



The Right to Water and Sanitation: A Practical Guide



Franciscans International
A voice at the United Nations

**INTERNATIONAL
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SERVICE**



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Authors – Jean-Benoit Charrin, Francesca Restifo, Andres Zaragoza, Gabriella Wass, et Evie Francq

Contributors - Julie Aubriot, Hélène Boussard, Odile Coirier, Vivien Deloge, Morse Flores, Markus Heinz, Peter Illig, Silvia Palomba, Enkeleda Papa, Renaud de Villaine.

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19 March 2013. Abu Shouk: Ms. Kariya Mohamed Abbakar, a 50 year old woman from Jebel Saiey, North Darfur, gives water to drink to her granddaughter Amina Abdala (2) in their shelter in the Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced persons.

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Translation - Requests for permission to reproduce the guide in its entirety or for translations should be addressed to:

International Advocacy Director

Franciscans International

37-39 Rue de Vermont

1211 Geneva

Switzerland

Web: www.franciscansinternational.org

Email: geneva@fiop.org

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A KEY TO READING THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to raise awareness on the importance of the right to water and sanitation. It is addressed to those who work at the grassroots, and aims at helping them with practical ways to address the challenges of poverty and water issues.

The guide adopts a bottom-up approach to highlight the steps that citizens and communities can take together with governments to address water and sanitation challenges.

The following guide was originally authored by the Franciscans and WaterLex, who have generously given permission to IPIS Research to adapt it for interactive workshops run in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda in February 2013. It is available in both French and English.

Section 1 gives an outline of legal basis of the right to water at the international level. Section 2 gives an overview on water and sanitation challenges faced by the poor and most vulnerable groups in society. Section 3 explains the role and responsibilities of governments with respect to the right to water and sanitation. Section 4 explains how national concerns can be brought up at the international level. Lastly, Section 5 shows how to bring local concerns forward at the national level and Section 6 presents different methods of advocacy.

How to use this guide

This guide is a brief introduction to the issue of water and sanitation and highlights key challenges and needs. It is structured in six sections, which set out main objectives and concerns. Throughout the guide, there are boxes that raise thought-provoking questions which can be answered while reading. At the end of each section, a box highlights the key points.



Picture Credit : UN Photo/Ray Witlin

SECTION 1 - THE LEGAL BASIS OF THE RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION

On 28 July 2010, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution that “recognise[d] the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a **human right** that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.”¹ In September of the same year, the Human Rights Council reaffirmed this right, and called upon States to fully implement it.²

The right to water is recognised under article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees the right to an adequate standard of living. This includes essential needs such as adequate food, clothing, housing and **water**. The UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights further specified what the right to water and sanitation actually entails in practice in General Comment No. 15:

*“Water is a limited natural resource and a public good fundamental for life and health. The human right to water is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity. It is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights.”*³

*“The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses. An adequate amount of safe water is necessary to prevent death from dehydration, to reduce the risk of water-related disease and to provide for consumption, cooking, personal and domestic hygienic requirements.”*⁴

SECTION 2 - WATER AND SANITATION CHALLENGES

Objective

This section provides an overview of the current local challenges related to the right to water and sanitation.

One in ten human beings do not have access to safe drinking water worldwide. This number includes women and children, who are particularly vulnerable to water-related diseases.

Improving access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation services for the poorest and most vulnerable groups is a major challenge, which requires commitment from every group of society.

One major misconception about today’s water crisis is that it is due to lack of water as a resource and lack of infrastructure. In fact, it is a problem of governmental mismanagement, and more broadly a problem of governance in general. This mismanagement stems from a lack of transparency, a lack of community participation in decision-making, and the fact that decision makers are not required to be accountable to their public for decisions made about access to water and sanitation.

The global water crisis can be adequately faced and prevented if:

¹ UNGA Res 64/292 (28 July 2010) UN Doc A/RES/64/292, 2 [1].

² UNHRC 15/L.14 (24 September 2010) UN Doc A/HRC/15/L.14

³ UNHRC ‘General Comment 15’ in ‘Note by the Secretariat, Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies’ (2008) UN Doc HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 [1].

