



**World Council
of Churches**



We are thankful to you for the hard work put in to preparing this synthesis report on SDG 6 on water and sanitation for all. However, we have two observations on the report:

1. Multi-Stakeholder participation leaves out Faith Communities who are Drivers of change!

Faith-based communities and actors often play a central role in community lives, guiding values, beliefs and behaviours and addressing critical community needs particularly in some of the most water insecure regions of the world. Their vast and structured networks are important means of channeling key messages on sustainable water management, access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. Dr David Nabarro, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, emphasized **role** of religious communities and faith-based development and humanitarian organizations which he considered distinctive and significant in advancing the Sustainable Development Agenda.

We are disappointed that there is no mention of this huge network of drivers of change for the success of the SDG in general and goal 6 in particular, as water has a strong spiritual significance in almost all the religions. Several humanitarian aid and diakonia /development organisations around the world are faith based organisations and are engaged in addressing the global water crisis.

2. On Public-Private partnership, ethical principles governing human right to water is not emphasised

While the report estimates that every year hundreds of billions of dollars are required to address target 6.1 and 6.2 alone and therefore, partnership with public-private is encouraged. However, the report does not take a critical look at the Bottled Water Industries. While the Earth Day had a focus on plastics this year and created awareness among people to become Blue Communities by shunning bottled water where tap water is safe to drink or to look for sustainable alternatives, the report is silent about the menace of bottled water industries.

Furthermore, it is silent on the privatisation of water sector as is the case in many countries. This is contradictory to the principles of human right to water. While the report admits of existing inequalities in the society which further alienate the vulnerable groups, it is silent about the for profit companies' possible contributing to this alienation process.

3. Small scale farmers threatened to be left behind in the implementation and monitoring of SDG 6.4.1. and SDG 6.4.2.

With regard to water and agriculture (target 6.4 and 6.6), the UN-Water report compiles extensive data, demonstration scope and challenge of achieving SDG 6 and interlinkages to related SDGs by 2030. However, " Executive summary", "key messages" and baseline data, do not adequately reflect challenges, opportunities and policy implications related to water use by agriculture.

Water stress is a major driver of shrinking agricultural land and a key constraint to increasing food production for expanding global demand. Increased pressures on freshwater, destruction of water related ecosystems, combined with extreme weather events and climate change threaten the productivity of both: irrigation agriculture (representing 20 percent of agricultural land) and rain fed agriculture (representing 80 percent of the world's cultivated area). Therefore, many regions facing water scarcity are forced to scale back irrigation, restore water bodies and inverse the damaged caused by over-extraction of water by irrigation agriculture (WWDR 2018). At the same time water storage and better water management practices in rainfed agriculture are essential to prevent the food and water crisis: Yields in rainfed areas are two- to fivefold lower than achievable with a current rainwater use efficiency at only 35–45% (Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture 2007).

- The report fails to acknowledge challenges and opportunities related to water use by different farming systems. The responsibility of high input farming systems for the degradation of ecosystems and impacts on water cycles, local water use and food systems are not mentioned. Accordingly, recommendations focus on system immanent agro technical solutions against water stress, such as more efficient and smart irrigation and farming technologies.

- National level statistics on water stress used in the baseline section of the Monitoring Report are hiding pressing problems on water catchment levels, affecting many more countries worldwide. Amongst them water rich countries and major agricultural exporters such as Brazil. The report fails to introduce the SDG 6.4.2. Monitoring ladder, which calls for higher resolution data, i.e. modelling and remote sensing data (FAO 2017 Integrated Monitoring Guide for SDG 6. Step-by-step monitoring methodology for indicator 6.4.2 on water stress).

- Even though mentioned in the interlinkages section (SDG 2.3.) Recommendations and key messages of the report do not even mention the required solutions for achieving better water resource management in rainfed agriculture, such as increased water harvesting and supplementary irrigation, water storage infrastructure, including improving soil moisture retention capacity. This gap is quite remarkable taken into consideration that rural small scale farmers, the group mostly affected by hunger and food insecurity are depending on it. They are threatened to be left behind in the implementation and monitoring of SDG 6.4.1. and SDG 6.4.2.

- Another major omission remains the inclusion of baseline data on challenges, opportunities and policy implications for **sharing of water for the realisation of human rights**. This point becomes even more important as SDG 6.4.1. will exacerbate competition for water amongst user groups and put pressure on small food producers. In theory, the increased participation and voice by local user groups (SDG 6b) may promote both sustainability as well as a fair balance of interests. In practice, imbalances in power structures impeach equitable distribution of resources favouring the economically powerful.

Future reports should focus more on preserving and rehabilitating water catchment areas as a precondition for sustainable water use in regions facing water stress. This should be reinforced with successful case studies drawn from regions in the global South that suffer from water stress. The reports should provide recommendations for better water management according to ecosystems needs and human rights, in line with recommendations of major UN-reports of the last years (WWDR 2018, WWDR 2012, HLPE 2015, CAWMA 2007),

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