

# Right to Water: a Health Justice Issue

People's  
Health  
Movement

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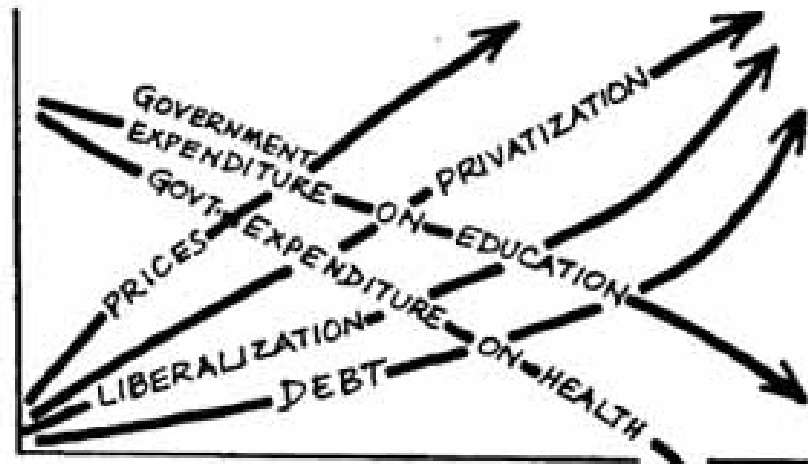
1. Introduce People's Health Movement
2. Overview of the global water crisis
  - Dimensions: who is using the world's water, for what purposes
  - Corporations aren't best water stewards
3. PHM's health justice agenda for water stewardship
4. Signs of hope and how to get involved



Alma Ata, 1978

The International Conference on Primary Health Care calls for urgent action by all governments, all health and development workers, and the world community to protect and promote the health of all the people of the world by the year 2000

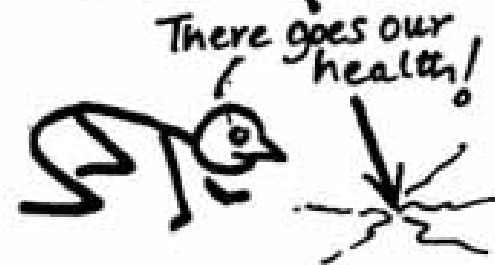
# Health for All by 2000?



