

Review

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NGOs and Water

a Who's Who in the Water Sector

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The Programme on NGOs and Civil Society

Worldwide, the role of civil society has been increasing at rapid speed. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become significant and influential players and generate much interest. Created in 1986, the Programme on Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society aims at contributing towards a better understanding of NGOs and the solutions of complex and conflictive societal problems involving NGOs.

The opinions expressed in this paper reflect only those of the author and not of the institutions to which he/she is or was affiliated.

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ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This review seeks to highlight some of the key non-governmental players involved in shaping the global debate on water issues and outline some of their networks, campaigns, and key priorities. This review is intended as a brief overview rather than a comprehensive report and, as such, it should not be considered an exhaustive listing of all actors and events. Information for this report was drawn from publicly available sources, primarily Internet-based sources.

ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL (SOUTH AFRICA)



www.actionaid.org

ActionAid is an international development organisation whose aim is to fight poverty worldwide. Based in Johannesburg, ActionAid and its partners reach roughly 13 million people in more than 40 countries. ActionAid's programmes include climate change, food, trade, and HIV/AIDS, among others. Under its Trade Justice Campaign, ActionAid has been working to prevent the privatization of water services in poor countries, targeting the GATS negotiations at the WTO in particular.

BOTH ENDS (NETHERLANDS)



www.bothends.org

Both ENDS is an Amsterdam-based NGO that works with other CSOs and issue-related coalitions and networks. Through research, coalition- and capacity- building, particularly on environmental issues, Both ENDS strives to connect "north" and "south", environment and development, and different sectors of society. In March 2006, Both ENDS participated in the official World Water Forum (WWF) event, as well as the Alternative WWF. Both ENDS and International Rivers network (IRN) emphasised the role of local action, arguing that "big is no longer beautiful in global water policy".

THE BLUE PLANET PROJECT (CANADA)



www.blueplanetproject.net

The Council of Canadians launched the Blue Planet Project to facilitate international cooperation on water justice and build community-based activism. In October 2006, the Blue Planet Project initiated *The Blue October campaign*, a month of international action on the right to water involving some 30 countries. The campaign is designed to commemorate Uruguay's move to recognise the right to water in its constitution in October 2004.¹

¹ Blue October supporters include: WDM; Amis de la Terre; BankWatch; Bread for the World; California Environmental Justice Coalition; Enginyeria Sin Fronteres; COMDA; Corporate Accountability International; CEO; Council of Canadians; Canadian Union of Public Employees; Equipo Pueblo; Food & Water Watch; France Libertés; Fundación Solón; Heinrich Böll Foundation; Hesperian Foundation; IATP; KAIROS; People's Health Movement; Polaris Institute; RedVIDA; TNI; and Water for All. See www.blueoctobercampaign.org

BREAD FOR THE WORLD (GERMANY)



www.brot-fuer-die.welt.de

Bread for the World, created by the protestant churches in Germany, works with churches and partner organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe on more than 1 000 different projects. As part of its commitment to “justice for the poor”, Bread for the World launched its campaign Human Right to Water to support and defend the rights and livelihoods of the poor.

CENTRE ON HOUSING RIGHTS AND EVICTIONS, COHRE (SWITZERLAND)



www.cohre.org

COHRE is a Geneva-based NGO which campaigns for housing rights and the prevention of forced evictions. COHRE’s *Right to Water Programme* promotes its recognition in national policies and international cooperation agreements, urges national and local groups to monitor water rights, and trains and advises local communities on how to secure their own rights. COHRE is currently developing a manual on the right to water. At the 4th WWF, COHRE called for the UN Human Rights Council to recognise the right to water and for the creation of a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water.²

COALICIÓN DE ORGANIZACIONES MEXICANAS POR EL DERECHO AL AGUA, COMDA (MEXICO)



www.comda.org.mx

The Coalition of Mexican Organisations for the Right to Water, or COMDA, is a diverse coalition of NGOs working to guarantee the right to water. COMDA’s work involves campaigning for sustainable water management, equal access to water, and public management of water services. At the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico in March 2006, COMDA played a key role in organising the civil society-oriented International Forum for

² Other signatories of the appeal include: ACCORD, Alliance Sud, Both ENDS, Bread for the World, Blue Planet Project, Development and Peace, COMDA, Council of Canadians, Deca/Equipo Pueblo, Espacio DESC, Food & Water Watch, FIAN International, Grupo Tacuba, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, PELUM, and Interamerican Platform on Human Rights, Democracy, and Development.

the Right to Water, also known as the Alternative WWF.³ COMDA is a member of the Blue Planet Project.

