



Christian Conference of Asia — World Water Day

Webinar on ‘Decreased Access to Safe Water in Asia: Challenges to Human Security’

Water is essential for life. It plays the most important role for all living things in, on, under, and above the Earth, and in both the biosphere and lithosphere. In some organisms, about 90 percent of their weight body contains water. Up to 60 percent of the human body contains water as every system in the body, from cells, tissues, and all vital organs, require water to function.

These emphasise that water is a fundamental need for the wellbeing of humans and all organisms on this earth. Access to basic or clean water also requires adequate sanitation since they are interdependent. Access to safe water and adequate sanitation is human rights and crucial for human’s life.

On 28 July 2010, the United Nations declared “safe and clean drinking water and sanitation” as a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all other human rights. Later on, most significantly in the 2030 Agenda through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN pledged to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

The human right to water has increasingly gained attention in recent years. It entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water for personal and domestic use. Having adequate sanitation is not only fundamental for human dignity and privacy, but it is also one of the principal mechanisms for protecting the quality of water resources. It is a critical need of the hour to re-affirm access to water and sanitation as a human right—simply because the lack of access to safe, sufficient, and affordable water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities can bear devastating effects on health and progress, thus directly violating other fundamental human rights.

In Asia, water-related problems have become increasingly acute. In a continent where over half the world’s population resides, Asia the least access to freshwater—3,920 cubic meters per person per year—compared to all continents except Antarctica. Almost two-thirds of the global population growth is occurring in Asia, where the population is expected to increase by nearly 500 million people within the next ten years. As population growth and urbanisation rates in Asia rise rapidly, the stress on the region’s water resources is intensifying. Climate change is expected to worsen the situation significantly. Decreased access to safe water in Asia will have a profound impact on human security. The consequences of reduced access to fresh water will have a lasting impact, as it will trigger reduced food production, the loss of livelihood security, large-scale migration within and across borders, and increased economic and geopolitical tensions and instabilities.

Some other challenges and threats to human security due to lack of access to water in the Asian context also include climate adaptation and pollution, untreated wastewater, solid waste, pesticides, and heavy metals being released into water supplies. Other phenomena like urbanisation, rapid industrialisation, and climate change, the vulnerability of Asian countries to disaster risks, rising sea-levels, and changing cyclones all compound this threat to human security. The magnitude of this issue has become the worst during the global COVID-19 pandemic, where clean and hygiene life practices are an absolute necessity to effectively combat the virus.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) has been encouraging its constituencies to work for the wellbeing of all God's creation in this world to bring justice, peace, and equality for the prosperity of life through its programmes. The CCA believes that providing proper access to safe and clean water and adequate sanitation has profound social and economic impacts. It will ensure poverty reduction, end malnutrition, ensure healthy lives, contribute to gender equality, enhance work productivity, secure safe and affordable housing for all, affirm the stewardship of our environmental resources, and enable economic growth. Everything is for the wellbeing of all creation in God's oikos.

Therefore, on the occasion of World Water Day, the CCA will bring together an expert group of panellists to discuss the issue of decreased access to safe water in Asia and the subsequent increasing challenges to human security in the region. The webinar, which will focus on the theme "**Decreased Access to Safe Water in Asia: Challenges to Human Security**" and will be held on **22 March 2021** from **12 PM to 2 PM Bangkok (Thailand) time**, will act as a platform to share region-wide broad contexts and country-specific challenges, learn about the best practices to ensure safe access to water, and re-affirm the Asian churches' commitments to securing healthy lives for all.

### Goals and Objectives

- To sensitise Asian churches about the issue of safe water and sanitation for the wellbeing of all creation;
- To provide a forum and share the experiences and struggles in Asia concerning access to water and sanitation in different regions and countries;
- To encourage churches to mitigate the impact of decreasing access to safe and clean water;
- To support the participation and engagement of churches and other faith-based organisations in Asia on advocacy for the right to water.