



Illustrations created by Anna Loveday-Brown



8 March  
International Women Day

12 – 17 March  
6th World Water Forum – Marseille, France  
Mobilize! Attend and support the *Alternative World Water Forum: FAME 2012!*  
More info at [www.fame2012.org](http://www.fame2012.org)

14 March  
International Day of Action Against Dams  
and for Rivers, Water and Life!

22 March  
World Water Day

17 April  
International Day of Peasant Struggle

Road to Rio a countdown-map of key events  
[http://www.etcgroup.org/upload/ETC\\_rio20\\_maplist\\_v8\\_4web.pdf](http://www.etcgroup.org/upload/ETC_rio20_maplist_v8_4web.pdf)

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## Editorial

### The Sound of Water

At the ancient pond  
a frog plunges into  
the sound of water  
*Frog Haiku by Matsuo Bashō,*  
*Translated by Sam Hamill*

### Water for life, not for death!

*Rallying cry of the International  
Movement of Dam Affected Peoples*

For centuries, in every part of the world, water has been a pivotal force of civilisation, culture and progress. Proximity to secure water sources has guided the itineraries of nomadic peoples and other travelers, and determined where communities and nations have established their settlements. Water has inspired poetry, music, art and literature, and has shaped the diets, cuisines and health of our families and societies. Like the air we breathe, water is the very essence of life and possibly for this reason, its use and governance are fraught with conflict and vested interests. Water has been dammed, diverted, piped, bottled, transported, contaminated, poisoned and purified, and through all these, **it has been responsible as much for life, as for death.**

This issue of the Nyéléni newsletter describes the pressures and demands on our planet's water sources, attempts to control access through privatisation and commodification, and the **intensifying struggles by extraordinary people all over the world to defend their rights to water and to protect water from elite capture.** Governments cannot be allowed to give corporations and wealthy classes preferential access to and control over water. **It is imperative and urgent that we join forces to protect water as commons, as the shared, collective wealth of current and future generations.**

*Shalmali Guttal*

Focus on the Global South

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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### Water = life

Water is first and foremost **an indispensable element of life.** Life on Earth originated in water, expanded to land and without water would cease to exist<sup>1</sup>. The majority of our planet is covered in water, but 97,5% of it is salt water, inadequate for human use. Only 1% of the remaining fresh water can be used and it would be enough to support more than three times the world's population if used with care<sup>2</sup>. **Instead it is polluted and depleted by a capitalist system based on overproduction and profit.** According to the United Nations, 884 million people in the world today lack access to clean water - this is roughly one in eight of the world's population - and almost 3.6 million people die every year from a water related disease. Water has become a highly political issue and access to water and its resources is the origin of many economic and political conflicts.

1 - M. Kravčík, J. Pokorný, J. Kohutiar, M. Kováč, E. Tóth, *Water for the Recovery of the Climate - A New Water Paradigm* (Krupa Print, 2007)  
2 - Rob Bowden, *Water Supply: Our Impact on the Planet* (Hodder Wayland 2002)

## Who we are

In the last years hundreds of organizations and movements have been engaged in struggles, activities, and various kinds of work to defend and promote the right of people to Food Sovereignty around the world. Many of these organizations were present in the Nyéléni Forum 2007 and feel part of a broader Food Sovereignty Movement, that considers the Nyéléni 2007 declaration as its political platform. **The Nyéléni Newsletter wants to be the voice of this international movement.**

Organizations involved: Development Fund, ETC, FIAN, Focus on the Global South, Food First, Friends of the Earth International, GRAIN, Grassroots International, IPC for food sovereignty, La Via Campesina, Marcha Mundial de las Mujeres, Oxfam Solidarity, Real World Radio, Roppa, The World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers, Veterinarios Sin Fronteras.

