

**WATERS  
OF LIFE**



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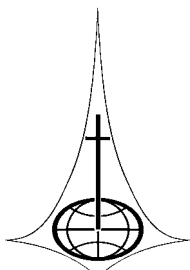
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**G**lobal data on water indicates that unless we safeguard our water resources to sustain livelihood, we will soon be getting to a threshold of depleting these resources and increasing the potential for conflicts over this basic need.

This special issue of the *Lutheran World Information (LWI)* is an effort to reaffirm the role and obligation of churches and their related organizations in ensuring the accessibility of safe water to all of God's creation.

Water has a spiritual value in all religions and cultures and is essential for the sustenance of life. The image of water runs through the Bible from the book of Genesis to Revelation. Water brings forth and sustains life not only as a physical element but also symbolically. The crossing of the Red Sea and the deliverance from Pharaoh's army became a touchstone for the Israelite's faith and life. Through the waters of baptism, we are born again and come to know the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. The disciples' feet washing was not only an act of cleansing but also a commissioning of the Twelve Disciples to serve people in humility. Therefore we can understand the importance and necessity of water when Jesus describes himself as "the living water."

God has endowed planet earth and the creation therein with waters of the oceans, seas, lakes, rivers and underground sources. Safeguarding these waters is therefore not only a moral and spiritual responsibility, but also an obligation to be accountable to the future generations. Although the world has enough water for its 6 billion inhabitants, the majority of the world's poor do not have access to safe drinking water. Human ingenuity is gradually turning God's "gift of water" into one of the most profitable commodities today.

The churches are called to sustain their collective voice in opposing all efforts to put profit before human



*LWF General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko*  
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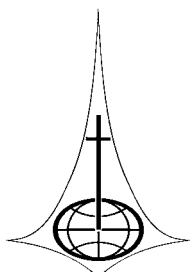
life. Our voices must enjoin those of the rural poor communities opposing the indiscriminate decimation of their indigenous forests; challenging the corporate, social and environmental responsibility of mining and water bottling companies; or simply urging their local governments to supply them with clean running water. In recent years, so-called "waters of death" through storms and flooding, also place a

unique responsibility on the churches and their related organizations in providing emergency and long-term support to survivors of such calamities.

The LWF and its member churches representing over 66 million Christians play a vital and proactive role in engaging people ecumenically and locally to become stewards of the precious and depleting water resources, and to respond to human need during disasters. This special *LWI* highlights some of the major debates about water including its privatization, accessibility, and the theological aspect among others. Also included are some examples from the LWF's extensive involvement in this subject through its Department for World Service field programs.

I invite you to receive and share further the contents of this special *LWI* as a contribution to a faith-based perspective on the water discourses around the world, and to the global activism to make water available to all people.

Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko  
General Secretary  
The Lutheran World Federation



## AN LWF PERSPECTIVE ON WATER

*Water is God's gift to all creation for the sustenance of life. Therefore, promoting its preservation, responsible management and equitable distribution should be understood by all human beings as a significant individual, communal and corporate responsibility. But today, the majority of the world's poor people have no access to safe drinking water. The dilemma is further compounded by the increasing privatization of water under the global forces of economic globalization.*

### Water of Life, Water for Life

“About one third of the world's population already lives in countries considered to be ‘water stressed’—that is where consumption exceeds 10 percent of total supply. If the present trends continue, two out of every three people on Earth will be living in that condition by 2025,” says United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in *We The Peoples*, 2000. He describes the water crisis as the “Crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” The UN declared 2005–2015 as the International Decade for Action—Water for Life.

The earth is referred to as the blue planet because over 70 percent of its surface is covered with water. Oceans contain 97 percent of the earth's water, with the remaining 3 percent classified as fresh water. Seventy-seven percent of this surface freshwater is stored as ice and 22 percent as groundwater and soil moisture. The remaining freshwater, making up less than one percent of the world total, is contained in lakes, rivers and wetlands.

Due to the growing demand for water as a result of increasing population pressure and over consumption, the non-renewable ground water is being used up by digging deep bore wells. Once siphoned, seawater seeps in to fill the vacuum, rendering the remaining fresh water salty and unusable. Simply put, we are upsetting the water cycle in many ways through our human greed.

#### Water Stress

The UN recommends a daily allowance of at least 50 liters of water per day per person for drinking, washing, cooking and sanitation, yet over 1 billion people—one sixth of the world's population—do not have access to this minimum requirement. It is important to note that while the world's population has doubled since 1950, water consumption has increased six-fold.

At the September 2000 UN Millennium Summit, heads of states and governments agreed eight goals to be achieved by 2015 in response to the world's



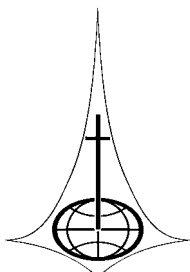
*The Gullfoss waterfall (Golden Falls) located on the Hvítá (White River) in south central Iceland, is one of the country's most popular waterfalls. © LWF/M. Keller*

main development challenges. One of the goals is to ensure environmental sustainability, taking into account the number of people who still lack access to safe drinking water.

But over six years later, little change is evident. Instead, there is a thriving global water market controlled by profit-driven companies. In most of the developing countries, the provision of safe drinking water increasingly targets the urban centers, leaving the slum dwellers and those residing upcountry to fend for themselves.

Over 5 million people die from water borne diseases each year—ten times more than the number of people killed in wars around the globe.<sup>1</sup> Every 15 seconds, a child dies from water-related diseases, resulting in nearly 6,000 deaths every day.<sup>2</sup> The control of water sources is a predominant reason for many conflicts around the world today.

The July 2003 Tenth Assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) called for an Action Plan on Water that would, among other concerns, highlight the importance of water for human beings and all creation, and demonstrate the dilemma of a just water distribution in view of increasing privatization under economic globalization.



The World Council of Churches has affirmed the report of the Ecumenical Water Network, an initiative by Christian agencies and movements to make Christian witness heard in the global debate on water issues, and to engage as an ecumenical community in common action at all levels. The network aims to promote the preservation, responsible management and equitable distribution of water for all, based on the understanding that water is God's gift and a fundamental human right.



*Ms Priscilla Singh © LWF*

Linked to the ongoing global and ecumenical initiatives on water, the LWF desk for Women in Church and Society (WICAS) in the Department for Mission and Development endeavors to bring greater awareness to the issue through its regional programs and consultations.

As a network of 66.2 million Christians in 78 countries, the LWF communion can play a major role in reversing the abuse, overuse and misuse of water.

As a faith-based diaconal communion, its involvement is crucial in not only providing safe water through several projects of the Department for World Service field programs, but also in advocating the right to water for all of creation. Through its member churches, related organizations and partners, the LWF can provide guidance toward developing reverence for water as one of the vital elements that point us to God and to Jesus Christ.

I cite a French proverb in conclusion, "You will never know the value of water until the well is dry."

