

WORKSHOPS ON THE RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION

The regional and international context

The official discourse of states and inter-governmental organizations today depicts Africa as a sort of XXI century Eldorado. Especially due to its huge natural resources, the African continent is today coveted and at the centre of international attention. The “African Summit” initiatives are multiplying, called on by the different present and past major powers. Africa, which a decade ago was seen as the hopeless continent, detached from the supposed benefits of globalisation, has become the carrier of the greatest hopes for the relaunch of a global economy that has been brought to the edge of collapse by neoliberal policies. According to the Japanese Prime Minister, indeed, Africa “holds the hopes of the world”.

Nevertheless, one needs to question whether these “hopes” are those of African peoples and citizens, or instead those of the financial markets and transnational companies across the world. Indeed Africa has become today the privileged conquered ground for large multinational companies and hedge funds, who monopolize and grab the natural resources of the continent, including land and water. In a world entirely “commodified”, the social construction of scarcity gives them the opportunity to bet on the prediction of the substantial increase of fundamental goods' market value. Far from being an adequate response to this process, the green economy is in fact one of its major drivers.

The African Social Forum of Dakar 2014 (15th-19th October) is held while a superposition of different crises is hitting its stride: economic crisis, social crisis, environmental crisis, pandemic crisis, energy crisis, geopolitical crisis. While the official statistics – highly contested, it must be said – of the economists attest a spectacular increase of the GDP in the majority of the African countries, the greater portion of the population lives in extreme poverty. While luxury villas are popping up in the fashionable neighbourhoods of African main cities, the majority of the population still lives in shanty towns where all rights are mocked. One therefore wonders who is appropriating this spectacular increase in wealth, if the social rights are not progressing, if salaries aren't increasing and if unemployment still forces millions of young peoples into a life of emigration without rights or official papers. In Africa today, we witness the paradox of the greatest riches which exist adjacently to, or even because of, the most extreme poverty for the poor, and those who are not sufficiently connected to benefit from the redistribution of the rents of natural resource grabbing which holds up the powerful of the continent. The different crises and wars which still exist across Africa, from Mali to Sudan, from Libya to Congo, are the crudest manifestation of this unacceptable inequalities.

The threats to the right to water

It's in this geopolitical framework that all the forms of disciplining, control, xenophobia, regimentation and turbulence are growing, thereby destroying all the development efforts, and thus allowing other forces to successfully grab resources and riches from countries in the global South. Millions of hectares of land have been granted by African states at negligible prices to the benefit of foreign private exploitative companies, thus fostering agri-business and agri-exports. The result is that in Africa the quantity of water necessary to cultivate the land during the year 2009 is twice the volume used for agriculture in the entirety of Africa during the 4 previous years. This expropriation

of natural resources, and of water in particular, violates the communities' right to directly manage of water in a free and autonomous way, and has a lasting impact on the sovereignty of States.

The violation of the right to water and sanitation in Africa hinders development and will cost the up to 5% of Africa's GDP every year. Equally, this is the principal cause of diarrhoeic illnesses, which have caused the death of 400 000 children per year in Africa these last years (according to the research of the NGO Water Aid). In Senegal, it is up to 2000 children who die every year due to diarrhoea provoked by the lack of access to drinking water and sanitation. The 2013 incident of the Ker Momar Sarr pipe clearly shows the limits of those supposedly “success stories” purported by public authorities, and highlights the unresolved issues of sovereignty and governance in the water and sanitation sectors.

At the same time, the new trade and investment policies that Europe is currently putting in place, with the United States on one hand (such as the TTIP, the transatlantic partnership for trade and investment), and with the African states on the other (the EPA, the economic partnership agreements, or the free exchange, between the EU and ACP countries), foreshadows a new world order where the role of politics, institutions, elected bodies and citizenship are marginalised. While the effects of this new layout will reverberate in all countries, Africa, for cause of its institutional fragility, will be especially affected. Indeed the treaty negotiations aiming to liberalise the public services are susceptible to introduce and increase, in all the African countries, the public-private partnership, as well as the privatisation of the management of drinking water in towns and at a rural level. Confronted with the lack of resources on site, the implementation of these treaties will result in the appropriation and the grabbing, to the benefit of Northern multinationals, of all the public services connected to water, including the provision, the sanitation, the distribution and the purification.