**Now is the time for Food Sovereignty!**



## Battles for and over water at the World Water Forum

Every three years since 1997, the *World Water Council (WWC)*, a Marseilles-based policy think tank run by the World Bank, development aid agencies like the United Nations, the major water corporations such as Vivendi and Suez, water ministries of a number of Northern countries, and water experts and professionals, hosts the World Water Forum (WWF). The forum is a formal gathering of **governments, international water experts, development aid institutions, water corporations** and other agencies to discuss the fate of the world's water, likening itself to a United Nations conference. Its sixth edition will be held in the birthplace and heartland of "privatisation": France. During the fourth edition of the WWF in Mexico City, the WWC has appropriated itself as the "Voice of Water"\* in the international community, determining how the earth's diminishing freshwater resources will be governed, while local communities and the poor majority are effectively excluded due to the forum's inaccessibility and high entrance fees. Further WWFs, from Marrakech to Istanbul, have been **nothing but trade fairs showcasing corporations moving in on the global business of water service provision backed by finance, trade and development agencies**. Rather than the 'voice of water', the 'voice of the corporations' is a more apt description for the WWF. The theme for the Marseilles WWF is "*Time for Solutions*" aimed to tackle the challenges facing the world today. Civil society and social movement resistance to the WWF has been growing. Thousands of *water warriors* from various parts of the world will gather once more in the *alternative WWF (FAME)* to take part in mobilizations to defend the world's water. While the official forum will discuss technical and economical issues, **FAME involves a territorial perspective: the defense of territory is the only possibility for future generations to have access to good quality water in sufficient quantity.** \*See - Loic Fauchon, President of the World Water Council, *Foreword*, in the Mexico 2006: 4th World Water Forum's Official Delegate Publication.

## World's Largest Water Companies

Company (Headquarters)	Revenue 2009 (US\$ million)
1. Veolia Environment (France)	49,519
2. Suez Environment (France) (FY ending 3/31/2010)	17,623
3. ITT Corporation (USA)	10,900
4. United Utilities (UK) (FY ending 3/31/2010)	3,894
5. Severn Trent (UK)	2,547
6. Thames Water (UK) (FY ending 3/31/2010)	2,400
7. American Water Works Company (USA)	2,441
8. GE Water (USA)	2,500
9. Kurita Water Industries (Japan) (FY ending 3/31/2010)	1,926
10. Nalco Company (USA)	1,628

Sources: Polaris Institute, Global Water Intelligence, ETC Group

## The water crisis

In the last two decades the situation has grown so critical that the world is now experiencing a **global water crisis**. Almost 80 per cent of the world's population live in areas with significant water security problems<sup>3</sup>. The majority of fresh water worldwide *is polluted or depleted by industrial agriculture and livestock, agrofuel crops, factories and large infrastructure projects* (such as hydroelectric dams and mines). *Climate change* is drastically altering weather patterns, triggering phenomena such as desertification, salination of fresh water, droughts and floods. At the same time the *privatisation of water resources* – promoted globally by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank - bind access to water to "the ability to pay" and international trade agreements open the doors to corporate ownership of all natural resources, including water<sup>4</sup>. **The collective rights** that have always guaranteed local communities access to water (as well as land and biodiversity), have now been replaced **by corporate control**: water has become a commodity that can be traded in the open market and poverty/wealth is a discriminating factor for access.

The **agro-industrial model in particular has an unacceptable predatory impact** on natural resources, water, biodiversity and on the survival of local communities – including family farmers, artisanal fishers, pastoralists and indigenous people. Industrial agriculture on its own accounts for approximately 70% of the world's fresh water consumption per annum<sup>5</sup>. It also has many negative consequences on the natural water cycle: soil erosion due to monoculture and massive deforestation; water depletion caused by the intensive irrigation systems; pollution of water tables due to the vast use of pesticide and fertilizers... The agro-industrial model has extreme environmental, social and economic effects and still worse, **is wrongly "sold" by many governments, transnational corporations and international institutions** as the solution to world hunger.

