



## 9<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, 2022: “Water Security for Peace and Development”

### CI POSITION PAPER

Every three years, the World Water Council convenes an international forum to raise awareness on global water challenges. The **9<sup>th</sup> Water Forum**<sup>1</sup> to be held in Dakar, Senegal from 22-27 March 2022. The forum’s aim is to raise awareness among economic, political and social decision makers in order to trigger action; facilitate dialogue and experience sharing on efforts to improve access to water and sanitation supply and; to create an environment for cooperation in the implementation of integrated concrete responses to issues in water. **In addition**, this year’s ***World Water Day-22<sup>nd</sup> March*** is focusing on groundwater “***Making the invisible visible***”. As climate change gets worse, groundwater is becoming more and more critical.

The upcoming forum gives Caritas organizations the opportunity to **present their vision about the future of water** and on their behalf, Caritas Internationalis<sup>2</sup> would like to raise **main concerns and proposed actions** to improve water security and governance based on the Caritas experience.

Our right to water is also a duty to water. Our right to water gives rise to an inseparable duty. We are obliged to proclaim this essential human right and to defend it – as we have done – but we also need to work concretely to bring about political and juridical commitments in this regard...*Pope Francis*

## THE GLOBAL TRENDS AND STATUS OF WATER SECURITY

The global water balance is under threat and 1.1 billion People worldwide lack access to water, and 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. Inadequate sanitation is also a problem for 2.4 billion people as they are exposed to diseases, such as cholera and typhoid fever, and other water-borne illnesses<sup>3</sup>. Many of the water systems that keep ecosystems thriving and feed a growing human population are stressed. Studies show that human populations are using 10 per cent more water than is sustainable in the longer term, and the gap continues increasing with population growth, prosperity and urbanization.<sup>4</sup> Groundwater currently supplies approximately 40% of the world’s irrigated area and about 1/3 of water required for industry. At the current consumption rate, this situation will only get worse and ecosystems around the world will suffer even more. Available data on access to water suggests that the largest populations without access to water live in North Africa, the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Central America and Western regions of Latin America.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldwaterforum.org/en/forum/first-announcement>.

<sup>2</sup> The global Confederation of 162 Catholic humanitarian and development organizations operating worldwide, and mostly known as Caritas.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldwildlife.org/threats/water-scarcity>

<sup>4</sup> See UNCTAD [http://unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/ditcted2014d1\\_ch06\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/en/PublicationChapters/ditcted2014d1_ch06_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> The Caritas In Veritate Foundation Working Papers “The City Of God In The Palace Of Nations” *Water And Human Rights, A Catholic Perspective On The Human Right To Water*

In regions like Asia, the rapid economic and socio-cultural growth, the modernization and advances in industrialization, agriculture and urbanization have put the region's water security, availability and accessibility in the fore. Nearly two billion people in the Asia Pacific region have poor or limited accessibility to water, and the number is expected to reach five billion in the year 2050<sup>6</sup>. Making matters worse, the quality of existing water resources have been deteriorated, untreated water in the freshwater system as nearly 90% of the total wastewater generated in the region is mixed without adequate treatment. To further aggravate the situation, climate change induced disasters have proliferated the situation of water quality and quantity and its uncertain demand and supply situation.

In the Middle East, and more specifically the Eastern Mediterranean region, has experienced a rapid process of desertification over the last decades. Due to connected factors such as climate change, rapid population growth and industrialization, water has become increasingly scarce and expensive natural resource.<sup>7</sup> This increased scarcity has significant political and socioeconomic impacts for the entire region and the freshwater scarcity that have political implications on the area's growth and security. Over the past half century, groundwater has boosted agricultural production and underpinned agrarian transformation in large parts of the Middle East and North Africa region. Today, groundwater and its socio-economic benefits in both rural and urban areas are threatened due to pollution and overexploitation caused by indiscriminate land use and countless unregistered private wells. In this region, it has also shown how water access is used as a weapon of war between hostile states and non-state actors.