⁴ *ibid* [2].

- States' available financial resources - both generally, and those accumulated by selling water rights - are effectively spent;
- Resources are spent in a transparent manner;
- Adequate monitoring of the spending of financial resources is in place.
- Effective and adequate access to recourse is available, should mismanagement of financial resources occur;
- Affected communities participate in decision-making and implementation.

2.1 THE NEED TO ENSURE GOOD WATER QUALITY

A lack of access to safe drinking water and low development are closely interlinked. For example, should a children fall sick due to poor quality of the water they drink, they would often be unable to attend school. Every time the child would have to stay home from school, parents would have to spend their (limited) financial resources on medication instead of other important goods such as learning materials.

Unsafe water stems from a number of problems. Below, we will look at two major factors: a lack of protection at the water point, and human pollution.

2.1.1 LACK OF PROTECTION OF THE WATER POINT

A major cause of unsafe water is the absence of protection at a water point. A water point is 'unprotected' when the water is directly in contact with contaminants such as animal defecation or environmental pollution.

In rural areas, good ways to protect a water point would include putting a tap over the well; using a bucket that is used only to take water from the well; or raising a barrier around the water point to prevent animals from entering the area. Beyond these initial good practices, de- contamination and purification of water are frequently required. In rural areas, contamination can often be due to the use of agricultural pesticides, which travel through farms and penetrate into ground water, thereby polluting it. In urban areas, the major source of contamination is human waste. Whilst human waste can be taken out of the water by using chlorine, more complex technologies are needed to destroy pesticides.

Questions:

- 1) What do the water points look like in your community area?
- 2) Do people have access to:
 - Piped water system?
 - Water pump?
 - Hand-dug well?
 - Open source (lakes, ponds, rivers or streams)?



2.1.2 HUMAN POLLUTION

Humans often cause water pollution. It is therefore important to know which activities lead to water pollution. The above mentioned impacts of agricultural pesticides, can also be caused by urban runoff. Likewise, wastewater discharges and industrial wastewater can seriously pollute the water that people depend on to survive.

Other actions, more closely related to individual human habits, can also render water unclean. These include bad hygiene habits, inadequate water storage and lack of hand washing (before cooking or eating) are the major causes of water-related diseases. In several regions these bad hygiene practices are directly connected to the lack of sanitation infrastructure. In many countries, children fall sick because they play outside, including in areas where the common practice is open defecation.

2.2 THE NEED TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT WATER QUANTITY

Too many populations face the challenge of water shortage, wherein water is not provided in sufficient quantities to cover the population's basic drinking needs. This seriously affects the lives of communities, especially in respect to children, who suffer, often fatally, from a limited supply of water and thus dehydration.

The World Health Organisation estimates that a minimum of 7.5 litres of water per capita per day will meet the requirements of most people under most conditions. However, this water needs to be of a quality that represents a tolerable level of risk, and more water would be needed to meet health and well-being-related demands outside of normal domestic use such as water use in health care facilities, food production, economic activity or amenity use.⁵

An inadequate supply of water can result from geographic features or seasonal constraints. For example, local populations are often forced, during certain dry months, to access water from unsafe

⁵ Howard, G and Bartram, J, Domestic Water Quantity, Service Level and Health, World Health Organisation, 2003, WHO/SDE/WSH/03.02.

water points. This means that a population might resort to using unsafe water from the river because the hand-pumped well has run dry, leading to water-borne diseases.

2.3 THE NEED TO ENSURE FINANCIALLY AFFORDABLE WATER

There is no international obligation to provide free water. Growing levels of pollution and the related need for purification, mean that, whether financed by indirect taxation or directly by the water point user, infrastructure maintenance does have a cost.

Paradoxically, it is the poor who can end up paying the most of water. For example in certain urban centres, slum dwellers, living in areas that are not covered by piped-water infrastructure, are forced to buy water in buckets from private water sellers. This 'private water' is sold to the poor at a cost up to 10 times the normal price paid for piped municipal water. As a consequence, paying too much for water can prevent poor households from purchasing medications, providing education or other fundamental needs for their children. In other words, ensuring adequate access to financially affordable water is a fundamental necessity for extreme poverty alleviation.

