

Report on The United Church of Canada's Global Partnership Water Survey

Introduction

In March 2004, the Water Issues Task Group of The United Church of Canada's Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit sent a Survey Questionnaire on Water Issues to 79 global partners. The survey sought to collect information and experiences from around the world related to water scarcity, water safety, commodification and privatization of water supplies, good and bad effects of dams, and organizations working locally to improve water supply and safety. The survey provides some insights into the likely future of water on our planet, whether it will remain a basic service provided at little cost to the consumer or whether it will continue to become ever more scarce, less safe, more polluted, and privatized to be sold at prices unaffordable to the poor.

Responses were received from a fairly wide cross-section of countries, represented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), churches, regional councils of churches, and so on. Areas of the world heard from were Southern Africa, Middle East, Asia, and Latin America.

Theme Responses

Water Scarcity

Respondents reported that aquifers, ponds, and water tanks are becoming increasingly depleted; women and children must walk long distances for water; pump breakdowns may be unable to be fixed; food crops may not grow; drought is frequent and although more wells are being dug, this increased usage lowers further the water levels in aquifers. Logging and deforestation contribute to rapid water runoff and soil loss.

Generally water is scarce in the country. Potable water is even more scarce with some rural communities resorting to unprotected water sources.

Christian Care, Zimbabwe

Women and children walk an average of 7 kilometres to a borehole and invariably queue for long hours before fetching water and walking back the same distance. Sometimes children miss school to help collect water for their homes.

Council of Churches, Zambia

Some communities are unable to repair and rehabilitate major breakdowns on the hand pumps, increasing the number of non-functioning water facilities.

Council of Churches, Zambia

Drought is causing

- a) critical hunger situation
- b) inadequate sources of water
- c) great distances to be covered to fetch water
- d) sharing contaminated water sources with animals
- e) increased risk of and vulnerability to water-borne diseases

People's Action Forum, Zambia

During drought season, the latter part of 2003, Lesotho was forced to buy its own water for 17 million rands a month, from South Africa; this is a controversy that confronts the people.

Christian Council of Lesotho

The Reforestation Program aims to revitalize the forests which aid the formation of underground root mats and clouds which fall as rainwater.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Congo

During the rainy season, very large amounts of water are lost; they could be recovered and held in water tanks (or wells). Well drilling and tank construction make financial demands that unfortunately are beyond the people's means.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Congo

There are communities where people are queuing [by] the public faucets just to have water for the day. Others have to wait in the evenings for the water to come out from the faucets. It is now a normal thing that people have to sleep past midnight waiting [in line] for their buckets to be filled up with water. Failing to do so would mean a waterless day for the whole family and cause multiple inconveniences.

CONTAK, Philippines

The unequal distribution of water resources between Israel and the Palestinian Territories. Control of subterranean aquifers found in the Palestinian Territories by Israel.

Middle East Council of Churches, Jerusalem

Agreements and/or negotiations have been ongoing between Israel and the Palestinian Authority on distribution of water resources and their preservation. The biggest challenge is that of drought years that also help deplete the aquifers and make the demand for water a more pressing issue. There are some who predict that the next war in the Middle East will not be fought over politics but over water.

Middle East Council of Churches, Jerusalem

The Palestinians are denied any access to underground waters in the occupied territories. In short, water is becoming an issue of national as well as regional security....Many think the next war in the Middle East will be the war on water.

World Student Christian Federation, Beirut, Lebanon

The cities require larger and larger amounts of water to supply the population. This has led to excessive drilling of wells to extract water from the subsoil and as a consequence the aquifers continue to decrease.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

The state and its institutions are not strong enough to enforce the rights of the population. In the southern coastal regions, they have taken landowners to court who have altered the course of rivers in order to irrigate their plantations. They [the landowners] did so without conducting any studies as to the environmental impact nor getting the appropriate authorization.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

The main problem which affects the majority of people living in urban areas is the lack of water service during the summer. Many of the families that live in the most populated neighbourhoods of San Salvador and the whole metropolitan area constantly suffer the lack of water in their homes (sometimes as much as 1 or 2 months).

Emmanuel Baptist Church, El Salvador

The rivers in the autonomous regions are drying up because of deforestation.

Institute for Social Development of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua (IDSIM)

Loss of 50% of the mountain ice caps in less than 30 years. The consequences are:

- Lack of water for home use in the towns and cities of the coastal area of Huaura.
- Lack of water for agriculture and ranching in the Andean area of Huaura.

Land and Sea Institute (ITM), Peru

The majority of communities and cities have systems for drinking water. But in general, the cities have water distribution systems older than 30 years and do not provide water 24 hours a day. Huacho, with more than 60,000 inhabitants is the capital of the basin, the province and the region and it only receives water 12 hours per day and in some of its regions only 3 hours per day. The poorer neighbourhoods bring in water in drums or cisterns with no guarantee of clean drinking water.