Yet, we are convinced that the rarefaction of water is not a natural given and inevitable, such as the propaganda of the green capitalism would like it: instead, it is socially constructed. The privatisation and commercialisation of the resources and services therefore represent flawed and dangerous answers which must be fought at all costs, for the preservation of water as a public good, a human right, and a commons. The conflicts in the Sahel, from Mali to Sudan, where the struggles for the access to water play a considerable role, illustrate in a tragic way the ineptitude of the international community who proved incapable, or unwilling, to fight in a concrete manner the desertification, and who never seriously upheld the international conventions existing to this purpose and recommended by the scientific community and the international civil society: it could have, to this day, saved millions of African lives. Paradoxically, we observe that even where water is available, the populations still do not have access to drinking water, and sanitation remains a luxury for the majority amongst them.

Reportedly, by 2030 70% of the world population will live in towns, of which more than half in “shanty towns”, where the lack of access to water, sanitation and energy, once again is not a fatality, but the largely predictable result of ineffective, expensive and dangerous policies deliberately adopted by governments who seem more responsive and accountable to their international partners – in exchange for interesting private benefits – than to their citizens' rights and well-being. Lately, the CIA anticipated a net increase in the number of refugees due to wars, to the environmental crises, and the propagation of conflicts for the access to water and food. It is to say that in addition to the political and social crises, of existing toll of wars and conflicts, the African continent could also experience major crises for the access to water and sanitation. Social movements and civil society organizations should not ignore the scenarios linked to the water and sanitation crisis, and their daily consequences on human life, health, means of subsistence and livelihoods, in sum on life as such. Africa cannot simply stand aside and let such crises add themselves to the daily package of difficulties which shake the continent.

The stages of mobilisation

Most of the promises and commitments taken on by the international community, and by the African states in particular, have remained in large part an annoying exercise of wishful thinking. At year of distance from the deadline, we can conclude that the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations has not been respected, and that in particular the promise to provide access to drinking water and sanitation, through the national policies and international aid and development, has not been fulfilled. After 10 years of mobilisation, the movements for water of all the continents have obtained the recognition from the United Nation General Assembly of the human right to water and sanitation (resolution 64/292 of 2010): and yet we are far from witnessing the implementation of this right across the world, and especially in Africa. Today many countries, of which notably Northern countries who abstained themselves from the recognition of the human right to water, overtly oppose all explicit mention of water as a human right in the framework of the UN negotiation for a post-2015 agenda of sustainable development goals. These will be adopted in October 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly. By then, several opportunities will give the chance to civil society organizations of the entire world, and particularly African ones, to make their voices heard, engage policy makers, express their worries and put forward proposals, These include: the next World Social Forum in Tunisia (March 2015) and the People's Forum in Milan (May 2015), in the frame of the Universal Exhibition Expo Milan 2015 "Feed the planet, energy for life". We can no longer wait to make African civil society's propositions and ambitions known, and share a platform for a common struggle towards the right to water.

The CSO/NGO, the social movements and the civil society networks engaged on Water and Sanitation issues are called upon. It has become increasingly urgent to consolidate the capacities of analysis, proposition and mobilisation of organisations from the social African movement so that they may fully play their role in Africa and at the heart of the Global Social Forum. The African Social Forum 2014 in Dakar (15-19 October) offers a unique opportunity for this, by allowing all participants to come together exchange, share, coordinate and fight at a regional and international level. The activities of the thematic panel "Water and Sanitation" described below foster this objective, as requested by the Senegalese Social Forum, as well as the COCIDEAS, and all the member organisations of the network.

Aims and objectives.

The problematic of access to water, hygiene and sanitation calls for work in synergy and the identification of political strategies for the concrete establishment of the human right to water and sanitation. To this effect, the African and international civil society actors engaged in the area of water and sanitation are invited to meet at the heart of the Social Forum during 5 days to work on the following objectives:

- make an assessment of the policies, programmes and commitments of African countries on water and sanitation, and share the lessons learnt and the good practices acquired through local and international initiatives of monitoring and advocacy put in practice by the CSO/NGO;
- support the networking dynamics of different organisations, and build the capacities of coordination and intervention of an African civil society network fighting for the human

- right to water and sanitation;
- foster the synergies with the international civil society actors fighting against the privatisation and the grabbing of water, and for a new water governance;
- identify practical tools of international law, human rights and national legislations aiming to implement the human right to water and sanitation, both at domestic level and within the framework on the 6th objective of the UN post-2015 Agenda (SDGs) dealing with water;
- promote an ethical charter based on the principles of international cooperation in the water sector, granting access to water as a human right and a commons which must be preserved against climate change and private grabbing;
- adopt a commune agenda for action for the 2015 horizon (Sustainable Development Goals) and 2016 (forecast adoption of TTIP and the APE UE-ACP).