Question:

How much of the population's monthly budget is spent on water:

More than 20% Between 5-20% Between 1-5%

Is safe drinking water free. i.e. not paid for by the local community?



Picture Credit : UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

In rural areas, lack of awareness about the importance of having access to safe water represents an obstacle to financing the maintenance and treatment of water points. A good practice would be to assess the financial capacity of poor households in order to equitably distribute the cost implied by the water infrastructure among all users.

2.4 THE NEED FOR PHYSICALLY ACCESSIBLE WATER

In some regions and cultures, girls and women are expected to walk hours each day to collect water for the whole household. Families prefer to send girls to collect water instead of sending them to school. Unfortunately, global figures show that lack of physically accessible water results in no primary education for one out of seven girls.

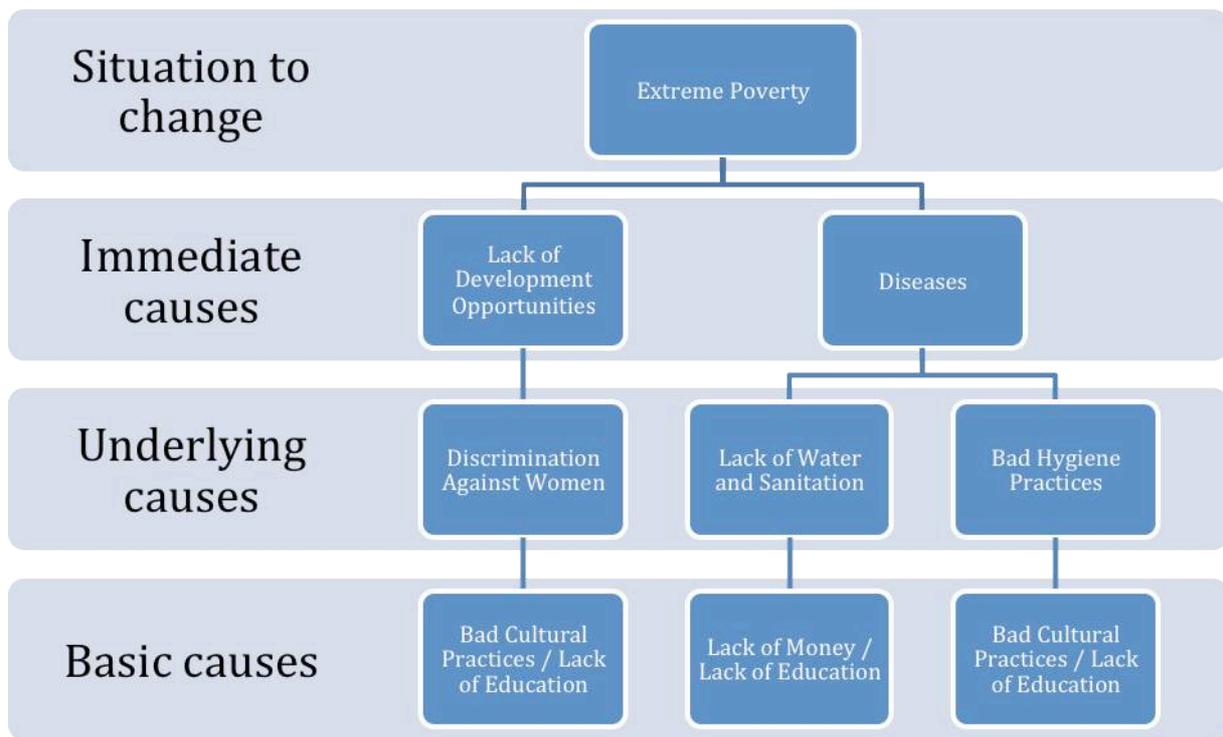
During periods of insecurity, water points can become damaged, forcing people to travel further to access clean water. These water points may start to be controlled by cartels, who charge users for access. Users may also have to travel through dangerous areas to reach water points.

