



World Student
Christian Federation
Asia Pacific Region



Human Rights Justice and Peace Committee

When the poor and needy seek water,
I will open rivers on the bare heights,
and fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
and the dry land springs of water.

Isaiah 41:17-1

Discussion Paper, General
Information and Bible
Study: WATER CAMPAIGN

Contents Page

- 1.0 Introduction to the HRJP Committee
 - 1.1 What is the committee
 - 1.2 What do we do?
- 2.0 Introduction to the Water Campaign
 - 2.1 Why water?
 - 2.2 Water and Human Rights
 - 2.3 Millennium Development Goals
- 3.0 Theological Importance of Water
 - 3.1 A Prayer
 - 3.2 A Bible Study
 - 3.3 Litany
 - 3.4 Adapted Reading
- 4.0 Some testimonials from young people in Asia/ Pacific
 - 4.1 Devi Kumari
 - 4.2 Shobu Tara
 - 4.3 Vu Thuy Anh
 - 4.4 Lin Yan
- 5.0 Call to Action
- 6.0 Links and resources

“Give drink to my chosen people” Isaiah 43:20c



1 in 8 people do not have access to clean and safe drinking water.

Image from charity: water. <http://www.charitywater.org/whywater/>

WSCFAP Human Rights, Justice and Peace Committee

1.0 Introduction to the Human Rights Justice and Peace Committee

As you will well be aware, the World Student Christian Federation has a strong focus on supporting social justice cause and a significant emphasis has long been placed on issues of Human Rights. As such the WSCF Asia Pacific region has had programmes in place to carry out this important work, initially this was run by a Human Rights coordinator. Then a comprehensive internship programme was introduced and run successfully. This internship programme was evaluated in 2006 and since then has expanded to run annual Human Rights workshops which are open to participants from throughout the region.

In 2007 a working group was formed to evaluate and bring to fruition, the idea of a Human Rights Committee for the region. This was completed and the first group met face-to-face in 2008.

1.1 What is the HRJP Committee?

The HRJP Committee is currently composed of the following people:

- Leni Valeriano (HR Coordinator)
- Neill Ballantyne (Aotearoa/NZ)
- A.V. Caleb (India)
- Nano Yeung (HK)
- Sunita, Suna (Regional Women's Coordinator)
- Necta Montes (Regional Secretary)
- Representative from SCM Philippines

We have had two online meetings and have met in the Philippines between July 1st- 7th.

1.2 What do we do?

According to the By-Laws of WSCFAP:

- a) That the HRJP Committee functions for two years until the next RCM; (This function has been completed by the interim committee)
- b) Assessment and evaluation of Human Rights Programs and Human Rights actions taken in the regional and national levels;
- c) Draw specific themes, plans and recommendations for the Human Rights Work and Program;
- d) Fundraising and linking with other HR and Justice and Peace groups.
- e) Serve as a campaign centre for HR, Justice and Peace issues locally and internationally.
- f) Develop future Human Rights and Peace Advocates.
- g) To build solidarity on peace and justice issues.
- h) Encourage and support national movements on their HR, Justice and Peace issues.

This information pack has thus been produced as part of our responsibilities.

2.0 Introduction to the Water Campaign

As you should be aware, the global advocacy campaign this year is in regards to water and what it means for us as Christian students. As such you should have received a statement earlier this year from WSCF's Advocacy and Solidarity Committee (ASC) marking the launch of the campaign which coincided with the Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS), as well as World Water Day. We hope your SCM was able to produce some kind of action in response to this statement, but if not all is not lost, as this document will provide suggestions of further ways of responding to the global theme.

2.1 Why Water?

Water gives life. From the first drops of water that pool together then tumble through the many waterways that link the globe, it sustains the planet like the blood that keeps us alive. We depend on this constantly renewing source to sustain the ecosystems that provide the food and sustenance we need. However, without adequate protection these sources of water are no longer sufficient for demand. In the past 50 years humans have polluted these life sources in an unprecedented manner.

Where there was once a flowing stream which fed pristine rivers and crystal clear lakes, now there is more likely to be polluted, disease-filled liquid or a dried up water bed.

