zones, and development of the individual integrated water supply and water sanitation systems in cooperation with mayors and citizens. Even though the implementation of the project did not receive funding and could not be realized fully, the protection zones of the wells are respected and the water quality of several wells, which are used by local people, improved greatly.

The Academy concentrates for several years now on environmental issues and the promotion of renewable energy technologies. A major project now is the a small 35kW hydro power plant which should respect the most strict standards related to protection of water and protection of water habitats. Income from the sales of the clean electricity should further support environmental initiatives for the churches and church related organizations in the Czech Republic.





DECLARACIÓN DE SU SANTIDAD EL PATRIARCA ECUMÉNICO BARTOLOMEO PARA EL GRUPO DE TRABAJO DEL CMI SOBRE EL AGUA

(12 agosto de 2005)

Agua

El agua es tan fundamental en la vida natural como lo es en el mundo espiritual. Como afirma el libro del Génesis: "En el principio creó Dios los cielos y la tierra. La tierra estaba desordenada y vacía, las tinieblas estaban sobre la faz del abismo y el espíritu de Dios se movía sobre la faz de las aguas" (Gn 1:1-2). De la misma forma que el agua es la esencia de toda la vida, también es el elemento primario en la vida de un cristiano, en la que el sacramento del Bautismo marca el inicio sagrado de la vida espiritual.

La estrecha relación entre el mundo natural y el mundo del Espíritu se manifiesta en la ceremonia de la Gran Bendición de las Aguas, que se representa en la Iglesia Ortodoxa el día 6 de enero, Fiesta de la Teofanía, en que conmemoramos el bautismo de Cristo en el río Jordán. La Gran Bendición comienza con un himno de alabanza a Dios por la belleza y la armonía de la creación:

Grande eres, Señor, y maravillosas tus obras, y ninguna palabra es suficiente para cantar tus maravillas... El sol canta tus alabanzas, y la luna te glorifica; las estrellas interceden contigo. Te obedece la luz. Ante ti se estremecen los abismos; los manantiales te sirven. Extendiste los cielos como una cortina. Estableciste la tierra sobre las aguas. Rodeaste los mares de arena. Derramaste el aire para el aliento...

El agua, pues, significa la profundidad de la vida y la llamada a la transfiguración cósmica. Nunca puede ser considerada o tratada como una propiedad privada, ni convertirse en los medios y el fin del interés individual. La indiferencia para con la vitalidad del agua constituye una blasfemia contra Dios, el Creador, y un crimen contra la humanidad. Mediante la polución o contaminación de las aguas del mundo, se consigue la destrucción de todo el ecosistema del planeta, que recibe su vida de la comunicación incesante, cual vasos comunicantes, de las arterias acuosas subterráneas y supraterráneas de la tierra.



STATEMENT BY HIS ALL HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW FOR THE WCC WORKING GROUP ON WATER

(12 August 2005)

Water

Water is as fundamental in the natural life as it is in the spiritual world. As the Book of Genesis says: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God's spirit hovered over the water" (Gen. 1.1-2). Just as water is the essence of all life, water is also the primary element in the life of a Christian, where the sacrament of Baptism marks the sacred source of the spiritual life.

The striking connection between the natural world and the world of the Spirit is indicated in the ceremony of the Great Blessing of the Waters, performed in the Orthodox Church on January 6th, the Feast of Theophany, when we commemorate Christ's Baptism in the Jordan River. The Great Blessing begins with a hymn of praise to God for the beauty and harmony of creation:

Great art You, O Lord, and marvellous are Your works: no words suffice to sing the praise of Your wonders....The sun sings Your praises; the moon glorifies You; the stars supplicate before You; the light obeys You; the deeps are afraid at Your presence; the fountains are Your servants; You have stretched out the heavens like a curtain; You have established the earth upon the waters; You have walled about the sea with sand; You have poured forth the air that living things may breathe....