## Water: deal maker in global land grabbing

The availability of water resources is a defining, critical factor and motive behind global land grabs. Water is an input in agriculture and as we have said, industrial agriculture is the biggest user, in particular for irrigation. The recent wave of global land grabbing concerning commercial transactions and deals around large-scale agricultural land acquisitions/lease for the production, sale, and export of food, feed and fuel will be tempered or hastened *by the available water resources* for growing them, especially for countries which experience land or water scarcity. China, for example, is a key player in the global land grab because its irrigated lands have become unsustainable. In Northern China, up to 25 percent of land is no longer arable due to severe water shortages. Similarly, Saudi Arabia is not only acquiring Africa's land for staple crops but are securing the equivalent of hundreds of millions of gallons of scarce water per year. Frequently, foreign corporations **are not even charged for water, or if they are, they pay a very small water fee**. Water resources are also a long-term factor for deals being made in Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. These three countries in post-Soviet Eurasia have significant untapped capacity with 23 million hectares of arable land out of production in the 1990s<sup>6</sup>. Eleven to thirteen million hectares of these lands are non-marginal which can be brought into production without major ecological constraints and with more precipitation than countries in Africa. The exact amount of lands which have been acquired by foreign government and investors remains unknown but the most well known deals are (1) the 100,000 hectare-deal in the Ukraine in 2009, between the Libyan government, Western investors such as Sweden, UK, Denmark and Gulf States and (2) the Kazakhstan-China land lease of up to one million hectares. *This shows clearly that land grabbing is also water grabbing.*

## Struggles and alternatives for water justice and democracy

Battles for and over water have been waged across the world as popular movements and citizens rise up to demand for their rights and reclaim control over water policies and access to their resources. The *Cochabamba Water Wars* of 2000 provided the world with a picture of the impact of privatisation and commodification of water and of the struggles against this, when thousands of people came out in the streets of Cochabamba, Bolivia to call for the cancellation of the city's private service contract<sup>7</sup> and renationalise water supply<sup>8</sup>. *Public and community responses and alternatives* to the commercialisation and privatisation of water abound. These alternative models, which offer new path and options for the world's waterless population, are diverse as they depend on the condition and specificities of a particular area or country. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' alternative that has emerged. But common among them is responding to the need for **people-centered, ecologically sustainable, and progressive public water management and on-the-ground solutions**, particularly for

3 - <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research/newsalert/pdf/219na1.pdf>

4 - An example at <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/139-latin-america-s-free-trade-agreements-with-the-european-union-an-agenda-for-domination>

5 - <http://www.worldometers.info/water/>

6 - For more details, see 'Land grabbing in post-Soviet Eurasia: the world's largest agricultural land reserves at stake' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 38:2, 299-323.

7 - In 1999, the World Bank recommended the privatization of Cochabamba's municipal water supply company, SEMAPA, through a concession to a private consortium, Aguas del Tunari, which involved International Water, a subsidiary of Bechtel. A law was passed called the *Drinking Water and Sanitation Law* in October 1999 that basically paved the way for privatisation of water service in Cochabamba.

8 - Water wars at <http://www.worldwater.org/conflict/list/>



poor and marginalized people's access to water and equitable resource use. In the Philippines and elsewhere, there are initiatives by public utilities that allow *communities to manage and maintain water sources for the cities*. These forms of 'partnerships' between public utilities and communities provide examples of **defending rural water systems**. In Thailand, farmers downstream affected by water scarcity have entered in dialogue with upstream users for **equitable distribution of the water**. Many local communities - especially in America - are maintaining the **well-being of their territories through the self-management of natural resources** - the preservation of water is an example of this practice.

## Right to water and food sovereignty

The 31st of January 1992, during the *International Conference on Water and the Environment*, the United Nations recognized water as an *economic good*<sup>9</sup> for the first time. Scarcity and misuse of fresh water were used from then on as **justification** to promote the privatisation of water resources. On the contrary access to water should be considered a *human right, a common good and a public trust*: water can be used but not owned. Ten years ago, Uruguay managed to drive the French multi-national Suez out of the country - Suez had been running water and sewerage services in part of the state. Privatisation had many negative effects: especially environmental impacts and the exclusion of large sectors of the population from access to drinking water because of the connection costs. The citizens decided to take action and - thanks to an initiative of the CNDAV<sup>10</sup> - voted a referendum to reform their constitution. Since then "access to drinking water and sewage system services constitute a fundamental human right" and its privatisation is illegal<sup>11</sup>. At the same time, local communities and small-scale farmers around the world play a decisive role **in the conservation and protection of water resources**, and their effort should be supported by national and international public policies. **The Food Sovereignty model and agro-ecological practices** - through fresh water and river management, water harvesting, protection of forests and biodiversity, are the real solutions to the water crisis. On the contrary, the **privatisation of natural resources, including water, is jeopardizing the life** of millions of people and exacerbating conflicts worldwide, while creating profit for few multi-national corporations. The reality is that the privatisation of natural resources is failing everywhere and must be stopped.