A review of current statistics indicates weaknesses in policy implementation in Africa. A 2020 report on water and sanitation indicated that in Zambia 4.8 million lived without clean water and 6.6 million did not have access to sanitation facilities<sup>8</sup>. In Kenya, 15% of the population rely on unimproved water sources while 41% of residents in the East African Nation lack access to basic sanitation facilities. In Nigeria, a UNICEF report established that over 86 per cent of Nigerians lack access to quality and safe water sources. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a large majority of the population do not have access to water and sanitation and this is a result of the political instability that the country has previously experienced.

## **WEAKNESSES OF GLOBAL FRAMEWORKS**

The **UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses**<sup>9</sup> adopted in May 1997 reconfirmed three key principles to guide the conduct of nations regarding shared watercourses: "equitable and reasonable use", the obligation to prevent significant harm to neighbors, and the obligation of cooperation. In addition, the **UN General Assembly Resolution on the Law of Transboundary Aquifers** called for cooperation among States to prevent, reduce and control pollution of shared aquifers and could offer the basis for a future binding legal instrument on transboundary aquifers. However, implementation of existing agreements still forms a challenge. In addition, water legislation and policies are still underdeveloped and weak and many treaties lack clear and tangible provisions. The implementation in most cases been hampered by

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<sup>6</sup> 5782FINAL-Background paper-Prof. Visvanathan.pdf (uncrd.or.jp)

<sup>7</sup> Ensuring Water Security in the Middle East: Policy Implications : IEMed

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nfnc.org.zm/download/water-and-sanitation-policy-brief/>

<sup>9</sup> Convention on the Law of Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (1997) (un.org)

lack of political will, inadequate water management structures and weak implementation capacities at national and regional levels.<sup>10</sup>



Source-Caritas Africa

**The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**<sup>11</sup> has significant implications for the way water is distributed, managed, used and governed. One of the Declaration's Principles is that Indigenous peoples have the right to use, own and control waters within traditional territories<sup>12</sup> this includes inherent rights to their own political and cultural on laws around water. However, implementation of the treaty has so far clearly fallen short of its

objectives. Despite the fact that the Water Framework Directive (WFD) whose aim is to enhance status of aquatic ecosystems including groundwater and promote sustainable water use, 60 per cent of European Union water bodies currently fail to meet the target of achieving at least good ecological status. From an ecological perspective, the WFD provides one of the best regulatory frameworks worldwide for the protection and sustainable use of fresh waters. However, the limited improvements to date in the ecological status of water bodies, limited policy, administrative and practical implementation at different level is an indication of major shortcomings in the implementation of the directive.

Further, in the document from the [Aqua fons vitae](#)<sup>13</sup> the Holy Father expresses concern about the slow progress with respect to the realization of the universal human right to safe drinking water and sanitation which, almost 10 years after remains merely declaratory, and not even so in certain States. He also joins the concern expressed by the United Nations about the fact that the world is not heading towards the achievement of SDG 6 (Ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all) by 2030.

## **EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES FROM CARITAS MEMBER ORGANISATIONS**

Access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water is a **right to life issue**, therefore is a central objective of many Caritas projects around the world. In Africa, Caritas organisations working on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene have a number of community-based initiatives. Under Caritas Kenya, this includes community dialogues on resource sharing; establishment of village water peace committees; implementation of projects<sup>14</sup> that promote rainwater-harvesting, provision of water tanks to education institutions and training of local communities on best practices in water sanitation and hygiene.

In Caritas Mali and Caritas Niger, projects aimed at enhancing integrated approaches to sustainable management of water resources have contributed to awareness raising on balancing water use between basic and interdependent social, economic, and ecological needs. The construction of facilities for easy access to drinking water and sanitation in rural areas and health centres has

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/>

<sup>11</sup> UNDRIP\_E\_web.pdf

<sup>12</sup> (article 26), UNDRIP\_E\_web.pdf

<sup>13</sup> Aqua fons vitae: the new Document of the Dicastery now available online - Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

<sup>14</sup> Diocesan Caritas of Wamba in DRC : Twelve water sources amid construction within communities through a humanitarian assistance project

supported the promotion of adequate WASH services. They are also implementing initiatives related to the ecologically sustainable management of water and other livelihoods that respond to the strategic and economic interests of both men and women.