Land and Sea Institute (ITM), Peru

Water Safety

In most countries, only a minority of the population have clean, safe water. Thus the majority run the risk of water-borne diseases and mineral pollution (e.g., arsenic). Peri-urban shanty towns usually do not have safe water. Harmful chemicals may be dumped into the soil, leading to aquifer contamination. Even if regulations exist, commercial enterprises are not interested in protecting the environment and don't follow regulations. Raw sewage frequently contaminates water sources. Thus, one partner commented that "we drink water by faith. That means that even [though] we know that water is not safe for drinking, we have no choice [but] to take it because it will cost additional expenses if we want access to safe water."

Despite our government having a good program to make sure that all people can have access to clean, safe water, because of poverty this goal has not been achieved. Even in Dar Es Salaam, the biggest city in the country with over four million people, the government has failed to provide clean and safe water and thus there is always an outbreak of cholera—a water-borne disease.

Christian Council of Tanzania

Most populations especially in rural areas do not have access to safe drinking water.

Council of Churches, Zambia

Access to safe water supplies in Zambia is estimated at 89% of the population in urban areas and 37% in rural areas. In the peri-urban areas, where 50–70% of the population live, only 44% have access to safe water.

Estimated coverage for sanitation (sewage disposal) is 73% for urban areas, 68% in rural areas, while 90% in the peri-urban areas do *not* have satisfactory sanitation facilities.

Unsanitary disposal of domestic waste is leading to communicable water-borne disease such as typhoid, dysentery, and cholera. Women and children are most affected.

People's Action Forum, Zambia

The public standpipes have been closed down; this has a negative impact on the poorer households and results in sporadic outbreaks of water-borne diseases, since people resort to unprotected springs.

Christian Council of Lesotho

The Agricultural Extension Centre, through its seminars, is trying to alert people to the need for safe drinking water to avoid water-borne diseases. Water analyses are sometimes made at the Free University of Luozi, and recommendations made.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Congo

Many of the country's rivers are biologically dead, due to mining, pollution from industrial and domestic waste, siltation and sedimentation due to erosion which is brought about by forest denudation.

National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP)

Water as a gift of life is not accessible to most people who live under poverty. We drink water by faith. That means even [though] we know that water is not safe for drinking we have no choice [but] to take it because it will cost us additional expenses if we want to access safe water.

CONTAK, Philippines

Arsenic is a problem in major parts of Bangladesh, West Bengal in India, and some parts of Cambodia, creating alarming health hazards. This is due to lifting underground water by installing deep tube wells.

Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Thailand (South and Southeast Asia)

In Lebanon the access to clean and safe water is not made available to all. The water pipes are old and often infested by sewage because their [sewage] pipes run in parallel and close to drinking water [pipes].

World Student Christian Federation, Beirut, Lebanon

The suburban settlements grow in numbers and size along with the difficulty of managing the environment, the ever-growing abundance of trash, inorganic waste, and [lack of] clean water. All of this translates into the contamination of the rivers [into which] industrial waste and domestic solids and liquids also empty.

Only those who live in the residential areas of big cities have access to potable water. Meanwhile, the population in the marginalized areas lack water or consume poor quality water. The small populations and rural areas use non-potable water and the majority of the villagers have to walk many kilometres to get the precious liquid.

Water contamination due to liquid waste contributes to the problem of environment clean-up. Illnesses related to water quality are the main causes of sickness and mortality. In 1993 the mortality due to diarrhea related illnesses was 1,144 for every 100,000 inhabitants, along with illnesses such as cholera, hepatitis, and other intestinal infections.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

The country has serious problems with providing potable water to all the inhabitants. A good percentage of the rural population has no access to potable water or it is very limited.

Definitely, one of the main problems in our country is the contamination of natural water sources. In effect, there have been numerous initiatives from diverse organizations in order to promote the protection of the rivers and water springs. However, only private businesses have the financial resources to keep control of the rivers and aquifers. Legislation that would favour conservation of this kind of resource does not exist, without the participation of the largest private businesses.

Emmanuel Baptist Church, El Salvador

In the Cabanas district, mining is about to begin in a 129-square-kilometre mining zone. The metals to be mined are gold, silver, amongst others. This project will soon contaminate the minor rivers of the Copinolapa and Titihuapa, which flow into the Rio Lempa. This is the primary water resource in El Salvador.

The Lempa river is the primary supplier of water to the city of San Salvador and is contaminated due to factories dumping industrial waters as well as raw sewage being dumped. Research done by the University of Central America, by Jose Simeon Canas, has found high concentrations of arsenic, pesticides, lead, mercury, etc.

