

Topic 1: Mass Education for Clean Water Infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Water is a unique resource in that it is essential to human life. Water infrastructure is a phrase used to describe water supply, waste management, treatment machinery, and storage of water. Unfortunately, around the world more than 844 million people lack access to clean drinking water and more than 2.3 billion people lack access to clean sanitation.¹ When working properly, water infrastructure not only provides safe drinking water but also limits pollution. The ability to have access to clean water has been dubbed a Human Right by the United Nations Resolution 64/292 in 2011 however many communities around the globe still do not have the resources to be able to build infrastructure and maintain it.² There is a clear need to provide education for these communities on clean water infrastructure.

Studies by the United Nations Children's Fund and the Center for Disease Control have shown that improved water infrastructure can reduce death by water-borne illnesses (such as diarrhea) by 21% and can reduce the catching of water-borne illnesses by 45%.³ For people to thrive, develop, and maintain their health, proper water infrastructure is imperative. While necessary, this type of infrastructure is expensive and complex leading many populations to be forced to live without it. In the United States alone, the Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that country wide, about \$650 billion dollars is needed over the next twenty years to invest in safe water systems⁴. The World Health Organization estimates that reasonable access to water is at least 20 liters of a day per person, however this is only the minimum. In developed nations, an average of more than 500 liters of water a day per person is consumed⁵.

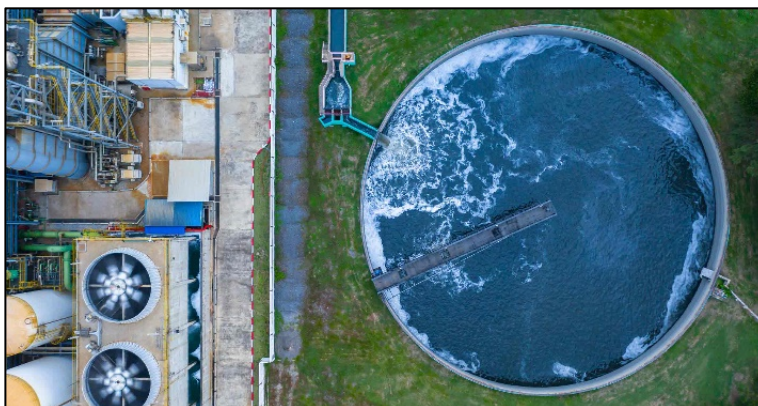


Figure 1: Water treatment plant in United States

Education often leads to innovation and although sanitation and water technology have rapidly developed, only the richest countries around the world have been able to access it. Even in the most urbanized cities, standard hygienic codes are often not followed for lack of personnel or resources. One solution to this blatant inequality is increasing global education on safe, clean, and reliable water infrastructure, however there are challenges in doing so. Water infrastructure needs to be able to keep up with the ever-changing world making it a long-term issue that requires immediate action.

¹ Oslo Governance Center. (n.d.). *Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation*. UNDP. <https://www1.undp.org/content/oslo-governance-centre/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-6-clean-water-and-sanitation.html>

² A/RES/64/292

³ Kahn, C. (2020, September 29). *7 Most Common Waterborne Diseases (and How to Prevent Them)*. Lifewater International. <https://lifewater.org/blog/7-most-common-waterborne-diseases-and-how-to-prevent-them/>

⁴ Irvin, W. R. (2019, May 9). *Spend More, and Spend Wisely, for Clean Water*. American Rivers. <https://www.americanrivers.org/2018/01/spend-spend-wisely-clean-water/>

⁵ OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2006). *Infrastructure to 2030: Telecom, Land*

Urban populations are certainly not the only ones in need of increased education on clean water infrastructure; in fact, most of the need lies in rural communities. In most cases rural communities lack even the basics of infrastructure such as abstraction and storage, waste management, and distribution. Often these communities might not even have access to a close enough water source to be able to build any infrastructure on. Rural and urban infrastructure often differ and so would education for both. There is also room for education in more sustainable infrastructure practices as the world grows more and more aware of the climate emergency.