Water, then, signifies the depth of life and the calling to cosmic transfiguration. It can never be regarded or treated as private property or become the means and end of individual interest Indifference towards the vitality of water constitutes both a blasphemy to God the Creator and a crime against humanity. Through the pollution or contamination of the world's waters, the destruction is procured of the planet's entire ecosystem, which receives its life from unceasing communication, like communicating vessels, of the watery subterranean or supraterranean arteries of the earth.



PRESSING ISSUES

The following water issues need special urgent attention at this time:

a) Ecological threat

There is a close connection between water and Climate Change. Factors such as deforestation, intense production methods and consumer demand, which lead to Climate Change have also impacted on the availability of fresh water. As climatic patterns change so weather systems are affected, prompting features such as extreme rainfall, prolonged droughts, melting ice and rising sea levels. The ecology of whole regions is under severe pressure, although, more positively, the planting of new vegetation encourages precipitation in drier areas.

b) Production and consumption lifestyles

In our global, interconnected world, water can no longer be just a local issue. Consumer habits are wasting water directly and indirectly, within and across regions. For example, intense farming of single crops to supply the demands of consumers, makes huge demands on water supplies. Massive factory manufacturing of plastic products or intensive agricultural production, which depends on continual irrigation, divert water away from the needs of local communities, both human and non-human

c) Water should be treated as a social good and a human right rather than as a commodity or commercial product It must be ensured that there are affordable pricing systems under public accountability. The costs to consumers should be re-directed to the benefit of the community rather than for private profit.

d) Commercialization

There is a need to question the trend to commercialization of water resources and services promoted especially by Western European based trans-national corporations active in the water sector together with international financial institutions. The loss of public control and participation of people and communities in water management at all levels is a serious matter. is essential that local control of localized water supplies is given higher priority.

By the rivers in Fortaleza, we sat down and cried for the cholera victims.

In those who lived there we saw sadness and we didn't know what to say.

People who lived there did not have songs on their lips.

They wanted joy but, with neither water nor health there was no way to be joyful.

How could we sing praise to the Lord in the midst of such suffering?

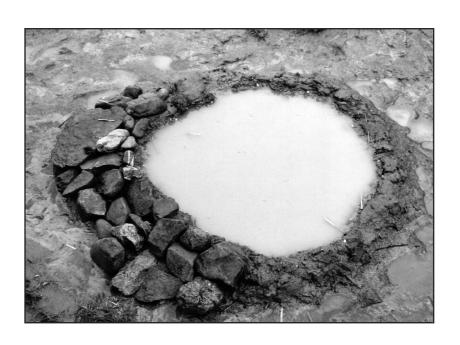
If we forget you, may we go thirsty.

May our lips be dry if we forget you, if we don't bring back water, health, and joy.

Judge, Lord, our elites, for their neglect and greed have long mistreated us.

But remember Fortaleza, your children in Ceara that suffer from thirst and cholera; don't let the earth go dry.

An adaption of Psalm 137, by Napoleao Marcos Mendes of Fortaleza, the state capital of Ceara in Brazil



SOLIDARITY WITH VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Access to water is uneven. Some communities are very much more vulnerable than others. These include low-lying countries and regions, where the primary threat is rising sea levels. Elsewhere, many communities are endangered by changing rainfall patterns or by the speeding up of the melting of permanent ice, which influence national and international river systems.

As members of the church, i.e. the Body of Christ, it is imperative to live in mutual support of one another. Special attention should be paid to those who are the most vulnerable. The equitable sharing of water is an essential expression of global solidarity and a practical response to the imperative to create a just society together. Furthermore, the lifestyle of vulnerable human (and non human) communities, often more sensitive to the natural rhythms of life, provides insights into ways and means for sustainability.

Joint Ecumenical Declaration

by churches of Brazil and Switzerland on water as a human right and a public good

We, the Protestant and Roman Catholic churches of Brazil and Switzerland - represented by our leaders, inspired by local initiatives taken in our parishes and encouraged by the declarations of the worldwide fellowship of churches - on the UN's "Water for Life" international decade for action (2005-2015).