CORPORATE EUROPE OBSERVATORY, CEO (NETHERLANDS)

www.corporateeurope.org



CEO is an Amsterdam-based research and action group which examines the threats to democracy, equity, social justice, and the environment posed by powerful corporate interests. COE's Waterjustice.org project brings together activists and researchers working on water. Additionally, COE, in collaboration with TNI, COMDA, FOEI, Council of Canadians, WDM, Bread for the World, and others, hosted the *Public Water for All: Symposium on Improving Public Water Delivery* in advance of the 4th WWF. CEO and TNI also released the paper *Public Water for All – the Role of Public-Public Partnerships* at that time.

COUNCIL OF CANADIANS (CANADA)

www.canadians.org



The Council of Canadians is a Canadian NGO working on both domestic and international water issues. Chaired by world renowned water activist Maude Barlow, the Council protests the commodification of global water resources and supports international initiatives calling for public control of water resources.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL WATER AND FOREST STUDIES, FIVAS (NORWAY)

www.fivas.org



FIVAS is a Norwegian NGO that conducts internationally-oriented research on water, including water struggles, climate and energy issues, international finance, the role of Norwegian institutions, alternative approaches, privatization, and the World Commission on Dams. FIVAS is part of the ForUM working group on freshwater.⁴ In April 2006, ForUM published the comprehensive report *Privatisation of Water: Public-Private Partnerships—do they deliver to the poor?* FIVAS is also working to further the right to water in Bolivia, an issue FIVAS intends to promote at the 2007 World Social Forum in Nairobi.

³ COMDA's partners for the event included: Council of Canadians, Development and Peace, Food and Water Watch, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Oxfam, Bread for the World, TNI, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and War on Want.

⁴ ForUM's other members include Norwegian Church Aid, the Norwegian Development Fund, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and the Norwegian Water Movement.

FOOD AND WATER WATCH (USA)

www.foodandwaterwatch.org



Based in Washington, Food and Water Watch (formerly Public Citizen's *Water for All* campaign) works with other NGOs to stop corporate control over food and water. Food and Water Watch focuses on privatisation and corporate control of water, the right to water, the role of international financial institutions in water, water desalination, the bottled water industry, and water-related trade agreements. Current campaigns include returning Bolivian water to public control and the Blue October campaign. *Aquabits* is its quarterly newsletter on bottled water.

FRANCE LIBERTÉS (FRANCE)

www.france-libertes.fr



Fondation France Libertés is a French foundation and the project of Danielle Mitterrand. Since attending the 1st World Social Forum, the foundation has worked to make another world possible by funding water projects as one of its four priorities. In collaboration with Green Cross, ACME France, and the Council of Canadians, France Libertés plans to host the International Conference on the Right to Water in Marseilles in November 2006.

FRESHWATER ACTION NETWORK, FAN

www.freshwateraction.net



FAN, an international civil society network, was founded following the 2nd World Water Forum to ensure that southern organisations had a strong voice in international water debates. Since 2000, FAN has supported the participation of its members in the 2001 Bonn Conference, the 2002 WSSD, the EU Water Initiative, and the annual World Water Forums. FAN members have created the African Civil Society Network on Water (ANEW) and the Central American Freshwater Action Network (FAN-CA). FAN is based out of WaterAid's London office. FAN's 437 members are listed on its website.

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH INTERNATIONAL, FOEI (NETHERLANDS)

www.foei.org



FOEI, the world's largest grassroots environmental network, includes 71 branches and roughly 1.5 million members. FOEI exists to challenge economic and corporate globalization and promote environmentally sustainable solutions and social justice. FOEI's campaigns target climate change, corporations, GMOs, forests, international finance, and trade. FOEI and many of its member groups are active at the World Social Forum. The Red de Ecología Social (REDES), FOEI's Uruguayan branch, was instrumental in protecting the right to water under the country's constitution.