TOPIC HISTORY

Infrastructure for water and irrigation is nothing modern, from the ancient Egyptians and Mayans, people have found ways to access, move, and treat water so that they can live comfortably. Initially humans had to live near freshwater sources like rivers or lakes which could serve for drinking water and/or waste disposals. The piping and aqueducts we use today can be traced back 2000 years ago to Ancient Rome and over the millennia, water infrastructure improved and treatment processes were created in order to dispose of waste properly without cross contamination⁶.

Different uses for water besides just consumption sprouted such as cooking, irrigation, waste, bathing, and more. These new practices created a need for more water and for ways to move water without physically carrying it. In the medieval times bathhouses were created in the Middle East, Mediterranean, North Africa, Asia, and Europe in which water would flow through aqueducts into a public bath that people could go to. Also invented around this time was the sewage system albeit on smaller scales than it is found today. In classic Mesoamerica, flushing toilets were found to have been used in a similar fashion that we use currently.

As the world began to progress through the industrial revolution (~19th century), complications occurred with water sanitation. Water borne illnesses spread rapidly and often those who were not among the elite lacked the knowledge on proper bathing and water treatment. People also used the same water source for both waste disposal and drinking water leading to deadly effects like cholera. Many began leaving big cities for areas with more pure water sources however most could not afford to leave due to the economic stressed of the era. Water was not only used for waste and drinking, but also for agriculture. At this time most nations were agrarian based and used most of their water to feed their livestock and water their crops; to do this on a large-scale irrigation was transformed.

Water filtration systems such as sand filters, desalination, and fluoridation/chlorination became popular around the turn of the century to minimize illness and disease. Scientists found that by adding small amounts of fluoride to the water supply, people were retaining their teeth longer⁷. Initially most of

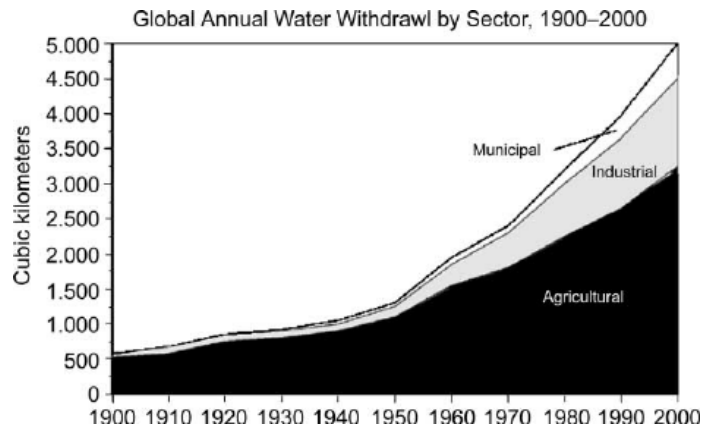


Figure 2: Global Annual Water Withdrawal by Sector 1900-2000
done by researchgate.net

⁶ Demming, D. (2019, October). *The Eighth Wonder of the World*. NGWA.
<https://ngwa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/gwat.12958>

⁷ Griffin SO, Regnier E, Griffin PM, Huntley VN. Effectiveness of fluoride in preventing caries in adults. *J Dent Res*. 2007;86(5):410–414.

the water infrastructure created in the west was privately owned but as society's need grew public works began to form.

In the 20th century the world population tripled from 1.5 to 6.5 billion and with it the need for water grew⁸. Urbanization progressed to even denser levels of living however many parts of the world continue to use 200-year-old infrastructure (pipes, etc.) and in other parts of the world, infrastructure simply does not exist; people still must carry water from hand dug wells or from nearby streams⁹. Simple but effective methods of filtration, irrigation, and piping exist yet many communities worldwide still have yet to achieve them. Large scale operations for any water infrastructure comes at a cost and many simply do not possess the resources to pay for it or learn about it.