This is another example that clearly demonstrates the linkage between lack of water, limited development, and extreme poverty. The diagram below is a useful guide for mapping the difficulties of a community. It is interesting to note that lack of education is often the cause of many of the challenges.

Summary – Section 2

Local communities can suffer from:

- Lack of water in sufficient quantity
- Lack of good quality water
- Lack of physical access to water points
- Over-expensive water supply (including necessary water treatments)
- Bad practices having a negative impact on the right to water and sanitation:
 - Discrimination (only girls and women are responsible for collecting household water)
 - Bad hygiene practices (including open defecation)
 - Lack of awareness to contribute to maintenance of water points



© WaterLex 2011 - Diagram adapted from UNICEF conceptual malnutrition framework (1990)

SECTION 3 - THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENTS

Objective:

This section introduces international human rights law and the obligations of governments related to water and sanitation.



Picture Credit: UN Photo / Jean-Marc Ferré r

Improving the behaviour of governments requires a sound understanding of their formal responsibilities and duties at international level (their international obligations).

The obligations to safeguard and respect human dignity are set out in a set of documents known as international human rights law instruments.

When a government recognises a human right, it recognises three types of related obligations: the obligation to 'respect', to 'protect' and to 'fulfil' that particular right.

Under international law, governments commit to:

- Respect their citizens' access to water and sanitation by ensuring that all government activities (including government-funded activities) do not harm water points. This is particularly important during armed conflict;
- Protect their citizen's access to water and sanitation by protecting access to water from abuse and overuse by other actors (such as farmers or private companies);
- Fulfil the right to water by contributing to improving access to water and sanitation for everyone, including the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Further, governments commit to developing all these activities in conjunction with their citizens. This implies informing everyone about the status of implementation of its obligation and sharing relevant documentation such as plans of actions, resource allocation and international financial support. Defining project priorities in consultation with citizens and affected communities is also required.

Governments must comply with their international obligations and are accountable at both national and international levels for the realisation and fulfilment of these commitments.

Picture Credit: UN Photo / Eric Kanalsstein



Questions:

Has your government committed to taking action for its citizens?

Yes No

Do you have a copy of relevant document(s)?

Yes No

Is the construction of water points and/or latrines a point a stake?

Yes No



Picture Credit : UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Summary – Section 3

Governments must comply with international standards on the fulfilment of the human right to water and sanitation.

This is the commitment by a government to:

- Promote access to water and sanitation;
- Protect this right from any abuse by third parties; and
- Contribute to improving access to water and sanitation for the poor and most vulnerable citizens.

A government commits to carrying out these activities by consulting citizens during the decision-making process (see the following section on ‘right to participate’).

SECTION 4 - BRINGING NATIONAL CONCERNS TO THE UNITED NATIONS OR THE REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION SYSTEM

Objective:

This section focuses on the mechanisms that can be used to bring national concerns to the international or regional level.

Although it is the first step, representing local concerns at the national level is not always a guarantee that they will be heard and, most of all, will be effectively addressed. In order to overcome some national barriers, governments agreed to establish two types of additional mechanisms at the international level, namely legal and political ones.

The following section will first present mechanisms available at the international (or UN) level. In the second, existing mechanisms within the African system of protection of human rights will be detailed.

4.1 THE UNITED NATIONS

4.1.1 THE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (CESCR)

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has been created by the States who signed the human rights convention on socio-economic rights: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The responsibility of this body of experts is to supervise and advise States on how they can improve the implementation process of their commitments under this Convention.

This body is particularly important for human rights lawyers, as it was the first one to explicitly recognise the human right to water in 2002. Indeed, it declared that:

“The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses. An adequate amount of safe water is necessary to prevent death from dehydration, to reduce the risk of water-related disease and to provide for consumption, cooking, personal and domestic hygienic requirements.”⁶

The CESCR was able to acknowledge the existence of the right to water because the ICESCR explicitly recognised the right to an adequate standard of living (art.11) and the right to health (art.12), which both imply the realisation of the right to water to be fully enjoyed.