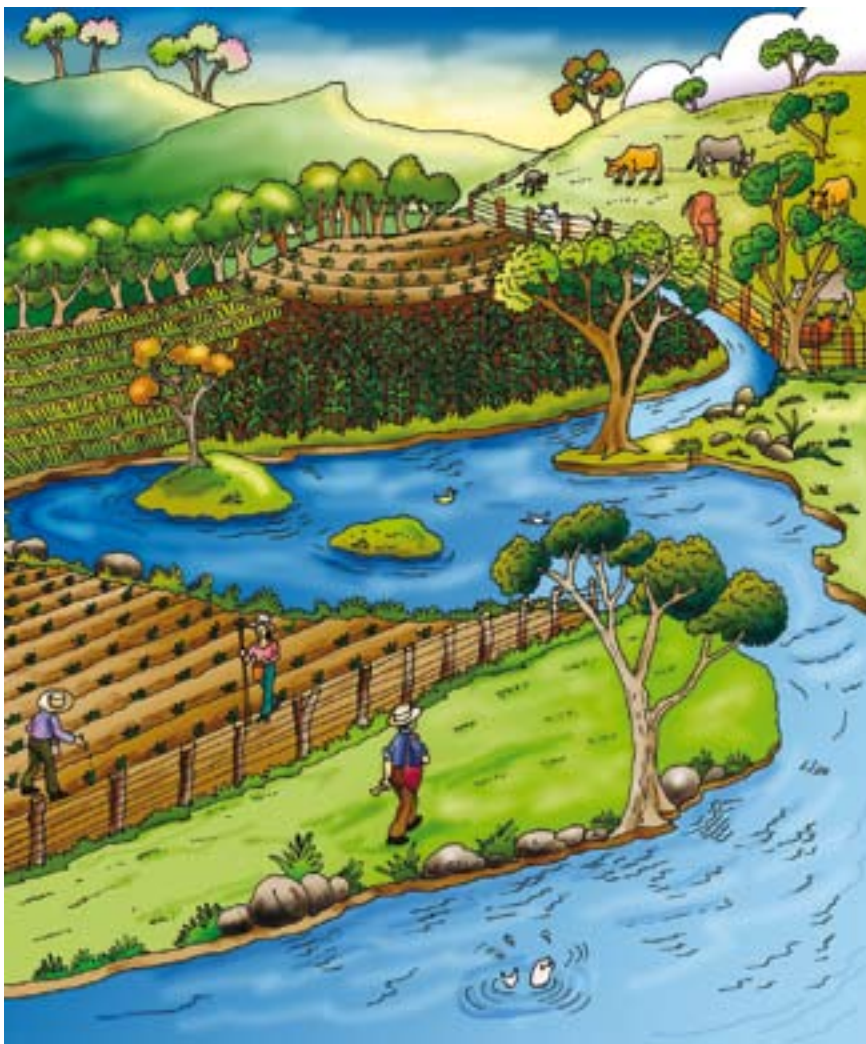
We need not wait until our wells run dry to take action.

*Ms Priscilla Singh is the executive secretary for the LWF desk for Women in Church and Society in the Department for Mission and Development.*

<sup>1</sup> [www.wateraid.org.uk/uk/what\\_we\\_do/statistics/default.asp](http://www.wateraid.org.uk/uk/what_we_do/statistics/default.asp)

<sup>2</sup> [http://unesco.uiah.fi/water/material/05\\_water\\_problem.html](http://unesco.uiah.fi/water/material/05_water_problem.html)

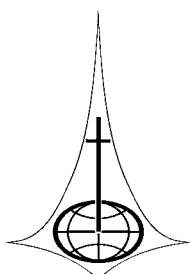
<sup>3</sup> <http://mail.unis.org/unisun/websites/PDFS/workingpaper.pdf>



The work of the Central America regional program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) in El Salvador includes support to organizations working in environmental management. This is one of the posters used in community education campaigns on developing capacities in disaster preparedness and risk management.

More information at  
[www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/DWS/Country\\_Programs/DWS-Central\\_America.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/Country_Programs/DWS-Central_America.html)

© LWF/DWS Central America



## THE RIGHT TO WATER Strategies and Positions - A Debate

Where is the crux of the matter when it comes to increasing access to safe water? The struggle for water must address the disabling promise of free water, and the myth that water is not a commodity for poor people. At the same time, the churches' struggle for the right to water must ensure that people are in control and that they are not reduced to mere customers.

### No Such Thing as a Free Lunch...

..Yet, when talking about charging a fee for the use of water, we often act as if this is not true. Many individuals and institutions make a case for a 100 percent subsidy on water or for subsidies covering everything except operation and maintenance costs. Some days I feel as if it is only the World Bank economists who argue for full-cost recovery through user charges.

This debate is caught up in the one about the privatization of water supplies. This is understandable as there are legitimate concerns about price increases, the poor people's access to water, the loss of local revenue, and the rejection of the business profit motive altogether. But ultimately, the question "Who pays for water?" is different from the question "Who provides the water?"



Built with assistance from the LWF/DWS program in Cambodia, this pump provides clean water for families in the dry, dusty village of Kauk, in Oral district, west of the capital Phnom Penh. © LWF/L. Macqueen

#### Public or Private Ownership

Contrary to what—in the face of failing utilities in the developing world—seemed obvious in the early 1990s, we know today that private sector involvement is not the panacea it was thought to be. Neither is the question of public versus private ownership of water utilities the most important. A recent World Bank study concluded that the performance of public and private operators is not significantly different, but that “the more relevant variables include the degree of competition, the design of regulation, the quality of institutions and the degree of corruption.” Truly what matters most is not fixing the pipes, but fixing the *institutions* that fix the pipes, as a former Indian Prime Minister remarked several years ago.



Mr Jan Willem Rosenboom  
© Private

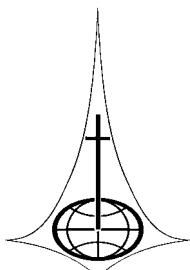
Whether the provider is privately or publicly-owned, we need to address the disabling promise of free water, and the myth that water is not a commodity for poor people. The irony is that the poorest people with the lowest level of service and the worst water quality often pay the highest price. Cambodia is a case in point. In the capital Phnom Penh, I get world class service for very little money—piped water into my house, uninterrupted, for USD 0.13 per 1,000 liters. Yet in the rural areas, some households buy a few hundred liters of untreated river water at ten times as much.

In order to dramatically increase access to safe water, we must treat water as a social and cultural good, ensuring its equitable access to everybody, including the poor and vulnerable. At the same time we need to *manage* water as an economic good. This means subsidizing

access to water for those who cannot afford it, but charging fair prices for use. We need to build strong regulatory and oversight mechanisms, free from political interference. While government may not want to be a water provider, it should not give up supervision and regulation of a public resource. It should ensure that negotiations about privatization or service contracts are conducted openly and transparently, with all stakeholders involved.

None of this is easy or straightforward, but it is our best hope for the future.

Mr Jan Willem Rosenboom is a World Bank consultant for water, based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He is currently the team leader for the Water Supply and Sanitation Program in the Cambodia country office.



