

# **CGS MUN**

**Committee: Human Rights Council**

**Issue: Ensuring access to water and sanitation for all**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

We live in 2018. Technology has improved up to a high point, new ways of surviving have been found and yet, basic needs and the essentials for one to live are not guaranteed. One big issue that our world has been facing for multiple years is the lack of access to water and sanitation. People are dying, diseases are spreading and more and more children are directly affected by this issue. Thus, the UN has set one of its Millennium Development Goals to achieve sanitation and water for every country and individual and as you have understood so far, it is our duty to do as such.

Water is something essential for every human being for multiple reasons. To start with, water works as a lubricant in digestion and almost all other body processes while it regulates a body's temperature. Without basic sanitation, a person can lead to dehydration and thus to various diseases such as waterborne diseases, digestive disorders, acid imbalance and more. However, that is not just it. Lack of sanitation can also lead to more immediate disabilities, such as lack of energy, premature aging or even high or low blood pressure. The tragic amount of people living without access to water are unfortunately 844 million and the people living without access to improved sanitation are 2.3 billion. Many countries are affected by this phenomenon. South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria and Pakistan are just a few examples of countries in which children, women and men are suffering from this huge problem we are dealing with. Despite the fact that many people do not understand how children are directly affected by this issue, in fact they are. Children often are the ones responsible for collecting water, in order to help their families and themselves survive and thus, do not devote time for their education. Addressing primary humanitarian needs and rights, such as the access to potable water, also allows children, to have a better future and this is one of the main UN responsibilities.

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To sum up, we need to find immediate solutions to solve this issue that our world is facing before it affects even more a country's economy, a country's citizens, a person's wellbeing and generally, our future.

## **DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

### **Sanitation**

“The promotion of hygiene and prevention of disease by maintenance of sanitary conditions.”

### **Water Scarcity**

“The lack of fresh water resources to meet water demand.”

### **Dehydration Water**

“A deficit of total body water, with an accompanying disruption of metabolic processes.”

### **Waterborne diseases**

“Conditions caused by pathogenic micro-organisms that are transmitted in water.”

### **Desalination**

“A process that extracts mineral components from saline water.”

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **SANITATION**

Sanitation, as mentioned multiple times before, is one of the essentials for a person to survive and provides a variety of benefits. For instance, access to sanitation will reduce the spread of tropical diseases that cause suffering for millions, such as

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trachoma, intestinal worms, schistosomiasis and more. Moving on, it will reduce the severity and impact of malnutrition while it will promote both dignity but also safety, when it comes to both children and adults. And that's not just it. Lastly, by solving this issue, societies could achieve the potential recovery of water e.g. via renewable energy nutrients from faecal waste. However, in the first place, which are the main causes of the issue? Pollution, the overuse of water, water wastage or even droughts and conflicts are just a few examples of the main causes of the problem. That affects multiple nations, not only by creating problems such as the lack of food and energy resources but also, less directly, other ones, such as a country's economic slowdown. It is clear, as stated above again, that solutions must be found immediately. However, there are still many challenges ahead. For example, there is limited data available on this topic that suggests that a large proportion of wastewater in developing countries is discharged partially treated or untreated directly into rivers, lakes or the ocean. Moving on, wastewater is increasingly seen as a resource providing reliable water and nutrients for food production to feed growing urban populations. Another example is that inequalities in access are compounded when sewage removed from wealthier households is discharged into storm drains, waterways or landfills, polluting poor residential areas. Thus, immediate measures to solve this issue need to be undertaken.

