

19 March 2018

Sir,

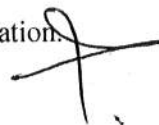
I have the honor to address you in my capacity as the Director of the Division of Organizations in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the State of Eritrea, in light to the letter you sent on 22 February 2018, in which, an official request was made for all states to make their contributions for the preparation of the thematic report for the 39th session of the Human Rights Council. The focus will be on “the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation by forcibly displaced people in need of humanitarian assistance”.

Eritrea’s contribution to the aforementioned request is hereby attached, where the Government’s efforts in providing safe drinking water and sanitation for forcibly displaced people are elaborated in a short but concise manner. Hoping this report would provide a valuable input to the 39th thematic report of the Special Rapporteur, I would like to highlight some points regarding the subject matter:

- Eritrea is committed to the promotion and respect of human rights in a comprehensive and holistic manner. Human rights is by its very nature indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated— where no specific right could be upheld while the others are neglected or undermined.
- It is imperative, then, that the root causes of forced displacement are dealt with expeditiously and pragmatically. Without addressing the root causes, no progress could be sustainable in the provision of safe drinking water, rather, it would just create and exacerbate a never-ending vicious cycle, which would in turn prolong the suffering of millions of people worldwide.
- The primary cause of forcible displacement of the people in Eritrea has been, and continues to be, the illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories by Ethiopia. This flagrant occupation has been ongoing for the past 18 years, instigating undue suffering on the people, and unwarranted pressure on the limited resources of the State.
- Thus, Eritrea maintains ending urgently the illegal occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories – which has been the root cause of the forced displacement- in the first place, would greatly alleviate human suffering and thereby enhance human rights.
- From Eritrea’s perspective, peace and stability are essential pillars in the struggle for the respect of human rights. When the two most precious elements for the promotion of human rights are denied, deprived or undermined – in various forms- including by foreign occupation, as in the case of Eritrea, all efforts exerted in providing safe drinking water for forcibly displaced people would continue to remain a collective failure of the international community in promoting and upholding human rights.

Please, accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Elsa Haile
Director, Division of Organizations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the State of Eritrea



HUMAN RIGHT TO SAFE DRINKING WATER IN ERITREA

The Government of The State of Eritrea strongly believes that water is a basic public owned resources that is vital for human survival and a fundamental resource for human and country development. Thus, the policy emphasizes the recognition of water as being both a social and economic public good, whose allocation should give first priority to domestic use.

In many developing countries, fetching of water is predominantly girls'/women's responsibility and is cumbersome and time consuming task as the average travelling time from a village to a traditional source ranges from half an hour to four hours or more. This deprives not only girls but also many boys of valuable learning time or other opportunities to develop themselves. Access to safe drinking water for all members ensures that community members – especially women – have more time to engage in income – generating activities, health, dignity and more time for the children, particularly girls to enroll in schools.

Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water for IDPs (Forcibly displaced people by Border conflict or natural hazards) in Eritrea

The problem of forcibly displaced people in Eritrea was mainly the direct consequence of the flagrant military aggression of Ethiopia against Eritrea in 1998. The two-year border war forced around 318,000 people to be displaced internally within Eritrean territory. Moreover, the refugees from Somalia, who started arriving in Eritrea in 1992 are numbered 3000. This posed immense challenges on Eritrea. Regardless though, the Government of the State of Eritrea showed its full commitment and took concerted measures to ensure that the internally displaced persons have access to sufficient and safe, accessible, and acceptable water supply and sanitation services. This is on the bases of their rights, needs and situation without discrimination on the ground of their ethnic or religious identity, their place of origin or any other factors. In accordance to the Human rights resolution of 2004/55 the State of the Government of Eritrea (GoSE) with its humanitarian partners constructed and/or rehabilitated water supply system infrastructures worth USD \$ 1,825,333 to provide the forcibly internally displaced persons with safe drinking water.