Association of Social and Economic Development (ADES), El Salvador

Industries, brought in by the central state through the granting of concessions, are using harmful chemical products that are disposed of in the soil and underground aquifers. In addition, the current bidding over oil and titanium concessions threatens the environment since the Nicaraguan state is not interested in protecting it nor do they want to follow the regulations that have been created around this issue.

Institute for Social Development of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua (IDSIM)

Contamination:

- Due to mineral washings in the Andean area.
- Due to fecal matter, particularly from the rural populations of the coastal area of the Huaura zone.
- Due to raw sewage (drainage from cities).
- From underground water containing nitrates and nitrites, resulting from poor management and use of organic fertilizers.
- Salinity of soil particularly in the coastal area.

Land and Sea Institute (ITM), Peru

Commodification and Privatization

People, especially in the cities, have to pay for water from which companies make high profits. Rural dwellers and small communities are unlikely to receive water—as a service or as a commodity. In large cities, water is supplied as a commodity to those who can pay relatively high prices for water. Bottled water, often imported, is increasingly used but is not always safe and the poorly bio-degradable plastic

containers exacerbate pollution. Trade liberalization prescribed by the IMF and World Bank means that water services are frequently owned by multinational corporations.

In Nicaragua, a water law to privatize rivers in the Eastern Coastal Autonomous Regions has been passed by the state government. This threatens the lives and culture of half a million Indigenous people and could lead to military-style defence of the territory and its ecology. A similar water law was successfully defended against in Peru by organized farmers, but is now being circumvented by allowing concessions, which can be obtained by foreign companies.

Water has become a commodity especially in urban and peri-urban areas; even the vulnerable people have to pay for water.

In most cases these people do not have water flowing in their homes (kitchens and washrooms), they queue for shared taps for long hours but still, they make a monthly payment to local Community Care offices for Water Development.

In Zambia, water is being managed under the Ministry of Energy and Water Development. However, there are private organizations that work hand in hand with the Ministry of Energy and Water Development as they provide water. Water is basically sold as a commercial product and companies make profits out of it.

Council of Churches of Zambia

Some agreements have required the commercializing of Water Supply and Sanitation Services in peri- and urban areas. This clearly puts rural areas in the shadows, second-in-line for service provision.

People's Action Forum, Zambia

Yes, water has become a commodity. Governments collect taxes from Water Authorities at the expense of the poor and the marginalized.

Christian Council of Lesotho

Water has effectively become a commodity....The distribution of running water in urban centres and large cities is a monopoly held by Regidoso. It distributes water to its clients, who are bound by fixed rules. Thus the poor generally do not have access to running water....In the city of Luozi, where there are several pumps (suction and pressure), there are committees who run these pumps. Small subscriptions are levied for the upkeep of the equipment.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Congo

Water services are privatized and are in the hands of two major companies run by the country's wealthiest....Consumers are charged exorbitant rates for what is supposed to be a natural resource that should be harnessed by the government and distributed to the people as a form of service.

[There is a] proliferation of water bottling companies especially in urban centres. Gone are the days when one [could] get a drink of water from a faucet, largely due to possible contamination. An urban poor community in Tondo, Manila, experienced an outbreak of cholera due to the contamination of a supposedly safe water distribution system of a private company....

The commodification of water is very much an issue in the Philippines and it is exacerbated by globalization which is expressed in the country as privatization, deregulation, and liberalization. Water services are privatized and owned by companies with multinational shares; this became possible [because] government services are deregulated. Imported bottled water also proliferates in the country because of trade liberalization. These policies of globalization are prescriptions of the IMF-WB.

National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP)

World Bank and IMF's structural adjustment, withdrawal of subsidy from social sectors are to be blamed for making water a commodity, high rise building, centralization of urban-based development, golf courses are part of the problem of diverting water from essential consumption. Business corporations, particularly [those] who are controlling water resources,

and government decides the priority. But at local levels elite and corrupt government officials collaborate.

Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Thailand (South and Southeast Asia)

The privatization of the water is an additional burden to Filipino people. Ideally water is a basic service which government should provide for the people. However, by privatizing the water service it will only lead now to denial of the basic and social services people deserve. The private companies will only think how to profit from the people. Public places, government universities, schools, hospitals, establishments, municipal halls, and even private establishments have little or no water in their toilets. One would conclude that water is like pure gold, so hard to get.

CONTAK, Philippines

In Israel and Palestine, water is a public domain and hence autonomous public institutions, such as the Water Authority, control the resources and distribution of water. However, those privileged in the population may receive a privileged position as to ability to pay for water used.

Middle East Council of Churches, Jerusalem

Clean water is becoming a commodity and is subject to the market prices. The lack of strict regulations that monitor the quality of drinking water versus the price makes it open to abuse and monopoly of local and international markets.