## LACK OF WATER

The lack of water is a fact in many countries in the world, something proven throughout the study guide. Not all citizens are directly affected and thus, they do not understand the multiple consequences. The aspects of the problem are unfortunately various. Taking an individual, for instance, we can see the multiple effects of his body not having access to water and thus not being hydrated. It can start with low blood pressure, or even low energy level but can unsuspectedly lead to serious diseases that could lead to dangerous or even fatal consequences. On the other hand, taking a country will make anyone understand that water scarcity is a fact. The total amount of easily accessible fresh water on Earth is 14.000 cubic kilometers. Of this amount, only 5.000 cubic kilometers are being used and reused by humanity and in theory, there is more than enough freshwater available to meet

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the demands of the current world population and even suffice for a population growth to 9 billion people or more. However, inequality exists, and in our case, it leads to differentiated access to water. For example, many people in More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC's) use about 10 times more water daily than those in LEDC's. And even the little water that is left in LEDCs, might be polluted and used to produce goods destined for consumption in other countries, due to the globalization in production chains.

## CHILDREN

As in any problem, there are specific social groups that are affected the most. In our case unfortunately, children mostly in LEDC's but also in some MEDC's are the ones needing our help the most with countries such as Pakistan, Nigeria or Ethiopia having the lead. The right to water is a right that plays a major role to the development of a children and its daily life. Unfortunately, they live a life with no education, no nutrition, no health and no employment. They are forced to walk long distances to bring water home, and thus they have no time left to even relax and take a break. They leave a poor and violent life in which they have the fear of being physically or sexually attacked, when walking for water and seeking a private place to urinate or defecate, and that goes both for girls and boys. Children that are supposed to be at school so as to broaden their future and open doors for themselves, are left home, with little supplies and an order to walk all day long so as to satisfy their families thirst and sometimes, if their lucky theirs. That, as one might think does not only affect the specific child, whether it a boy or a girl. It leaves a whole society and its economy behind and does not leave any space for development. UNICEF has specifically stated that a lack of access to clean water causes waterborne illnesses that kill more than 1.6 million young children each year or that lack of separate and decent sanitation facilities at schools often forces girls to drop out of primary school. It is high time we did something about it, before it is too late and many developing countries are left with little or no future.

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## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

### Nigeria

Nigeria is a country in which over 180 million people do not have access to water or sanitation, for multiple reasons such as the results of conflicts, violence and instability. The north-eastern part of Nigeria has been affected the most due to the Boko Haram insurgency that has damaged about 75 per cent of water and sanitation infrastructure. Furthermore, a major lack of access to clean water due to malnutrition and cholera among children has been reported in Nigeria. Thus, Nigeria is a country directly affected by the specific issue and needs to start taking immediate actions. Throughout the past years, attempts have been made so as for water to be provided to such people and some of them have had results, however the world needs to take a step further, so as for every aspect of the problem to be tackled.

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## **Pakistan**

Pakistan is a country that ranks third among the countries that do face problems when it comes to accessing water and having a sufficient sanitation. Most of the water in the specific country seems to be polluted due to various factors. Poor strategy of government institutions, the policies of neighboring countries and poor distribution of water within the country are just a few examples of why Pakistan is one of the countries that needs to start making rapid progress when it comes to that field.

## **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is again a country that struggles with the problem at hand. In this country, the problem is targeted mostly at vulnerable social groups, such as women and girls, that have to walk more than three hours to collect water, often from shallow wells or unprotected ponds they share with animals. In this specific country, not only its economy is problematic, but also its resorts are left unused. Despite the fact that in the past attempts that have helped improve the situation have been made, we need to start taking again actions.

## **Uganda**

Uganda is a country that due to its economic growth has a large population not only in rural areas but also around urban centers. Unfortunately, the high population growth, stressed the water and sanitation services that exist, thus leading to serious consequences. For instance, it is a fact that 61% of Ugandans lack access to safe water and that 75% do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. That has a serious impact, regarding the people living there and the diseases that are spread.