1. We acknowledge:

- That water is a basic precondition for all life. Without water there is no life. Having or not having access to water determines life or death. Water is a gift of God, which he offers to all so that they may use it responsibly for fullness of life. Thus water is a public good.
- Water is a human right. The "right to an adequate food" is set down in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 25) and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (article 11). In putting this into practice the problems and specific needs of women (and children, particularly girls) ho bear the responsibility for providing water with consequences for women's health, through carrying heavy burdens, and for young girls who are thus prevented from attending school.
- Water is a force of faith. Water is not only an economic commodity it also has a social, cultural, medical, religious and mystical value. In the story of creation we read that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." (Gen.1.2). Through Moses God provided his pilgrim people in the desert with water. For we Christians the symbolic force of water is found in baptism, "The one who believes and is baptized will be saved." (Mk.16.16). For many peoples and cultures water has a sacred significance and has value linked to its capacity to forge community and its ritual and traditional properties.



- Water is becoming scarce for many human beings. The high pro capita use of water, population growth, wastage, lifestyle, destruction of forests, land and water reserves require that particular attention be given to water and to setting priorities for how it is used.

2. We demand:

- That the human right to water be recognized at the local and international level in the same way as the right to adequate food. This right must be respected by all sectors of society but states have a particular responsibility in this area. «General Observation» No15 of the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and « the voluntary directives to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security » (in particular directive 8c) adopted by the international community at the FAO in November 2004, must be put in place without delay.
- That water must be treated as a public good. The State must take over the commitment to guarantee access to drinking water to all of the population. This guarantee includes fixing an affordable price for water, making the necessary technical and financial means available, as well as involving local councils and communities in decisions relevant to them on the use of available water resources. Treating water as a public good also implies the commitment of states to regulate the use of water resources by peaceful means, in such a way that the right to water for all of the inhabitants of neighbouring states also be respected.
- That the right to water should be regulated through an international convention on water to be adopted by the UN.
- That in terms of water consumption legal priorities need to be laid down. The first is quenching the thirst of human beings and animals and ensuring the supply of water to food crops. This presupposes a preventative approach to environmental policy, in the spirit of solidarity between local government, countries and peoples.



3.We commit ourselves:

- to convince our churches, congregations, institutions, ecumenical groupings and partner organizations to support this declaration and to pray for its aims;
- together with the movements and NGOs in Brazil and Switzerland interested in these issues, to motivate public opinion, political forces and the population of our countries to work in favour of the terms set out in this declaration; to lobby the governments of our countries to guarantee, through appropriate laws, the human right to water and the declaration on water as a public good, and to work for the drawing up of an international convention on water to be adopted by the UN.

Bern 22 April 2005

National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil (CONIC) represented by its president, Bishop Adriel de Souza Maia. National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) represented by its general secretary, Dom Odilo Pedro Scherer. Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches (FEPS) represented by its vice-president Ms Irène Reday. Swiss Conference of Bishops (CES) represented by auxiliary Bishop Peter Henrici



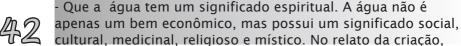


DECLARAÇÃO ECUMÊNICA SOBRE A ÁGUA COMO DIREITO HUMANO E BEM PÚBLICO

Nós, do Conselho Nacional de Igreias Cristãs do Brasil, da Confederação Suíca de Igrejas Evangélicas, da Conferência Nacional de Bispos do Brasil e da Conferência dos Bispos da Suíca, reunidos em Berna, na Suíca, no dia 22 de abril de 2005, em sintonia com a Década Internacional da Água (2005-2015), declarada pela ONU, nos alegramos e nos animamos com as iniciativas de nossas comunidades e assumimos as manifestações das nossas Igrejas no mundo inteiro em favor da água como Direito Humano e Bem Público.