World Student Christian Federation, Beirut, Lebanon

In Guatemala and Central America, the tendency to convert water into a consumer good continues. Community water is becoming contaminated and therefore less useful. Running water is being privatized and not only arrives to housing areas in precarious forms but at a high cost.

“The municipal governments decide on the distribution of water. However, in the big cities, where the interests of the owners of the capital prevail, they are not interested in the well-being of the community but rather in the accumulation of wealth. There are still water-rich zones in the country where struggles have started between several sectors—on one hand are community residents, on another side are the tourist businesses and on another are the water distributing businesses. Water has stopped being a social good and has become a consumer good.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

In our country, water has become a consumer good for several years, while at the same time a large part of the population (mainly the people who live in the rural area) have no access to drinking water. Purified bottled water has been sold for at least 15 years. It is well known to all Salvadorans that the water we get in our homes is not fit for human consumption (nor for drinking or cooking).

At the very least, in our country we know that water is marketed by large businesses or imported from neighbouring countries (Guatemala or Honduras). In spite of the existence of the National Administration for Aqueducts and Sewers (ANDA) in the country, it does not respond to the demand of ensuring water for all citizens. There are no policies that defend the resource of water.

Emmanuel Baptist Church, El Salvador

There is an accelerated privatization process of hydro resources. New companies appear daily, selling bottled water; ARENA's new government plans focus on the privatization of the state water company.

Transnational companies are in control. They are backed by the WTO as well as national economic elite groups and are making decisions in close co-operation with one another.

Association of Social and Economic Development (ADES), El Salvador

The new water law is a state initiative privatizing water, especially around the Atlantic Coast within the Autonomous Region where water is an abundant resource but in rapid process of destruction. Until now, this has not been an object of great commercial importance, but more of

an assumed service of potable water that the state inefficiently and unevenly provides for the population of Nicaragua.

Currently a water law is coming out in order to privatize the rivers of the Autonomous Region. This is a disturbing move, with regard to the culture and values of the approximately 500,000 Indigenous people scattered around 50% of Nicaraguan territory. It is seen as a threat against their traditional form of life and could potentially call for a military defence based on their ecological vision (the vision of the interrelation of nature).

Institute for Social Development of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua (IDSIM)

Two years ago the government attempted to announce the new "water law," allowing the privatization of water for home and agricultural use. It didn't go anywhere when faced with the massive rejection of the organized farmers in their Committees of Users of Irrigation Districts. Today, they want to put forth another law, which does not mention privatization, but rather concessions...for 30 years!! Concessions can be given to foreign companies. Water is now a big business and the large transnationals in mining, agribusiness, and beverages wish to take possession of this resource which belongs to everyone.

Land and Sea Institute (ITM), Peru

Dams

In some areas, notably southern Africa, dams are mainly regarded as useful, providing water for agriculture and animals as well as for humans. These dams are often relatively small. Very large dams are usually built to generate electricity and often cause extensive permanent flooding, driving many farmers from their land. New dam projects will flood several communities along the Lempa River in both Honduras and El Salvador. Electrical and mining companies may employ armed men to drive away the farmers and other inhabitants of the land to be flooded or scarred. Community leaders who resist these activities may risk assassination. Heavy water-using crops such as rice and sugar cane may also use dam water.

The dams have had positive results on food security and livelihoods as families engage in irrigation schemes. Jobs are created at the schemes. Some dams have been protested by families who had to be relocated to pave the way for their construction. Christian Care constructed many [small] dams throughout the country.

Christian Care, Zimbabwe

There are [a] few dams built for the purpose of harnessing electricity and for drinking purposes. There has been no protest and we wish that more dams for different purposes be built.

Christian Council of Tanzania

Mostly, [local?] dams have been constructed for providing water for animals. However, dams also provide water for washing, bathing, gardening and for fish farming. Dams have had a lot of positive impact on local populations.

Council of Churches, Zambia

The Kariba Dam created Lake Kariba, one of the largest man-made lakes in the world. This project entailed the total displacement of the local people to make way for the dam, affecting their livelihood through loss of their traditional lands and economic patterns.

Significant protests were heard from the traditional leaders, a generation later. They expressed great displeasure to the fact that despite the Kariba Dam and Lake becoming a tourist attraction, the Indigenous people have seen no significant improvement to their lives and incomes. [On the other hand], much income has been realized through the generation and export of electricity to neighbouring countries.

People's Action Forum, Zambia

Lesotho has embarked on a mammoth project of Lesotho Highlands Water Scheme. The purpose of the huge dams built in the country is to sell water to our neighbours. People have

been removed from their homes to new settlements, where they face problems of loss of agricultural land and suffer many other atrocities connected with uprootedness.

