

Goal 6

Water Conflict- Troubled Waters?

INTRODUCTION – Why is this a Global Justice Issue?

The conflict over water relates to the gap between demand and supply. Add in climate change, the geopolitics of water transfers and pressures from population increase and the problem becomes only too obvious.

As demand for water hits the limits of finite supply, potential conflicts are brewing between nations that share transboundary freshwater reserves. More than 50 countries on five continents might soon be caught up in water disputes unless they move quickly to establish agreements on how to share reservoirs, rivers, and underground water aquifers. The articles and analysis below examine international water disputes, civil disturbances caused by water shortages, and potential regulatory solutions to diffuse water conflict.

SUGGESTED AREA OF FOCUS:

- Water conflict
- Water supply and demand
- Water shortage, scarcity and stress (SSS)
- Sustainable water supplies
- Water management and conflict
- Mapping global water distribution and scarcity
- Water consumption
- Climate change and water
- Water grabbing
- Water conflict prevention
- Water pollution

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM LINKS:

- **English:** Water in various forms is a popular source of inspiration for different forms of poetry. Study a water-related poem, and write your own. (In English, you might choose a one from the 'water' poems on the PoemHunter website.)
- **Maths:** Calculate the amount of water used in Ireland, and compare this with water use in a less developed country.
- **Geography:** Research areas of the world where water conflicts may occur, such as where a major river flows through many different countries, global distribution of water, water management, geopolitics
- **History:** Explore the history of water and sanitation in your country
- **Science:** Research different technologies to provide water and sanitation solutions, for example those provided by Practical Action or WaterAid.

SUGGESTED LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Understanding the global distribution of water

- Learning about some regions in the world who are involved in water conflict
- Understanding why some regions are facing water shortages and conflict over water
- Learning about some of the things that are being done to prevent water conflict/water wars

SOME KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED:

- What happens when rivers and sources of water are shared between countries?
- What impacts can building dams have?

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS:

1. WHO OWNS THE WORLD'S WATER (from the Geographical Association)

ABOUT: Arrange students in groups of four or five and give each group a copy of the first page of Information Sheet 5 showing the Euphrates and Tigris river systems region. Allow students some time to examine the map and suggest why conflict over water supply is likely. Support groups by suggesting factors that might cause potential conflict over access to water, e.g. major rivers crossing national boundaries, arid zones and areas with limited resources. Encourage students to find appropriate map evidence for this.

LINK: <https://www.geography.org.uk/teaching-resources/nc-china-india/world-water>

2. WHO GIVES A DAM? THE ILISU PROJECT (from the Geographical Association)

ABOUT: Turkey wants to build another dam on the River Tigris at Ilisu. What might people in Turkey, Syria and Iraq say?

LINK:

https://www.geography.org.uk/write/MediaUploads/teaching%20resources/Water_Works_L4_Activity_8.pdf

3. VARIOUS RESOURCES ON WATER CONFLICT

https://globaldimension.org.uk/resources/search/?fwp_keyword=WATER%20CONFLICT&fw_p_topic=water

Simulation Activities:

Name of activity: Water Stakeholders

Students will represent the various stakeholders in the issue of water use in southern Ethiopia. Some of these stakeholders were seen in the "Water Wars" video. Others were not, yet they have a stake in the issue.

Debrief

- Who are the stakeholders introduced in the “Water Wars” film and article?
- What are their concerns? How do their perceptions on the issue differ?
- What is causing the conflict?
- Are there other stakeholders not introduced in the article or “Water Wars”?

Exploring Your Stakeholder’s Views

- Distribute [Background to the Conflict: Ethiopia](#) to all students.
- Form students into 5 groups representing the following stakeholders:
 1. The Borana
 2. The Guji
 3. The Ethiopian Red Cross
 4. United Nations
 5. Ethiopia’s National Government

Distribute the appropriate [Stakeholder Group](#) handout to each group. In groups, students will read [Background to the Conflict: Ethiopia](#) and the profile of their stakeholder group on the Stakeholder Groups handout. Ask them to assess the situation and then adopt a realistic perspective for their stakeholder group. Students will complete the questions at the end of the Stakeholder Groups handout.

Presenting Stakeholder’s Views: This is a whole class activity in which groups present their stakeholder’s views.

In their presentations, tell students to be sure to answer the following questions:

- What is this conflict about?
- What caused it? How did it start?
- How can it be resolved? Who is responsible for solving the problem? What should be done and by whom?
- Will outside resources or assistance be needed or can this be resolved locally?
- What will happen if the problem is not resolved? What social, political and economic changes may occur?

When each group has finished presenting, allow students from the other groups to ask clarifying questions.

Debriefing

- Is there a solution that would be tolerable for all stakeholders?
- What obstacles might stand in the way of an acceptable solution?
- What does this exercise suggest about solving such critical resource scarcity problems?
- what contributions can each stakeholder make to solve this problem?
- Is this a local or a global problem? How does looking at it one way or the other influence how it is addressed and resolved?