Methodology

COSPE was invited by the organising committee to play a facilitating and coordinating role of the initiatives related to the right to water and sanitation within the ASF. The panels mentioned below involve a plurality of regional, sub-regional, and national Senegalese civil society actors, who have been considered because of their significant experience of struggle and resistance to foster the right to water. Despite the different contexts and challenges, we are persuaded that this opportunity for sharing and exchanging views and lessons learnt will strengthen the struggles at a local scale as well as internationally. The moderators are in charge of ensuring the coherence of each panel, including the conclusions and outcomes. Aiming at the practical and political goals of the Social Forum, the wish is that, next to the exchanges and the experiences shared, this would enable the drafting of commune declarations as well as a shared calendar of forthcoming mobilisations.

Panels

1) Coordination of the struggles and challenges of the African civil society in the field of the right to water.

Objective:

Sharing the lessons learnt, methods and strategies to address the present and coming challenges to the right to water and sanitation in Africa.

Facilitator: Leonard Shang Quartey (ISODEC, Ghana)

Speakers:

- Mignane Diouf (COCIDEAS, Sénégal): the struggles and challenges for the right to water and sanitation in Senegal.
- Léonard Shang Quartey (ISODEC, Ghana): the struggles and challenges of the right to water and sanitation in Ghana: from the privatisation to the constitutionalization, via the pre-paid meters
- Chantal Jacovetti (CNOP, Mali): the struggles and challenges for the rights to water and sanitation in Mali: from land grabbing to water grabbing. The alternative of the agro-ecology.
- Patrick Sindane (YASA, South Africa): the struggles in the Southern Africa Region, between privatization, water meters, water grabbing and the national processes of constitutionalization

2) Human Rights instruments for the protection and promotion of the right to water and sanitation.

Objective:

Sharing of tools, both existing and proposed, for the analysis and monitoring of the State's responsibility with regard to the implementation of the rights to water and sanitation.

Facilitator: Luca Raineri (COSPE, Italie)

Speaker:

- Water Aid, Senegal : the legal and budgetary obligations of the states with respect to the promotion of the right to water and sanitation: Human Rights instruments and approach.
- Léonard Shang Quartey (ISODEC, Ghana) : budgets analysis and tools for social accountability of the right to water;
- Tchernon Hamadou (Alternatives, Niger) : sharing the tools for budget analysis for the promotion of rights to food in Niger : towards an extension to the right to water?
- Rosario Lembo (CICMA, Italy) : Towards an international protocol for the human right to water and sanitation : sharing objectives, strategies and challenges.

3) Right to water: what type of partnerships? Business, appropriation or cooperation?

Objectives:

- ⤴ Roundtable with African social movements, civil society and networks, international NGOs and donors, to discuss the challenges and threats of different modes of partnerships between North and South, Europe and Africa, for the promotion of the right to water and sanitation.
- ⤴ Workshops for the promotion of a joint declaration of African civil society networks struggling for the right to water and sanitation against the ratification of the Economic Partner Agreements UE-ACP aimed at the liberalisation of the public service sector (establishment of a working group).
- ⤴ Reinforcement of an African network for the right to water and sanitation.

Facilitator: Mignane Diouf (COCIDEAS, Senegal)

Speaker:

- ⤴ POSCAO, Senegal: challenges and threats of Economic Partnership Agreements UE-ACP in the public service sector, and for the right to water and sanitation in particular.
- ⤴ Luca Raineri (COSPE) : water grabbing in Africa. Challenges and tools for a joint struggle : the international campaign against the water grabbing
- ⤴ Rosario Lembo (CICMA) : current challenges and threats of development aid policies ; presentation and discussion of the Charter for an Ethical Cooperation in the water and sanitation sector.
- ⤴ Meeting of the main platforms of activists struggling for the right to water and sanitation (ISODEC, REDEAS, CNOP, ecc.). Drafting a joint declaration against EPA UE-ACP on services.
- ⤴ donor organisations, (TBC): African Development Bank, AFD, SIDA.