CURRENT SITUATION

The disparities surrounding the issue of clean water infrastructure is a direct result of global inequality. Developed nations who possess more resources than most developing nations put together, are rapidly growing and innovating their water technology. Poorer countries are forced to buy water from local carriers for up to 500 times more than their richer neighbors; often the water is bottled due to the stigma surrounding tap water and disease¹⁰. As the demand for bottled water grows so does energy demand, waste production, and transport infrastructure needs. Less developed nations now face the pressure to industrialize rapidly but often lack the resources to provide the infrastructure since most of the technology currently being used is imported. In an effort to appease their people, governments often hastily exploit water resources without proper sanitation. In Bangladesh during monsoon season, sewage infiltrates water supply leading to water borne illnesses. Small communities are often more successful than large governments when given the proper education.



Figure 3: Water Sanitation and Hygiene Project (WASH) by UNICEF

Currently agriculture is by far the largest consumer of water in the world. India, Pakistan, the United States, and China make up for 75% of total agriculture uses¹¹. The amount of irrigated land around the world continues to fall per capita after peaking post 1960. As populations increase it seems global water supply decreases which leads to scarcity and the threat of conflict.

In *From a Few to All* by Juuti & Katko, the best results are found when sanitation/health education is introduced at the local level¹². Governments that are committed to prosperity such as China are successful when they commit to education on the basics of clean water infrastructure.

In June 2011 the United Nations passed a resolution dubbing clean water a 'human right' (A/HRC/RES/64/292) and in September 2011, passed a resolution ([A/HRC/RES/18/1](#)) which called on member states to ensure enough financing for sustainable delivery of water and sanitation.

⁸ Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2019). *World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations*. United Nations. <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/Probabilistic/POP/TOT/900>

¹¹ <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/chart-globally-70-freshwater-used-agriculture>

¹² https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312631875_From_a_Few_to_All_-_Long_Term_Development_of_Water_and_Sanitation_Services_in_Finland

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When deliberating the issue, Member states in this committee should remain aware that The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization can only make recommendations in regard to international investments, technological innovation, and educational initiatives. With that in mind, delegates should aim to expand upon the specifics of education for clean water infrastructure and how it can be accessed and distributed, improve upon current resolutions and treaties, and ensure that safe clean water remains a human right so that all may be able to access it one day. Furthermore, member states are highly encouraged to create a stronger framework of international norms to shape attitudes about current water infrastructure educational efforts: this can be accomplished by building upon preexisting frameworks, treaties, or creating new recommendations that accurately represent the United Nation's attitude towards clean water infrastructure.

The committee should also keep in mind the existing risk of conflict surrounding access to water around the world and put forth efforts to reduce such tension in order to foster cooperation. Lastly, it is important to recognize that while there are member states who have innovative technologies and monetary resources to fund education, there are member states who are without such capabilities and their concerns should be addressed and incorporated into any resolutions passed. Addressing the need for mass education on clean water infrastructure is of the utmost importance to the international community and will shape the quality of life for generations to come.

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Topic 2: Protection of Historical Monuments Amidst Increasing Political Tensions

INTRODUCTION

Historical statues and monuments represent the past and what people of the past wanted to memorialize. They can be sacred, religious, cultural, and patriotic; and sometimes they can be erected in order to remember a tragedy and give communities a place to grieve. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization aims to encourage the protection of cultural heritage around the world and provide emergency assistance for world heritage sites in immediate danger. One of the biggest dangers to historical monuments today is increasing political tensions. Around the globe priceless artifacts and historical monuments are damaged and destroyed by war and tragedy.



Figure 1. Temple of Bel in Tadmur, Syria

When these important historical monuments are lost, they are lost forever and with them the cultural significance for those affected. Destruction of historical monuments is considered by many nations to be a war crime. Many groups use the destruction of relics and monuments as a way to discourage and bring down others.