FRIENDS OF THE RIGHT TO WATER

c/o www.canadians.org



Friends of the Right to Water is a group of national and international CSOs committed to defending the right to water and those who struggle to protect it. The network also promotes the drafting of an international treaty on the right to water. The network was created in 2004.⁵

THE GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP, GWP



www.gwpforum.org

The GWP is a partnership of private companies, academic institutions, and development agencies, as well as governmental, international and non-governmental organizations. The GWP's mission is to "support countries in the sustainable management of their water resources", based on the principles laid out in the Dublin and Rio conferences. The GWP works with its partner networks in Central America, Central and Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Caucasus, China, Eastern Africa, Mediterranean, Pacific, South America, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Southern Africa, and West Africa. A detailed list of its 1350 members is available on its website.

⁵ Members of the network include: Alliance Sud, Blue Planet Project, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Both ENDS, Bread for the World, COHRE, Corporate Accountability, Council of Canadians, FIAN International, Food & Water Watch, Ghana Coalition against the Privatisation of Water, Grassroots Africa, IBON, Public Citizen, Tarun Bharat Sangh, among others.

GREEN CROSS INTERNATIONAL (SWITZERLAND)

www.greencrossinternational.net



Green Cross is an international NGO with representation in more than 30 countries which provides environmental analysis and expertise on the topics of conflict resolution and natural resources. In 2004, Green Cross launched a global campaign, *The Right to Water*, to raise public awareness of the water crisis and to support the global campaign for an International Convention on the Right to Water. Green Cross hopes that the treaty, which was proposed at the Water for Life Dialogue in Barcelona, will be signed at the 2008 World Water Exhibition.⁶

INTERNATIONAL RIVERS NETWORK, IRN (USA)

www.irn.org



IRN is a Berkeley-based network of activists, social movements, NGOs and other partners working to protect rivers and defend the rights of communities, particularly in the South. Through research, education, and advocacy, IRN monitors and critiques river projects. Through its Regional campaigns in Africa, China, Latin America and South and Southeast Asia, IRN works on affected peoples, aluminium and rivers, dams and climate change, international finance, river revival, water and energy alternatives, and the World Commission on Dams. IRN is a member of FAN.

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR WATER, ISW (CANADA)

www.i-s-w.org



The ISW was founded following the adoption of the 1990 Montreal Charter, a conference involving 100 groups from 29 countries as part of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990). As an international NGO, the ISW is currently working to ensure universal access to water and to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the basis for social and political stability, sustainable water management, and ecosystem protection. ISW produces “Blue Books” outlining strategies to meet these goals.⁷

⁶ Green Cross International, the International Secretariat for Water, and the Maghreb-Machrek Alliance for Water jointly launched this initiative.

⁷ The ISW’s “Water Affiliated Networks” include: Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré, the Asian Alliance of Appropriate Technology Practitioners, the Central Asian Alliance for Water, the Alliance Maghreb Machrek pour l’Eau, Solidarité Eau Europe, Earth for Ever, Red de Estudios de los Servicios Urbanos en America Latina, and Coopération Internationale pour un Développement Rural Intégré.

THE MVULA TRUST (SOUTH AFRICA)

www.mvula.co.za



Based in Johannesburg, and with seven regional offices, The Mvula Trust is a “professional water supply and sanitation NGO”. The Trust has worked to extend water services to more than 1 million South Africans and specialises in sustainable, community-based service delivery in rural and peri-urban areas. The Trust is a member of FAN.

PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL, PSI (SWITZERLAND)

www.world-psi.org



PSI’s Research Unit (PSIRU)⁸ was created to research privatisation, public services, and globalisation. Based out of University of Greenwich’s Business School, PSIRU focuses on water, energy, waste management, and healthcare, as well as the role of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs). PSIRU is responsible for the 2003-2005 Europe-wide research project *Watertime*, an examination of decision-making in water systems funded by the EC. PSI and WDM jointly-produced the report *Pipe Dreams: the Failure of the Private Sector to Invest in Water Services in Developing Countries* in March 2006.