Less Food

No Jobs

No water

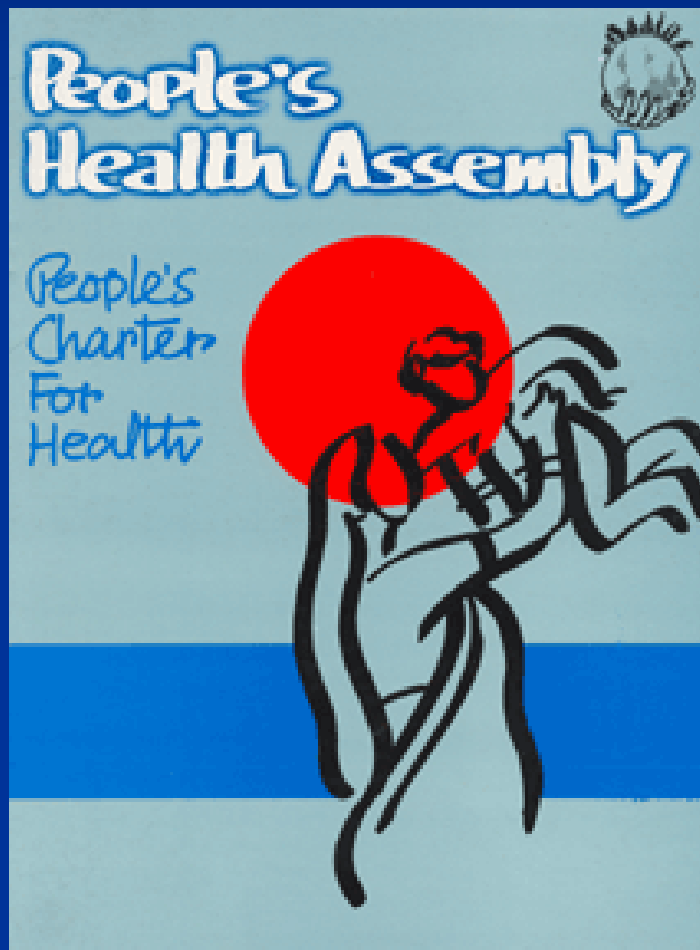


# First People's Health Assembly Bangladesh, December 2000



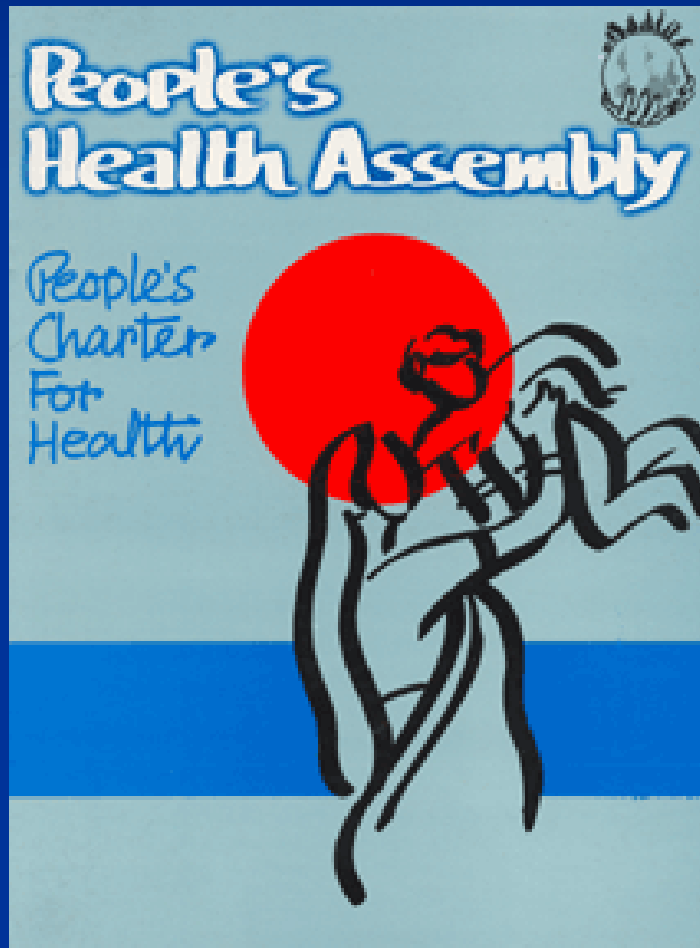
1500 delegates from over 60 countries issue a  
*Call to Action*

# The People's Charter for Health



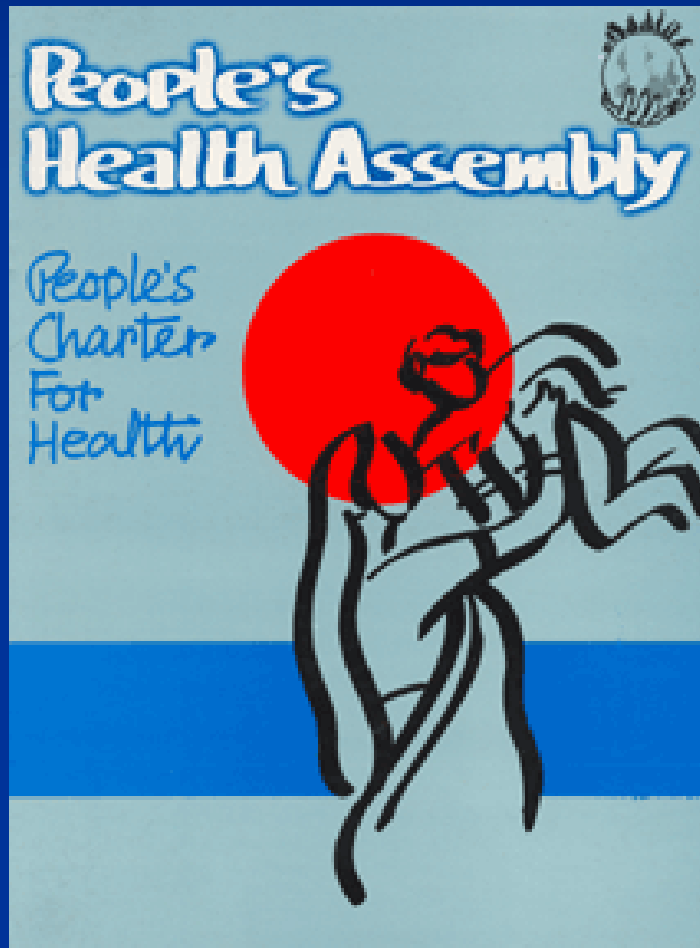
“Health is a social, economic and political issue and above all a fundamental human right.”