### Make your voice heard:

**Participate and support the Alternative World Water Forum!** - [www.fame2012.org](http://www.fame2012.org)

## World's Top 10

### Food and Beverage Processors

Just five of the world's largest food and beverage processors consume about 575 billion litres of water a year, **enough to supply the daily water needs of every person on Earth**. Source: ETC Group, the Greed Economy

Company (Headquarters)	Food & Beverage Sales, 2009 (US\$ million)
1. Nestlé (Switzerland)	91,560
2. PepsiCo (USA)	43,232
3. Kraft (USA)	40,386
4. ABInBev (Belgium)	36,758
5. ADM (USA)	32,241
6. Coca-Cola (USA)	30,990
7. Mars Inc. (USA)	30,000
8. Unilever (The Netherlands)	29,180
9. Tyson Foods (USA)	26,704
10. Cargill (USA)	26,500
<b>Total Top 10</b>	<b>387,551</b>

Source: Leatherhead Food Research

9 - <http://www.un-documents.net/h2o-dub.htm>

10 - Comisión Nacional en Defensa del Agua y de la Vida (National Commission in Defence of Water and Life)

11 - To read all the story <http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/archives/books/wateruruguayrev.pdf>

## Voices from the field

*Short stories from Africa, America, Asia and Europe, resistance and alternatives*

### The Mexican case to go to the Water Court

*Andrés Barreda, economist and founder of the National Assembly of People Affected by Environmental Issues and guarantor in the process of the People's Permanent Court of Mexico.*

The increasing water crisis on the American continent affects everybody since it is the main water reserve of the planet. However, this is not enough to explain what is happening in Mexico. Here, the devastation is *terrible and unique in two ways*. Firstly, the number of lost rivers, aquifers, wetlands and glaciers is causing growing conflicts within the country. Unlike any other place in Latin America, the *Latin American Water Court* (the only ethical court of its kind in the world) has had to deal with a great many cases. Secondly, the nature of the catastrophe can only be explained by the water policy promoted by the *North American Free Trade Agreement* (NAFTA), which has organized a systematically predatory, corrupt and exclusive water usage, and the rigorous criminalization of any sign of social resistance. In Mexico, the free market promoted policies allowing a depredatory use of all natural resources. (...) Also, Mexico is included in the group of countries which are expected to suffer most from a climate collapse. But what nobody wants to realise in Mexico and abroad is the combined way in which *global warming and free markets* are already punishing the country. Such devastation is an opportunity for many companies to strip the country of its resources or sell technologies for "adaptation" or "mitigation". *The looting of water in Mexico is a tool of the global privileged to ultimately dispossess land and territories* which the ejidos (communal lands) residents and indigenous communities refuse to hand over. Water use is not a single problem among others: the water crisis is the sharp edge of climate change which already kills thousands of people and will soon kill millions of them. We hear a lot about geopolitical water wars, when we should be hearing about **water extermination policies** with regards to the populations which world leaders consider as superfluous. Mexico is a painful experiment and other nations should take note of it by listening to the lawsuit being brought by the National Assembly of People Affected by Environmental Issues against the Mexican government in the Water Court for using its water policy as

a devious way of destroying sovereignty; giving all the wealth to the world rich, and punishing the national population.

