

2. At the government levels

Everything concerning water is political and water must contribute to the solidarity among countries, societies and generations.

But the cost of purification, transportation, and distribution of water is real. It seems that negotiations are possible between States and private ownership, so that the cost of water is accessible to everyone.

3. At the level of local collectivities

- Reducing evaporation in reservoirs
- Recycling
- Maintenance of water distribution and irrigation networks
- Fight waste



Bibliography

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Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.
Note sent as a contribution by the Holy See on the Occasion of the Third World Water Forum. (Kyoto, March 22, 2003) (in many languages)

www.vatican.va Click on the upper icon: Roman Curia, then Pontifical council, then Justice and Peace.

IHP International Hydrological Programme Brochure
Edited in many languages by UNESCO, 7 Place de Fontenay, 75352 Paris 07 SP France. www.UNESCO.org

Suggestions for using these guidelines

I. Before any research we could ask ourselves the following questions:

1. How important is water for me? My environment?
2. What problems related to water have I witnessed or been involved in?

II. The problem of water today

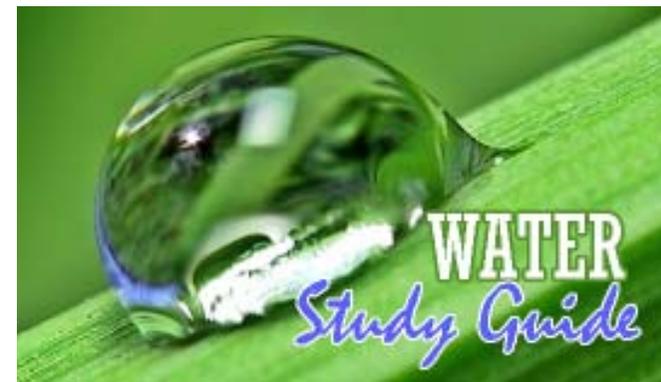
1. Why can't water be considered like the other foods?
2. The scarcity of clean drinking water: what are the causes?
3. Who suffers the most from lack of water? Why?
4. What is the situation in the country we live in? How do those in our circle have access to clean drinking water? Who manages it? What is the cost of clean drinking water?

III. Reflection based on our faith

1. What is said about water in the Bible?
2. What is the role of water in the life of the Church?
3. What do the Magisterium and the Bishops say?

IV. What can we do to reduce the scarcity of water and live in solidarity?

1. Personally?
2. In Community?
3. With those around us?
4. With our government?



Fundamental Principles

Water is an essential element for the survival of living beings.

It is at the heart of civilization, at the heart of social and religious practices, and at the heart of culture. It is indispensable for hygiene, agriculture and industry.

This source of life is therefore part of the common patrimony of humanity.

The whole human community has the right to have access to clean, safe drinking water, and the necessary quality and quantity for life and economic activity.

The lack of water in the world

Only 3% of the resources of available water is fresh water, and only 1% is immediately accessible. The rest is in the form of ice or deep underground water.

Desalination of sea water is expensive and is only possible there where energy is cheap (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait)



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Fresh water is not immediately safe to drink: it must be purified, and purification is so costly that only the rich can afford to do it.

Moreover, fresh water is poorly distributed on the earth: some countries have it in abundance and many others have very little or close to none. 60% of lands have an inadequate supply.

The world population has tripled during the twentieth century to reach six billion. At the same time the consumption of water was multiplied by 7.



The need for water is about 50 liters per person.

- 70% for agriculture
- 20% for industry
- 10% for the people:
drink and hygiene.

But one billion, four hundred million people do not have access to clean water. Seven million die each year from water related illnesses.

Factors for this scarcity

1. Pollution

- water becomes a vector of viral diseases
 - water carries toxic chemical substances.

The principal causes of pollution are the following:

- intensive agriculture
- industry
- people's irresponsible disposal of waste.



2

2. The over consumption and waste

- lack of maintenance and repair of water systems: water spreads out onto the land
- excessive irrigation and watering
- irresponsible use of washing machines and sanitary installations in rich countries.

3. Building of big dams on rivers.

There are more than 45,000 of them.

The consequences are the following:

- loss of farm lands
- displacement of peoples
- reduction of water table
- elimination of animal and vegetable species
- proliferation of mosquitoes.

4. Deforestation and desertification.

Deforestation contributes to scarcity of rainfall.

5. Global warming

The melting of glaciers results in higher sea levels and therefore a decrease in fresh water reserves.

Management of water in the world

It constitutes an aggravating factor.

Water, patrimony of humanity, should be managed in a democratic way at all levels. In reality:

1. Water is treated as merchandise

The international institutions (World Bank, World Organization of Commerce) encourage privatization of water. Three French multinationals (Vivendi, SAUR and Suez-Ondeo) together, hold 74% of the water market in the world.

3



Privatization of the distribution of water leads to an immediate rise in price and often, bloody revolts (Ex: in Bolivia, Cochabamba and Nicaragua).

2. The control of water constitutes an essential element of power.

The distribution of water is a source of conflict:

- between countries where the same river flows through (Pakistan and India, Palestine and Israel, etc).
- between people and their governments (Bolivia, Spain).

It is also a means of applying pressure between countries.

The disparity between North and South is worse.

Clean drinking water has become too expensive in developing countries.

What should be done?

1. At the international level

- Awareness and training.
The year 2003 was proclaimed "Year of Fresh Water" by the United Nations, in order to have a better understanding of the importance of water and to promote action at all levels.
- Agreement

Through a decision taken by the United Nations on December 22, 1992, every year a World Water Day is held in March.

4