# The People's Charter for Health



“Health for All means that powerful interests have to be challenged, that globalization has to be opposed, and that political and economic priorities have to be drastically changed.”

# The People's Charter for Health



“Equity, ecologically-sustainable development and peace are at the heart of our vision of a better world.

There are more than enough resources to achieve this vision.”



# Promoting a comprehensive Right to Health Platform



# Promoting a comprehensive Right to Health Platform

People's Health Movement promotes ongoing activism to:

- Organize for quality health care, accessible for all.
- Organize for equity and access to determinants of health -- such as water, food security and nutrition, housing, healthy environment...

# Right to Health: Right to Water



# Equitable access to safe and sufficient water -- a global crisis

- Over 1.1 billion people (1/6 of the world's population) lack access to safe water – meaning a protected water supply within 1 km of their home)
- 2.6 billion people (40% of the world's population) lack access to adequate sanitation

# Water scarcity



# Equitable access to safe and sufficient water -- a global crisis

- Lack of clean drinking water leads to nearly 250 million cases of water-related disease each year and between 5 and 10 million deaths.
- Over 5 million people, mostly children, die annually due to preventable water-borne diseases.

# Water contamination



# Inequitable use of water: 12% of the world's population uses 85% of the water

WHO: The minimum amount of water needed for drinking, cooking, bathing, and sanitation is 13 gallons per day

- In the US average use: 65 - 78 gallons of water/ day
- In the Netherlands average: 27 gallons/ day
- In the Gambia average use: 1.17 gallons/ day



# Global consumption growing: how is water used?

Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, more than twice the rate of population growth.

- Agriculture: irrigation for crop production 65%
- Industry 25%
- Households and Municipalities 10%

# A justice or “rights based” approach

- Water is a basic public good
- Prioritize people’s needs over profit

Protect global water resources for the  
global public good

# Corporate-driven agenda has contributed to poor water stewardship

- Privatization of municipal water systems:
  - greater inequities in access to water;
  - not led to improvements in delivery or quality
- Prioritizing profit over essential use: industrial-scale agricultural irrigation and industries waste vast amounts of water.

# privatized water systems... pure gold!

- 3 large corporations deliver water and wastewater services to almost 300 million customers in over 100 countries. Suez, Vivendi (France), RWE-AG (Germany).
- At current rate of expansion, these 3 alone will control over 70% of water systems in Europe and North America in a decade.
- The majority of World Bank loans for water in the last 5 years required conversion of public systems to private.

## Privatized water systems: increase inequalities in access to water

- Bolivia: price of water tripled with privatized water systems.
- South Africa: fees tripled with newly privatized service, hundreds of thousands had water cut off.

Not just in the developing world....

- England: 106% price hike following privatization in 1985 while profits increased by 692%. Customers who had water disconnected increased by 50% since privatization.

# Privatized water systems: have not improved quality or safety of drinking water

In Atlanta, after Suez took over water system:

- 5 “boil water” alerts in 1 year
- Brown water from rust and debris
- Less than 1/2 basic scheduled repairs completed
- Fire hydrants lacked sufficient water pressure

**Where there is no water system...  
commercialization of water still reigns (not rains)**

Poor people in the “developing” world pay on average 12 times more per liter of water than fellow citizens connected to municipal systems.

# Profit over essential needs: Industrial-scale irrigation wastes water

Irrigation for crop production claims 65% of all water used yet more than half of this (60%) is wasted

- Overhead irrigation inefficient -- water is lost to evaporation and run-off. Drip irrigation and flood irrigation use water more effectively.
- Proper irrigation can save 450 thousand-acre-feet (KAF) of water per year. Enough to satisfy the needs of 3.6 million people.



# Where there is no irrigation:

Africa is the region most heavily dependent on rain fed agriculture.

The region accounts for less than 5% of global irrigation.

# Efficient uses of water in agriculture

- ecologically appropriate crops
- intensive organic agriculture uses far less water and is capable of producing higher yield than extensive industrial agriculture.