### Stop water piracy!

*Abdullah Aysu, Chairman of Farmer Unions' Confederation of Turkey*  
The developments regarding water issues in the world and in Turkey are upsetting. In most of our waters, oxygen levels have decreased to near zero (0.14 mg/l). Fish are dying due to decreases in oxygen levels and increases in ammonium and sulphite levels. *The contaminated waters can no longer be used in farming* and this is primarily due to factory dumping, household waste and industrial agriculture. Private companies treat water and land as commodities. In Turkey, there are currently 288 hydroelectric power plants (HEPPs) in operation. 1019 more HEPPs - where the Government has signed the Water Use Agreement with private companies - are under construction. The total number of HEPPs with power output of 0.5 MW or more, - which obtained valid licence - surpass 2000. About 700 hundred of the planned HEPPs are located in the Eastern Black Sea region. *Water is being privatised and power companies carry out water piracy*. They are denying food sovereignty to the whole population. Water is life. No one has the right to put a price on life, because water is the right of the whole ecosystem. We know that the responsibility of defending the rights of the commons - which are not able to defend their rights by themselves - belongs to the people. Our democratic struggle in seeking rights proceeds together with the *No To Commercialization of Water Platform* composed of local people, peasants, workers, lawyers, engineers, environmental organizations, women, students and young people against the implementations of private companies supported by the state. **We call everybody to action!**

### Agrofuels dry up our crops

*S. Coulibaly, farmer from Markala, Mali*  
*SOSUMAR's aim is to produce and transform 7 680 tons of sugarcane a day in order to generate 15 million litres of ethanol on a 20.000 ha property, of which 14 000 ha will be planted in 2012.* Today, SOSUMAR is growing sugarcane saplings on 140 hectares of land. This year, our

fields located next to the crop nursery did not receive any irrigation. We called the water manager, the Office du Niger, who told us we will not get any irrigation next year either. **Sugarcane consumes more water than any of our own crops** [on average 18.200 m3 of water are needed to grow sugar cane, while winter rice only requires 7.100 m3 and the rotation rice and vegetables 11.700 m3]. I need to grow two harvests in the year in order for me and my family to live, this is now impossible. Yet I pay my water fee every year [67.000 FCFA per ha and per year while SOSUMAR only pays 2.640 FCFA per ha and per year] without even knowing what land I will be allocated next year, since, like all peasants here I have no lease on the land. *By contrast, I have learned that not only has SOSUMAR been given a very long-term and renewable lease on land, but the company also has priority access to water.* They get access to land and water while we are being expelled from our land and need to go and work as farm workers, paid 1.000 FCFA per day, which is not enough to feed our family. The government no longer wants us. They are planning to grow 20.000 hectares of sugarcane, so even if we should manage to get a little piece of land, we won't be able to cultivate it, since we will not get access to any water. What will we become of us?

### The uphill struggle for food and water

*Ka Elvie Baladad, farmer leader, Philippines*

It is very difficult for an environmental advocate like me to understand

the double standard policy that the Philippine government is taking with regards to mining and food. *On one hand they are giving incentives to the mining industry with the aim of enticing foreign investors to extract our mineral resources and in the same breath, talk of the country being self sufficient in rice by the year 2013. Mining is destructive to the environment and it is even worse if it is done in areas used for food production.* It is painful to see the impacts from the mining operation in MacArthur, Leyte, an island province in the south of the Philippines. A Chinese corporation was given a permit to mine magnetite sand right smack in the irrigated rice lands and most contemptible is the fact that the irrigation water that was funded and developed by the government to flow to these very rice lands is being diverted to the mining site so their floatation equipment can extract the minerals. The government claims that the mining brings great benefits, providing jobs and helping the local economy. These claims are only lip service - the people of MacArthur, Leyte are still poor and jobless and could not even use the road constructed by the Chinese to transport their agricultural products. The once fertile land is now like a desert and the irrigation canals where water once flowed are no longer visible. There is a limit to what the environment and the people can take. If water cannot be accessed and food prices become so high beyond the reach of the poor, social unrest can ensue, not for anything else but simply for survival.