Christian Council of Lesotho

Not a single important dam has been built in the area around Luozi. The Inga Dam, built downstream from Luozi, has no impact on the people of the Luozi area. If dams could be constructed it would be more to provide electricity than to make reservoirs of water. The region is not short of water.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Congo

Construction of mega-dams entails the charging of costs of said construction to the consumers, like the San Roque Mega Dam Project which amounted to millions of pesos. The costs are shouldered by consumers for electric services through the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The construction of dams also displaced a number of communities and affected the water system of farmlands. Ironically, several communities near the dams do not have electrical services.

The NCCP's involvement on the issue of dams dates to the time of Marcos during the early eighties when it was involved in the campaign against the Chico River Dam Project. The campaign...was instrumental in uniting Indigenous peoples of the Cordillera region.

National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP)

Dam-displaced people who are living down stream from the dam may become deprived of water. Some examples:

a) Kaptai Dam in Bangladesh displaces tribal people, Pakmoon dam in Thailand deprived a fishing community.

b) Farrakka Dam on the Ganges in India created drought in the northern part of Bangladesh.

Now China is planning a big dam on the upstream side of Mekong which will create problems in Mekong area.

Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Thailand (South and Southeast Asia)

Lebanon people are protesting because no dams are built in Lebanon. Lebanon is a very rich country in water but most of the water goes to the sea or causes flooding that destroys planted areas.

Now there is ongoing dam construction in the Shabrouth area and it is welcomed by the people. There is a need for more dams in this country.

World Student Christian Federation, Beirut, Lebanon

[In Guatemala] the case with the largest impact is the dam built on the Usumacinta river along the Mexican border. The argument is that it will generate energy for Mexico and Central America. This very large dam will flood many hectares in the Peten zone affecting communities and modifying the ecosystem. Actions have been taken by civil society to stop this project.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

The impacts have been disastrous. For example, the Cerron Grande dam built at the beginning of the 70s, between the municipalities of Cuscatlan, Chalatenango, San Salvador, and Cabanas, displaced agricultural producers because their properties were flooded. This became a factor in the consciousness-raising of peasant farmers, which in turn made up the FMLN.

The Salvadoran government proposes to build at least two big hydroelectric projects in the Rio Lempa riverbed. This latest project will flood several Honduran communities, resulting in the same on the Salvadoran side. The Salvadoran government...is working on a dam...on the River Torola. The inhabitants of this municipality have denounced the constant threats by armed men of the electrical company, not to mention the company assassinating one of the most outspoken community leaders against the building of the dam.

Association of Social and Economic Development (ADES), El Salvador

Between the 1930s and 1980s there were hydroelectric companies in the coffee growing zones where they endanger the regions due to clearing forests....It is important to note that in many cases the interest has been the industrial exploitation of water by sugar cane companies

[Malacatoya region], rice companies, or electrical industries that belonged to the state. However, the requirements for the preservation of the natural environment have not been consistent. The construction was done at a time when little was known of the potential damage and there was no opposition to them and [they were] seen only as a benefit. For example, in the Autonomous Region were the Voz and the Maininco companies and the mining triangle in Siuna, they created business ventures and economic boom in the area but at the cost of contaminating water with cyanide. The destruction of their energy source at the Salto Alto dam left thousands unemployed and displaced into the agriculture sector, then subject to abandonment by the state when the company left.

Institute for Social Development of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua (IDSIM)

Groups Involved in Conventional Water Activities

Conventional water activities include digging wells, drilling boreholes to aquifers, constructing water tanks, installing pumps for water, and building aqueducts and water distribution systems. Some of these are undertaken as community projects to produce low-cost water for small- and medium-sized communities. Others are commercial ventures that charge high prices to a relatively wealthy clientele in large cities. In Peru, organized farmers (mostly small farmers) belonging to committees of users of irrigation projects have experienced attempts to disorganize and corrupt them, including purchasing of votes. Improved canals are being co-financed with farmers' labour but the canals remain fully owned by the state.

In the cities, water and drainage are financed by government programs but smaller municipalities are providing water and drainage through international funding (which will inevitably be through private water companies and concessions owned internationally). Of the survey respondents, only the Centre Vulgarisation Agricole of Kinshasa credits an official agency for providing safe water.