Caritas member organisations in Asia region work on water focuses on **ensuring access to WASH services** and these interventions contribute to enhancing disaster preparedness and response, post-disaster recovery, livelihoods, sustainable agriculture, and climate change adaptation. **In Bangladesh**, Caritas Bangladesh WASH interventions in the refugee camps, hospitals health and nutrition centres, schools and other institutions aims to meet basic needs and improve safe access to sufficient quality and quantity water, sanitation and hygiene practice. Through the established community water management teams, the interventions have contributed to enhanced community participation in water management. **In Pakistan**, Caritas Pakistan has facilitated the formation of 64 WASH Committees in remote areas to contribute to the promotion of safe water practices. Caritas Pakistan has also been conducting radio awareness campaigns in the dioceses linking WASH and Covid -19.



Photo Courtesy: Caritas Marsabit in Northern Kenya)

All Caritas Organisations additionally participate in Policy dialogue at the national, regional and international level based on their field experiences.

## KEY MESSAGES

- **Governance:** Water is a collective good that requires good governance and the convening of multiple stakeholders. As such, **water governance** is key to advance a new pathway of development that puts the human person at the center. Above all, poor people are the most vulnerable in the face of water scarcity and good governance is key in enhancing sustainability.
- **Water security** is critical for climate resilience and mitigation. Some regions experience drought and flood as cyclical parts of their existence (e.g. Horn of Africa). Climate change is making the onset and impact of these incidents less predictable and more widespread. Therefore, there is need to be more holistic in programming and not only think about extraction, but replenishment and sustainable use of the water resources.
- **Conflict:** Water stress needs to be addressed as a means to mitigate conflict. Natural resources, including water, are at the root of many internal and cross-boundary conflicts, and the tensions in-country and between countries that share river basins may hinder sustainable development thus indirectly driving poverty, migration and social instability.
- **Collaboration:** Water is a common good that requires good governance. It is paramount for all stakeholders from the local and national Governments, civil society organizations, private companies collaborate to strengthen transparency and cooperate to support local communities to build their **capacity in sustainable** water management.

## Case from Somalia

The 2021 drought that affected more than 3.2 million people in 66 districts, of which 245,000 are internally displaced has caused the loss of livestock and agricultural production that account for more than 70% of GDP. The destruction of the main livelihoods of local communities continues to increase and this has contributed to disease outbreaks that include malaria, cholera, typhoid fever, pregnancy complications and respiratory infections, particularly tuberculosis. Exacerbated by COVID-19 and more in Galgadud region, the displaced people have water conflicts due to severe water shortages and lack of access. In addition, these conflicts are interconnected with the negative impacts of climate change and variability in Somalia and affect the most vulnerable (especially women and children) and resource-dependent communities. To address this, Caritas Somalia has been calling for the distribution of water and filling of wells to address the community conflicts through the provision of adequate sanitation and sanitation facilities and deliberate prevention of diseases related to lack of water.

## SPECIFIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is need to optimize groundwater policies to boost sustainable groundwater use. In some cases, well-intended but misinformed policies stand in the way of effective groundwater use. As such, actors should design clear policy and management interventions that support sustainable ground water use in Arid and Semi-arid regions and contrasting socio-economic and institutional contexts.
- There is need to review and revise key water legal frameworks and conventions and add a new '**water justice**' dimension to the current principles. This should be harmonized with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Consider the full spectrum of human mobility in the context of water governance and establish policy responses accordingly to address different migration dynamics. This should be coupled with the commitments of the grand bargain on humanitarian localisation through partnerships with local and national actors in facilitating access to quality and safe, water and sanitation facilities.
- There need for a clear framework that will support intergenerational dialogue to preserve knowledge and promote utilisation of indigenous knowledge in water resources management and climate change adaptation.
- Heads of State and Governments should acknowledge the contribution of Civil Society in enhancing water security and collaborate in research on water and sanitation and; use this data for planning, policy formulation and implementation.