

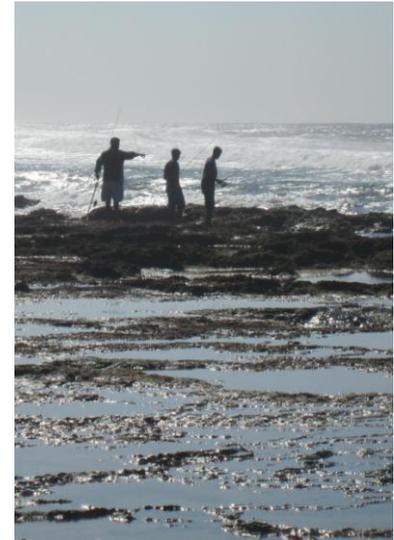
Sustainable use of water, oceans and marine resources

No Life without water. Even more than food we need it to survive. That is why access to water is a basic human right. Yet, some 663 Million people do not have access to clean water. About a third of the world's population lacks basic sanitary services. Polluted water and lack of hygiene are the causes of many sicknesses. The oceans, too, are polluted by plastic materials and industrial and agricultural toxic wastes which harm fish populations and destroy corral riffs and marine ecosystems. Already now climate change means for many regions of the African continent less rainfall, lower ground water levels and lack of drinking water. The struggle for diminishing water supplies is likely to cause major conflicts in the future. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for the conservation and fair and effective management of all water resources.

What do the SDG call for?

The SDGs demand that all people have access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation. Means suggested to achieve this aim are:

- reducing chemical pollution; improving wastewater treatment and recycling and reusing water
- protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes
- sustainably managing, protecting and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems
- minimizing and addressing the impacts of ocean acidification; regulating harvesting and ending over fishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices



What can we do?

Especially, in the drought areas of Africa religious have provided the population with access to clean water by building wells, drilling boreholes and constructing simple water reservoirs.

The local branches of the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) have advocated for many years the right to water as a basic human right.

We can all contribute to avoid the pollution of water resources and of oceans by reducing our use of chemicals and by avoiding as much as possible plastic bags and packing. We can get information about concrete water problems and current campaigns from the [Ecumenical Water Network](#). It publishes during the seven weeks of Lent theological reflections and other [liturgical materials](#) on the theme of water. Also take note of World Water Day 22nd March.

Words to challenge us

- For human beings to destroy the biological diversity of God's creation; for human beings to degrade the integrity of the earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to contaminate the earth's waters, its land, its air, and its life - these are sins. For to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin against ourselves and a sin against God. (Patriarch Bartholomew, quoted in *Laudato Si'* 8)
- One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related diseases. ... Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatize this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market. Yet access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. (LS 29.30)
- An acute water shortage may occur within a few decades unless urgent action is taken. The environmental repercussions could affect billions of people; it is also conceivable that the control of water by large multinational businesses may become a major source of conflict in this century. (LS 31)