

Sample Position Paper/Policy Statement:

Position Paper for the 3rd Committee of the UN
Preventing the spreading of water-borne diseases
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Even though India is one of the countries with the best water supply (means they *have* a lot of water), the cleanliness of drinking water and with that water-borne diseases are a huge problem in the country.

There is a significant contrast in water availability: While in some regions there is an abundance of water and people struggle with a sustainable use of it, there are other regions in which the availability of clean water is the main issue and in which people struggle with scarce clean drinking water. Because of India's high population, the contamination of just one drinking water source could have severe consequences in form of water-borne diseases (e.g. cholera, malaria or diarrhea) that affect millions of lives.

In 2010, it was reported that in India, over hundred thousands of people die of water-borne diseases every year. One reason for this is that in one third of the 600 Indian districts, the ground water is not fit for drinking. The concentration of fluoride, iron salinity and arsenic exceeds tolerance levels, leading to approx. 65Million Indians that have been suffering from fluorosis and approx. 5Million from arsenic poisoning in West Bengal alone. In Delhi, the toxic quotient in the water is five times higher than it is defined in the WHO standards. Every day, over 18,000Million liters of untreated sewage water flow into the Yamuna river. Of a total of 1.42Million Indian villages, 196,813 are affected by chemical contamination of water. Of 10Million deaths annually, 780,000 are caused by the lack of basic health care amenities including toilets or latrines, an effective sewage system and safe water supply. In this report, it was also stated that 70% of India's water supply is seriously polluted with sewage effluents. The warm climate supports the spread of water-borne diseases. Every year during summer and rainy season, they erupt. All these facts are leading to India, in terms of quality of water and availability to its citizens, ranking as the 120th among 122 nations. In the report, it was stated that to solve this problem, the Indian government committed to provide drinking water to all habitations by 2012.

More current resources say that Indians have *the worst* access to clean drinking water in the world followed by China and Nigeria. Only approx. 5% of the population had access to clean drinking water and 769Million people lacked access to improved sanitation in 2016. 140,000 children suffer from diarrheal diseases every year after drinking polluted water and more than 500 children under the age of 5 die each day from diarrhea in India alone. Another problem is that buying water can cost 1rupee (\$0.015), which can be very expensive when looking at the high percentage of poor people in the Indian population.

Another issue that is strongly related to waterborne diseases is the lack of latrines and toilets in India. Worldwide, one million people are forced to defecate openly, 600 Million of these live in India. Almost every second Indian does not have the chance to use sanitations to defecate, so they often defecate on the streets, on fields or in rivers, contaminating the drinking water of millions. Also, the ground water is contaminated, because feces seep into it. Because of the caste system and the wide-spread Hinduism, many Indians don't even want to use sanitations: In Hinduism, feces are considered extremely dirty and it is only the lowest caste, the *Dalit* that cleans it up.

Former Indian governments have tried to introduce toilets but most of these ended up as storerooms: Indians don't want to use latrines due to already mentioned reasons. Trying to solve the problem, Prime Minister Narendra Modi started a hygiene campaign with the goal that by the 2nd

October 2021, no Indian must defecate openly anymore. It is planned to build over 100 Million toilets.

The World Water Council (WWC) has published a survey in which it was stated that the drinking water in India has improved over the past 5 years but still, more than one-third of Indians think that not enough is being done to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 6 approaches to make water and sanitation for all reality by 2030. 31 per cent of the surveyed Indians said they had been in a situation where they had no other option than drinking unsafe water and hence suffered from water-borne diseases.

To work on the issue, Narendra Modi appointed a special secretary in the ministry of water resources to deal with the Ganga River cleanup. This led to 71 per cent of Indians saying the drinking water situation has visibly improved over the past five years. As the World Water Council's president Benedito Braga stated: "There has been some work done in the past five years to improve the drinking water standards in India. Of course, there's still a lot of work to do there."

Encouraged by the fact that at least 10 per cent of diseases worldwide could be avoided if water supply, hygiene and water resource management could be improved and alarmed by the statement that more and more could die from water-borne diseases if adequate safeguards aren't taken, India emphasizes that commitment at the highest level is necessary to provide water and sanitation universally by 2030. As in India, a special secretary in the ministry of water resources can be helpful to solve issues with the quality of drinking water. Furthermore, organizations like water.org should be supported more effectively since they already achieved a lot by collecting donations and working hand in hand with other organizations like WaterCredit. Alarmed by the fact that worldwide every 7th person is forced to openly defecate, it is necessary to spend more attention to organizations such as the World Toilet Organization and to launch campaigns to build latrines and toilets and to educate people about the necessity of sanitation.