## The Right to Water – Water for All

Water is not a commodity to be bought and sold for profit. Water is sacred and a common good to be shared with all creatures on planet earth. These are convictions held by different religions. From rice growing farmers in the Philippines to Arab villages where water is scarce, communities took care of the water they needed and developed their own rules concerning its use. Applying “market principles” for water access in the privatization of water services is a relatively new idea.

Churches increasingly support movements and civil society organizations, which advocate for the right to water. *Right to water* means more than *access* to fresh water. The term *access* to water is not so much about the way in which access is secured:

water services can be provided by local or public enterprises, but in many places people resist when water management is taken over by big transnational companies such as Bechtel, Veolia, Indo-Suez, among others. Listed at the stock-exchange markets, these companies’ aim is to earn profits, which satisfy their shareholders and their expectations of high returns for their investments. This is not just about income that should guarantee a functioning service.

### Investing in Facilities

The right to water implies that people are in control and not reduced to customers. While the struggle for the right to water begins at the local level, it also includes efforts to arrive at clear legal frameworks at national and international levels. Currently, many groups are calling for a “Rapporteur for the Right to Water” at the Geneva (Switzerland)-based United Nations Human Rights Council. The rapporteur would be responsible for monitoring progress with a view to the right to water, and also to expose misuse of power at the detriment of needy people, for instance through over-pricing among poor communities.



*Water means life for people living in Bolivian villages located 4,000-5,000 meters above sea level in remote places. The Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church and SARTAWI, a local church related non-governmental organization, receive support from the LWF to assist families and communities with water supply installations. © LWF/J. K. Schep*

### Public Control

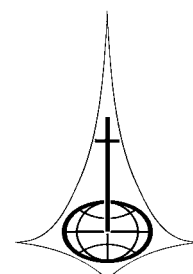
Ensuring water supply for all involves investment in facilities. This requires clear and transparent policies that must be worked out between governments, communities and local and national private sector. Such policies might propose that those who can afford to pay do so for their higher levels of water consumption in order to cross-subsidize a free amount for poor communities. Such block-tariffs were introduced in a number of South African cities after people protested in the streets. Ordinary people have succeeded in regaining some form of public control in Cochabamba (Bolivia), Manila (Philippines), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Curitiba (Brazil), and in many other places. In Europe people continued to defend public ownership of water facilities. There is almost no place in Western Europe where the World Bank-favored “full-cost recovery principle” was applied to water. Water prices were always calculated according to the people’s needs. Let us stay on firm ground. Let us work for the Right to Water.



*Rev. Dr Martin Robra  
© A. Wasyluk*

*Rev. Dr Martin Robra is program executive for ethics and ecology in the World Council of Churches Justice, Peace and Creation team.*

**LWI special issues focus on cross-cutting themes of LWF’s work. See other editions at [www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_we\\_Do/OCS/OCS-LWI\\_PDF.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_we_Do/OCS/OCS-LWI_PDF.html)**



**WATER – PERSPECTIVES FROM THE REGIONS**

When it comes to the preservation of life and water, every effort counts. Whether lobbying governments to address policy that affects the sustainability of water resources; supporting local people to make better use of the available water to improve their livelihoods; rebuilding homes that have been destroyed by storms or flooding; or providing theological responses to contemporary water crises, partnerships at grassroots, national and international levels remain crucial. This section contains perspectives on water from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Africa**

**Pride in Their Success: Fresh, Clean Water from the Mountains**

A group of men and women sit on the ground or stones under a tree outside the village of Ndego, eastern Rwanda. They have come to welcome a delegation of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), and express to the group their pride and achievements in these last few years with support from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) country program in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Thanks to a water pipe network in their village, they all have access to fresh, safe drinking water straight from the mountains.

In addition to the water system, the two villages now have a health center and two primary schools between them.

A certain level of prosperity has emerged here. “We used to have homes made out of those United Nations’ blue canvas,” recalls one elderly man. “Now our houses are made of bricks.” The villagers produce the bricks themselves. Near the water point are two moulds filled with wet clay, and next are rows of finished bricks, drying in the sun.

People have been living here since 1997, having moved from other densely populated areas, and as a consequence of the 1994 Rwandan genocide in which almost a million people—mainly Tutsis and moderate Hutus—died. Life here is different. The women no longer have to worry about being attacked by wild animals on their long trek to fetch water from the lake. Not only is the water clean, the food quality has significantly improved, as the villagers adapt professional farming methods, with greater success than before, especially in keeping livestock.

The boys, who are crowding with curiosity alongside the others under the great tree with its outstretched branches, are asked what they want to become when they grow up. The answers come: “minister;” “president – like [President



Members of the Kajevuba rice growers’ cooperative society in Kibungo province welcome an LWF/DWS Rwanda group visit to their project site. © LWF/E. Bares

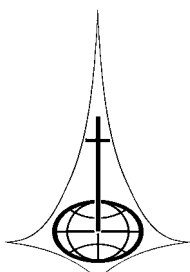
A young woman explains that she no longer has to trek the six kilometers to the lake for water. Instead, she now spends adequate time caring for her children, cooking their food and helping them with their schoolwork.

**New Level of Prosperity**

The village, which lies in drought-prone Kibungo province, near the border with Tanzania, is home to around 800 families. Another 700 families live in the neighboring village. The new water system supplies both villages with fresh, clean water. Village water committees are responsible for the pipes’ maintenance. The distribution points are checked daily and an alarm system ensures that any damage is noticed and repaired quickly.



The villagers now have clean water from the mountains. © LWF/DWS Rwanda/T. Lohnes





Paul Kagame!” “doctor.” “I want to be a nurse,” adds a shy little girl.

### Rice Farmers’ Cooperative Society

A few kilometers away is a completely different project supported by the LWF/DWS program. Next to Lake Rweru lie the fields of Kajevuba village, where the men and women have worked long and hard to reclaim paddies. At the time of its first harvest, the Kajevuba cooperative society, which was founded by nine women and seven men, had reclaimed only around three hectares of land—hardly an encouraging result, as the few hundred kilos of rice harvested was not enough to feed their families. Still, the cooperative’s members would not give up, and more members joined.

Two years later, in 2002, the rice harvest was 42 tons. The families not only had enough to eat, they also had a surplus for additional income, enabling them to pay school fees, among other needs. In the meantime, the cooperative’s members have also gradually renovated their houses.

The 1,200-member cooperative society has become a model. People from other villages inquire about the agricultural methods used, the type of assistance needed, and how they could establish



*The Kajevuba rice paddies have changed the villagers’ lives. © LWF/E. Bares*

a similar group. The Kajevuba cooperative members proudly lead us to their rice-shelling mill. The diesel-engine machine is placed next to the group’s meeting house, where sowing and harvest schedules hang on the walls, and the managers regularly meet.



*Mr Klaus Rieth  
© Private*

*Klaus Rieth is the press officer of the Evangelical Church in Württemberg, Germany. In June 2006, he visited projects supported by the LWF/DWS Rwanda-DRC program in the context of the inaugural conference of the IFAPA Commission and the Africa regional workshop of the LWF young communicators’ training program.*

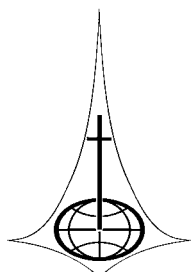
### Sand Filters Bring Clean Water to Mozambique’s Rural Communities



Mozambique is prone to cyclic floods and drought, which have been particularly severe in recent years.