The effect of this recognition is that when States submit and present their report every three to five years to the Committee, its experts will ask the State’s representatives if the right to water is respected, protected and progressively realised in their country.

In this process, victims and NGOs play an important role as they can provide additional information to the experts which can be compared to the information provided by the government and then be used by them to issue recommendations to the government.

In December 2008, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was adopted by the UN General Assembly. In May 2013, the Optional Protocol

⁶ Ibid.

entered into force. This means that individuals, groups and non-governmental organisations can seek to enforce economic, social and cultural rights enshrined in the ICESCR (including the right to water) through two means: a Complaint or Communication procedure, and an Inquiry Procedure. As of March 2015, the Protocol has had 45 signatories and has 20 state parties.

4.1.2 THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC)

Within the United Nations, governments also agreed to put in place specific political mechanisms providing a consultative role for civil society through the voice of the NGOs that have received accreditation, which is known as the General Consultative status. Accredited NGOs such as Franciscans International and Waterlex can express their concerns and draw the attention of States' representatives to national concerns that might otherwise remain unheard.



Within the UN, the Human Rights Council is the main body dealing with human rights in all UN Member States. Therefore, it also deals with the right to water and sanitation.

On the basis of information received from the grassroots, NGOs can submit written and oral submissions to the HRC concerning human rights violations in a given country. NGOs can also host issue-specific events next to the official meeting room in order to raise awareness of States' representatives on an issue of concern. The purpose of these NGO activities is to bring human rights abuses committed in a country to the attention of all governments, and to suggest steps on how these abuses could be prevented.

4.1.2.1 The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The Universal Periodic Review is a specific mechanism within the UN-HRC procedures. This State-driven mechanism monitors how every State individually fulfils its international human rights commitments. All States are reviewed by the Council every four years.

During UPR sessions, accredited NGOs can raise local concerns of human rights interest in different ways:

- NGOs can submit their own written report;
- NGOs can also issue short public statements in front of all governmental delegates.



These reports are particularly valuable if they include a monitoring of commitments made by the given State so as to allow the other Member States of the Human Rights Council to issue relevant recommendations.

4.1.2.2 The Special Rapporteurs

Another specific mechanism within the UN-HRC is the appointment of independent experts, called “Special Rapporteurs”. Their mandate may cover the monitoring of all human rights in a given country or worldwide monitoring of one specific human right. In November 2014, Mr. Léo Heller was appointed by the Human Rights Council to be the second Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Victims may send the Special Rapporteur information regarding their situation, whilst NGOs can communicate regarding the status of the respect, protection and realisation of the right to water and sanitation in a given country. Following such complaints or reports, the Special Rapporteur may ask the State for further information, as well as an invitation for a field visit to the country to gather additional data, and then issue recommendations for improvement. NGOs often play a facilitating role between the UN expert, the governments and the victims during this process.

Other treaty bodies and working groups can serve a useful purpose in helping NGOs and individuals to raise issues and problems relating to the right to water. For example, the UN Working Group on the Issue of Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises could be approached regarding the impact of corporate activity and the right to water. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child could be approached regarding the specific impacts on women and children of a lack of the right to water and sanitation. Indigenous peoples whose right to water and sanitation is not realised may contact the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. Other relevant means for vulnerable groups include the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on Minority Rights.

4.2 THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

4.2.1 THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS

At the regional level, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights was created to promote and protect the rights enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights adopted in 1981, and entered into force in 1986. The African Commission is located in Banjul in The Gambia, and its members are elected by the Assembly of the African Union.

The Commission has different means by which it can protect human rights:

- Communication procedures;
- State reporting (including consideration of NGOs’ shadow reports);
- Activities of special rapporteurs, working groups and missions.

Communication Procedures

The African Commission may receive complaints from States against another State (inter-State communication) or by individuals and NGOs against one or more States. An individual communication can be brought by a victim or anyone on their behalf, for example an NGO. The NGO or the individual do not need to be citizens of the State against which the communication is made. However, communications can only be submitted against States that have ratified the African Charter.

