



Supportive Environments for Healthy Communities

## Issue 77 November 2, 2012 | Focus on Water Conflicts

Water sources are under tremendous pressure around the world. According to an OECD report, 47 percent of the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress by 2030. War over water is rarely strategically effective or economically viable. However, the lack of clean freshwater can lead to instability, which can lead to political conflict. Conflict is most likely to occur over water where the quantity and quality of available water is relatively low. A UNEP brief states that degraded water quality can pose serious threats to health and low water supplies can encourage migrations that politically destabilize the countries of destination.

Upcoming issues of the Weekly will contain relevant reports and resources for **World Pneumonia Day** (Nov. 12) and **World Toilet Day** (Nov. 17) so please contact WASHplus if you or your organization has recent resources or research that could be featured.

*Please let WASHplus know at any time if you have resources to share for future issues of WASHplus Weekly or if you have suggestions for future topics. An [archive](#) of past Weekly issues is available on the WASHplus website.*

### REPORTS/JOURNAL ARTICLES

- **The Global Water Crisis: Addressing an Urgent Security Issue**, 2012. H Bigas, UN University. ([Full text, pdf](#))

While observers have clearly demonstrated that collaboration over regional water issues has typically been a unifying experience as opposed to a divisive force in matters of regional political stability, rapidly growing human populations in combination with changing hydrological circumstances in many parts of the world are likely to exacerbate existing tensions over water security and create new sources of potential conflict in regions that are relatively stable today.

- **Global Water Security: Intelligence Community Assessment**, 2012. U.S. State Department. ([Full text, pdf](#))

During the next 10 years, many countries important to the United States will

experience water problems—shortages, poor water quality, or floods—that will risk instability and state failure, increase regional tensions, and distract them from working with the United States on important US policy objectives. Between now and 2040, fresh water availability will not keep up with demand absent more effective management of water resources. Water problems will hinder the ability of key countries to produce food and generate energy, posing a risk to global food markets and hobbling economic growth.

- **Strategies of the Poorest in Local Water Conflict and Cooperation: Evidence from Vietnam, Bolivia and Zambia.** *Water Alternatives* 5(1) 2012. M Funder, Danish Institute for International Studies. ([Full text, pdf](#))

This paper examines the strategies of poor households in local water conflicts. Such households may not only engage actively in collaborative water management but may also apply risk aversion strategies when faced with powerful adversaries in conflict situations. In addition, dependency relations between poor and wealthy households can reduce the scope of action for the poor in water conflicts.

- **Water as a Casualty of Conflict: Threats to Business and Society in High-Risk Areas,** 2012. K Donnelly, Pacific Institute. ([Full text](#))

This paper provides a framework for understanding the nature of water challenges in conflict and high-risk areas and how these, in turn, affect business operations and society. It incorporates examples of impacts on business operations, and anecdotally highlights what companies are doing in response.

- **Water Conflict: Myth or Reality?** 2012. World Wildlife Federation. ([Full text, pdf](#))

While there have been instances of conflict arising at the various geographical scales over a shared water source, history reveals that cooperation is the predominant response. Securing water resources that can meet growing human needs, safeguard fragile ecosystems, and maintain economic prosperity is a key issue confronting the global community.

- **Water Shortages and Conflict: Briefing Paper for the United Nations Environment Program,** 2012. A Barua. ([Full text, pdf](#))

Water sources are under tremendous pressure around the world. Forty-seven percent of the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress by 2030. The challenges facing water resources stem from a multitude of factors, including the steady increase in population, urbanization, environmental degradation and industrialization. Such challenges are particularly daunting to developing countries where the rates of population growth and urbanization are high, and per capita water availability is low.

## BLOG POSTS/NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

- **Avoiding Conflicts Over Water Rights,** *Tufts Now*, Oct 2012. S Islam. ([Link](#))

Water-use issues are common—and likely to occur more frequently with population growth and climate change. What’s needed is not a technical solution for how to allocate water, but a negotiated one. Any resolution of water disputes needs to take into account the complex nature of the relationships of those clashing over the natural resource.

- **Jeffrey Sachs Sees Lack of Water at Root of Conflicts in Poorest Countries**, *Water Citizen News*, Aug 2012. ([Link](#))

Will water be the cause of wars in the future? According to “The End of Poverty” author Jeffrey Sachs, water is the root cause for political unrest and armed conflicts that are already occurring in the world’s poorest countries today.

- **Water Scarcity Leads to Conflict? Not a Foregone Conclusion**, *Reuters News*, July 2012. S Heywood. ([Link](#))

The idea that climate change will inevitably lead to an increase in violent conflict over scarce natural resources is an increasingly common position in public discourse, but is it necessarily true? In actual fact, a team of academics found that the number of incidents of serious international conflict over water is very small – just seven in the last four decades.

- **“Water Wars”: Past, Present and Future**, *International Relations and Security Network*, Oct 2012. K Conca, University of Maryland. ([Link](#))

Conflict over freshwater resources has occurred for thousands of years, but the historical record includes only one verifiable instance of a genuine water war. In this video interview, Ken Conca, professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland, says that this pattern is unlikely to change dramatically in the future.

- **Ethiopia: Multiple-Use Water Conflicts**, *The Water Channel TV*, Oct 2012. S Kebede. ([Link](#))

This article shows the need to develop a protocol for determining and settling water rights in Ethiopia and to define also the role of the local government to step in where required. There is also a need to revisit the planning of drinking water systems and develop them as multiple use systems from the very beginning, including the settlement of access rights to the productive use water.

- **Managing Water Conflict Is About Lifting Boundaries Off the Map and Human Interaction**, *Greenacre Radio*, Aug 2012. A. Wolf. ([Audio](#))

Can global water conflicts between people who dislike each other be negotiated? Water negotiator and Oregon State University scholar Aaron Wolf has seen it happen in tense river basins all over the world.

- **Risk of Water Wars Rises with Scarcity**, *Aljazeera Features*, Aug 2012. C Arsenault. ([Link](#))

UN studies project that 30 nations will be water scarce in 2025, up from 20 in 1990. Eighteen of them are in the Middle East and North Africa, including Egypt, Israel, Somalia, Libya and Yemen. Some experts bet that a battle between south and north Yemen will probably be the scene of the next water conflict, with other countries in the region following suit if the situation is not improved.

Each WASHplus Weekly highlights topics such as Urban WASH, Indoor Air Pollution, Innovation, Household Water Treatment and Storage, Hand Washing, Integration, and more. If you would like to feature your organization's materials in upcoming issues, please send them to Dan Campbell, WASHplus knowledge resources specialist, at [dacampbell@fhi360.org](mailto:dacampbell@fhi360.org).



**About WASHplus** - WASHplus, a five-year project funded through USAID's Bureau for Global Health, creates supportive environments for healthy households and communities by delivering high-impact interventions in water, sanitation, hygiene (WASH) and indoor air pollution (IAP). WASHplus uses proven, at-scale interventions to reduce diarrheal diseases and acute respiratory infections, the two top killers of children under five years of age globally. For information, visit [www.washplus.org](http://www.washplus.org) or email: [contact@washplus.org](mailto:contact@washplus.org).

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