There are programs country-wide trying to improve supply and quality but still much to be done. The organizations with which I operate (ALoz and Linkage Trust) promote use of clean water and boost how to achieve it—but we have no financial resources for acquiring it, digging, etc.
Adult Literacy Organization, Zimbabwe

Government programs [for clean and safe water] cover cities, towns, and big villages. Many people living in small villages are sometimes if not always forgotten.
Christian Council, Tanzania

Government, UN organizations, donors through funding, churches, NGOs including most of the other development organizations and indeed, local communities all work on conventional water projects. Water sites are identified using water experts who work in consultation with communities in order to maximize community benefit.”
Council of Churches, Zambia

- PLAN International—boreholes, water and sanitation health education.
 - Ministry of Health—facilitation of WASHE workshops (Water, Sanitation and Health Education)
 - People's Action Forum (PAF)—holding WASHE workshops; teaching good hygiene practices; rehabilitation of existing water points; training of pump menders
 - UNICEF—embarking on a program of drilling boreholes all over the country.
- People's Action Forum, Zambia*

Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP); Christian Council of Lesotho (CCL) project at “Ha Sekake”; Government Village Water Supply Branch; private organizations and agencies
Christian Council of Lesotho

The distribution of running water in the city of Luozi is guaranteed by Regidoso [a water company]; construction of water tanks and the drilling of wells are specific projects realized with foreign financing. In Luozi, there are several pumps, [and] there are committees who run these pumps. Small subscriptions are levied for upkeep of the equipment.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Kinshasa, Congo

Not much knowledge of conventional projects, but note Negros Island Project [below].

The NCCP has released statements regarding the privatization of water services and also on other environmental issues like mining and how it exacerbates air and water pollution. The NCCP is also a convener of the Philippine Water for the People Network, a compendium of people's organizations, NGOs, and environmentalists campaigning against privatization of water services and the degradation of the environment which affects the country's water resources. This network released a primer on the issue of the exorbitant rates of the water services of Maynilard. NCCP was also very active in advocacy and lobbying efforts against the San Roque Water Dam Project. It also coordinated the DanChurchAid (DCA) water project on the island of Negros for a water system for a peasant community.

The NCCP sponsored an Environmental Investigative Mission (EIM) last year on the extent of pollution brought about by Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company to communities and the life support systems of the Abra River since 1963. The results of this mission were instrumental in the formation of an advocates' network called Save the Abra River Movement (STARM).

National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP)

UNICEF in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia. A large number of NGOS have done small-scale projects for drinking water.

Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), Thailand (South and Southeast Asia)

An open market. There are no specified groups....Individuals as well as private companies are operational.

World Student Christian Federation, Beirut, Lebanon

Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, Middle East Council of Churches; the Hydrology Group; Jerusalem Water Undertaking

Middle East Council of Churches, Jerusalem

Social funds are invested through participation of communities, municipalities, and government, acting through the Social Investment Fund, the Indigenous Development Fund, and others. The distribution of water in some rural areas is entrusted to community groups when this service does not generate profit. The urban areas have been infiltrated by private businesses, who administer the water for profit.

In terms of well construction and water distribution at the commercial level, the most well known businesses are Daho Wells, Persidep, and the bottling and water distribution brand name "Salvavidas," as well as many other new and upcoming businesses.

In the case of the Capital, Guatemala City, the municipal water business, EMPAGUA, is designing a mega-project that will naturally give concessions to big business, to build a national aqueduct that will take water from Alto Motagua, from the high plains in order to increase the amount of available water for use in the city. The problem is the effects this will have on the communities of the high plains, the majority of whom are Indigenous.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

ANDA (National Administration for Aqueducts and Sewers) [is] those responsible for the total administration of water. There are other isolated efforts by water committees and by municipalities to provide water to the rural communities of the country. There also NGOs and institutions like the church which support and strengthen the work of the communities and leaders in order that they manage and distribute water to all Salvadorans.

Emmanuel Baptist Church, El Salvador

The Autonomous Regional Government is building wells and the mayor's office of Waspam, Puerto Cabezas, Prinzapolka, Rama, the majority being Indigenous, are responsible for the

construction of wells and water distribution. However, surprisingly enough, there is no severe damage.

Institute for Social Development of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua (IDSIM)

At the rural level we are experiencing an attempt to disorganize and corrupt the Committees of Users of Irrigation Districts, the most powerful institutions in the countryside, and for the most part made up of small farmers. But thanks to the new legislation, they are excluded by area of their lands (5+ ha), their education (secondary), and their age (over 25)....

Through the Irrigation Sub-sector Program (PSI), the canals and water capitation system are being modernized. The work is co-financed with farmers' labour, but the legal owner is the state and not the farmers. The conditions to sell water and the now modernized irrigation infrastructure are thereby created with the money and effort of the farmers, to benefit those they believe to be the next owners with water concessions.

At the city level, the municipality is working on water and drainage channels through government financed programs, *A Trabajar Urbano*, *A Trabajar Rural*, *Foncodes*. The municipal districts, which do not benefit from these programs, are creating water and/or drainage channel projects on their own, financed by international funding agencies.