1. Reconhecemos

- Que a água é um bem fundamental para a vida. Sem água não há vida. Ter acesso ou não ter acesso à água significa decidir sobre a vida e a morte do povo. A água é um dom de Deus. Ele a coloca à disposição de todos. Pede o seu uso responsável para que todos tenham vida em abundância. Por causa da vida, a água é um bem comum, que não pode nem deve ser privatizado.
- Que o acesso à água é um direito humano. O "direito a uma alimentação adequada" é definido pela ONU, tanto na Declaração Universal dos Direitos Humanos, em 1948 (Art. 25), como no "Pacto Internacional de Direitos Econômicos, Sociais e Culturais", em 1966 (Art. 11). À luz desse direito, reconhecemos que as mulheres devem merecer uma atenção especial frente aos problemas e sacrifícios que enfrentam. Em muitos países, elas, juntamente coma as crianças e as jovens, são responsáveis pela provisão e pelo abastecimento da água. Essa tarefa acarreta consegüências e danos para a sua saúde. Igualmente, impede que as adolescentes e as crianças fregüentem a escola.





lemos que "o Espírito de Deus pairava sobre as águas" (Gen 1,2). Através de Moisés, Deus providenciou água para o seu povo peregrino no deserto. Para nós cristãos, a água no batismo tem uma força simbólica: "Quem crer e for batizado será salvo" (Mc 16,16). Para muitos povos e muitas culturas, a água tem um caráter sagrado, está ligada às tradições e exerce uma função comunitária e ritual.

- Que a água tornou-se escassa para muitas pessoas. Escassa devido ao alto consumo per capita e ao crescimento populacional, bem como escassa devido ao uso inadequado e ao desperdício da água. Escassa por causa do desmatamento e da destruição do solo e das reservas hídricas. Essa realidade demanda um cuidado especial e uma definição urgente para que a água seja uma prioridade colocada a serviço da vida e do consumo humano.

2. Exigimos

- Que a água seja reconhecida como um direito humano como parte integrante do direito à alimentação adequada. Esse direito deve ser respeitado por todos os setores da sociedade, em nível local e global. Cabe ao Estado uma responsabilidade especial, consignada no "Comentário Geral" n° 15 do Comitê das Nações Unidas para Direitos Econômicos, Sociais e Culturais e nas "Diretrizes Voluntárias para o Direito à Alimentação" no contexto da segurança alimentar nacional, especialmente a Diretriz 8c (Água), da comunidade das nações, ratificadas pela FAO em novembro de 2004. Essas responsabilidades e direitos devem prontamente ser postos em prática.
- Que a água seja considerada e tratada como um bem público. O Estado deve garantir o acesso à água potável para todos, o que implica em: preço acessível da água para todos; obtenção de recursos técnicos e financeiros; participação das comunidades e entidades locais nas tomadas de decisão no que diz respeito ao uso dos recursos hídricos existentes. Água como bem público obriga o Estado a regular o uso dos recursos hídricos através de meios pacíficos, para que o direito à água seja para todos, inclusive para as populações de países vizinhos.



- Que sejam definidas prioridades legais para o uso da água.
 Em primeiro lugar está a dessedentação de pessoas e animais e o fornecimento de água para a produção de alimentos. Isso exige uma política ambiental dentro do espírito de solidariedade entre comunidades, regiões e povos.
- Que o direito humano à água tenha um marco legal através de uma Convenção Internacional da Água, a ser definida pelas Nações Unidas.

3. Comprometemo-nos a

- Convidar nossas Igrejas, comunidades eclesiais, entidades ecumênicas e organizações sociais a apoiarem essa declaração e a orarem pela causa da água em nosso planeta.
- Motivar, com a ajuda dos movimentos sociais interessados e as ONGs do Brasil e da Suíça, a opinião pública, os partidos políticos e a população de nossos países a se engajarem nas causas dessa declaração e a se oporem às políticas e às manobras para a privatização da água.
- Exigir que os governos de nossos países se comprometam em assumir o direito humano à água e a declarar a água como um bem público mediante uma legislação adequada, bem como a envidar esforços e a se empenhar na criação da Convenção Internacional da Água no âmbito da ONU.