The LWF Department for World Service (DWS) country program’s work in the South African country includes the provision of safe drinking water to rural communities.

This cistern system in Sofala, central Mozambique, collects clean sand-filtered run-off water from the ground surface and finally deposits it in the large storage tank, after passing through two dirt filters.  
© LWF/DWS Mozambique



**Australia: Toowoomba Residents Protest Against 'Drinking Sewage'**

On 29 July 2006 residents of Toowoomba, eastern Australia, voted down a radical proposal by their council to recycle sewage for drinking water. Ms Rosemary Morely of Citizens Against Drinking Sewage says that the proposal was something that "in Australia we should never have to consider."

While recognizing that many people regard the recycling of sewage as an unpalatable solution to the city's water crisis, Toowoomba's mayor says that Australians are going to have to look at water differently than they have in the past.

Toowoomba is one of many towns and cities in the narrow coastal agricultural belt that is running out of water. The country is facing its worst drought for over a hundred years and the dams supplying water to Australia's biggest cities, including Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, are at record low levels. The population shift from rural to urban centers in recent decades has increased pressure on city water supplies, and municipal authorities all over the country are scrambling to find urgent solutions.



*Australia is the driest continent on earth.  
© LWF/L. Macqueen*



*Mutitjulu Lutheran Church is located on Aboriginal land at the base of Uluru (Ayers Rock). © LWF/L. Macqueen*

Although the effects of depleting water resources have been evident for decades, the recent imposition of severe restrictions on water usage has brought environmental issues into sharp focus for city dwellers for the first time. The Murray Darling, the continent's longest river system, sustaining more than two-thirds of all agricultural regions, is at the lowest level ever recorded. South Australia's minister for the Murray River, Ms Karleen Maywald, describes the situation as "catastrophic," and predicts great hardship for farmers and the communities.

Environmentalists are quick to point out that nature alone cannot be blamed for the water crisis. Don Henry, executive director

of the environmental group, Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) says, "The demands of our cities, agriculture and industry have traditionally taken precedence over the needs of the natural environment. Our rivers have been diverted, dammed and used for waste disposal."

Australia is the driest continent on earth, yet its per capita water consumption is the third highest in the world, after the United States and Canada. For the first time since white settlement, environmental groups are receiving serious support from government and church bodies in urging Australians to take better care of their natural resources. Rev John Henderson, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), says, "Care for the environment is a critical issue in our time. Human activity is doing great, and maybe irreparable, damage to our home, the earth. There are undeniable links between environmental degradation and poverty, an injustice we are called to overcome, from governments to individuals."

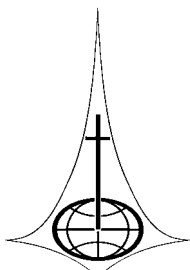
Jointly with the ACF, NCCA has called on Australian Christians to lobby government to address the issue of climate change and to consider how they can set an example in their own communities and homes by reducing water consumption levels.

The NCCA has called on the Australian and state governments to pursue economic prosperity within a context of ecological stability and to adopt environmental policies "that do not steal from present and future generations."

*Ms Linda Macqueen is editor of The Lutheran magazine of the Lutheran Church of Australia.*



*Ms Linda Macqueen  
© Private*



## An Important Symbol in Asia's Faith Expressions

All religions in Asia value water. It is a very important symbol in the rituals and faith expressions of the people.

In **Buddhist** funerals water is poured into a bowl placed before the monks and the dead body. As it fills and pours over the edge, the monks recite, "As the rains fill the rivers and overflow into the ocean, so likewise may what is given here reach the departed."

For **Hindus**, morning cleansing with water is a basic obligation. *Tarpon* is the point at which the worshipper makes a cup with the hands and pours the water back into the river reciting mantras. Every temple has a pond near it and devotees are supposed to take a bath before entering the temple. Rivers are sacred places for pilgrimage.

In **Islam** water is important for cleansing and purifying. Muslims must be ritually pure before approaching God in prayer. Some mosques have a courtyard with a pool of clear water in the center, but in most mosques the ablutions are found outside the walls.

In **Shinto**, Japan's indigenous religion, worship of the *Kamis* (innumerable deities believed to inhabit mountains, trees, rocks, springs and other natural phenomenon) must always begin by a ritual of purification with water. This act restores order and balance between nature, humans and the deities. Waterfalls are considered sacred in Shinto.

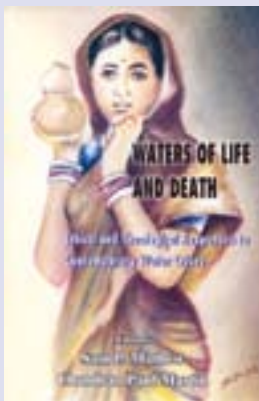
In **Christianity** water is intrinsically linked to baptism, a public declaration of faith and a sign of welcome into the Christian church.

And for our **indigenous communities**, we consider water as very precious. Water not only quenches our thirst, cleans or heals our bodies, water also sustains life. Water, like land, is life. Deep in our spirituality is the care for water and for all creation in our web of life.

*Copyright: Christian Conference of Asia News, June 2006.*

## Indian Theologians' Reflections on Contemporary Water Crises

The impact of the December 2004 tsunami on South East Asia and the recurring flooding in India, have raised theological questions about water, making it imperative to take water as a serious category for theological reflection. *Waters of Life and Death: Ethical and Theological Responses to Contemporary Water Crises*, is a pioneering work about theologizing on water, initiated by the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI). The 284-page book deals with the political, social and economic dimensions of today's water crises, and attempts



to evolve a Christian ethical and theological response to this context. The different authors present a common call to redeem water from the oppressive and exploitative sites and restore it back to its original life-giving and life-sustaining site.

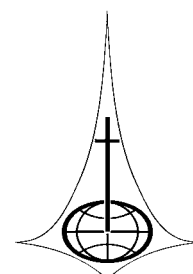
*Waters of Life and Death* is co-edited by Rev. Chandran Paul Martin, LWF Deputy General Secretary, and former UELCI Executive Secretary; and Sam P. Mathew, Gurukul Lutheran Theological College.

© UELCI/ISPCK 2005.

## A New Start for Tamil Nadu's Tsunami Survivors

Support from the Kolkata-based LWF Department for World Service (DWS) India program to the December 2004 tsunami survivors in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry includes supply of fiberglass fishing boats (right) and rebuilding houses. By November 2006, the LWF had completed and handed over to community members 177 out of the 850 earthquake and cyclone-resistant houses (below left) being constructed in government-designated villages.

*Text and photos by Rina Chunder, information and documentation officer, LWF/DWS India.*



## Norwegian Agency Supports Dalits' Protest Against Coca-Cola's Investment

When Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) heard that the Coca-Cola Company had drained the water resources of a small village in southern India, the question was obvious. Could an ecumenical organization in a little country as Norway change the actions and attitude of the world's largest beverage company, and owner of the most famous brand?