Cultural property is protected during war in 2 ways: being considered under civilian property and therefore illegal to attack or safeguarded by its host nation in case of an armed attack¹. These strategies are only successful in nations able to protect themselves against others by either moving the monument or guarding it militarily. Many in the developing world do not have the resources to be able to defend their people and also their cultural property leading to increased damages and destruction. Theft, pillaging, and misappropriation are rampant and during the Covid-19 pandemic, many nations were left defenseless against these attacks.

In an effort to combat these threats, some nations are setting up systems like in India where the public and the government are both taking a stand to protect historical sites. Volunteers are welcome to come and guard or clean monuments and the government is creating stricter protocols for the preservation of these sites. It is becoming clearer that legal action is needed in cases of threatened historical monuments. Developed and developing nations can work together to provide resources and accommodations for these pieces of history. In looking at the past often can help shape the future and preserving these sacred places can help educate and enlighten generations to come. Partnership is crucial and heritage experts as well as government bodies can work together as well. That is why it is so crucial that this committee acts now to find an international solution to this issue.

¹ *International Committee of the Red Cross*. (2010, October). ICRC.

TOPIC HISTORY

Often throughout history, one of the most important victims to conflict besides people are the physical displays of their culture and community. The concept of protecting important cultural monuments is not modern and was first recorded in the sixth century BCE when Chinese author Sun Tzu wrote the Art of



Figure 2. Protection of the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem by British Soldiers in 1917. Photo: Courtesy of The Northumberland

War describing how destroying the heritage of your enemy is bad practice. In the centuries since international calls for the preservation of historical sites have continued². Centuries later in 70 CE, the Roman Army plundered the second Temple of Jerusalem during the first Jewish-Roman War³. In 1385, the earliest surviving code for the English Army mentioned a prohibition on the destruction of religious or cultural sites⁴.

About 500 years later in 1899, the first Hague Peace Conference adopted a resolution to create a coalition that would regulate the conduct of war which provided some rudimentary forms of protection which were then updated in 1907⁵. Soon after World War I broke out, leading to the destruction of countless historical sites across Europe such

as the burning of the Medieval Library at Leuven⁶.

No concrete international laws would be made however until after the second World War. During World War II the United States avoided attacking Kyoto due to its legacy and vast historical and cultural importance. In the 1954 Hague Convention the “intentional targeting of cultural and religious sites that are not military objectives, have no military function, and make no contribution to military action, is prohibited specifically in international humanitarian law,” and it was revised again in 1999⁷. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution under Mao Zedong’s regime, thousands of important Chinese cultural sites were destroyed in order to take down traditionalism. In 1972 UNESCO adopted an international treaty called the [Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#) which sought to encourage the identification and preservation of world heritage sights due to their value to humanity.

Recent History

Decades later, war continues to cause damage and destruction around the world with little to no consequences or repairs. For example, during an interview with UNESCO director-general Irina Bokova, it was confirmed that all of Syria’s UNESCO world heritage sites have either been damaged or destroyed since the beginning of the civil war. In China over a quarter million tombs have been raided since 1990

² Comment: Why cultural heritage should be protected during conflict. (2020, January 10).

³ Lohnes, K. (2018, August 29). *Siege of Jerusalem*.

⁴ Sayki, I. (2020, June 15). *Destruction of cultural heritage is not only a war crime, but an attack on humankind's shared memory*. The Organization for World Peace.

⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross. (2022). *Treaties, states parties, and commentaries - hague convention (II) on the laws and customs of war on land, 1899*.

⁶ Ovenden, R. (2020, November 27). *One of Europe's great libraries didn't stand a chance... in either of the World Wars*.

⁷ *Practice relating to Rule 38. attacks against cultural property*. Customary IHL - Practice Relating to Rule 38. Attacks against Cultural Property. (2022).

and stolen items are being sold on the black market⁸. In response, the UNESCO general conference met in Paris in 2003 to discuss the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In 2017 the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2347 and was the first resolution to focus completely on cultural heritage. Specifically, “it welcomed the central role played by UNESCO in protecting cultural heritage and promoting culture as an instrument to bring people together and foster dialogue.” Lastly, in 2001 UNESCO passed the Protection of Historical Monuments Law which gave historical monuments legal status.

