

HUMAN RIGHTS II- Human right to water: Addressing systematic freshwater pollution in low-income countries

I. INTRODUCTION

Access to fresh water is considered a human right. It is an important part of our everyday lives, from drinking and washing to watering crops or water-based electricity. 1 person is estimated to use 72 m³ of water per year (2002), and with the population growing, the amount of water available for 1 person grows smaller and smaller.

For low-income countries, this amount is even smaller. Whether it is because of the climate in the given area or simply the lack of sources, it affects many parts of the society. People use the same water for drinking, washing or getting rid of rubbish, polluting the water and making it a source of many different sicknesses. In many low-income countries the level of wastewater treatment is very low. Wars have been started over water; one country appropriating too much or barricading a part of the river that provides the most water to another country. With no clean or fresh water, people are less immune to illnesses and it is harder for them to heal from one.

The water, however, is not polluted simply by these countries themselves. Through the industrial use of the aquifers, the pollution spreads in underground sources as well.

II. UN INVOLVEMENT

The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda in 2015. Number 6 of these seventeen goals is Clean water and sanitation. It seeks to create a sustainable management of water resources, their treatment and conserving ecosystems.

In 2023, according to the SDG 6 report, the progress is off-track, needing to at least quadruple in some areas.

The UN launched many different organizations to further approach the SDG 6. This includes SDG capacity development initiative which works with UNESCO and helps with the management of different actions, the UN SDG 6 Data Portal which assembles all the information concerning water in one place or the UN Integrated Monitoring Initiative which supports the countries monitoring water. Each year since 2015 a water report comes out with information about the progress.

III. QUESTIONS

What is my country's water sanitation or accessibility level?

What are legal actions my country is taking to protect its water sources?

Are there political conflicts linked to water in my country?

IV. SOURCES

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/09/systematic-pollution-freshwater-affects-human-right-water-billions-people>

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4018137?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header>

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384657>

<https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/6-clean-water-and-sanitation/>

<https://www.sdg6data.org/en>

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Resource Wars, Michael T. Klare