Link: <https://www.choices.edu/teaching-news-lesson/water-wars/>

[Short Video Clips:](#)

To view videos and news clips that explore and discuss the issue of water conflict, enter 'water wars' or 'water conflict' on www.youtube.com

Documentaries:

1. Focus on Water Wars

<https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/focus-water-wars>

2. Blue Gold World Water Wars

<https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/blue-gold-world-water-wars/>

3. Flow: for the love of water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvtvVQPxmzM>

4. Thirst

<http://www.thirstthemovie.org>

5. Liquid assets: the big business of water

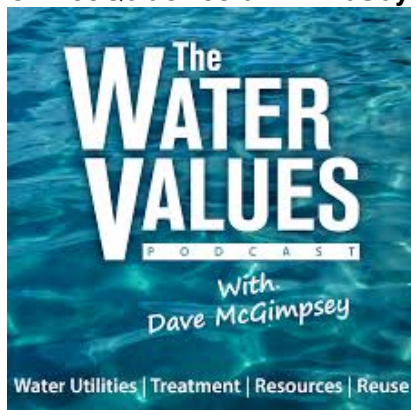
<https://www.films.com/id/23370>

Podcasts:

1. The Water Values Podcast explores water issues from a variety of perspectives with the goal of uncovering the true value of water. Each session will delve into one aspect of water, such as water utilities, water treatment, water resources, water reuse, and more.

Link:

<https://podcasts.google.com/?feed=aHR0cHM6Ly90aGV3YXRlcnZhbHVlc3BvZGNhc3QubGlic3luLmNvbS9yc3M%3D&hl=en-IE>



2. Circle of Blue Podcast

Founded in 2000 by leading journalists and scientists, Circle of Blue provides relevant, reliable, and actionable on-the-ground information about the world's resource crises

LINK:

<https://podcasts.google.com/?feed=aHR0cDovL2ZlZlZWRzLnNvdW5kY2xvdWQuY29t>

L3VzZXJzL3NvdW5kY2xvdWQ6dXNlcnM6MTY3OTk2MzQ1L3NvdW5kcy5yc3M%3D&hl=en-IE

[Blogs:](#)

World Bank Blogs

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/water/water-and-war-turbulent-dynamics-between-water-and-fragility-conflict-and-violence>

ACTIONS - CREATING CHANGE:

Ideas for Political Engagement (Supranational, Intergovernmental, Regional, National, Local):

Campaign against Water Conflict

This includes:

- Getting in touch with your local politicians - Make an appointment with your TD, phone, use emails and Twitter to contact them directly.
- Write a letter to companies who operate in areas of water conflict. Tell the company why you are concerned and what you would like them to do to improve the situation.
- Facilitate discussion in your school and local community - Invite along local TD's and community members and start stimulating discussion on water conflict.
- Reach out to civil society and NGO's
- Organise activities and demonstrations - it is important to increase the frequency and quality of media coverage on water conflict.
- Encourage Discussion - water conflict is still not very well known. Talk with your friends, family and community about water conflict.
- Use social media to share information - #Stopwaterconflict will guide you to posts. Have you heard any debates on the radio or news? If not, contact radio and TV broadcasters to ask for the debate to be publicised.
- Write articles & letters and send to print media. Don't forget to include photos.
- Contact local radio to promote your events and/or interview your campaign group.
- Post messages on your own web pages, blogs, etc.
- Create a list of email addresses and send campaign updates and requests for support/action.

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY: WHY NOT CARRY OUT A SCHOOL/ COMMUNITY ACTION ON THE DAYS BELOW:

- World Water Day March 22nd

CAMPAIGNS/ ORGANISATIONS TO LINK IN WITH:

1. WATER AID

<https://www.wateraid.org/uk/>

2. UNICEF:

<https://www.unicef.ie/our-work/water-and-sanitation/>

3. UN WATER

<http://www.unwater.org>

4. Water.org

5. Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)

<http://www.siw.org/about/>

FURTHER TOPICS FOR THOUGHT:

- What are the effects of a lack of water — a drought, water shortage, or even a reduction in supply — on any society? (Go beyond thirst, hygiene and crop failure. Think about social changes, public health, internal and external conflict, cultural ways of life, and more.)
- What would happen if our own society started running short of water? Think about what systems would change — jobs, diet, public health, school, government, and more. How would your families cope with water shortages? How would your communities be and look different?
- What should be done to ease the water crisis? Who can do the most to reduce the stress on world freshwater supplies? How can individuals, communities, nations and international organizations help ease the problem of water shortage?
- Given that water is distributed unevenly around the world, should water allocation be managed internationally or by local or national governments? What would be the consequences of that?
- Compare how poorer nations deal with such a situation, compared to richer countries. How does a water shortage affect these countries differently? How might different populations within those countries be affected? What capabilities do richer countries have to respond as opposed to poorer countries?