But the global food supply currently depends on large scale export-oriented agriculture.

# Profit over essential needs: industrial abuses of water resources

25% of all the water used is for industrial uses

1. Mining
2. Oil extraction
3. Manufacturing

# A justice or “rights based” approach for better water stewardship

## Core principles

- Human right to water – a public good
- Democratic control
- Clean production
- Equitable distribution to ensure basic human needs are met
- Invest in sustainable and healthy water conservation measures

# Human Right to Water for better water stewardship

Friends of the Right to Water,  
Project Blue Planet

<http://www.blueplanetproject.net/>

<http://www.righttowater.net/>

<http://www.righttowater.org.uk/>

<http://www.citizen.org/cmep/Water/humanright/>

<http://www.jubileesouth.org/news/EpZyVVlyFygMevRBey.shtml>

# Democratic control over water resources for better water stewardship

- Water as a public good;
- Careful balance in use of water resources for personal needs, agriculture, and industry;
- Prioritize water use for people before profit

# Democratic control over water resources for better water stewardship



...as participatory as possible

# “Clean production” for better water stewardship

- “clean production” systems: water is recycled and reused, inputs are recycled and reused, and toxics use is minimized.
- Financial costs to industry in the short-run outweighed by benefits to water stewardship



# Sustainable and healthy water conservation measures for better water stewardship

A few examples:

- Recycling water (grey water)
- Conservation-oriented irrigation systems (drip irrigation, traditional flood irrigation)
- Rainwater catchment
- Watershed management
- Non-water based sanitation

# Signs of Hope: Right to Water

- Uruguay became the first country in the Americas to mandate the Right to Water in their new constitution (2005), and has phased out all private investment in water and sanitation utilities.
- Canada and Great Britain have expressed interest in writing Right to Water into national legislation.

# Signs of Hope: re-claiming control of water systems

- Bechtel, after being expelled from Bolivia in 2001 for tripling water rates, filed a \$50 million lawsuit against the country -- and lost.
- Bolivia became the first country in the hemisphere to assign a new cabinet position: Ministry of Water; Venezuela soon followed with a similar post.
- In the US: Atlanta ended its deal with Suez after years of poor service.
- Argentina: several provinces have expelled private water companies.

# Signs of Hope: water struggles becoming global

- Water struggles in El Salvador, Ecuador, and Mexico
- Water Forum (Mexico, 2005) negotiations were stalled by a block: Uruguay, Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil and Angola united to challenge prevailing global governance of water.
- Multinational front uniting water struggles: Red Vida in Latin America, Pan African Water Movement, and Friends of the Right to Water in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia.

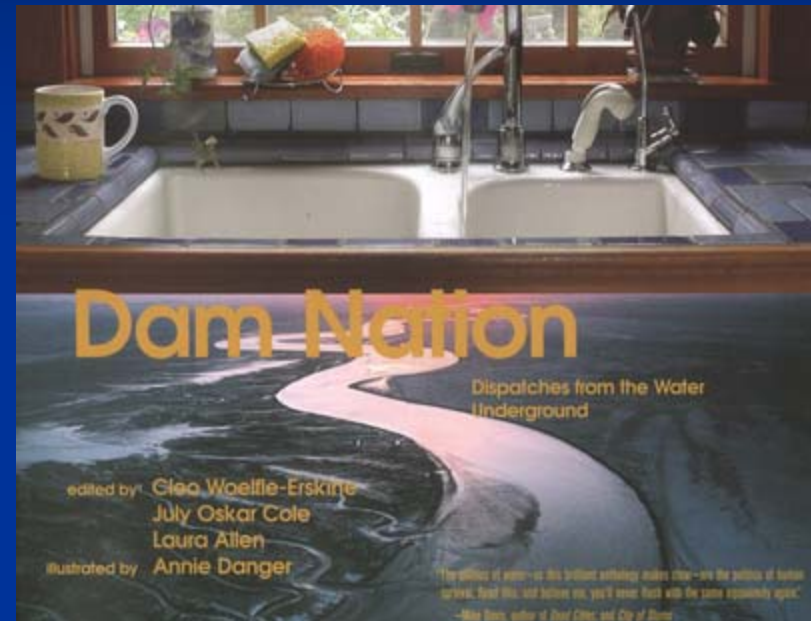
# People's Health Movement Right to Health Campaign