The seriousness of the damage to the water supply compounded by the increasing demands for more water are major challenges to us all. Increased production, industrial processes, mining and agriculture combined with the greater pressure from a growing population add daily to this stress.

Addressing issues surrounding global water supply and sanitation is an urgent matter especially when so many people suffer from the consequences of drinking unclean water and using unhygienic toilets. Together they are key causes of ill health and increased poverty as those with the least struggle to pay for treatment. Global efforts by the United Nations to increase access to sustainable, safe drinking water are improving the situation for some but similar efforts to improve sanitation are failing.

As Christians we recognise that water has is a symbol of many biblical truths, such as our thirst for justice, the power of the Holy Spirit and of new life in Jesus Christ. We also recognised that we are called to protect water as stewards of Creation.

2.2 Water and Human Rights

- Access to water for life is a basic human need and a fundamental human right. Yet in our increasingly prosperous world, nearly a billion people are denied the right to clean water (UNDP, 2006: v).
- We are making progress. Worldwide, there have been huge gains in extending access to water, and now 5.7 billion people, or 87% of the world's population, have access

WSCFAP Human Rights, Justice and Peace Committee

to safe drinking water. This is an increase of 1.6 billion since 1990. The number of people without access to safe drinking water sources has fallen below one billion, and is currently at about 880 million.

- Some of the world's poorest people are paying some of the world's highest prices for water in slums and informal settlements. The cost of purchasing water from a private vendor can be 10-20 times more expensive than from a public water utility (UNDP, 2006: 83).
- Although there is not yet a global water shortage, over 40% of the world's population (2.8 billion people) live with some form of water scarcity (UN, 2008: 40).

2.3 Millennium Development Goals

- The Millennium Development Goals were devised by the United Nations and signed onto by leaders of the world's richest countries in the year 2000.
- They are a set of 8 development targets which are aimed to be completed by 2015 and include the likes of eradicating extreme poverty, reducing child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development.
- One of these goals includes the target to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the world's population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.
- Adequate access to water affects progress towards other MDGs, including gender equality, child mortality and environmental sustainability.
- Currently the world is on track to meet the MDG drinking water target: trends suggest that more than 90 per cent of the global population will use improved drinking water sources by 2015 (WHO/UNICEF, 2008: 24).
- However even if the targets are achieved, there will still be more than 800 million people without access to water. We need to keep in mind the goal of universal water coverage.

3.0 Theological Importance of Water

As noted earlier, the bible is full of references and stories involving water. This is not especially surprising considering that many of the writers of the books of the Bible lived in areas where clean water is not in abundance. Thus it is not surprising that acts to symbolise spiritual cleanliness involved the use of water, baptism for example. Also the notion of water as healing, both physically and spiritually is noted in the bible. Some traditions even set apart water for the purpose of both healing and cleansing and call it 'Holy Water.'

Thus it is clear that water is important to the Christian faith and the following suggested activities will explore this in greater depth.

WSCFAP Human Rights, Justice and Peace Committee

3.1 A prayer

Sustaining God

We turn to you in prayer, mindful of the world in which we live where too many people lack the most basic source of life -clean water. This is your world, created with water enough to meet every person’s need, young and old, male and female, rich and poor.

We pray for water for all God’s people.

Life giving God, we pray for the people of Haiti. Before the earthquake so many of them struggled to find the means to survive but now it is so much harder. They are your people and in need of your care. Help us to remember them as they rebuild their lives. May they know that like all people of this earth, you care for them. Give strength to all those who seek to bring new life to this broken land and hope for a just future.

We pray for water for all God’s people.

Dreaming God, we pray for all those who have the power to make life-giving decisions, especially those who are responsible for managing and maintaining water systems, for community groups and SCM groups seeking to restore the environment and the lives of poor people, and those who can make policies to protect the future of all people. May they find just solutions that ensure that every human being has clean water and adequate toilets.

We pray for water for all God’s people.

In the name of the Christ who always brings life and hope, we pray together.

Amen

3.2 A Bible Study

1) Share your actual lived experiences with water – personal, family, communal.

Do any of these actual lived experiences relate - directly or indirectly - with the following biblical passages?

