

The 4th Istanbul International Water Forum

Water for Peace

Water for refugees, displaced persons and marginalized areas



Istanbul Conference Palace

10-11 May 2017

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4TH ISTANBUL INTERNATIONAL WATER FORUM

WATER FOR PEACE

1. INTRODUCTION

As a triennial event held one year prior to each World Water Forum, the 4th Istanbul International Water Forum (IIWF) aimed to provide important inputs to the 8th World Water Forum, which will be held in Brazil in 2018. The Forum was devoted to the impacts of the latest regional political setting on water issues. Within the wider context of 'Water & Peace,' the 4th IIWF discussed the subjects of urban water management, relief actions, legal aspects and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a specific focus on the refugee issue. The Forum will feature four thematic sessions that will discuss water relief actions, challenges of urban water management and meeting the SDGs in turbulent times, including a Plenary Session on 'Water for Peace'. A Special Session will also be held on the practices of water and sanitation provision to Syrians in Turkey. Istanbul International Water Forum is the flagship event of Turkish Water Institute (SUEN).





The 4th Istanbul International Water Forum was held between 10-11 May 2017 at the Lütfi Kırdar International Convention and Exhibition Center. The Forum was jointly organised by the Turkish Water Institute (SUEN) and the General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) under the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey.

The 4th IWWF welcomed 1,681 registered participants from 64 countries all over the world. The Forum was attended by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private sector representatives, scientists and academics. The Forum focused on the issue of refugees under the main theme of "Water and Peace". The 4th IWWF panellists discussed the subjects of urban water management, relief actions, legal aspects and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a specific focus on the refugee issue. The Forum enabled ample exchange of experiences and success stories on the challenge of providing water and sanitation services to refugees among refugee hosting countries.

By emphasizing that refugee crisis has become a global concern, the Forum's message was that refugee crisis is not an issue to be dealt alone by host countries and responsibility should be shared by the international community through new mechanisms including increasing financial options.

2. GIWEH PARTICIPATION AT ISTANBUL WATER FORUM Special session; GIWEH 5

In preparation of the 8th World Water Forum in Brazil, GIWEH organized a special session at the 4th Istanbul International Water Forum aimed to engage experts, members of the international community, humanitarian organizations, UN agencies, refugee representatives and civil society to promote the participation of civil society in the Citizen's Process and to highlight the theme, "Bring the Refugees' Voice".

GIWEH formally invited 30 refugees and people from isolated areas to attend the Forum in Istanbul, in order to give a voice to marginalized individuals into global water policies. The Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health plans on inviting a larger number of refugees to the Forum in Brazil.

Name of the organization: The Citizen's Process Commission (GIWEH- Global Institute for Water Environment and Health)

Partners: AFIF Charity, Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) and Syria Water Forum

Type of event: Panel

Title of the event: Water for the refugees



'Water for the Refugees' is one of several side events organized by GIWEH and partners in preparation for the civil society forum of the 8th World Water Forum in Brazil in March 2018. For this event, the focus is on providing a voice to the vulnerable and marginalized populations who have been displaced from their homes and require secure access to water and sanitation. The main goal is to highlight the position of refugees and in fact all vulnerable and displaced peoples.

It also highlighted SDG 6: “ensure access to water and sanitation for all”, and endorsed the research for sustainable and effective solutions at the water services’ sector.



3. OBJECTIVE:

The aim is to engage experts and the civil society in the preparation of the 8th World Water Forum and promote the participation of the civil society during the Citizen's Forum. The goal is to share knowledge on water challenges and solutions concerning forced displacement; as well as highlight the importance of humanitarian aid, specifically when addressing water and sanitation. This session *Organized by the Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health (GIWEH) in partnership with the World Water Council, the 8th World Water Forum and AFIF Charity. In collaboration with the Asian Water Council, the Korea International Water Forum, the International Youth Parliament of Water, the Palestinian Hydrologists Group, the Syria Water Forum and Syrian community organizations.*

Representatives from the civil society as well as related institutions such as International Organisations, local authorities and charity foundations took part to the session as speakers.



In order to engage as many people as possible in our activities during the Citizen Forum of the 8th World Water Forum and to open a discussion on the topic. Moreover, a special attention was given to water and sanitation provision to Syrians in Turkey, and at the neighbouring countries like Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS:

- Mr. Mabrouk Ben Atia,- Program Coordinator; Water, Food, and Energy (GIWEH) and,
- Dr. Tobias Schmitz, Senior Advisor, Water and Human Rights Expert (GIWEH).