The NCA's objectives include support to the poor, marginalized and oppressed people, and challenging the rich and powerful all over the world. Grounded in our conviction that every human being is created in God's image with equal values and rights, our daily work mainly focuses on the provision

of safe drinking water and sanitation. Coca-Cola's exploitation of poor people's water resources in Plachimada served as a perfect case for an NCA campaign.

Plachimada is situated in the heart of Kerala, southern India, a green and fertile area known for its rice and coconut production. But the village itself lies in the rain-shadow, receiving far less rainfall than its neighboring communities, and limited water for agricultural purposes. This was where the Coca-Cola Company decided to put up its single largest bottling plant in 1999.

### 30 Deep Wells

The mainly *Adivasi* (tribals) and *Dalit* (untouchables) inhabitants were promised development. But instead the entire basis of their existence fell into pieces.

Coca-Cola dug 30 deep wells on the company's premises, providing the factory with 500,000 to 1.5 million liters of groundwater per day. The intensive



Police watch as Plachimada villagers protest in front of the Coca-Cola bottling factory in Kerala, south India. © NCA/E. Roest

drilling resulted in sunken water levels in the local wells, and failed harvests. The company was also distributing its toxic solid waste to farmers, telling them that it was good fertilizer. In addition, the indiscriminate discharge of waste water into the fields around the plant and sometimes into rivers contaminated the groundwater and soil, and people fell ill from consuming products containing hazardous substances. People were forced to look for jobs in other villages or cities. With little options for clean water sources, the villagers now had to walk 2.5 kilometers to fetch safe water.

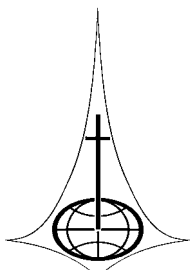
Then the Plachimada villagers protested, calling for the factory's closure and claiming compensation for the losses they had incurred. The NCA's then regional representative Mr John Nathan, heard about their struggle and wanted to support them. The VAK, a local human rights and development organization provided the necessary documentation. The villagers refused financial support in order to avoid accusations of "being bought" by other companies or organizations, and instead asked us to raise awareness about their plight in Norway.

On 9 March 2004, the NCA launched at its Oslo headquarters a campaign calling for a boycott of all Coca-Cola products until the case of the Plachimada villagers could be heard. Several church-related organizations and schools followed suit and called for a boycott.

The campaign was incorporated in the NCA's Lenten campaign, an annual information and fund-raising drive, which in 2004 focused on the right to water. Thousands



"Make Coke Change in India," the poster used in the Norwegian Church Aid campaign to raise awareness about the plight of Kerala's inhabitants. © NCA



of confirmands and other congregation members also joined in.

A poll showed that one-third of the total Norwegian population heard about the campaign. The sale of Coca-Cola drinks was dramatically reduced, although that was also due to other reasons. During the campaign we maintained a dialogue with Coca-Cola Norway, and they passed our message on to the parent Coca-Cola Company based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.



Ms Astrid G. Handeland  
© NCA/ L. A. – Hansen

After several court rulings in India, Coca-Cola was forced to shut down its bottling factory in Plachimada, because of the water-resources' exploitation. But they still refuse to compensate the inhabitants for their losses, thus the NCA and many of our supporters continue to boycott all products from the Coca-Cola Company.

*Ms Astrid G. Handeland is a campaign consultant with the NCA Division for Advocacy Campaigns.*

### Why Water Cannot Be for Sale

Water is the basis of all existence. However, over one billion people today do not have access to clean water, and 2.5 billion lack proper sanitation. Our planet earth has enough water for everyone, but it is not within everybody's reach. There are many countries worldwide where poor people

cannot afford clean water because its supply has been privatized. Contrary to general opinion, water privatization has not improved its accessibility to many people in developing countries who cannot afford to pay for it. Supporting the public water supply systems therefore, remains crucial.



One of the posters used in the "Water for All" campaign by the FCA and Finnish Ecumenical Council. © NCA

In 2005, nearly 20,000 Finns signed a FinnChurchAid (FCA) and Finnish Ecumenical Council appeal, "Water for All." Its message was that Finland should actively support public water supply in developing countries, and oppose in the European Union attempts to make water a commodity. Water is a human right.

*By Ulla Hottinen, Media and Public Affairs Officer, FinnChurchAid.*

### Successful Water Rights Campaign in Germany

*Brot für die Welt* (Bread for the World), a Christian aid agency supported by Protestant churches in Germany, began its *Menschenrecht Wasser* (Human Right to Water) campaign in March 2003. The campaign focuses on upholding water as a human right, protecting it as a public good, and applying pressure to politicians to improve water supply for people living in poverty in city slums and rural areas.

*Brot für die Welt* has contributed to the development of a global water movement aimed at promoting the exchange of information at the international level, and championing the human right to water. Organizations, groups, and congregations throughout Germany have adopted the campaign's goals, translating them into local action.

The organization's water project was transferred to the Geneva-based Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) at a 7-8 October ceremony in Hamburg, Germany. Founded in 2005 under the World Council of Churches (WCC), the EWN was received with particular enthusiasm and support at the February 2006 WCC Tenth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The

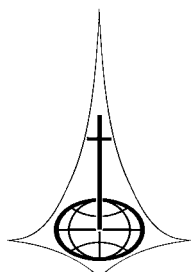
network's activities ensure that water remains a priority within the ecumenical movement's agenda.

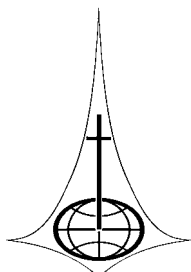
*More on this topic can be found at: [www.menschen-recht-wasser.de](http://www.menschen-recht-wasser.de) (in English, German and Spanish).*

*By Bernhard Wiesmeier, Bread for the World Advocacy and campaign team. Wiesmeier is responsible for the Human Right to Water campaign until the end of 2006.*



Bishop Bärbel Wartenberg-Potter (left) hands over the symbolic steering wheel of the Bread for the World water campaign to Mr Fernando Enns, representing the WCC's Ecumenical Water Network. © Brot für die Welt/T. Jelonnek





North America

A Future with Hope

*“A time to kill, and a time to heal (Eccl 3:3a).”*

What brings life can also take life.

Water, one of the most basic human needs, can also kill. The people of the United States’ Gulf Coast experienced that personally as Hurricane Katrina, one of the most destructive storms to ever hit the USA, ripped through the states of Louisiana and Mississippi in August 2005.