CURRENT SITUATION

Illicit global trade of historical antiquities and the destruction of culturally significant historical sites continues in an effort to maintain control and gain power. In Ethiopia military campaigns have led to destroyed religious, historical and cultural sites of immense value and even more tragically, countless civilians have died in the crossfire. Over 40 Churches and Monasteries have been damaged since early 2021 and over 320 members of the Priesthood have been killed⁹. In the last few months alone around 53 of Ukraine’s important historical sites were damaged by the current invasion and over 153 instances of crimes against Ukraine’s cultural heritage sites have been recorded¹⁰.

Under international criminal law, monuments are considered a type of [cultural heritage](#) and their destruction is prohibited.

Most countries in the developed world have laws and protections set in place for their historical monuments and heritage sites however most of the world does not. Historical monuments cannot escape conflict and are now being targeted during tensions. International cooperation on this issue is lacking and countries often are left defenseless when destruction happens. Historians are finding themselves on the front line of attacks without assistance from militaries or monetary funds.

Potential solutions for the protection of historical monuments in the developing world rely on international cooperation. Establishing close relations and the exchange of knowledge and resources is an imperative. Identifying historical monuments is also becoming more crucial as legal status can help nations with achieving international assistance.

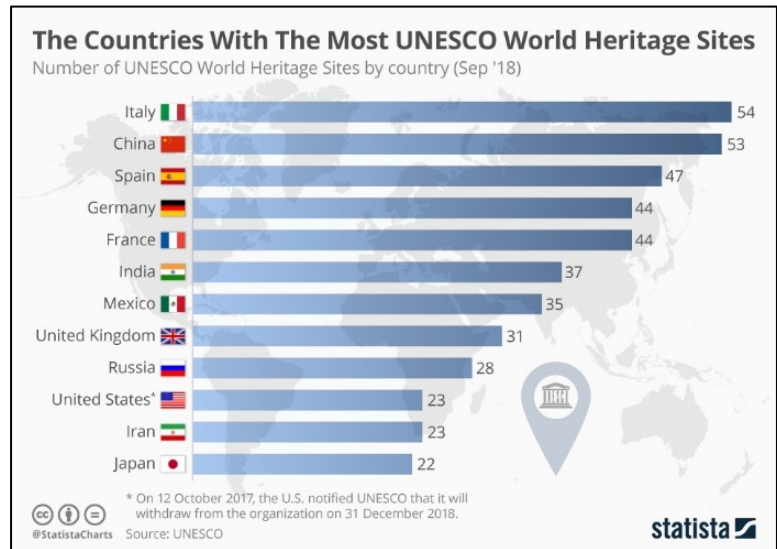


Figure 3. Countries with the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites Graph

⁸ Baskin, B. (2009, January). *Historical Heist: An Economic Argument Against Embargoing Chinese Cultural Property*. Washington University Global Studies Law Review.

⁹ Abay, H. (2022, March 30). *Ethiopia's war in Tigray wiping out centuries of the world's history*. The Jerusalem Post - Christian World.

¹⁰ Reporter, G. S. (2022, April 2). *At least 53 culturally important sites damaged in Ukraine – Unesco*. The Guardian.

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Delegates should aim to expand upon existing UNESCO resolutions and standards when deliberating this issue. This committee is tasked with finding an achievable solution that is sustainable for stabilizing and improving the protection of historical monuments amidst growing political tensions. The effects of the destruction of historical monuments and heritage sites are drastic and the disparity in which countries are affected is by no means small. Solutions aiming to reduce the damaging of these sites are crucial and in doing so international cooperation must be involved. Measures taken must promote the positive effects of the preservation of the monuments. As society becomes more globalized and technology rapidly improves, historical monuments will become increasingly targeted in conflict. In order to make sure future generations get the chance to benefit from these important cultural hubs efficiently and effectively distributing resources where they are most needed and creating an environment where these historical monuments can thrive must be accomplished to move toward a more secure and educated world.

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