

## **Privatization and Its impact on Access to Water Resources**

By- Hannah Johns  
Researcher, International Advocacy, NCDHR

Climate Change and alterations have deep impact on natural resources, and one which has direct impact is water resources. Water availability, supply and therefore, accessibility to water can have drastic change due to this phenomenon. These changes will have far reaching effects on the day to day life of vulnerable and marginalized communities. In order to ensure the equitable distribution of resources among everyone, governments have a huge role to play. But in present days, privatization of resources is a big threat, especially resources like Water, which is so fundamental to right to life. The increasing trend in governments, pro privatization policy is something to be worried about.

The visible threats from corporatization of drinking water would be many, such as water price hikes, water mining and bulk exports, monopolistic water markets, sub standard water quality, threatened community ownership of water resource, corruption, and lack of transparency. As a case study, if we look into the Shivanath river project (Chhattisgarh), the first case of river privatization in India with total expected cost of Rs 256 crore had terrible outcomes such as supplying water at the rate of Rs.12.60/liter to industries and to railways; and denied access to people for fishing and bathing etc. News reported case of this privatized river, slowly drying up. A monopoly on the water supply in the radius of 18 km, government announced the scheme is constitutionally illegal and later they revoked the contract (<http://www.aidindia.org/main>).

Here, the crucial decisions about water privatization between donors and the governments are made behind closed doors and without the knowledge of the citizens, especially the marginalized Dalits whose small pieces of land with water sources are often appropriated for constructing national highways, etc. or forced to be sold for petty amount to corporate companies. Neither the donors (the World Bank or the IMF) nor borrowing governments disclose information about loan agreements and conditionalities. This is contrary to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, (Rio Dec, Principle 10: Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level) that entitles individuals to access information and judicial proceedings, as well as the chance to be involved in decision-making.

There is an urgent need for strong legislations in all the caste discriminated countries in South Asia that recognizes drinking water as one of the livelihood rights priorities. As far as India is concerned, amend the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989) to include discrimination and violence against Dalits regarding the right to drinking water. A dialogue with governments, relevant UN bodies, the private sector, local authorities, national human rights institutions, CSOs and academic institutions needs to be promoted and sustained with a view to identify, promote and exchange views on best practices related to access to safe drinking water. Preparation of a compendium of best practices, in relation to access to safe drinking water along with a right's based approach is a very urgent and essential step to be taken to guarantee their basic rights.

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