Land and Sea Institute (ITM), Peru

Other Comments

Inadequate water supply and sanitation in poor urban areas leads to annual outbreaks of water-borne diseases during the rain season. Agriculture that relies on rain is prone to crop failure in "dry" years. Skills are being provided for sustainable water management, sanitation, and hygiene. As one partner comments, "A precious gift of God to all though [water] is, it is now a commodity and by all practical realities is no longer a right to be freely expected and received."

Availability and equal access to water for all members of society pose challenges, for example in Lesotho. Where safe water is being made too expensive for the poor, water-borne diseases become a constant threat.

All NGOs believe there should be safe water for everyone. While small, safe water projects are important, partners remind us of the bigger picture and further expose the system for making water a commodity rather than a service to all. In the Middle East, there is need to develop a comprehensive policy on the water issue.

In Nicaragua, the Autonomous Regions, previously a paradise, are becoming a desert. NGOs and social and religious organizations in Guatemala are bringing the water issue into the national debate, applying the arguments of citizens' rights to water and its uses, deforestation and water treatment, recycling and sharing of rain water. The least favoured regarding access to quality water are the Indigenous and rural populations of Guatemala.

El Salvador is the second most deforested country in Latin America. Only 3 percent of the land is covered by forest mass. This is largely due to absence of a national policy to protect natural resources. The situation diminishes water levels in aquifers and the flow of water in rivers, and increases heat and dryness causing fires.

Poor water supply and sanitation services in poor urban areas have been the cause of annual outbreaks of water-borne diseases during the rain season, which not only puts a heavy economic burden on the already impoverished communities, but also strains the public health services. Poor operation and maintenance of urban and rural water supply facilities not only restricts services to a small number of consumers, but also leads to relatively high water charges for the urban poor.

In the rural areas where the communities rely on rain-fed agriculture, failure of the rain season is invariably followed by crop failures and decrease in livestock herds, and results in unaffordable food prices and starvation....

Commercialized water service entities are faced with 'operational difficulties' such as lack of working capital that make them unable to expand service into the unserved areas.

Safe drinking water supply and good sanitation are essential to life. As suggested by statistics, the water and sanitation situation in Zambia's rural and peri-urban areas has not reached acceptable levels of coverage and efficiency of operation. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to the resulting water-borne diseases.

There is a moral, God-given, obligation on all of us to improve water supply, sanitation and hygiene standards to reduce morbidity, mortality and hence poverty, in these vulnerable communities.

The purpose of PAFs hence has been to provide skills for sustainable water management, sanitation and hygiene education to the communities of Nega Nega, Mazabuka District.

Water is undoubtedly a resource whose lack leads to untold suffering to so many, the poor always being the worst affected. A precious gift of God to all though it is, it is now a commodity and by all practical realities is no longer a right to be freely expected and received.

From the "Zambia Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2002-2004"

Quoted by People's Action Forum (PAF), Nega Nega, Zambia

Issues concerning availability and equal access [to] water to all members of society pose challenges in Lesotho. It means that the poor will always suffer from water-borne diseases and further confront problems of access to health facilities which are equally expensive. The worst hit are the women and children. The Christian Council of Lesotho, fulfilling its mission statement "to be the voice of the voiceless, the poor and the marginalized" ...is playing its advocacy role to expose all ills that confront the local communities.

Christian Council of Lesotho

We have a saying: Water is life. This vital product should be available to everyone. So, to reduce the distances that have to be covered in the search for water, consideration should be given to drilling wells wherever possible, to install pumps (suction and pressure)...The work of finding water is often done by women or children. This burden should be lightened.

Centre Vulgarisation Agricole, Congo

I hope and pray that your efforts [will] be able to create a significant contribution in calling the attention of the peoples of the world [to] the seriousness of monopolizing the water services by private corporations through the connivance of governments....

We can look into the repealing of laws and an immediate call to make water a service [rather] than an opportunity for business to profit.

CONTAK, Philippines

Water is such an important resource. The Holy Land and the Middle East region in general is one of those regions less fortunate in this resource. Accordingly, there is need to develop a comprehensive policy on the water issue that would consider all the components from the international to the local. Any attempt in this direction would be welcome and we are ready to participate in this effort.

Middle East Council of Churches, Jerusalem

The two Autonomous Regions on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast and other areas with Indigenous populations are territories where people work in the forests that have a high level of biodiversity and abundant rivers. But these areas are also the object of agricultural migration. Nor is there state commitment for bio-ecological preservation. Conditions for mega-projects such as the trans-isthmus channel, and the oil and titanium concessions, have been discussed and resolved without the consent of the inhabitants. The Indigenous people have not consented to this development. The major impact is deforestation or systematic desertification of all the headwaters, as well agrochemical, industrial, and human contamination. This leads to the destruction of more than three-quarters of the territory and forests of the Autonomous Regions and Rio San Juan, known historically as the Moskitia. This paradise is becoming a desert due to a structurally backward state.