Freiburg, 22 de abril de 2005

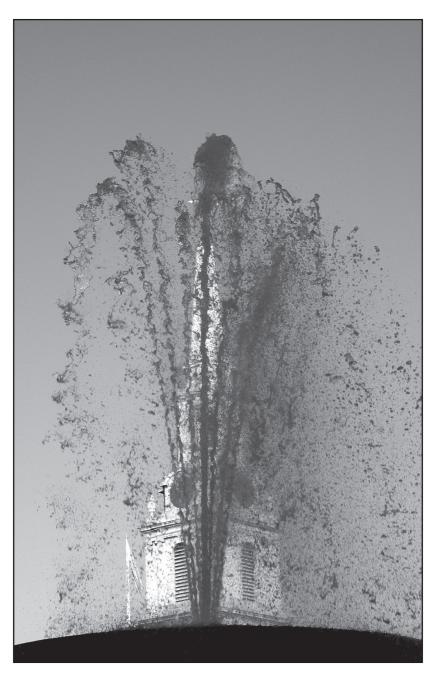
Bispo Adriel de Souza Maia, Presidente do Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs do Brasil - CONIC

Dom Odilo Pedro Scherer, Secretário-Geral da Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil - CNBB

Irène Reday, Vice-Presidente da Confederação Suíça de Igrejas Evangélicas - SEK

Dom Peter Henrici, Presidente da Comissão Nacional Justiça e Paz da Conferência dos Bispos da Suíça - SBK







FRAMEWORK FOR THE ECUMENICAL WATER NETWORK

What we stand for

Water scarcity belongs to the pressing environmental issues of today's world. Many countries suffer from water shortage. Large numbers of people have no access to water and lack adequate means of sanitation. If present conditions continue to prevail, the situation is bound to become worse in the coming decades.

The *Ecumenical Water Network* was formed by Christian agencies and movements:

- to make a Christian witness heard in the present debate on water issues,
- to raise the awareness of the churches on the urgency of the concern.
- to engage as an ecumenical community in common action at all levels

with the aim to promote the preservation, responsible management and the equitable distribution of water for all, based on the understanding that water is a gift of God and a fundamental human right.





6.1 What are the reasons for the present crisis?

Many factors are responsible. To mention but a few: increased and unsustainable agricultural and industrial use of water, deforestation and land-degradation that seriously change the water cycle, over-consumption and waste, pollution and population growth. But the crisis is aggravated by the prevailing economic system. Public and community control of water supply has drastically diminished over recent decades and years. Increasingly water is treated as a commercial good subject to market conditions. Many cases can be cited where privatisation of water resources has deprived the poor from access to water.

6.2 Fundamental convictions

As the churches engage in debate and action on water issues, they are guided by the following convictions:

- a) Water is the *condition of all life* on the planet plants, animals and human beings. Water is an essential gift of God for all living beings. Water resources must, therefore, be protected for the whole of creation. Human beings are part of the creation. Human society can only exist within the biosystem; its survival depends on the survival of the whole. The care for the whole of creation must be the basis for the churches' engagement and action.
- b) As far as human society is concerned, our starting point is that the access to water is a *fundamental human right*. It is a matter of justice and of social and political sustainability of any society, that it must be ordered in such a way that all people can benefit from the gift of water.

This requires

 to establish the right to water for all people in a binding manner.



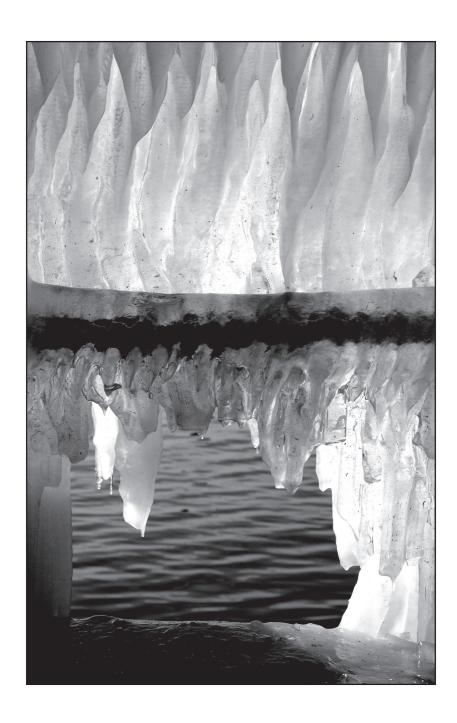
- to guarantee the right to water for coming generations,
- to protect the local and national water rights of Indigenous Peoples under international law,
- to guarantee women's water-related rights as human rights.
- c) The *sustainable use* and human management of natural resources as forest, wetland, grassland and agricultural land is of utmost importance for the long term availability of water. Necessary for all life, water must be treated in a careful and sustainable manner. Fresh water is scarce. Only 0.008% of the planets water is available for consumption. Water should not be over-used or polluted. Water must be used efficiently for agricultural, industrial as well as for domestic use. We have to manage our water resources by keeping environmental and economic development in balance, by learning from good examples in the world, and adapting them to local conditions.