The African Commission can declare a breach of the Charter if it finds that a State violated one of the rights protected by this instrument. In some cases the Commission will also make recommendations for action that the State should take to rectify the violation. This may include payment of compensation to the victims.

State Reporting

Every two years, all the States which have ratified the Charter have to submit a report regarding the implementation of the rights it protects. This procedure serves as a forum for constructive dialogue. It enables the Commission to monitor the implementation of the Charter and to identify challenges.

If NGOs are concerned that the report submitted by a given State does not reflect the reality in their country, they have the possibility to submit a *shadow report*. The purpose of a shadow reports is to supplement – or "shadow" – the report of the government of a particular country. These reports can dispute official ones or provide information on unreported violations.

The Special Rapporteurs

Like the UN-HRC, the African Commission also has Special Rapporteurs and working groups. Since 2004, there has been a working group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa. This working group undertakes studies on specific socio-economic rights – such as the right to water – and can prepare draft principles or guidelines. In 2009, a Working Group on Extractive Industries and Human Rights Violations in Africa was established. This Working Group examines the impact of these industries on the rights guaranteed by the Charter.

4.2.2 THE AFRICAN COURT OF HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS (ACHPR)

The African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) was established in 2004 by the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Court Protocol). It is a regional court which can pass judgments on member states of the Court Protocol's compliance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The Court is based in Arusha, Tanzania. On the whole, only member states of the Court Protocol, as well as the African Commission and African inter-governmental organisations, can bring a case before the Court. However individuals and NGOs with observer status before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights can file applications against member states, but only if the state in question has accepted the competence of the court to receive such submissions (as of publication, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Tanzania, Rwanda and Cote D'Ivoire). If the Court finds the rights of an applicant have been violated, it can order remedial measures such as compensation or reparations.

Summary – Section 4

States have agreed to establish at the international level several additional legal and political mechanisms.

As regards **legal mechanisms**, victims and NGOs may present reports to the experts which monitor the implementation of a given human rights convention. These reports allow the experts to get access to alternative information, and therefore issue more accurate recommendations to States.

As regards **political mechanisms**, NGOs may interact directly with governmental representatives or UN experts. Their written reports and their public statements are a unique opportunity to give a voice to the most marginalized groups and publicly suggest steps on how governments could better comply and implement their human rights commitments.

SECTION 5 – UNITING TO SHARE LOCAL CHALLENGES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Objective:

This section seeks to demonstrate the similarity of many problems between different communities, and how citizens increase their effectiveness when they come together at the regional and national level.

It is important to realise that the challenges faced at local level by a given community are not unique. Very often, other communities and leaders face similar obstacles and problems. For example, their municipality might also not be willing to address their concerns or share documents and information with the community.

It is therefore very helpful for communities to organise meetings at the regional or national level with other communities committed to advocating for issues pertaining to water and sanitation. The purpose of such a meeting is to share knowledge and experiences so as to:

- Improve the effectiveness of all the communities to access their right to water and sanitation;
- Exchange new ideas on how to overcome specific difficulties;
- Share best practice from success stories in other areas.



Picture Credit: OFM.org Photo – Rome 2010

Such joint meetings may also help to demonstrate that the main challenge lies with the central government. For example, in many countries it is the city council which is responsible for improving access to water and sanitation for local communities. However, it may be that they cannot levy the necessary taxes from their citizens and local businesses, and that the central government does not provide any support. A potential area of discussion of the joint meeting could be to focus on the creation of a national coordination group to address these problems at

the national level, on behalf of all communities.

Engaging at the national level is more complex, but potential results can also be significant, even vital. National authorities have to write a National Strategy in which they explicitly state where the money they receive will be spent (in developing countries these documents are called National Poverty Reduction Strategy).

In order to ensure that a new-elect government invests in a particular sector, and to prevent re-negotiation of agreements previously concluded between civil society and the former government, several countries enunciate the government specific obligations in a legal act or even in the State Constitution. This is the case in Indonesia where article 31(4) of the Constitution specifies that “The state shall prioritise the budget for education to a minimum of 20% of the State Budget and of the Regional Budgets to fulfil the needs of implementation of national education.”