## THE WORLD IN WORDS

### Durban, another fiasco

The *UN Climate talks* took place in Durban last December and the results were as weak as ever. On the last day of the conference, all countries decided to sign a piece of paper that commits them to reducing global emissions according to a global treaty that doesn't exist yet. The so called *Durban Platform* will start not before 2020 and will support the same market based solutions as the Kyoto Protocol. These **false solutions** will be financed by a *Green Climate Fund*, controlled by the World Bank. The bad news doesn't end there. The Durban talks opened the doors to **include agriculture in the carbon markets**: a new opportunity for transnational corporations and agri-business to make profit. While the impacts of climate change are effecting more and more people worldwide – the only “true solutions” carried out everyday by local communities, family farmers, fisherfolk, pastoralists and Indigenous Peoples are not taken into account and are jeopardized by international and national policies. We are in a “cul-de-sac”, and must reverse direction now! More at [www.climate-justice-now.org](http://www.climate-justice-now.org)

### A march for water and life

In Peru, from the 1st to the 10th of February many people took part in the Long march for water and life, with the main objective of protecting water and natural resources, including those that will be affected by the Conga mining project. *Social movements, indigenous people and local communities walked for ten days from Cajamarca, where they visited the lagoons that are threatened by the transnational mining company, to the capital city, Lima.* People are strongly opposing the mining project that would have terrible consequences on the local water resources and on the health of the neighboring communities. The participants claimed **the right to choose what kind of “development” they want**, based on the *buen vivir* and *respect for Mother*

*Nature.* More information at [www.codpi.org](http://www.codpi.org)

### Against the capitalist crisis, Declaration of Social Movements Assembly

We, people of all continents, gathered in the *Assembly of the Social Movements* during the Thematic Social Forum “*Capitalist Crisis and Social and Environmental Justice*”, fight against the causes of a systemic crisis expressed as the economic, financial, political, food, and environmental crisis, that puts at risk the survival of humankind. (...) People all over the world are suffering the effects of the aggravation of a profound crisis of capitalism, in which its agents (banks, transnational corporations, media conglomerates, international institutions, and submissive governments) aim at increasing their profits applying interventionist and neocolonial policies. (...) Rio +20, to be held in June, in Rio de Janeiro, 20 years after ECO 92, reinforces the importance of *the fight for environmental justice as opposed to the model of capitalist development.* **The attempt to greenwash capitalism** by imposing new instruments of “green economy” is a warning for us, the social movements, to *strengthen our resistance and to take the leading role in building true alternatives to the crisis.* We call upon activists around the world to take to the streets from June 5th to join in the global action against capitalism and to support the People's Summit for Social and Environmental Justice, against the commodification of life and in defense of common goods, to be held in the framework of Rio+20.

To read all the declaration <http://www.e-joussour.net/en/node/11403>

Next edition special on **land** – Send your contributions - news stories, photos, interviews to [info@nyeleni.org](mailto:info@nyeleni.org) by the **20th of March!**

## To read, listen, watch and share

- *Who will control the Green Economy?*, ETC Group, 2011, <http://www.etcgroup.org/en/node/5296>
- *Violations of the Human Right to water*, FIAN – Ecumenical Water Network – Bread for the World, 2008, [http://www.oik-oumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p4/ewn/resource\\_database/EWN\\_Right\\_to\\_Water.pdf](http://www.oik-oumene.org/fileadmin/files/wcc-main/documents/p4/ewn/resource_database/EWN_Right_to_Water.pdf)
- *Progressive Public Water Management in Europe*, Transnational Institute and Corporate Europe Observatory, 2009, <http://www.waterjustice.org/uploads/attachments/Progressive%20public%20water%20management%20in%20Europe.pdf>
- *Global Water grab*, Polaris Institute, 2003, <http://www.ratical.org/co-globalize/GlbH20grab.pdf>
- *A world without water*, directed by Brian Wood, 2006, <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=3930199780455728313>
- *Blue gold: World water wars*, directed by Sam Bozzo, 2008, <http://www.bluegold-worldwaterwars.com/>

For reports and more references [www.nyeleni.org](http://www.nyeleni.org)

**One does not sell the earth upon which the people walk.** Tashunka Witko, 1840 –1877