

# **Stirring the Waters**

## **LWF/WICAS African Regional Consultation, Nairobi, Kenya**

**25 to 29 April 2005**

### **PREAMBLE**

We, thirty nine women and men representing LWF member churches in Africa, ecumenical organizations and NGO network on water and justice issues gathered to deliberate on the theme “Stirring the Waters” in Nairobi Kenya. This is the second follow up consultation to the call from the LWF 10<sup>th</sup> Assembly to develop an 'Action Plan on Water'

From all the lectures, presentations and contributions from participants, we have learned that there is a great global water crisis which affects humanity especially in the developing countries.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Water is life without water life ends. Water has a spiritual meaning in Christian life. It is like a womb which nurtures and brings forth life. To think of God as a fountain of water is a very profound article of faith. Water is God's gift to creation, therefore should be made available to all creation - human beings, animals and plants. Spiritually water symbolizes salvation and eternal life. Water is one of the elements of baptism and therefore should be taken seriously and urgently. That means the church should be involved in planning with the governments concerned. When water is turned into a commodity by private enterprises, the question of human rights to water is violated and therefore needs to be addressed. Water is diminishing because of overuse, misuse and abuse. Ecumenical perspectives on water emphasize its conservation, responsible management and equitable distribution to the people.

Water must remain a public trust and not a commodity. Therefore the management, protection, distribution, and consumption of water are the responsibility of all. Management of water resources can eliminate poverty. Africa has the potential to bring sustainable water projects to her people.

People living in poverty and those who safeguard the environment should be the main actors in delivery, water management strategies, protection and consumption. The ecumenical organizations should continue to demonstrate how public water management could be made efficient by giving no space for criticism.

### **Key issues:**

1. We affirm women's participation at all levels of decision making that is critical in achieving a more equitable provision of water and sanitation services. Without water they become most vulnerable. Therefore it is important to ensure their involvement as water users, community mobilizers and as decision makers.

2. We call on Governments to make stringent laws and follow up against destruction of natural ecosystems through deforestation, ground water depletion, land degradation and pollution from human chemical and agricultural waste. Governments should provide sustainable alternatives for all these issues.
3. Moral vision, good leadership, resources of human character and spirit, love of life, far sightedness and solidarity are needed to awaken sufficient sense of urgency and resolve at this point in time. Therefore we appeal to African leaders wherever they are in international agencies to come to the aid of their people in this global war against water crisis.
4. The Church should serve as a steward in the management of water. We call on the churches as members of ecumenical family to link up with other organizations that advocate for water including NGOs, private sectors and international bodies to achieve the millennium development goals for water by the year 2015.
5. The community should be made aware of their own national policy and other international conventions on water and be involved in the management of their water.

We recognize and recommend the following practices to be important in solving the African water problems:

- Community participation at all levels of program/projects is important. Wisdom of local community must be utilized.
- Women, youth and children should be involved at all levels of initiatives.
- The importance of water harvesting must be emphasized.
- The importance of afforestation and environmental protection by communities for conservation of water should be encouraged and ensured.
- Address water problems by use of effective traditional methods and appropriate technologies that prevent pollution.

**We commit ourselves to;**

- Report to respective churches and urge them to include in their theme of evangelism the issue of global water crisis.
- Disseminate information obtained from the consultation through workshops and media and invite experts to educate us on water issues.
- We begin the process for developing an LWF action plan for Africa that will include education of communities on their rights to water.
- Advocate and lobby for government support in water development project.

Priorities for African Region:

- Water conservation, sanitation and distribution.
- Peace building and conflict resolution

- HIV/AIDS
- Poverty alleviation and food security
- Gender education and Violence against women and children.

**The role of LWF as a world umbrella for the Lutheran churches includes the following:**

- Extend financial and technical support
- Include afforestation and water harvesting in refugee work.
- Accompany in building up and sustaining regional networks on water issues
- Include water as an agenda item for discussion in workshops at regional church leadership consultations.
- Continue to be part of the global network on water advocacy
- Follow up with the water processes during the UN decade on water.

We recognize this consultation as a beginning of the process of addressing water issues in Africa.