Exodus 17:1 “no water for the people to drink”

Psalms 23:2..... “beside still waters”

Psalms 137:1..... “by the rivers of Babylon”

Mark 4:36–41..... “then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm”

John 19:28–30..... “I am thirsty”

Revelation 7:16–17 “springs of water of life”

Can you think of other biblical references that might relate to your personal experiences?

Brainstorm all the biblical references to water that you can think of.

WSCFAP Human Rights, Justice and Peace Committee

2) What symbolic significance does water have for you?

Do any of these biblical references relate – directly or indirectly – with your personal symbolism?

Psalms 1:3..... “like trees planted by streams of water”

Jeremiah 2:13 “cracked cisterns... can hold no water”

John 4:7–42..... “a Samaritan woman came to draw water”

Can you think of other biblical references that might relate to the symbolic significance water has for you?

3) Consider some of the specific symbolic realities of water in the Bible.

How do these images speak to you?

Water – cleanliness Leviticus 15: 1 - 15

Water – healing Mark 8: 23

Water – blessing..... Deuteronomy 11: 13, 14, Hebrews 6: 7

Water – welcome and hospitality:..... Matthew 10: 42

Water – value 1 Chronicles 11: 15 - 19

Water – initiation Mark 1: 9 - 13

Water – repentance..... Acts 22: 16

Water – liberation Exodus 14

Water – destruction Joshua 24: 6

Water – fear..... Psalm 107:23-32; Matthew 8:23-27

Water – refreshment..... Isaiah 49:10; Revelation 21:6

Water – hope Revelation 22:1-5

Water – God..... Jeremiah 2:13; Psalm 36:8-9; Revelation 4:1-6

Water – fruitfulness..... 1 Corinthians 3: 6 - 8

Water – Holy Spirit..... John 7: 37 - 39

Water – wise planning Matthew 7: 24 - 27

Water – ministry..... 1 Corinthians 3: 5 - 9

Water – grandeur..... Job 38; Psalm 104

(especially verses 3, 6, 10-11, 25-26)

Do your own investigation to find out how else water figures symbolically in the Bible.

WSCFAP Human Rights, Justice and Peace Committee

3.3 Litany

Response: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: Creating God, how magnificent are the works of your hands. We remember how you created the waters of the earth and out of these waters you created life.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: We remember how you sent rains upon the earth to cleanse it. We remember how you sent the rainbow as a sign of promise each time it rains.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: We remember how you created a new people by having them pass through the sea with a “wall of water on the right and on their left”. We remember how you provided water that was sweet for forty years in the desert.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: We remember how the Psalmist called the sheep of his flock to find pasture beside the still waters. We remember how the Prophets announced a time when the wilderness would blossom forth with new life and justice would flow like a mighty river.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: We remember how Jesus calmed the waters of Galilee. We remember how he invited all to come and drink from a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: We also remember how the waters of this land were once pure and clean. We remember how the lakes and rivers and streams sustained the first peoples of this land. We remember how our ancestors settled along the waterways of this land gaining livelihood from the water.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: But we did forget. We took your water for granted. We polluted it. We wasted it. We became sick of it and some even died from it.

People: Creating God, help us never to forget.

Leader: Many years will pass and considerable resources will be needed if the waters are to run clean again in our streams, rivers, lakes and oceans. Help us, Creating God, to never forget the sacred gift that is water.

3.4 Adapted Reading

By the rivers in Fortaleza, we sat down and cried for the cholera victims.

In those who lived there we saw sadness and we didn't know what to say.

People who lived there did not have songs on their lips.

They wanted joy but, with neither water nor health there was no way to be joyful.

How could we sing praise to the Lord in the midst of such suffering?

If we forget you, may we go thirsty.

May our lips be dry if we forget you, if we don't bring back water, health, and joy.

Judge, Lord, our elites, for their neglect and greed have long mistreated us.

But remember Fortaleza, your children in Ceara that suffer from thirst and cholera; don't let the earth go dry.

An adaption of Psalm 137, by Napoleao Marcos Mendes of Fortaleza, the state capital of Ceara in Brazil.