Table:-1 Illustrative Summary

| No | Displaced Villages | Name of camp - area | Number of Population | Water source | Pipe line & PF | Water pumps | Intervention cost (\$USD) |
|---|---|---------------------|----------------------|--------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Forcibly displaced people by Border conflict | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Tsorona area Hadish Adi Seboo Akran Kunin kunito | Maiwrai | 20,000 | Bore hole | Pipe line 2-3km, emergency public fountain, Reservoir & water tracking | Generator & submersible pump | 58,000 |
| | | Maichena | 20,000 | | | | 43,333.33 |
| | | Rokoyto | 15,000 | | | | 33333.33 |
| | Tisha Hamboka Zban awlie | Tisha | 30,000 | Bore | Pipe line 2-4km, emergency public fountain, | Generator & submersible | 66,667 |
| | | Hamboka | 7,000 | | | | 58,000 |
| | | Zban awlie | 5,000 | | | | 40,000 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------------|----------------|--|--|---|------------------|
| | | Again moved to Maihabar | | hole | Reservoir & water tracking | pump | 83333 |
| 3 | Sub zoba Adi Quala, Maiaini, Emni haili | Dubarwa Maisagla | 60,000 | Bore hole | Pipe line 2-5km, emergency public fountain, Reservoir & water tracking | Generator & submersible pump | 166,667 |
| | | | 10,000 | | | | 58,000 |
| | Adi keshi Korokon Kotobia Jejah DEmbedoran Bushuka | 21,000 | Bore hole | Pipe line 2-3km, emergency public fountain, Reservoir & water tracking | Generator & submersible pump | 100000 | |
| | | 17,000 | | | | 66666.67 | |
| | | 17,000 | | | | 80000 | |
| | | 10,000 | | | | 58000 | |
| | | 5,000 | | | | 40000 | |
| | | 12,000 | | | | 73333.33 | |
| 5 | sub zoba Tessenai Barentu Haikota | Zeron/Hamelmallo | 30,000 | Bore hole | Pipe line 2-3km, emergency public fountain, Reservoir & water tracking | Generator & submersible pump | 133,333.3 |
| | | Shellob/Aderde | 25,000 | | | | 100,000 |
| | | Again moved to Afabet area | | | | | 100,000 |
| Displaced due to Volcanic Eruption | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Sireru area | | | Bore hole | Pipe line 2-3km, emergency public fountain, Reservoir & water tracking | Solar powered Water supply system | 166,667 |
| | Maebele | wade | 1,500 | | | | 200,000 |
| | Mindg | Alale | 2,500 | | | | |
| Somali Refugees | | | | | | | |
| 7 | From Somalia | Inkulu | 3000 | Massaw a Water Supply | Pipe line 1km | Additional Solar powered reservoir | 100,000 |
| Grand total | | | 321,000 | | | | 1,825,333 |

As a matter of principle and definition, all drinking water should be free from pathogens and toxic levels of chemicals. Supporting documents for the human right of water safety (HRWS) refers to the World Health Organization guidelines for drinking water quality (WHO 2011a). In Eritrea the drinking water quality management has two distinct entry points, one related to the standard to be met on a day-to-day basis under routine operating conditions; and the other, related to managing incidents that threatens or affects drinking water quality. In both cases, the human rights principles are part of decision-making process in Eritrea.

SANITATION

Eritrea's priority in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector is based on the provision of improved and sustained sanitation coverage to enhance public health, human dignity, and socioeconomic development and environmental protection.

CHALLENGES

Despite the commendable achievement and progress, there still remains the 15 % gap of access to safe water supply coverage to meet SP by 2021. The progress achieved so far could, however, be seriously threatened by prolonged spells of drought in the Horn of Africa which, if not tackled with appropriate strategies, could undermine upcoming efforts and may even reverse service coverage and sustainability of water resources.

Therefore, a serious rethinking of overall water resources planning and management in the face of chronic drought, falling water tables and gaps in hydro geological data is required. This necessitates an immediate sharing of all hydrological, hydro geological and geophysical studies and data to create a holistic understanding of the status of water resources in Eritrea and to identify critical gaps. A greater understanding of the hydro geological dynamics in various catchment basins and strategic aquifers is also needed to ensure that water extraction does not exceed that of water recharge. Furthermore, the rapidly falling water table in many agricultural areas where irrigation is practiced is a particularly worrying problem not only for agriculture, but also for human development needs.

These challenges force us to rethink how to better utilize and manage scarce resources, and to make better use of proven and appropriate technologies and strategies in order to meet our goals in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner.

Though the Department of Water Resources has scored a remarkable achievement in the provision of safe and adequate water supply. However, there are still major challenges and constraints facing to the established water supply system to be managed sustainably by the community and sector level, such as:

- The increased demand and competition for water;
- Degradation of land and water resources due to risks of climate change; Scarcity of water resources;
- Financing the water developmental infrastructure; and
- Over exploitation of ground water

LESSONS LEARNED

Piped water supply will increase household use of safe water, thus for improved health and hygiene. Piped water supplies offer the opportunity to include the schools and the health facilities by bringing the water to a reasonable walking distance (500m radius).

CONCLUSION

Eritrea regards the provision of safe and clean drinking water to all, specifically to forcibly displaced people as a basic human right. It is from this perspective that it remains as one of the fundamental priorities in nation-building. In this endeavor, Eritrea welcomes cooperation and

partnership with all stakeholders and intends to share its experiences, lessons learned, and challenges faced in this area. Meanwhile, it is appropriate to underline the urgency of preventing wars and conflicts that are wreaking havoc globally, as they remain the main root causes of displacement. Thus, the provision of safe drinking water and sanitation for forcibly displaced people should be viewed as ad hoc solution-rather than a permanent one, since the essential challenge lies in promoting peace and stability in the first place.