

# Drops of Hope: Fresh Water and its Related Services in Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Activities

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# Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of water systems
- III. Integrating fresh water and related services in peacebuilding efforts
- IV. Restoring water systems for post-conflict peacebuilding: some practices
- V. Final remarks: reimagining water initiatives for post-conflict stability

# I. Introduction

- Peacebuilding: a multidimensional process (political, security and socio-economic elements)
- Aims: managing conflicts, mitigating impacts and preventing escalation
- Positive role of water in post-conflict environments: an entry point for peace
- Various facets of water: fresh water as a resource and related water systems
- Water systems include assets, consumables, people and knowledge: beyond physical assets

# I. Introduction (cont.)

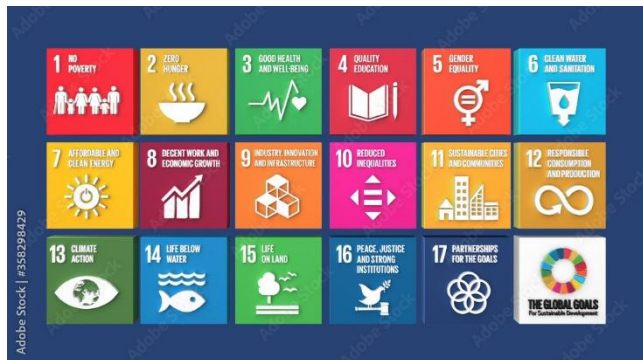
- Water: multiple roles in post-conflict societies (supporting food security, economic recovery, poverty alleviation and sustainable development)
- Need to shift peacebuilding approaches on water: from a technical issue to a broader governance issue, including its human rights and transboundary aspects
- Challenge to show examples portraying how restoring water systems (or WASH systems) contribute to long-term stability and sustainable peace
- Water integrated in a comprehensive crisis management approach

## II. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of water systems

- Rehabilitation and reconstruction should contribute to building societies' resilience
- Challenge: weak legitimacy of institutions
- Effective service delivery helps in rebuilding citizens' trust in government institutions and the legitimation process

## II. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of water systems (cont.)

- Rehabilitation of water systems is grounded in international law, i.e. the human right to water
- Water systems are social and political aspirations for states' societies enabling the achievement of all SDGs



## II. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of water systems (cont.)

- Prioritization on rehabilitating and reconstructing water systems: a signal for peace and development
- Each post-conflict situation is unique: the role of water for peace needs to be tailored to the political, cultural, economic, institutional, legal and ecological context
- Neglecting water-related priorities in post-conflict settings increases the risks of conflicts

### **Principle 21: Reconstruction, rehabilitation and repair of water infrastructure and water-related infrastructure**

1. Destroyed and damaged water infrastructure and water-related infrastructure should be reconstructed, rehabilitated and repaired.
2. The equipment and other goods necessary for the reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, operation and maintenance of water infrastructure and water-related infrastructure should be exempted from sanctions and other coercive measures.

### III. Integrating fresh water and related services in peacebuilding efforts

- Initially, peacebuilding focused on security sector reform, political stabilisation, and reestablishing institutions
- Risks that technical aspects of water management prevail without empowering local people; ownership placed on international actors instead of local people (examples: Ferghana Valley and Kosovo)



### III. Integrating fresh water and related services in peacebuilding efforts (cont.)

- MINUSMA and UNMISS: active in the construction of boreholes and water towers; extended their support to prevent tensions between farmers and pastoralists
- Peace-keeping operations should include the protection, reconstruction and rehabilitation of water systems in their mandate

#### Principle 22: Peacekeeping operations

1. Protection of water infrastructure and water-related infrastructure and their reconstruction, rehabilitation and repair should be included in the mandates of the peacekeeping operations, where appropriate.
2. Peacekeeping operations should support and provide assistance to the local authorities in the reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, operation and maintenance of the water infrastructure and water-related infrastructure.

### III. Integrating fresh water and related services in peacebuilding efforts (cont.)

- The human right to water should be the basis for developing water policies and decisions in post-conflict environments
- Transboundary waters: role of international water law in supporting the development of transboundary freshwater agreements and joint commissions
- Role of international dispute settlement bodies to redress violations of human rights and international water law

## IV. Some practices on restoring water systems for post-conflict peacebuilding

- South Sudan
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Afghanistan
- East Timor

## IV. South Sudan

- GIZ and KfD Development Bank: mobile infrastructure with water tanks
- USAID programme « Water for recovery and peace programme »: water points
- UNMISS supported rehabilitation and building of water systems to increase access to water and minimize potential conflicts

## IV. South Sudan

- Through its Quick Impact Project, UNMISS established solar-powered boreholes
- Restoring damaged water systems: reduction of tensions between farmers and herders
- Jonglei canal project on the Nile river presents an opportunity transboundary water cooperation with Egypt and Sudan



## IV. Challenges in South Sudan

- Projects on drinking water supplies have benefited urban areas, widening the urban-rural divide
- Challenges: raising operational costs and delays in material supplies, inadequate site selection and design deficiencies
- Community-based organizations lacked expertise to build and restore water infrastructure

## IV. Democratic Republic of Congo

- EU and ICRC projects to increase access to water
- Importance of designing resilient water systems capable of absorbing shocks while ensuring continuous service
- Lack of adequate funding and restricted access due to ongoing conflict
- UN Stabilization Mission in DRC provided water tanks and rehabilitation of infrastructure