This requires:

- to protect water resources and catchment areas,
- to carefully monitor water supply systems,
- to re-circulate water,
- to support local communities in their efforts for responsible use of water.
- d) The protection and control of water resources is a central *public responsibility*. Water being a condition of life, water supply must be managed through structures representing all sectors of the population. Churches will call for comprehensive plans and measures to protect the availability of water.

The recognition of the basic role of water for all life and human survival and health needs to be enshrined in national constitutions. States have the responsibility to create within their territory the best possible water conditions for all. This





responsibility includes the protection of aquifers, measure against pollution and salinisation, afforestation etc. Public authorities are responsible for the adequate supply and the equitable distribution of water.

This requires:

- to declare as a core task of governments to guarantee the right to water and to make nation-states and their authorities responsible for the respect, protection and optimal and on going fulfilment of the right to water.
- e) Water must not be treated as a commercial good or a commodity of trade. Water being *an essential good for life*, should not be subject to the rules of profit making.

It must be ensured that there are affordable pricing systems under public accountability. The costs to consumers should be re-directed to the benefit of the community rather than for private profit.

Water increasingly being a scarce good, must be used sparingly. Water must be placed under public responsibility to guarantee the access to water for all including the impoverished sectors of society without purchasing power.

This requires:

- to protect water as a public good belonging to humanity and all life.
- to prevent water from being commodified and degraded to a tradable good.
- to ensure that the human right to water takes precedence over international trade policies; in particular water should be excluded from all bilateral and multilateral trade and invest ment agreements.



f) At all levels *public administration* of water must be *transparent*, i.e. open to control by the people.

This requires:

- to provide all people both internationally and domestically with effective judicial remedies for demanding fulfilment of the right to water.
- g) To the largest degree possible responsibility for the management and distribution of water should be placed in the hands of the *communities depending on it*. The principle of subsidiarity is essential for the maintenance and protection of water resources. Churches and church agencies will therefore consistently support and encourage the control of water resources by local communities.

This requires:

- to ensure that the people have a democratic right in determining and deciding national and local water strategies;
- to protect the local and national water rights of Indigenous Peoples under national and international law.
- h) Water issues transcend in many ways national borders. Solutions can only be found through *international solidarity*. Since water issues transcend regional and national boundaries, nations will require regional and international legal frameworks and agreements to ensure concerted common action. Churches will promote mutual understanding and common action by the community of nations. As water becomes scarce, it can easily become a source of conflict. To preserve water resources, conflict prevention is essential.

6.3 Theological and ethical basis

a) Water - the cradle and source of life:

Water is the cradle and source of life, and one of the most potent bearers of cultural and religious meanings. Life, in all its forms is impossible without water. It was only the development of planetary conditions that allowed for the presence of large quantities of water in its liquid state that made possible the emergence of life on earth. Without water and its particular qualities, biological life as we know it would be impossible.

b) Water - well of health

Water is both an external and internal feature of life on God's Earth. Over 80% of our bodies comprises of H2O, The same is true of most other living organisms. Our metabolisms function by the flow of fluids.

We are held in water before our birth. We express some of our feelings through tears and perspiration. Water is central to our diet and balance. Some of us struggle from dehydration, whilst others suffer from excess water in our body-weight.

c) Water - God's gift for all living beings:

In Christian theological reflection, Creation begins with the Spirit of God "brooding over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). God, the creator, is the giver of life, and water is so to say the instrument through which God creates. Gifts remind us of the giver. They have their value because of the relationship to the giver and the giver's presence in them. Gifts must be respected. The giver is honoured by sharing the gift with all, and passing it on to future generations.

d) Water - scarce and over-abundant

It is possible for the waters of life rapidly to become the waters of death. Waves, tides and rains can bring destruction instead of vitality.

In the Biblical texts water is seen both as a necessity to life, but also as a threat under the conditions of a world suffering from the consequences of sin. Drought becomes a symbol and image of divine judgement (Isaiah 33:9). Water scarcity endangers life. Communities experience threat not only because of desertification and drought but also through devastating floods, sea level rise or water pollution as a result of inadequate sanitation. The eschatological hope of the prophets comes to be expressed through the promise that



rivers will spring up in the desert (Isaiah 43:19). The river of life is the final vision of the Book of Revelation (Rev. 22: 1-7) and the life-threatening sea will be no more when there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1).

e) Waters of life

For the Christian community water becomes the image of renewal, of promise, and of hope in baptism. Water has a deep spiritual meaning.

In the scriptures we see the identification of particular cultures with the rivers from which their sustenance is drawn. Human community is dependent on water, not just physically, but socially and culturally. When the people "refuse the gentle waters of Shiloah" (Isaiah 8:6), we are being told that they have forgotten their divine vocation. The consequence of this is a judgement lived out in exile beside the wrong river (Ps 137). This correlation between culture and the water systems beside which people live, and in relationship to which they gain their livelihood, provides a basis for the church's solidarity with Indigenous Peoples, and indeed, with all peoples who are displaced from their home and alienated from the waters that have traditionally given them life.

f) Water requires human responsibility

We are called to use God's gift of water in gratitude and for the common good of all life on planet earth. This call involves human responsibility in caring for the neighbour and for all life in order to ensure as a matter of justice that nobody is denied water, the foundation of life.

In other words: The centrality of water to life, and the experience of water as gift are two sources of the affirmation of water as a basic human right. Just as the biblical Jubilee declared that land belonged, in the final analysis, to God and not to any particular individual, so water should be part of the global commons and a social good.

To treat water as a gift of God and human right implies that clean fresh water should be available to meet the basic

needs of all living beings, rather than be treated as a private commodity to be bought and sold.

6.4 Issues for advocacy and action

The fundamental convictions stated above need to be promoted at all levels of society. They imply:

a) Placing water issues on the agenda of the churches, inviting them to assess the situation in their own country as well as the response of their government to water issues, urging them to articulate their position in the light of theological and ethical basis and the fundamental convictions, and calling them to advocate for the right to water for all and to promote public measures for protecting water resources against over-consumption and pollution.

b) Supporting community-based initiatives

taking sides with people – often marginalised – who tend to be excluded from water supply, e.g. in slum areas or remote rural villages and strengthening initiatives of local communities to exercise control over the management of their water resources; establishing a network among such "communities of hope".

c) Addressing trade and privatisation concerns

co-operating with local, national and international movements defending access to water as a human right in negotiations on trade agreements at all levels and participating in the present debate on the relationship of the public and private sectors. The concern for the maintenance of transparent and efficient public control must consistently be pursued, e.g. at the level of UN CSD but also at the national and regional levels.

d) Advocating sufficient support to and funding of water projects

regarding Official Development Aid (ODA) targets (0,7% of the Gross Domestic Product and 15% share of aid to water and sanitation) and the priorities in the programmes and projects of relief and development agencies.