RED VIGILANCIA INTERAMERICANA PARA LA DEFENSA Y EL DERECHO AL AGUA, RED VIDA

www.laredvida.org



Red VIDA is an inter-American coalition of NGOs working on the right to water. Following the 2003 San Salvador Declaration, NGOs from 16 North, Central and South American countries pledged to fight for water as a common good and a fundamental human right. The coalition includes women’s groups, environmental groups, workers’ unions, human rights activists, church groups, and indigenous groups. Red VIDA is a member of the Blue Planet Project. A list of members is available on its website.

⁸ www.psiru.org

RIOS VIVOS COALITION (BRAZIL)

www.riosvivos.org.br



Rios Vivos works with public and private organisations, research institutes, and indigenous communities across Latin America. Its programmes, which focus on the conservation and sustainable use of continental waters, agricultural productivity, clean energy initiatives, and multilateral financial agencies, are supported by a number of NGOs in Europe. At the 4th WWF, Rios Vivos, together with Both Ends, ECOA, and AEDES, organised a session on the importance of small-scale, ecosystem-based approaches.

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL WATER INSTITUTE, SIWI (SWEDEN)

www.siwi.org



SIWI describes itself as a policy institute working towards solutions to the world's escalating water crisis. Through dialogue and collaboration with various stakeholders, as well as integrated water resource management (IWRM) and innovative thinking, SIWI believes that the MDGs can be achieved, and ultimately, that poverty can be eradicated. SIWI organises the annual World Water Week forum in August and operates the Swedish Water House, a platform for networking and capacity-building in the water sector.

TRANSNATIONAL INSTITUTE, TNI (NETHERLANDS)

www.tni.org



TNI is an international network of activist-scholars committed to a democratic, equitable, and environmentally sustainable world. At the 3rd WWF, TNI, in collaboration with Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), launched *Toward Water Justice*, a programme which examines the effects of water privatisation and the need for alternative models. The project highlights the role of European corporations in water privatisation schemes in the South.

WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL, WSSCC (SWITZERLAND)



www.wsscc.org

WSSCC is a quasi-NGO created by the UN to promote access to water, basic sanitation, and hygiene as the foundations for development. Based in Geneva, the Council works with more than 1500 members in 30 countries to extend its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (or “WASH”) campaign globally. WSSCC’s partners include NGOs, Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), governments, international organizations, and the private sector. WSSCC’s 2006 events included Africities, World Water Week, and World Water Day.

WATERAID (UK)



www.wateraid.org.uk

WaterAid is a London-based international NGO focused on the provision of safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene education. WaterAid works to provide low-cost, sustainable water projects in rural and urban areas in 17 African and Asian countries and campaigns against water privatisation. Instead, it supports the human right to water and sanitation services and calls for increased international funding to achieve these goals. WaterAid is a member of FAN.

WATERJUSTICE.ORG



www.waterjustice.org

Waterjustice.org was created by water campaigners from CEO, TNI, and the Council of Canadians at the 4th World Social Forum in Mumbai, India. The site is designed as an open space for activists dedicated to effective, democratic, and equitable water solutions to design and discuss proposals and solutions.

WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT, WDM (UK)



www.wdm.org.uk

WDM describes itself as a “democratic movement of individual supporters, campaigners and local groups” which, in partnership with other NGOs, works to tackle the underlying causes of poverty. By providing campaign resources to the public, WDM challenges

consumers, governments, and MNCs to be more accountable. WDM's current campaigns include aid, trade, debt, and water. Specifically, the *Dirty Aid, Dirty Water* campaign monitors the role of UK MNCs and UK foreign aid in forcing water privatisation on developing countries. In March 2006, WDM and PSI jointly-produced the report *Pipe Dreams: the Failure of the Private Sector to Invest in Water Services in Developing Countries*.

WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE, WWF (SWITZERLAND)

www.panda.org

WWF is an international environmental NGO based in Gland, near Geneva which aims to prevent environmental degradation and promote a sustainable future. In its 2006 report *Rich Countries, Poor Water*, WWF's Global Freshwater Programme advocates water management based on an economic approach, arguing that properly valuing water and ecosystem services can provide financial incentives to increase efficiency and conservation while providing the funding to ensure long-term sustainability. The Programme works with international institutions, governments, NGOs and the private sector to achieve its goals.