## **Middle East**

Most of the countries in the Middle East face issues regarding the access to sanitation that affects them either directly or indirectly and causes severe results. Some of them, including Yemen, the UAE, Saudi Arabia or Iraq have been trying to deal with

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this issue for a couple of years, with little or no success. For instance, UAE are confronted with a serious depletion of their available water resources. A report from the Emirates Industrial Bank in 2005 stated that the UAE had the highest per capita consumption of water in the world. Another research ending in 2009, showed that the rate of freshwater reserve losses in the region was almost equal to the volume of the entire Dead Sea, making it the largest rate of loss of liquid freshwater on the planet during that time. When talking with percentages, Bahrain uses 220% of its available renewable water reserves, compared to 943% in Saudi Arabia and 2,465% in Kuwait. In the Middle East 85% of the water supplies is used in agriculture, another habit that needs to be immediately changed.

## TIMELINE OF EVENT

Date	Description of Event
1997	The United Nations Water Conference
2005-2015	'Water for Life' International Decade for Action
September 2 2013	UN Deputy Secretary General urges global action on sanitation
November 6 2014	UN Secretary General addressing World Water Summit on importance of water and sanitation to global peace and development
22 March 2018	International Decade for Action, 'Water for Sustainable Development' commenced on World Water Day, (basically, in this decade, it has been signed that multiple actions will be taken by many countries and co-operations within nations would be in order so as for this huge problem regarding lack of water and access to sanitation to be solved)

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28 July 2010	Through Resolution 64/292, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realization of all human rights.
November 2002	the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment No. 15 on the right to water.
March 2008	Through resolution 7/22, the Human Rights Council decided to appoint, for a period of three years, an independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations related to access to safe drinking water and sanitation.
May 2011	The World Health Organization (WHO), through Resolution 64/24, made a call to Member States to ensure that national health strategies contribute to the realization of water- and sanitation-related Millennium Development Goals.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

As mentioned multiple times throughout the study guide, attempts have been made in order for this issue to be solved. However, they were either insufficient, or they were unfruitful. For instance, with the donations of multiple countries, institutions for developing water and sanitation portfolios have been created, however with not enough help provided to them. Other governments are trying their best to give access to water to people who need it the most, or to provide healthcare

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to the ones suffering. Lastly, in many LEDC's, children's rights are being defended, so that they can finally be able to live a healthy life. Despite all the aforementioned attempts, more help is needed and the matter needs to be dealt with seriousness and urgency.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Possible solutions for this problem to finally be solved can be found and implemented, as long as there is willingness to do so.

To start with, awareness should be raised via multiple means. If people around the world are not aware of the huge problem we are dealing with, they won't be able to contribute in any way possible. Moving on, both Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and governments need to start taking actions and getting matters into their own hands. Funding already existing organizations so that they can help people who suffer from diseases caused by the lack of water, children get back on track when it comes to their education or even provide the ones needing it the most with a sufficient proportion of water is of great importance. Despite all the above indirect solutions, there are others, more direct and difficult ones. For instance, elimination of the use of chemicals in water should be a general guideline no matter how difficult it seems. Maybe annual checks so as to measure both the quantity and the quality of water in a country would reduce inequality in general, due to the basic reason that the ones suffering the most will be recognized and will receive help more immediately. Even the reinforcement of already existing researches whose goal is to find solutions for issues such as finding economical ways to desalinate ocean water would again provide a much bigger proportion to the world that at the current moment needs it. Furthermore, innovations could take place. For instance, grapheme filters, fog catchers, solar crops or more other innovative ideas could now, in 2018, be a reality. Moving on, international coordination and cooperation could take place within the framework of the UN so as for more propositions to become a reality. Finally, something worth mentioning is the importance of MEDC's and how their contribution via funding, raising awareness or even their cooperation with other countries would be more than essential. Let's not forget, that we are now trying to

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find solutions that will not only make the water resources meet the needs of every country but will eliminate what we call water crisis.

To sum up, there is a variety of solutions that can be found and implemented, but the primary requirement is willingness. If there is willingness, then the only thing left, is to start transforming our words into much needed action.

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