# Resources available from Hesperian

Dam Nation

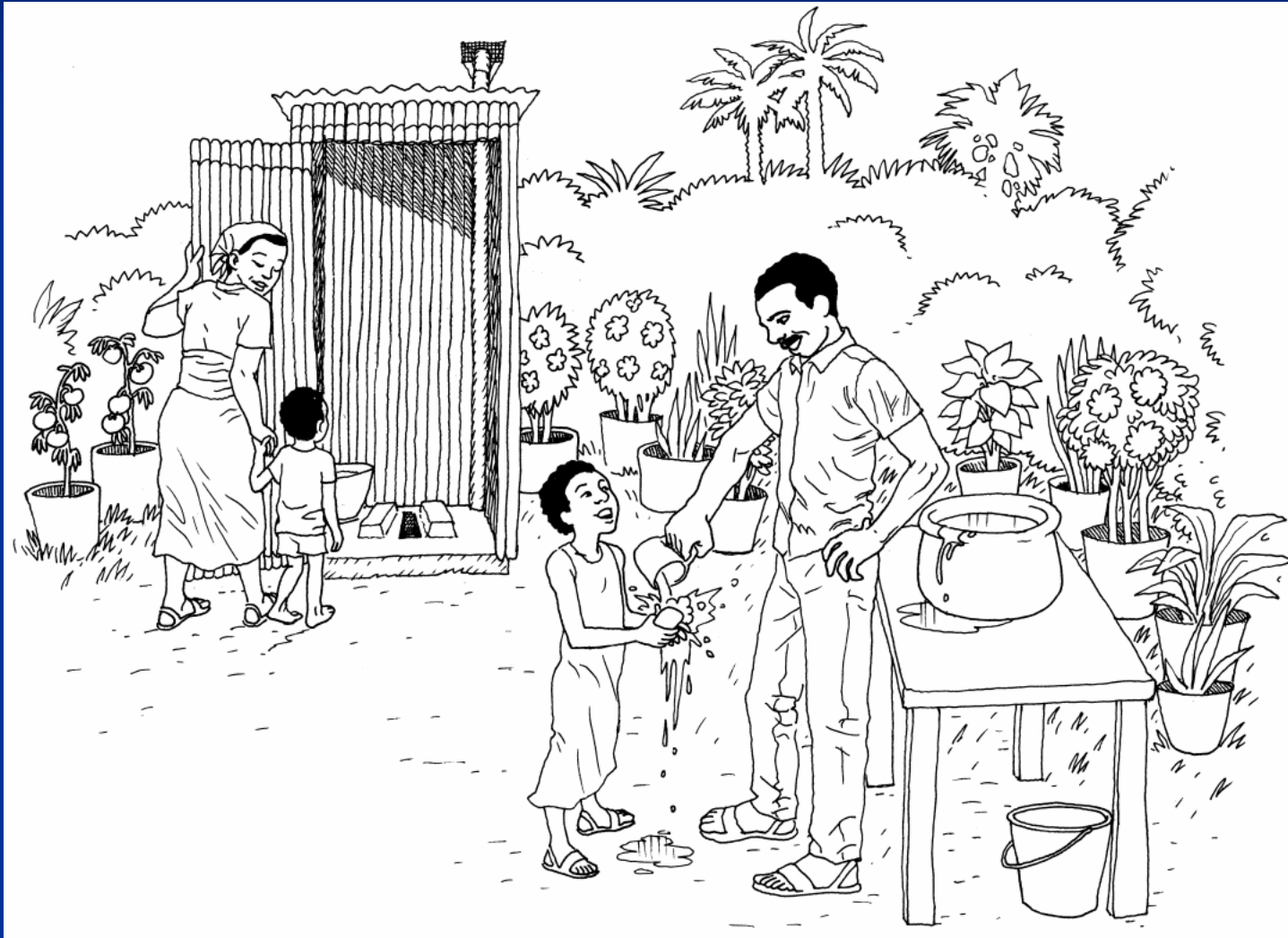
*Dispatches from the  
Water Underground*



# Water for Life: Community Water Security



# Sanitation and Cleanliness for a Healthy Environment





# *The People's Health Movement*

People's Health Movement

[www.phmovement.org](http://www.phmovement.org)

Global Health Watch

[www.ghwatch.org](http://www.ghwatch.org)

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