Speakers at the Istanbul International Water Forum

Dr. Nidal Salim, Director General (GIWEH)-Geneva, Switzerland

He described briefly the 8TH World Water Forum 8,(WWF8) processes:

- Thematic process
- Political process
- Regional process
- Sustainability focus group
- Citizen's Forum

He mentioned briefly the main activities of citizen forum and how it can integrate with the other processes. He focused on the concept of sustainability and raised the question of ``How to move from emergency actions to sustainable approach to reduce the losses and achieve more efficiency and effectiveness. He also highlighted the integration between the humanitarian fund and the business models as a sustainable a approach. He linked the water topic to other topics including energy and food. He explained that achieving the concept of human security needs the interlinked relationship between water, food and energy, referring to the fact that one function in Water creates 4 functions around it, so water is an integral. He said, "We need to look at sustainability form an integrative perspective``. In financial and support terms, funds and aid must be channeled through clear organization and methodology with a very clear vision and approach, so that the transition from relief to sustainability could be achieved in a systematic way.

This event examined the current situation of refugees and displaced population's access to water and sanitation services, discuss the role of actors in the water field in improving the situation. The session highlighted the challenges, share daily life stories and lesson learned. Discussions evolved around the potential role charity foundations, International Organizations and other professionals can play in supporting these populations within the water sector. It opened discussion on possibility to build cooperative programme between refugees and hosting countries.

Finally, Dr. Salim's message addressed the issue of poverty and vulnerability, a global concern which is not limited to recently displaced people coming from Syria or Middle East, but also other countries as Somalia and Kenya.

Mr. Mbaruko Vyakweli, Member of the Board of Directors of the World Water Council

Mr. Vyakweli pointed out the need for poverty alleviation, the heart of the sustainable development agenda. He mentioned the example of Kenya, which has received many poor, war-affected and displaced communities from neighboring countries such as Somalia and Southern Sudan. Kenya supports many refugee camps as a way of contributing to international humanitarian efforts. He noted that the province of Garissa, northeast Kenya, has the world's biggest refugee camp (Dabaab Refugee Camp), with 300'000 refugees. The Kenyan government works alongside the German Corporation of International Cooperation (GIZ) and other financial and technical partners. Receiving refugees is one of the most important and pressing concerns in the country: it deserves special attention since it could be a source of tension if not managed with care –especially considering the health issues that could arise. For this reason, the partnership and consultation between population and donors is essential, since it helps the development of implementation mechanisms. Mr. Vyakweli stated that Kenya has also shown interest in the development of technology for communication because it proved itself useful for Somalia's stability.

Mr. Ibrahim Ali, Director, Board of Directors of Afif Al Khairiy Foundation Doha Qatar

Mr. Ali noted that “water is the source of life and peace; however, it can be cause of conflict if not managed in a scientific and correct way”. As stated at the COP 22 by governments and organizations, water is essential for development, and Qatar stays in line with that position. Mr. Ali mentioned that “people should have access to water; it should be a priority in national programs and projects, and remain a permanent issue on the international agenda”. As the humanitarian situation in Syria and other small developing countries continues to deteriorate, many charitable associations in Qatar have intensified their aid efforts to help those living in war, as well as displaced people. AFIF, alongside local and international partners, reaffirmed its commitment to continue assisting Syrians in need, especially in the water and food sectors. It will as well host communities from marginalized areas of the world, and will make sure that the conditions of the services efficient manner. Humanitarian aid agencies are also considering making major shifts and address basic need issues of vulnerable population. The idea is to transfer them from a relief situation to a sustainable solution.

Mr. Ali stated that “one of the main reasons for organizing this event is to interact and discuss with key actors in the water services that work on the ground—who deal daily with the water challenges of refugees– as well as UN organizations, professional networks of scientists and leading NGOs such as

GIWEH. The objective is to find the right solution and build a strong partnership in order to be more efficient and effective”.

Within the Citizen’s Forum and as a part of the 8th WWF this topic was particularly addressed, along with issues related to natural solutions, the importance of sustainability, and capacity building. The 8th WWF will be a unique opportunity to interact and learn from different practices.

Mr. Siddhashdahrani, Syria Building Foundation

Mr. Siddhashdahrani pointed out that “14.9 million people are in desperate need of water, 8 million of them in Syria. About 52% of the Syrian population is being served by existing networks, and about 30%, supplied through water trucks”. The deterioration of the current water infrastructures is the main issue to be dealt with, according to Mr. Siddhashdahrani. Said matter requires assessment about the state of the facilities. Therefore, there are two priorities, he claimed: restoring the infrastructures and restoring the ability to manage them. At a different level but still relevant, there’s the issue of sustainability and electricity. He mentioned that the spread of diseases in the region because of water pollution has increased three to four times, so the matter is more urgent and relevant than ever.

In terms of human resources’ capacity, he pointed out that there are some good experiences with water tariffs, which are sustainable thanks to financial support. The remaining challenge so far is to define the role of the private sector. As this is still unclear and ineffective, the government and non-governmental organizations must be involved on the problem-solving.

Ms. Kirsten Karlstom, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees

“The sustainability issues we are discussing in these areas are relevant and linked to disaster risk reduction in several ways. Although my current position is in Turkey, I worked in refugee camps in Kenya in 2011 and I have a clear idea of the circumstances there. My responsibilities are not directly related to the provision of water, but to the making sure that organizations and the private sector work together, even if the intervention relief programs are different”, stated Mr. Kirsten, who thinks that relief programs will not be long term and will not go far.