It struck the Gulf Coast on 29 August 2005. By 31 August, 80 percent of the city of New Orleans with a population of 500,000 was under water, and water depths reaching



*In Ocean Springs, Mississippi, the storm surge carried enough force to smash through the reinforced concrete cement of this garage. © ELCA/M. Nevergall*



*Hurricane Katrina swept through and destroyed hundreds of homes in Slidell, Louisiana. © ELCA/M. Nevergall*

The damage to property and lives is beyond anything most have seen or will ever see. The recovery efforts will be a ministry that will be going on for years, even decades. This is beyond the scope of any natural disaster that has ever affected the USA. No government or religious organization was prepared for such large-scale destruction. The need, as well as the response, have been overwhelming. One report stated that more oil was dumped into New Orleans because of the hurricane than the volume (52 million gallons – 197 million liters) released in 1989 when the oil tanker *Exxon Valdez* ran aground on Alaska’s coastline.

up to 6.1 meters. Eighty percent of the city was evacuated. It is estimated that 1,800 people lost their lives and damages are estimated at over USD 75 billion.

Just one year later, Hurricane Katrina is seen as old news. It is no longer making the headlines, or on the Cable News Network (CNN), or even on the last page of most newspapers. It is almost a survival technique for us. We can feel we are losing our own lives if we are always dwelling on past tragedies. As Christians, however, we are called to something different. We are called to remember and help our sisters and brothers in need—no matter where they may be.

But we are not a people without hope. “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope (Jer 29:11).”



*Rev. Robert W. Moore, ELCA Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod © ELCA*

Much of the hope we have received has come through people who have offered their prayers, time, talents, and financial resources for hurricane relief. You are the voice of hope—and the voice of our Lord—to brothers and sisters in need.

You can still assist. Go to our disaster relief Web site site at [www.futurewithhope.org](http://www.futurewithhope.org) and learn how you can be a partner with one of our congregations affected by the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Thank you for being in partnership with us as we work together to recover. It will be a long and often frustrating time but we know that our Lord is with us every step of the way. Your voices help to remind us that we all have a future with hope. And your prayers

mean that the victims of Katrina will one day heal—and no longer see water as a curse—but a blessing.

*Rev. Robert W. Moore is Assistant to the Bishop/Mission Director of the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*

### Canadian Agency Challenges Mining Companies in Peru

In the Vicos River Basin, northern Peru, Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) partners with the local non-governmental organization, Urpichallay to provide training for community members in water quality testing. The need



*Thick smoke billows from a Peru refinery of the US heavy metal company, Doe Run. © LWF/ Diaconía – Peru/A. Farrel*

for this analysis stems from mining practices in the Cordillera Blanca mountain range that threaten the safety of the region's freshwater supply.

The ability to test for and understand heavy metal contamination and pH levels equips residents to engage

in informed dialogue and environmental advocacy with government and mining companies working in the area. Currently there is a recommendation by one community group to the local government to change the place where they capture domestic water because this source is contaminated with lead.

Other positive results from dialogue include the move of small mining companies in the Huascarán National Park area to include environmental practices in their operations. These same companies are also sharing their expertise to help communities develop sanitary waste systems. Since January 2003 over 50 community members have been trained as environmental watch promoters.

CLWR is the service delivery arm for overseas development programming and relief of the Lutheran Church-Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada.

It works in partnership with community-based organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

*Daranne Mills is the CLWR director for Communications and Education.*



*Ms Daranne Mills  
© Private*

### Women and Water, Let's Begin

“The things we can do individually and the things that require group action are both necessary if we going are to take better care of the environment. Every day is a perfect time to look at changes you can make in your life, and to think about the environmental needs in your community.”

This statement on the Web site of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) women's organization—Women of the ELCA—invites reflection and action for environmental care.

Water issues continue to be important for participants in the Women of the ELCA. At the organization's Fifth Triennial Convention (2002) and the Sixth Triennial Convention (2005), the delegates took action on water issues, calling for all participants to take the lead in identifying local water issues and educating others about those issues. More information is available at [www.womenoftheelca.org/getinvolved/water.html](http://www.womenoftheelca.org/getinvolved/water.html)

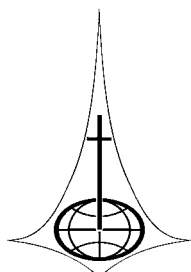
As part of the organization's 20th anniversary in 2007, a portion of a celebratory offering will go toward the Stand



*A woman fills her water pot at a project site of the LWF Department for World Service program in Wollo zone, northern Ethiopia. The project receives financial support from the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. © ELCA/K. Sime*

with Africa Water Project of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe and the Lutheran World Federation.

*Women of the ELCA*



## No Life Without Water – No Water Without Forests

Estela can still clearly remember days when there was enough water in her village in the Olancho administrative district in Honduras. “When I was a little girl,” she recalls, “we used to have water all summer long. These days we get three hours per day.” Estela leans forward in the jeep, and starts to narrate her day-to-day life in her home village of Campamento, about the delicate art of using water sparingly, of the days before the water shortage, before the forest was decimated in Honduras’ largest administrative district.

She sums up the problem perfectly: “Si no hay agua, no hay vida. Si no hay bosques, no hay agua.” – “Without water, there’s no life: without the forest, there’s no water.”

Estela is an administrative assistant at the *Movimiento Ambientalista de Olancho* (Olancho Environmentalist Movement, or M.A.O.) office. She and Hector Hermilo Soto Martinez, coordinator of the Honduran branch of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) country program in El Salvador, are on their way to a M.A.O. coordination meeting. The road to Salama takes them through tall, mature pine forests and then along bumpy gravel roads. Trucks, heavily laden with logs strain past them toward the opposite direction.

Salama is an idyllic little town with a whitewashed church. But its calm appearance is deceptive: two security guards patrol the entrance while Father José Andrés Tamayo Cortez talks with his fellow M.A.O. coordinators.

The 48 year-old Franciscan monk and his colleagues have been receiving death threats ever since they began this organized resistance to the pillage of their environment eight years ago. Some, in fighting for life, have lost theirs.

They record everything—both triumphs and tragedies. One room of the presbytery is dedicated to documenting their story. The walls are covered with newspaper cuttings illustrating M.A.O.’s history: “30,000 March Against Deforestation” and “Protest March For Life” – but also “Unless Father Tamayo Leaves the Land Soon, He Will Be Killed”, and, as if in answer, the title of an interview with



*The luscious greenery can be deceiving—80 percent of tree felling in Honduras is illegal. © LWF/K. Achtelstetter*



*Despite death threats for his outspoken opposition against the indiscriminate decimation of forests and depletion of water sources, Fr José Andrés Tamayo Cortez remains committed to M.A.O.’s cause. © LWF/K. Achtelstetter*

Tamayo himself: “I Am Prepared For Whatever May Come.”

He is not the one who requested the security guards’ posting in front of his house, Tamayo stresses. His commitment stems from his pastoral duty, he explains: “For 23 years, I watched our environment being destroyed and saw the destruction it brought on the community.” He tells of small-scale farmers who have seen their harvests halved because of the dramatic reduction in the water table as a result of deforestation.

Tamayo says 80 percent of the ongoing logging is illegal. The beneficiaries are mainly North American and European firms providing consumers with either cheap timber or rare, protected types of wood such as mahogany. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has already sounded the alarm, warning that at the current logging rates, Honduras’ mahogany will be decimated within the next 10 to 15 years.