(source of image ADP – Grand



INGA)

## IV. East Timor

- Water supply infrastructure severely impacted by the armed conflict in late '90 with around 70% of buildings and utilities affected
- UNTAET took immediate action to establish the Water and Sanitation Service Unit
- UNTAET placed great importance on increasing access to water in the recovery process

(Source of image: Britannica)





## IV. Challenges in East Timor

- Shortage of skilled personnel, difficulties in obtaining the baseline data on the status of the water sector
- The peace dividend low for 3 reasons:
  - 1) Community management of water systems did not fit the local reality;
  - 2) Water committees were not inclusive (due to the exclusion of women);
  - 3) Lack of coordination among actors and lack of a clear plan to link short and long-term sustainability

## IV. Afghanistan

- Over the years, various international institutions, including the UN have constructed water supply systems
- USAID involvement
- UNAMA and peacebuilding: resolved a longstanding water dispute in Nangarhar province through mediation and community engagement



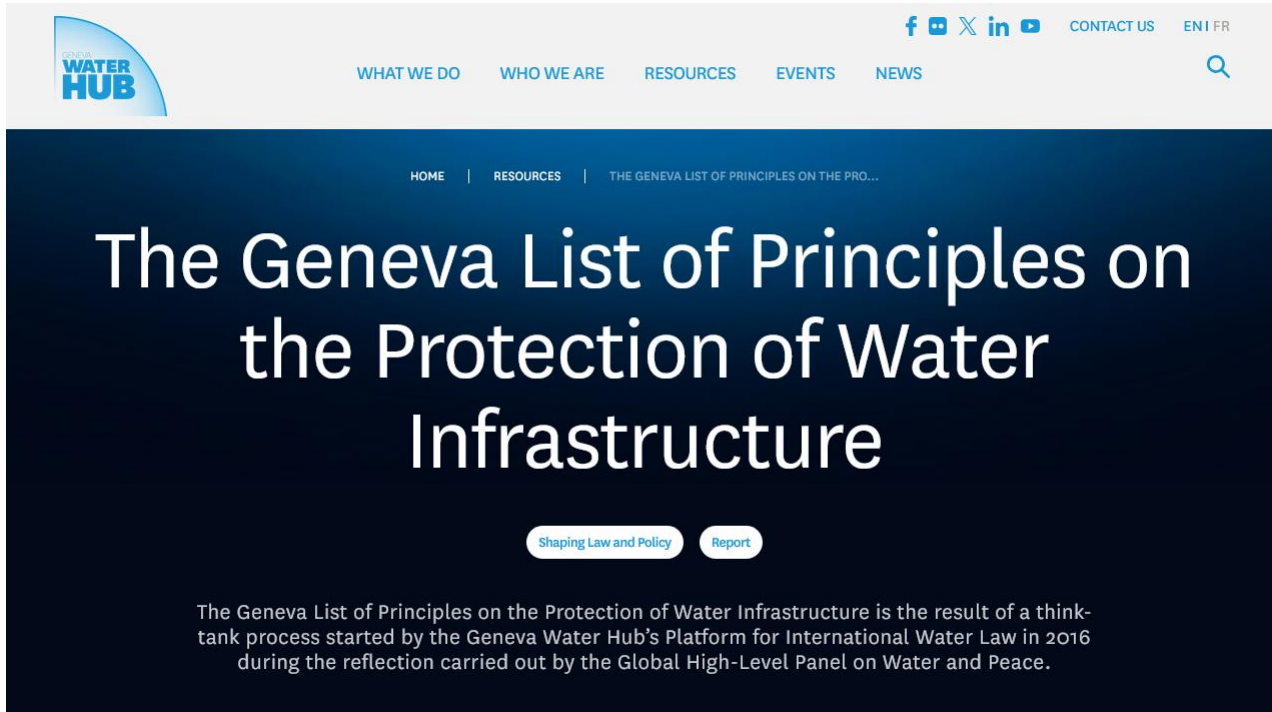
Source of image: University of Nebraska Omaha

## V. Reimagining water initiatives for post-conflict stability

- Fresh water as an entry point for peace in the former Yugoslavia: adoption of the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia in 2002
- Restoration of WASH systems must include local communities in early decision-making on planning, construction and maintenance; equal access to all segments of the population without discrimination and taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups (i.e. affordability)
- Legal and policy implications of water for the country and its neighbours

[For more information, please visit our website:](https://www.genevawaterhub.org/geneva-list)

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The screenshot shows the website of the Geneva Water Hub. The header includes the logo on the left and navigation links (WHAT WE DO, WHO WE ARE, RESOURCES, EVENTS, NEWS) and social media icons (Facebook, YouTube, X, LinkedIn, Instagram) and 'CONTACT US' and 'EN | FR' on the right. A search icon is also present. The main content area has a dark blue background with the title 'The Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure' in large white text. Below the title are two buttons: 'Shaping Law and Policy' and 'Report'. A paragraph at the bottom explains that the list is the result of a think-tank process started by the Geneva Water Hub's Platform for International Water Law in 2016 during the reflection carried out by the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace.

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# The Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure

Shaping Law and Policy Report

The Geneva List of Principles on the Protection of Water Infrastructure is the result of a think-tank process started by the Geneva Water Hub's Platform for International Water Law in 2016 during the reflection carried out by the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace.