



CWS: World Water Day 2023 Resource

Overview of CWS'
Commitment to
Water Justice



Photo: water is filtered through Renewable Energy Technology in Georgia (country)

All life springs from water. But it's a delicate balance; too much water, too little, too unclean, too commodified...and life becomes impossible. As an organization rooted in faith, Church World Service believes that all people deserve to lead lives of dignity, wherever they find themselves.

At the current rates of progress, by 2030, 1.6 billion people will lack safely managed drinking water, 2.8 billion people will lack safely managed sanitation, and 1.9 billion people will lack basic hand hygiene facilities.

These inequities are forcing urban and rural communities alike into extreme conditions including conflict, displacement, disenfranchisement, disease (including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic), and even death. Those who are the most affected by water scarcity are often the least responsible for harm to the environment. As climate change continues, more and more are burdened by its consequences.

CWS supports holistic and community-led solutions to today's human challenges in 25+ countries. For over 70 years, CWS has prioritized water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programming as a pillar of its sustainable community development, life-saving disaster response, and humanitarian assistance. Through community-led advocacy, global partnerships and collaborative implementation, CWS works alongside communities to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (SDG6), and to build collective power so that those who are most impacted can experience water justice and peace in their lifetimes.

Examples from Around the World:

WASH and water justice are key components of CWS' mission as we aim to transform communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster. Specifically, CWS has been working in Kenya, Tanzania, Vietnam, Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Cambodia, Haiti, the South American Gran Chaco (Argentina, Bolivia, and Paraguay), Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, the Republic of Georgia and the United States. The map below shows a sample of what this means.

108,390 hygiene kits distributed in 2022

CWS and UMCOR launch new menstrual hygiene kits

Resilience and the right to water in the Lower Chaco region of Paraguay

Beekeeping as a response to flooding and droughts in Tana River County, Kenya

Fair water access promotes peace in Cao Binh, Vietnam

A Focus on Water, Migration and Climate Change:

CWS' unique cross-sector work allows the organization and its partners to consider the specific impacts of climate and water injustices on migration and development.

When surveying communities in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Republic of Georgia, Haiti, and Kenya, CWS found that climate-induced water scarcity and its impact on agriculture are increasing factors in migration. In at least one community, climate change was described as a tipping point for displacement.

CWS amplifies the following needs from surveyed communities:

- In these settings, the economic and non-economic impacts of water scarcity must be front and center of government responses to climate change, including through support to locally led adaptation and new responses to climate-induced loss and damage. Drought and increasingly unpredictable rainfall are making land less productive, reducing agricultural incomes and increasing farmers' debt burdens.
- Women and girls especially feel this impact, as less water means more time and effort needed for both farm work and household labor.
- The most economically vulnerable families have little ability to cope with these changes, and have reported to CWS that they can only "rely on nature".
- Successful, pro-active adaptation requires moving beyond customary irrigation and introducing new ways to harvest rainwater; improving access to technology; and mobilizing public investments to access groundwater sources, expand clean water distribution systems, and maintain community water infrastructure.

Resources and WASH Activities for Faith Communities:

CWS' interfaith community – which represents millions of individuals around the world through hundreds of partnerships and its 37 member communions - is critical for mobilizing action and response to water injustices and WASH needs. CWS offers the following educational resources and activities to guide conversations and actions within this community:

CWS' CROP Hunger Walk: Every year, tens of thousands of CROP Hunger Walk participants educate their communities and walk in support of water and food justice. Water is an integral part of our 2023-24 Walk theme, Building Global Resilience.

CWS Kits: Across the nation, hundreds of communities (largely comprised of faith groups) hand pack or sponsor thousands of kits – including general hygiene kits and menstrual hygiene kits – that CWS distributes to communities who need these supplies throughout the year.

Walk Talk Listen: This weekly podcast is led by CWS' Chief Sustainability and Impact Officer, Maurice Bloem, and convenes thought leaders who are advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG6.



Assembling CWS menstrual hygiene kits at a United Church of Christ kits event in New Hampshire (March 2023).



Community water tank, Paraguay



School water system, Haiti



Household water filtration unit, Cambodia

CWS' Role in Global WASH Conversations

Below is a sampling of the organizations and working groups CWS is affiliated with to advance SDG6 and sustainable water justice around the world:

InterAction WASH Working Group

International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) Climate Change Working Group

ACT Alliance Migrant and Climate Justice Working Groups

Bread for the World Interfaith Working Group on Foreign Assistance

Climate Migration and Displacement Platform (CMDP)

WCC-Ecumenical Water Network

CWS Member Communions