“We have found that the conditions (of camps for refugees) are changing. They previously existed within rural areas, but now are extending to urban ones, even getting to the heart of cities”, he said. “The general approach has also changed: about 75% of refugees are hosted in urban areas, in cities and communities. The camps, which used to host the majority of the displaced individuals, host now only

25% of refugees. In this case, the role of community services should not be overlooked, as we have seen in water operations.”

When talking about the relationship between water and other issues, Ms. Kirsten admitted not having a clear idea of the interests of donors in any related fields such as energy and water. “In order to obtain positive effects from the donations, the contributions have to be integrated to development projects from the perspective of the donor countries, and not only directed towards humanitarian issues. There are several matters which also require attention: development, infrastructure, maintenance, sustainability and others. These issues have to be taken care with professionalism, since empowerment should not only be a reaction, but a constructive project with future perspective, aiming to achieve sustainability. Also, there is a need to define community mechanisms: refugees are seen as mere residents, they don’t have a “safety net” and therefore their position is weak. It is a key issue to guarantee refugees having the right to work and getting a payment for their services.”

Dr. Abdullah Sjahr, Syrian Engineers Establishment for Construction

Dr. Abdullah raised the issue of untreated sewage water, explaining that it can be a source of death. Sewage water is estimated untreated at a 100% in Syria, which is the main reason for outbreaks of diseases and epidemics such as cholera, typhoid and leishmaniasis. He made clear that there is a need to develop treatment plants and sanitation within safe areas, pointing out the increase in the number of cases of leishmaniasis in Syria passing from 75,000 in 2015 to 91,000 in 2016.

Controlled by the interim government, the city of Idlib, Dr. Abdullah said, is currently the one with the riskier situation, and solutions need to be found. Dr. Abdullah explained that two systems are currently in use: the usage of sewage tanks and the treatment of wastewater. The first one allows reducing pollution by 40% to 80% and it does not require maintenance, which is especially relevant since they do not have operating costs. The second can be achieved at low cost using natural underground decomposition methods. For these systems to succeed, some steps must be followed: encouraging donors to finance sewage infrastructure in Syria, prioritizing sanitation services, building capacities for the sanitation sector, implementing sewage projects and rehabilitating existing wastewater infrastructures.

Results and recommendations:

As the water issue is the central issue in the SSSP, all participants stressed the need for the creation of a dedicated working group that would discuss and integrate different topics. The most important outcome of this workshop was the focus on the following aspects:

- ④ The raise of the capacity of refugees, displaced and people from isolated areas to be influential, work within their communities and interact with organizations of civil society that have a good reputation and are efficient.
- ④ Supervision of projects and mechanisms by competent institutions, as well as the coordination with local councils that have a deep knowledge of the reality of the area and are competent at project-developing.
- ④ Encouragement of donors to finance sewage infrastructures in Syria within its specialized institutions. One of the most important achievements of the dialogue session was the agreement between the Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health and the United Nations: to focus on the marginalized areas and to create international partnerships to activate this agenda at the 8th World Water Forum in Brazil, finding co-financing sources for projects in these regions.
- ④ Integration of funds between relief funds and development funds within the concept of sustainable development.
- ④ The Global Institute for Water, Environment and Health will hold five more informative and collaborative sessions this year and will focus on sustainable solutions for development in marginalized and conflict areas.





SAVE THE DATE



Water for the Refugees
May 11th, 2017
9:00 – 10:45am, Dolmabahçe B
4th Istanbul International Water Forum
Co-organized by:



In preparation of the 8th World Water Forum in Brazil, this session aims to engage experts, members of the international community, humanitarian organizations, UN agencies, refugee representatives and civil society to promote the participation of civil society in the Citizen's Process and to highlight the theme, "Bring the Refugees' Voice." The goal is to share knowledge on water challenges and solutions concerning forced displacement; as well as highlight the importance of humanitarian aid, specifically when addressing water and sanitation.

Panelists:

- ❖ **GIWEH:** Dr. NIDAL SALIM, Director General, Welcoming and Objectives
- ❖ **Refugee Voice:** Mr. Omar Chamali, Director, Syria Water Forum
- ❖ **WWC:** Mr. Mbaruku vyakweli, Governor of World Water Council
- ❖ **UNHCR:** Mr. Murray Burt, Senior WASH Officer
- ❖ **AFIF charity:** Mr. Ibrahim Ali, CEO, Role of Humanitarian Aid
- ❖ **Local Practices:** Dr. Abdullah Saghir, Director, Syrian engineers for construction and development

Moderator: Dr. Tobias Schmitz , GIWEH Senior Advisor-Water Resources management and monitoring, Civil society's representatives working in water and sanitation will take part in the event.

Our Partners:

