

10 December 2017

Human Rights Day

AquaFed stands up for
Human Rights every day

AquaFed and its Members, the private water operators, support the “Stand up for someone’s rights today” campaign of the UN Human Rights office (OHCHR), **because we believe wholeheartedly in the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation.**

AquaFed - www.aquafed.org

The Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

Water and Sanitation

Today at least 1.8 billion people have to use water that is unsafe and 2.4 billion people do not have access to safe sanitary arrangements. Those who depend on water and sanitation services that do not comply with all aspects of the human rights increase these numbers very significantly up to around 40% of the world’s population.

The Human Rights to Water and Sanitation (HRWS) are obligations that States must deliver to the people. States have to ensure that everybody gains access to these services by creating an enabling environment, by adopting appropriate legislation, policies, programmes and by ensuring that these are adequately resourced and monitored.

States have the international obligation to move towards the goal of universal access. Following the principle of **progressive realization** of human rights. Governments have to deliver these rights as expeditiously and effectively as possible, within available resources and within the framework of international cooperation and assistance where needed.

The Human Right to Safe Drinking Water

The human right to safe drinking water entitles every person to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses, under the conditions of equity and non-discrimination.

The Human Right to Sanitation

Lack of sanitation hurts and kills. Ensuring access to sanitation is imperative for health, education and dignity. It is a fundamental right. ‘The human right to sanitation entitles everyone, without discrimination, to have physical and affordable access to sanitation, in all spheres of life, that is safe, hygienic, secure, socially and culturally acceptable and that provides privacy and ensures dignity.’

TODAY

40% of the world’s
population without
fulfilment of their Rights
to Water and Sanitation.

It is estimated that
**every dollar spent on
water and sanitation
generates a return of 8
dollars** in reduced
health costs and
increased productivity.

Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation Declared Universal Human Rights in 2010 and 2015

The HRWS acknowledges the “importance of equal access to safe drinking water and sanitation as an integral component of the realization of all human rights”.

Universal access to sanitation is, “not only fundamental for human dignity and privacy, but is one of the principal mechanisms for protecting the quality of water resources.”

The rights to safe drinking water and sanitation are not specifically mentioned in the **Universal Declaration of the Human Rights from 1948**. The Declaration was adopted by the UN General Assembly as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. For the first time, fundamental human rights were set out to be universally protected.

The importance of equal access to safe drinking water and sanitation is an integral component of the realization of all human rights. Without access to water and sanitation, other rights cannot be exercised. For example, the Rights to "standard of living adequate for the health and well-being" and to "Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance" depend on water and sanitation being available.

The rights are reflected also in article 6 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also guarantees the right to life, and in the articles 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights guarantee an adequate standard of living.

On 28 July 2010, through Resolution 64/292, the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential to the realisation of all human rights.

In September 2010, the Human Rights Council defined the right clearly.

In April 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted, through Resolution 16/2, access to safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right: a right to life and to human dignity.

In December 2015, the General Assembly of the UN adopted a resolution that: “recognizes the distinct nature of the right to sanitation in relation to the right to safe drinking water, while keeping the rights together.”

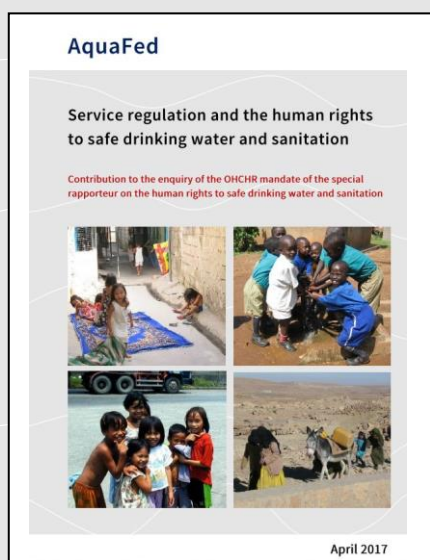
AquaFed Supports and Promotes the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation

Since its creation in 2005, AquaFed has been an active supporter and promoter of the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation.

Key contributions of AquaFed to the development and clarification of the HRWS include collaboration with the OHCHR from 2005 until to date, and with the Special Rapporteurs on the HRWS since start of their assignments.

In 2010 AquaFed contributed to the report on the role of Non-State Actors, including the private sector, while the latest contributions in 2016 to the Rapporteur’s inquiries were on **gender equality** ([link](#)), on **development assistance** ([link](#)), and on **service regulation** ([link](#)) in 2017. Further we answered to the **research project on the HRWS** ([link](#)) conducted by the world water council. AquaFed co-produced the “**Manual on the Human Right to safe Drinking Water and Sanitation for Practitioners**” with IWA.

In a regional perspective, in Europe AquaFed issued proposals in 2014 for the HRWS to be better recognized; and in particular, for them to be included in the European Charter.



Human rights are relevant for all of us, every day.

Source. Key messages UN Human Rights Day



"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home -- so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. [...] Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world."

-- Eleanor Roosevelt (source: [70 years UN Human Rights](#))

When defining the content of these rights in **international law in 2010**, the United Nations have ruled that **private operation of public water services** is an option that water authorities can use to meet their obligations.

Implementation of the HRWS

3 Steps to implementing the Rights locally

Step 1. Acknowledge the content of the right to water. This has been done by the United Nations at the international level. It has to be done at national level in State 's laws or constitutions. Many States have already done this.

Step 2. Identify the public authority in charge of the implementation of the right to water, its related duties and means of action. The Rights include several independent components such as water safety, accessibility, acceptability, availability, affordability, etc. Each of these components requires elements of regulation and oversight by public authorities.

Organise the implementation of State duties with respect to the Rights. States need to define which entities are responsible for each component of the Right in each situation. In particular, targets must be set, tariff structures have to be appropriate, local authorities must be allocated the appropriate financial means and their obligations should be made clear.

Step 3. Make the right real for every individual through delivery in the field. This is where efficient operators are needed to produce the expected results. Private water operators are the instruments of the public policies that aim at increasing access to water and sanitation. If called on, they can deliver.

Further information – see links below

- AquaFed - www.aquafed.org
- AquaFed submission to WWC research project on HRWS. Overcoming the challenges to implementation
- AquaFed contribution to enquiry on Service regulation and the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation
- Combined AquaFed & Women for Water Partnership contribution on questions for the report on Gender Equality
- AquaFed contribution on questions for the report on Development Cooperation
- Manual on the Human Rights to safe Drinking Water and Sanitation for Practitioners
- UN Human Rights Office
- UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation
UN Declaration on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation A/RES/70/160

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