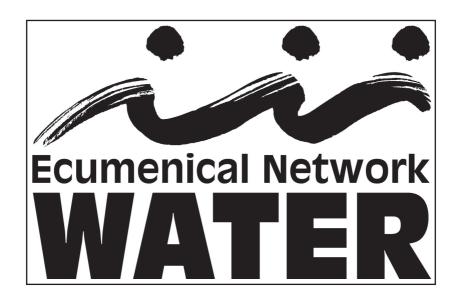


e) Participating on the basis of the fundamental convictions

in the UN Decade on Water 2005-2015 and in the efforts towards binding legal instruments for the implementation of the right to water and the protection of water as a public good at the level of the UN.

6.5 Signs of Hope

The stories at the beginning of this Living Waters brochure were originally included in this section of the document as examples for inspirational good practice of church engagement with water issues across the world. The Ecumenical Water Network provides an opportunity to share such stories of successful community based initiatives so that all participating can learn from each other, encourage each other and co-operate in a world-wide network.



Ecumenical Water Network - Africa

Water for Life

November 7-11, 2005, in Machakos/Kenya

Their commitment to work together in support of community based initiatives and for the human right to water was underlined by 75 representatives of churches, ecumenical organisations and civil society groups from 17 countries in Africa, and from six countries in Asia, Europe and Central and South America who gathered on November 7-11, 2005 in Machakos/Kenya to attend the first conference of the emerging Ecumenical Water Network.

The conference was opened by the General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Rev. Dr Mvume Dandala with a fervent call on secular and faith based organisations to focus their agenda on programs relevant to people of Africa from the perspective of local communities. Water is essential for life and a key issue in any effort to eradicate poverty. It is unacceptable for the vital needs of the poor to be neglected due to lack of resources or to be turned into a matter of profits for stockholders of private companies.

Inspired by the opening remarks of the AACC General Secretary the participants in the meeting shared their experiences with community based initiatives in their various home-countries and discussed water politics in Africa and the human right to water. Exposure visits to the Utooni Self-Help Group in the rural area close to Machakos, the Kibera informal settlement in Nairobi and a couple of other communal projects were important opportunities to engage with and learn from the local situation.

The participants resolved to stay in contact with each other and to exchange information, engage in common advocacy, and share best practices. They extended a formal invitation to the AACC and the Sub-regional ecumenical organisations in Africa to accompany them and entrusted a committee with the task to prepare for a follow-up meeting with the involvement of new partners. The committee will work on the basis of the Framework Document of the emerging Ecumenical Water Network that states fundamental convictions, the theological and ethical basis and issues for advocacy and action.



LINKS

7.1 Useful reading

Barlow, Maude and Clarke, Tony. Blue Gold: The Battle Against Corporate Theft of the World's Water. Toronto: Stoddart, 2002. Jubilee South (www.jubileesouth.org)

Shiva, Vandana, Water Wars, Cambridge: South End Press, 2002

The Blue Planet Project (www.blueplanetproject.net)

The Water Barons: http://www.publicintegrity.org/water/

United Nations: Water for People, Water for Life: http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr/table_contents.shtml

7.2 Websites of partner organisations

Brot für die Welt - water campaign http://www.menschen-recht-wasser.de/index.php

Church World Service series on water and worship materialhttp://www.churchworldservice.org/pdf_files/E&A/water2.pdf

http://www.churchworldservice.org/worship-resources/worship-water.html

Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias

http://www.clai.org.ec/programas/cambiental/cag_1.htm

Christian Conference of Asia

http://www.cca.org.hk/resources/resframe.htm

The Ecumenical Patriarchate

http://www.ec-patr.gr/ecology.php?lang=en

Conference of European Churches - European Christian Environmental Network

http://www.ecen.org/ecenhome.shtml

FinnChurchAid

http://www.kua.fi/english/front_page/?id=51

KAIROS Canada

http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/ecology/water/index.asp

Lutheran World Federation

http://lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/Focus_Areas/DWS-FA_Sustainable_Development.html

National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

http://www.nccecojustice.org/

Norwegian Church Aid

http://english.nca.no

Church of Sweden

http://www.Svenskakyrkan.se/

United Church of Canada

http://www.united-church.ca/ecology/water/

World Alliance of Reformed Churches

www.warc.ch

World Council of Churches

http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/earthdocs.html#water



