



Lagos Water Summit: “Our Water, Our Right”

AUGUST 2015 - COMMUNIQUE AT THE END OF LAGOS WATER SUMMIT WITH THE THEME: CONNECTING LOCAL OUTRAGE TO GLOBAL RESISTANCE OF CORPORATE CONTROL OF WATER HELD AT DOVER HOTEL, IKEJA ON TUESDAY, 11th AND WEDNESDAY, 12th AUGUST 2015 IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

PREAMBLE

The Environmental Rights Action/ Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/ FoEN) organised a Water Summit with the theme: Connecting Local Outrage to Global Resistance of Corporate Control of Water on 11-12 August 2015. The summit was organised in partnership with Corporate Accountability International, the Amalgamated Union of Public Corporations, Civil Service, Technical and Recreational Services Employees (AUPCTRE), Public Services International (PSI), Transnational Institute, Asian Peoples' Movement on Debt & Development, and Freedom from Debt Coalition.

Participants were drawn from local, national and international partners in Ghana, Belgium, the Philippines and the United States, representing a growing global movement committed to resisting corporate control of water and securing water as a human right. Solidarity messages were received from notable civil society actors and policy stakeholders in Nigeria. They include Ms. Joe Odumakin, Chairperson of Women Arise for Change Initiative; Hon. Wale Okediran and Hon. Uche Onyeagucha former parliamentarians; Mr. Auwal Rafsanjani, Executive Director, Civil Society Legislative Centre (CISLAC); Greg Akili, Project Coordinator, Corporate Accountability International (CAI); Priscilla Achakpa, Executive Director of Women Environmental Programme; Sani Baba of Public Service International (PSI), and Shayda Naficy of Corporate Accountability International.

Key on the agenda was the interrogation of water privatization in all its ramifications and implication on communities and peoples; solidarity between civil society groups, labour unions, activists, policy makers and the media around public-public partnerships as a strong alternative to privatization in the water sector; and exploring of policy options to strengthen democratic control of water.

It also reassessed and denounced the misleading marketing myth of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) as just another form of water privatization promoted by the World Bank and other financial institutions.

In his welcome remarks – titled Water as a human right and communal good: the way forward – ERA/FoEN Executive Director, Dr. Godwin Ojo, noted that the summit was aimed at honing the tools needed to stop water privatization in Lagos and other cities faced with the challenges of privatization.

The keynote address was delivered by Nnimmo Bassey of Health of Mother Earth Foundation.

Following exhaustive deliberations and contributions, participants observed that:

1. The World Bank and other corporate powers are aggressively promoting privatization as a false panacea to lack of water access in Africa.
2. Awareness of the human right to water is still very low.
3. Traditionally, it is a taboo to sell water in most communities in Africa.
4. Failures of good governance and profit-oriented management have caused the water systems in Lagos and other cities to decline markedly over the last 15 years.
5. Land grabs by multinational corporations have increased in Africa and pose serious challenges on access to water, thus depriving locals of their right to safe and potable water. Corporate takeover of water sources in Lagos and cities across Africa is a new form of colonialism.
6. Women's rights and the rights of other vulnerable groups are a central concern in the realization of the human right to water, but are not accorded priority in government planning in Lagos and across Africa. Women and children are at the receiving end of water shortages and inaccessibility.
7. Reckless oil extraction activities, especially in the Niger Delta, are contributing factors in denying local communities access to water.
8. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the water sector are not the solution to the water challenge, but rather a new form of colonialism aggressively marketed by the World Bank and its corporate partners, that defines success in terms of profit rather than universal affordable water access.

It was therefore agreed that:

1. Privatization, under any guise including a PPP, is not a solution to lack of access to water.
2. A bill to guarantee access to water as a human right should be sponsored at the Lagos State House of Assembly and at national levels to forestall plans to use Lagos and other Nigerian cities as the laboratory for water privatisation in Nigeria and across the African Region.
3. There is the need to link the governance issues at the domestic front and across Africa with the robust global movement that is resisting privatization of water.
4. A growing global trend of reclaiming and building strong public water systems – including through remunicipalisation – offers opportunities to build local democratic governance of water sources and infrastructure.
5. Privatization is a justification or excuse for introducing market forces that cannot guarantee rights to water.
6. The failure of the World Bank's privatization of the water system in Manila, Philippines, which has been marketed to government officials across Africa, is a cautionary example of the dire consequences that would face Lagos if it pursued the PPP model.
7. Women and vulnerable groups should be accorded priority in plans to guarantee access to water.
8. The linkage between water access and the environment and sanitation is important and therefore should be at the front burner of campaigns against the privatisation of water.
9. Local communities at the grassroots level, and in particular Community Development Associations (CDAs), must be fully integrated into campaigns on the human right to water.
10. The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) should be used to demand information on funds granted for public water projects over the last three decades.

11. The need for stakeholders to assert their identities as ‘citizens,’ rather than accept being designated as ‘consumers’ through privatization and commodification.
12. An Africa Coalition Against Water Privatisation has been established as a network of civil society and development experts carrying out targeted actions towards promoting the human right to water. This initiative will address the challenges of governance, human rights and corruption in the water sector across the African continent.
13. An African Women Water & Sanitation Network has been established, working in coordination with the Africa Coalition Against Water Privatisation.
14. The Summit stands in solidarity with the Water Citizens Network of Ghana in saying NO to prepaid water meters.
15. The monthly surcharge on electricity tariff stopped by the Nigerian Senate should also be extended to the water sector.
16. Citizen engagement processes that are funded and supported by international financial institutions, that promote PPP privatization models as the presumed goal and/or neglect input from independent citizen advocates, are rejected.
17. A probe will be launched of all loans and funding for the existing water system and infrastructure managed by the Lagos State Water Corporation (LSWC).

KEY SIGNATORIES:

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Environmental Rights Action

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Corporate Accountability International

SANI BABA
Public Services International

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