The document showing the amount of resources that a government plans to allocate to the water and sanitation sector is often called a National Water and Sanitation Strategy. Ideally, this should specify the budget to be allocated to the sector as a whole, accounting all relevant individual budget lines from the key sectors related to water. If such document does not exist, it means that the authorities have not committed to any specific investment on water and sanitation. In this case, it might be relevant to consider organising a national or regional campaign to promote the adoption of such a policy instrument.

In this process, it is important to note that most countries have established a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), which has the mandate to monitor and assist the government in the implementation of its human rights commitments. NHRIs can be powerful potential partners in this advocacy process.

Summary – Section 5

Sharing knowledge, experiences and concerns with other communities who have similar projects and challenges can be very helpful.

Through co-ordination at the national level, it is possible to develop an advocacy strategy to improve the activities and commitments of regional and national governments.

SECTION 6 – ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS RAISING

Objective:

This section focuses on how important messages about the right to water can be made through public platforms such as newspapers, social media and campaigns. It describes how decision makers can be made aware of the issues surrounding the right to water, and hopefully influenced.

6.1 AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are online forms of communication through which users create communities to share in particular information, ideas, messages, videos and photos. The Internet is now a major means to gain and share information and social media is indeed an excellent way to achieve this.

By signing up to RSS feeds, Google alerts and blogs, you can collect up-to-the-minute information on topics of interest such as pollution, water, government policy or on the work of specific charities. Nonetheless, using local newspapers to gather particularly relevant information to your community still remains invaluable.

Using social media can also be a very positive way to communicate your message to a large audience. You can set up a Facebook page or a Twitter account to start engaging with other people having common interests. People will often highlight a topic by using a hashtag such as #water, #Kampala, or #humanrights.

As you build an online “presence”, you will be able to start online conversations and debates with other civil society groups, journalists and interested parties. This might become a good way to promote events and causes, and build capacity, contacts and networks. This can lead your cause to be taken up by journalists willing to follow the developing steps of your story. Lastly, building a dedicated website for your cause may be an appropriate way to host updates, photos, blogs and so on.

6.2 CAMPAIGNING AND LOBBYING

Governance and policy-making do not take place in a vacuum; rather, they are influenced by groups and individuals, each with their own political and personal interests, and who have different levels of power and ways of action. Governance is therefore directed by politics and power and, as a result, does not always follow a rational path. For example, a district community will not gain access to water merely because people need it but because of its ability to influence those who have power to grant it. Politics is about how actors – individuals, businesses, civil society and others – in a society organise themselves to increase their influence as they seek to promote or protect particular interests.

It is therefore worth going further than communicating with NHRIs, and it can be useful to direct messages to certain politicians, political groups and the public at large. Social media is one way to do this, but more active forms of campaigning can provide even more visibility.

To increase your influence in the fight for the right to water, it is worth considering the following methods as a group:

- **Public Campaigning:** engaging with the public and getting them to take action for your cause. There are many ways to do this, from demonstrations to silent sit-ins or petitions.
- **Interaction with the media:** influencing wider public opinion on the radio, TV and in the press.
- **Pushing the message:** publishing documents, producing materials and carrying out public campaigning by organising meetings and events likely to make your message accessible to a wider public and increase its influence in the public debate.

Summary – Section 6

Social media can be used to gain the latest news, to gather relevant and rich information, and to communicate messages in an effective way. This can lead to new ways of connecting with others and help you to build relationships with people and organisations that share your interest in the right to water.

This can be taken to a bigger scale and used to motivate the public at large, influencing politicians and those in power to eventually have an effect on the governance of your country.

Franciscans International

37-39 Rue de Vermont
1211 Geneva
Switzerland

www.franciscansinternational.org
geneva@fiop.org

Waterlex

83 Rue de Montbrillant
1202 Geneva
Switzerland

www.waterlex.org
info@waterlex.org

IPIS vzw

Italiëlei 98a
2000 Antwerpen
Belgium

www.ipisresearch.be
info@ipisresearch.be