Institute for Social Development of the Moravian Church in Nicaragua (IDSIM)

In Guatemala, the NGOs and social and religious organizations of service, with the support of external co-operation, are placing the issue of water into the national debate. They are doing this from the perspective of citizens' rights to access of water and its uses, as well as an integral focus having to do with the protection of the environment and more specifically, of the water basins.

The issue of water is a central theme that is being undertaken through consciousness-raising of water treatment, recycling, and rainwater capitation. This is being done from the point of view and with the contribution of the communities in situations of extreme poverty as can be seen in the villages and municipalities of the Zacapa and Chiquimula in the eastern parts of the country, and in the deforested municipalities such as Totonicapan and Huehuetenango.

Lastly, the exclusion and cultural discrimination that is present in the development indicators related to water should be highlighted. In the statistics regarding access to quality water in Guatemala, the least favoured and those who suffer the consequences of poor quality of life are the Indigenous and rural populations of the country.

Conference of Evangelical Churches in Guatemala (CIEDEG)

El Salvador is the second most deforested country in Latin America. Only 3 percent of its territory is covered by forest mass. This situation is largely due to the absence of a national policy to protect natural resources.

This situation, together with 1) the accelerated growth of the population who primarily consume firewood as a source of energy 2) the use of wood for commercial purposes and 3) the felling of forests for urban settlements, has caused an alarming state of deterioration. The situation daily diminishes the water level of the aquifers, the flow of the rivers; the increase of heat causes fires in the few areas with vegetation.

Of all the national territory, the Eastern zone is the most affected by environment degradation. This is reflected [in] continued droughts, floods, forest fires, and sterile soil due to high levels of erosion.

Emmanuel Baptist Church, El Salvador

I hope that you will not be scared off because this is truly a mess and we are moving toward a catastrophe. It is beyond a doubt that this is the fruit of capitalist development on which El Salvador is dependent."

Association of Social and Economic Development (ADES), El Salvador

Churches in general speak of the Reign, but do nothing to fulfill their stewardship. And few fulfill their prophetic role by denouncing the contamination of water, the exclusion of the poor's rights to this resource which belongs to all humanity.

In the International Forums much is said about defending water, but...it is industrialized countries from the North that do not comply with the agreement and the authorities from the South keep quiet or repress those who protest.

Peru has 5 percent of the world's fresh water reserves but in 25 years Peru's coasts will suffer a situation of permanent drought, and more than 40 percent of Peru's population live there. Because of this, the issue of water is a top priority for us.

At ITM we firmly believe that water guarantees life; to defend and protect water and humanity's right to clean and sufficient water to live with dignity is a struggle/fight for life.

Land and Sea Institute (ITM), Peru

Conclusion

Water is rapidly becoming a critical issue. Sources of fresh, safe water are being increasingly depleted. Commodification of water by commercial interests, backed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, has been uniformly disastrous for the poor and must be stopped. The profit motive drives these ventures, leaving the poor to face water scarcity and pollution. Dams and mining scar and deforest the land as well as polluting the water chemically and driving inhabitants off the land, often through force and even through the assassination of leaders. Canada's mining operations are fully involved in these practices, even if it is commercial partners from the "host" country who do most of the "dirty work." We need to publicize and bring shame to such practices.

Methodology

In March 2004, a questionnaire was sent out to 79 of approximately 150 global partner organizations of The United Church of Canada. This report is compiled from 17 responses received. The questionnaire was sent out once only and the response rate was about 20 percent. However, the responders came from a fairly wide cross-section of countries, represented by NGOs, churches, regional councils of churches, and so on. Some respondents gave replies representing a large area (e.g., AMAN representing Southeast Asia). Areas of the world heard from were Southern Africa, 7 replies; Middle East, 2; Asia, 3; Latin America, 5.

There are a number of possible weaknesses in this survey:

1. The sample size is small so that quantitative handling of the data is not possible.
2. Respondents did not always answer all the questions, but the major themes were almost always commented upon.
3. Communities represented are very diverse in size and nature. One reply gave information about much of Southeast Asia while others were quite local. One organization was an adult literacy organization that was involved in water education.
4. Some replies were obviously affected by local political and security situations that were causing water supply problems.

Despite these imperfections, the comments provided graphic narratives of, in particular, the many inter-relationships between water and poverty and how present trends are exacerbating the problems.

Summary prepared by John McKenzie, a member of the Task Group on Water Issues of the Justice, Global and Ecumenical Relations Unit of The United Church of Canada in conjunction with Gary Kenny, Southern Africa Area Secretary, The United Church of Canada.