4.0 Some testimonials from young people in Asia Pacific

4.1 Devi Kumari- Nepal

Devi Kumari lives in Satu Pasal, Nepal with her family. The women of the village worked with WaterAid's partner NEWAH to build a water supply close to their homes while the village men were fighting with the army. Before they had their safe water supply they used to have to collect water from a dirty river at the bottom of the hill. When the men returned they were so inspired by the women's work that they decided to build a path from the village to the new water point. Devi's grandmother Devaka Kahtri explains the difference that water has brought to her family's life:

"We used to get water from the stream, it was very dirty. The children would get sick with diarrhoea at least once a month. Now that hardly ever happens. A neighbour's son died four years ago from diarrhoea and it is still happening in villages further up the hill where they don't have safe water."



4.2 Shobu Tara- Bangladesh

Shobu Tara lives in Kallyanpur Pura Baste Slum, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The area she lives in is overcrowded and used to have no basic services like water or sanitation. Recently her community has worked with WaterAid to build water and sanitation facilities here. She now visits a day care centre while her mother works to earn money for the family. At the centre children are taught about good hygiene practises which they then teach to their parents and other people. They train for three months and then graduate to spread the message to other people living in the slums.

"I tell my family and neighbours about hand washing and keeping things clean. If I see anyone using a bad hygiene practice I tell them. Initially my parents would tell me to be quiet as I was just a child. But the group I'm with now get together and then go and tell these adults together about good hygiene. We are braver in a group and feel like we can tell adults what to more with that extra confidence."



4.3 Vu Thuy Anh- Viet Nam

Vu Thuy Anh was incensed to learn that village children in her native Viet Nam could not go to school during the dry season because they had to walk 30 km each day to fetch water. Vu and an engineer designed a system to draw water from the nearest spring 12 km away. The solar-powered system uses a pump to move water from the spring through a pipeline and into a holding tank in the village.

In two days Vu, her friends, and 60 villagers dug the trench for the pipe. By the end of the week, the holding tank was full. The project engineer, Nguyen Xuan An, trained local youth to oil the moving parts of the pump and monitor it regularly. The kids, accompanied by many young helpers, eagerly check it daily. They come to view the pump that has saved them so much and allowed them to attend school again.



4.4 Lin Yan- China

“At home I re-used tap water to flush the toilet,” says Lin Yan from China. “The next month, my mum was surprised to see the water bill drop by 20 per cent! Seeing the state of affairs around me, I decided to start the ‘How to Save Water at Home’ campaign. I printed flyers and I now have a good team of people who have joined hands with me. Every year on World Water Day we organise awareness events in our community. Though a little step, we at least know that we are moving in the right direction and ensuring the population, especially the poor, gain access to enough water for less money.”



5.0 Call to Action

Knowing how important water is to all of humanity, we cannot in good conscience, sit back and let our natural water resources be depleted, polluted and privatised. We call on SCM's throughout Asia-Pacific to identify specific water issues with their countries which they could take action to try and resolve. Some suggested actions include:

- Lobbying your local politicians
- Starting a demonstration
- Educating your community on the issues
- Raising awareness through symbolic actions at your university (maybe a flash mob or a freeze mob)
- Having a day of prayer etc

Furthermore we encourage you to have all your SCM members stand in solidarity with SCM'ers from throughout Asia-Pacific by signing onto the same online petition:

<http://www.petitiononline.com/waterday/petition.html>

This petition is a statement on the right to water, and with our backing we could add thousands of signatures to it and then have our Interregional secretary Christine Housel present it to a United Nations representative in Geneva.

Here is a way where we can effectively come together, in solidarity as a regional organisation, and take action which could have wide-reaching consequences.

Thus we encourage you to take up your responsibility as a steward of creation and as a friend of the marginalised and take action on the theme of water.

6.0 Links and Resources

United Nations, 2008, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2008*. New York: UN.

UNDP, 2006. *Human Development Report 2006: Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*. UN: New York. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2006/>

WHO/UNICEF, 2008. *Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: Special Focus on Sanitation*. Geneva: United Nations. <http://bit.ly/p0dg>

charity: water. <http://www.charitywater.org/>

WaterAid. <http://www.wateraid.org/>

End Water Poverty coalition. <http://www.endwaterpoverty.org/>

<http://www.waterfootprint.org/?page=files/home>

<http://www.churchworldservice.org/>

http://www.cws.org.nz/files/World%20Water%20Day%202010_0.pdf

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home/>