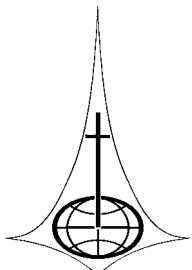
Tamayo stresses that the water and forest are inextricably linked: “We have got to understand the connections that exist and protect our environment, and water is a part of that.”

The LWF/DWS regional Program in Central America has been supporting the M.A.O. environmental campaigning work since 2005.

*Karin Achtelstetter is director of the LWF Office for Communication Services and LWI editor-in-chief. She visited the LWF/DWS Central America projects in Honduras and Nicaragua in July 2006.*



*Ms Karin Achtelstetter, director, LWF Office for Communication Services © LWF/D. Zimmermann*





## LWF Program Works with Haitian Farmers to Protect Natural Resources

The struggle for resources such as water and oil can and does lead to armed conflict. But even in smaller countries such as Haiti, the fight for access to drinking water can lead to considerable violence, often at the local level. This problem is growing rapidly, exacerbated by environmental destruction through deforestation and slash and burn agriculture, illiteracy, ignorance, and the lack of political will of those in power.

The Haiti country program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) has therefore committed itself to the protection of essential natural resources. Innovative economic models are now in place to support rational resource management, which serves to safeguard farmer interests while sustainably protecting natural resources. Reforestation is crucial to

maintaining the sources of Haiti's drinking water. But the fragile Haitian state is unable to help, farmers, who are the most affected by this problem.

The LWF/DWS Haiti program's intervention through the farmers includes strengthening the farmer organizations, developing drinking water supply networks, and the establishment of a water management committee. The work is concentrated in the southeastern part of the country, which is still home to untapped water sources that can still be safeguarded. Extreme underdevelopment and ecological destruction otherwise characterize Haiti, one of the world's poorest country.

*By Michael Kuehn, director of the LWF/DWS Haiti country program.*

## Nicaraguan Church Stresses Water Value Through Public Seminars

For over two years, the Nicaraguan Lutheran Church of Faith and Hope (ILFE) has been focusing its efforts on the appropriate and sustainable use of water. In one such project, the church cooperated with other members of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) International alliance and with other Christian partners in offering seminars and workshops concerning water in Nicaragua. As Rev. Katia María Cortez, assistant to ILFE Bishop Victoria Cortez

Rodríguez, explained, during a recent visit by the *LWI* editor-in-chief, it is the church's goal to inform the public on three related issues: water as nourishment; water as a basic element of health and life; and water as a basis of production. María Cortez noted that each congregation already had a contact person in place to work toward disseminating such information.

*By Karin Achtelstetter, LWI editor-in-chief.*

## A Reservoir to Secure Farmland in the Andes Region

The residents of Singa district in Peru's central province of Huamaly waited 40 years to see their dream become a reality—the conclusion of a five-kilometer canal that provides them with water throughout the year. Located in the Andes region, the district has little water past the rainy season, leaving irrigation as the only guarantee for a good crop production, sometimes even allowing a second harvest.

In 2003, Diaconía – Peru, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS) associate program in the South American country, signed an agreement with the Huánuco municipality to construct the canal, and build an 840 cubic-meter reservoir to secure agricultural production.

Under its Integrated Rural Development Project, Diaconía's contribution toward the canal's construction included technical assistance and building materials. In turn, the community provided skilled labor while the municipality availed transportation means to ferry sand from the Marañón River banks. Today, the available water can irrigate 900 hectares of farmland benefiting 1,130 families.

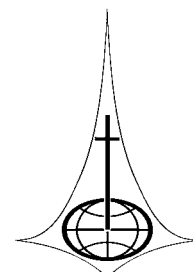
The LWF/DWS Peru program originally began in 1971 in response to the critical needs identified by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peru, an LWF recognized congregation. The church development department established with



*The canal's construction was a joint effort between the local authorities, community members and Diaconía – Peru. © LWF/DWS Peru/L. Hokkanen*

DWS' assistance became a recognized non-governmental organization in 1997, and evolved into a DWS associate program in 2002. Its work mainly focuses on the implementation of rural development programs in some of the poorest Andean regions.

*A contribution of Diaconía – Peru. Further information about the program's work is available on the LWF Web site at: [www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/DWS/Country\\_Programs/DWS-Peru.html](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DWS/Country_Programs/DWS-Peru.html)*



WATER – A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE

The LWI special editorial team invited some of the participants in the three-year (2005–2007) LWF young communicators’ training program, “Towards a Communicating Communion – A Youth Vision,” to share their contextual perspectives on water.

Our Best Water Story

We are water people with water stories. Mine come from the north. I live in Alaska, the United States’ sub-arctic wild. Water brings life here—we pull salmon from the Kenai River, kayak near calving glaciers and pan for gold in the Nome. Water brings death, too. In August, floods swept away bridges between Fairbanks and Anchorage. Above the Arctic Circle, the Shishmaref village washes out to sea as global water levels rise. Shrinking ice fields shorten winter hunting and bring the danger of thin ice.



Rev. Lisa Smith  
© Private

We are God’s people with God’s stories of flowing waters. God moved over the waters at

creation, saved Noah from flooding, and led the Israelites through the Red Sea. John baptized Jesus in the Jordan and washes us in a daily flood of mercy, love and grace. This is our best water story, the one that gives life where all was dry and waiting.

Rev. Lisa A. Smith, 29, serves as Associate Pastor of the Central Lutheran Church, Anchorage, Alaska, USA. She provides pastoral care, worship leadership, preaching and education opportunities for the 800-member congregation of the Alaska Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Scarcity in East Africa’s Water Tower

Ethiopia is often referred to as East Africa’s water tower. It hosts a mass of big river basins such as the Tekeze, Baro-Akobo, Omo-Ghibe, Wabe Shebele, Awash, and the Blue Nile, as well as the Rift Valley lakes south of the capital Addis Ababa. It also has a significant ground water resource potential, which could be tapped for the community’s use. Yet there is a strange paradox between the rich water resources and the current reality with respect to water supply and sanitation.



Mr Johannes Hailu  
© Private

Around 90 percent of Ethiopia’s 74 million people live in the rural areas, some of which are very difficult to access. The national overall access to potable water is estimated at 35 percent, with this figure dropping to 25 percent for the rural population.

In the context of rural Ethiopia, a typical girl or woman may walk up to four or more hours in search of water for domestic use. The so-called safe drinking water may not be treated.

Indeed, the search for water especially in rural Ethiopia, is not only strenuous for our womenfolk, it has also impeded the progress of many future leaders. Accessibility to safe drinking water would significantly contribute to the development of this country.

Yohannes Hailu, 32, is a columnist with the *Beira* newspaper, a publication of Protestant churches in Ethiopia. He is an employee of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

The Philippines – Surrounded by Bodies of Water

The phrase *No ayshi shanum, ayshi biag* in the Philippine’s Ibaloi dialect means “without water, there is no life.”

God let water spring out from the heart of the earth to sustain life—a gift to every living creature. Plants, animals and human beings would not survive without it.

We cannot deny the universal importance of water—for good sanitation and sustaining good health; food production; and as a source of energy, among others.

The Philippines, an archipelago comprising 7,107 islands, is surrounded by bodies of water—the Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. God has endowed this country with riv-

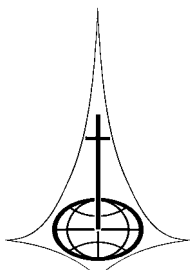


Mr Gerald A. Salda  
© LWF/D. -M. Grötzsch

ers, lakes and springs. However, because of the ill-fated activities of humankind like unsafe disposal of domestic, industrial, agricultural and mining waste products, most of the fresh water resources here—Pasig, Balili and Abra rivers, and the Manila Bay, to mention a few—are polluted.

Restoring these bodies of water to “life” would require the combined effort of all government and non-governmental organizations including churches.

Gerald A. Salda, 26, is a member of the Lutheran Church in the Philippines, and president of the North Luzon Lutheran Youth League.



Throughout the Bible, the image of water is presented at multiple levels. This section contains some theological reflections on the close relation between the spiritual waters and the waters of our world today. It also highlights the potential for conflicts among communities living in areas with scarce water resources.

## “Water of Life and the Waters of Our Lives”

The biblical image of water speaks to us at multiple levels. God’s presence is revealed to us in the rivers of our baptism and also in the rivers of our lives—the waters of the Mekong River in Cambodia, where I recently attended a Lutheran World Federation (LWF) consultation on water; the cascading waterfalls of the Columbia River, western United States and Canada; and many other rivers of our world.

The Bible’s many invitations to come to the “water of life” bring together both literal water and spiritual water. In the Hebrew Scriptures, “living water” means water that is flowing free and pure, in contrast to water from cisterns that could be stagnant. In the Gospel of John, Jesus chooses the term “living water” to refer to the gift of life that he gives to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4) and to all who thirst. The living water offered by Jesus for our spiritual life speaks also to the living waters of our world today—rivers, oceans, glaciers, aquifers and watersheds that are endangered by pollution, climate change, dams, privatization and other threats.

The prophets of old envisioned a place where spiritual waters and earthly waters flowed together. Ezekiel saw water flowing from beneath the temple, becoming a river along whose banks trees grew abundantly (Ezek 47:1–12). The final vision of the apocalyptic book of Revelation invites us to drink of the wondrous river of life that flows through God’s holy city.

Where is God’s river of life in our world today? If we too hastily “spiritualize” biblical descriptions of the water of life as referring only to heavenly water, we may miss an important biblical dimension that can help us in addressing water issues today.

Consider Lamentations 5:1–4, a catalog of the sufferings of exile, including the lament that “We must pay for the water we drink.” Is this just metaphorical language? Or could it be that access to drinking water—real, physical water—was being denied God’s people in exile?

Similarly, the beautiful poetry of Isaiah 55: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price!” Certainly this is wonderful metaphorical language, proclaim-



Rev. Dr. Barbara R. Rossing  
© LWF/H. Putsman

ing that God’s grace is free. But could it also be that the prophet noticed the poor people around him who lacked the money needed to buy water, and thus were denied access to the essentials of life in an unjust economy?

The book of Revelation contains some of the Bible’s most vivid water imageries, with its terrifying sequences of plagues and wondrous river of life. In Revelation 16:16 a messenger of the rivers cries out to warn oppressors about the consequences of their own deadly actions. In the third plague when waters and springs turn to blood, the angel (“messenger”) of the waters interprets

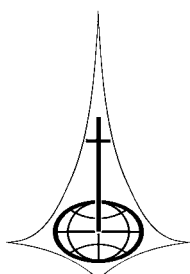
this through the logic of natural consequences, in a boomerang-like effect: “You are just, O Holy One... for you have judged these things; because they shed the blood of saints and prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is axiomatic” (Greek: *axios estin*, Rev 16:5–6).

The messenger of Revelation’s waters seems to be saying that oppressors who commit acts of violence will eventually unleash their own destructive consequences upon themselves.

As we consider the message of Revelation for today, we can ask how the angel of the waters’ biblical axiom speaks to us. The biblical plagues are not meant to be predictions but rather exhortations to repentance—urgent warnings, like the Exodus plagues, to wake us up to the consequences of our actions before it is too late. Revelation not only diagnoses the plagues of the empire, it also offers a vision for healing—a wondrous river of life, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb, Jesus, through the center of our world. Revelation invites us to see all the waters of our world as connected to that watershed of God’s river of life. “(..) Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift” (Rev 22:17).

*(Biblical references are based on the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.)*

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## Strengthening Community-Based Conflict Resolution Structures

The Kenya/Sudan program of the Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service coordinates emergency, relief, recovery and rehabilitation operations in northwest Kenya and South Sudan. Present in Turkana District since the establishment of the Kakuma Refugee Assistance Project in 1992, the LWF expanded its operations in 1999 to also implement projects in the district's surrounding areas of Kakuma and Oropoi in order to address the growing needs of the host Turkana community.

Classified as an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) district, Turkana has limited economic potential and is characterized by drought, rocky terrain and poor vegetation coverage. The population is primarily pastoralist and nomadic, relocating constantly in search of pasture for its livestock. The sporadic movement often exposes the local community to conflict over grazing land and water resources, which can sometimes lead to loss of lives. Additionally, the limited access to basic services—water, education, health, food, shelter and physical infrastructure—in the host community, while these services are made available in the LWF/DWS-run Kakuma Refugee Camp (KRC), continues to enhance tensions between these communities.

Through its peace building and conflict resolution unit in the KRC, DWS Kenya/Sudan conducts joint peace initiatives between the two populations in order to reduce inter-communal tensions and promote harmonious relations. The focus includes the formation of joint peace and security committees; facilitation of mediation and reconciliation meetings; and training on peace building and conflict resolution techniques.

The following case is a typical example in an ASAL district. Prolonged drought in 2006 compelled the locals to move closer



A Turkana man drinks water from one of the boreholes provided by LWF/DWS Kenya-Sudan. © LWF/DWS Kenya/Sudan/B. Waddell

to the KRC with the hope to access the water facilities there. A Turkana boy punctured a water pipe to get drinking water, causing considerable damage and interrupting the water supply to the camp. Although such an incident would normally lead to heightened tension and eventually physical confrontations between both communities, the timely intervention of the KRC peace building unit ensured that the hostilities were quickly defused.

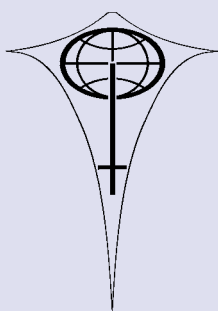
The follow-up included further intensive dialogue in reconciliation meetings between the host community leaders and the camp's water management committee. As a result, the locals residing in the camp agreed to share their water during the dry season with the Turkana who live outside the camp.

Through the KRC peace building unit, DWS Kenya/Sudan continues to promote community initiatives that strengthen community-based conflict resolution structures.

*Contributed by staff of the DWS Kenya/Sudan peace building unit at the Kakuma Refugee Camp, northwest Kenya.*



A Turkana woman cools off with water from a shallow well during a community meeting. © LWF/DWS Kenya/Sudan/B. Waddell



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