

ABOUT THE THEME



John 1:4 “in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”

In the year of 2019 the world is facing multiple water crises. They are not new but most deepen each year as supplies shrink and demand increases – or in some cases the crises are rising seawater and more intense rainfall. The crises are felt more strongly in some places than others and by some peoples more than others.

Water is the essence of life and a symbol of faith. We can choose to see it as ordinary or a gift of great importance. When we can turn on a tap, it is easy to take water for granted, but when it takes hours and a risky journey to collect, it is of great value.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, every region has its water issues – many waterways are polluted and water rights are under hot contention. Paying for water can undermine people’s fundamental right to water. Flooding and drought can cause great harm. Habitat for creatures living in or near water is under threat. Think about water in your place. What is the most important water issue for you?

THE NEED IS CLEAR

We can focus on the global water issues or on their effect on individual families. For most families living with poverty, the lack of safe water to drink is one of a number of challenges they face.

In the story of one family, we can see how the HIV and AIDS epidemic, an existing shortage of good water, poverty and violence against women combine to undermine good health, education and a decent life.

Farazia and her granddaughters have generously agreed to share their story as our call to action for this year's Christmas Appeal. You can read more of their story or watch the video [here](#).

They live in the southwest of Uganda, an area that is getting drier with climate change. The streams and waterholes do not store water as long as they once did making the long trek to the river more necessary.

Some years ago Farazia's oldest granddaughter was raped on the way to the river. Her daughter Arinda (*pictured*) is now 5 years old and stays with Farazia while Betty works in the nearby town.



Life has been hard. Farazia buried Betty's parents after they lost their fight with AIDS. She has also buried a young grandson who died from the cholera he picked up from the water.

She is a strong woman but at 78 years old, she is not sure how much longer she can keep going. Her prayer is for water.

She is not the only one. According to the United Nations, one in three people do not have access to safe water.

Our partners like the Centre of Community Solidarity are doing incredible work to bring safe water and other help to these families affected by HIV and AIDS in Uganda. They have the expertise to build tanks in a way that lifts people out of the misery of poverty and strengthens the local community in their support for each other.

GIVE WATER FOR CHRISTMAS

We have woken up to the seriousness of climate change and the need for urgent action. We can already see the impact it is having on our neighbours in the Pacific. In places like Ethiopia,

Nicaragua and Uganda the droughts are severe, but in all these places there are people working for change and committed to making justice visible.

For change to happen we need to increase our support. CWS is one of many groups and organisations calling for more action to protect the climate. We campaigned for the Zero Carbon Emissions Act and made a submission in support of it to Parliament. As part of ACT Alliance, we are taking the message of climate justice to global negotiations. Their most recent [report](#) prepared with others in the lead up to COP25 is on Loss and Damage.

Our partners are giving people access to safe water, assisting them to protect waterways and oceans, and helping them survive through changing weather patterns and disaster. They can do this work because of your support. Working together we can make sure no one is left behind.

The need is clear, give water this Christmas.



THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

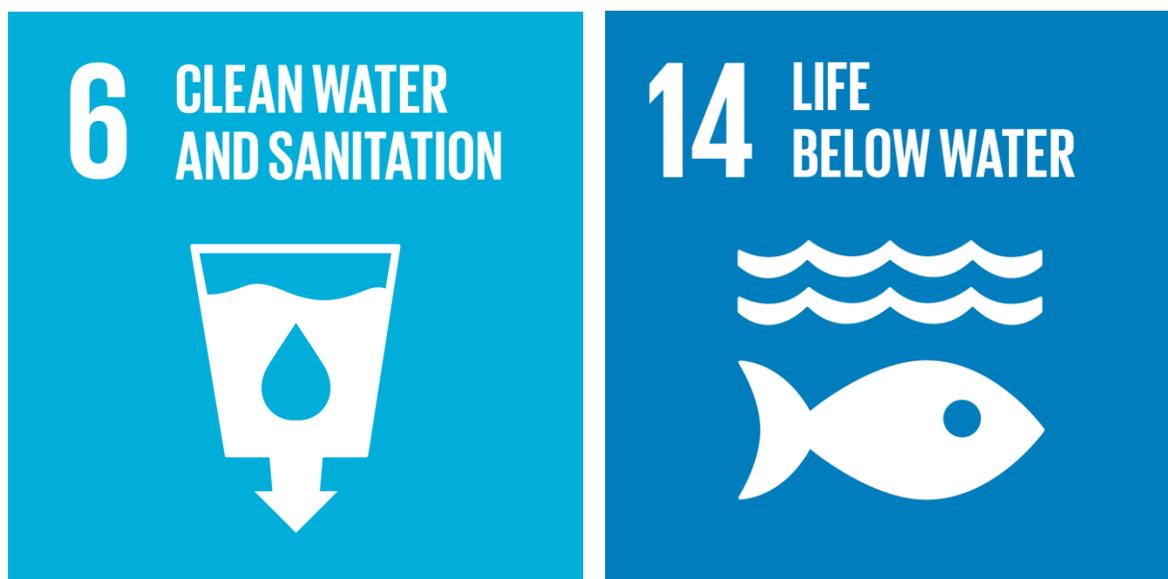
At the global level, CWS recognises the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as one opportunity to address some of the factors that drive poverty and injustice.

In September 2015 at the United Nations General Assembly world leaders signed up to seventeen ambitious goals that if achieved would transform the world as we know it. From the first goal to “End Poverty in all its forms everywhere” to the 17th requiring a strong commitment to partnership and cooperation, nations agreed to a vision ‘to leave no one behind’. Alongside the goals are 169 targets – for example free and equitable primary and secondary school education for all – and the expectation that nations will report on their achievements. Governments are collecting the relevant statistics and dates are set for reporting. The interconnected goals were adopted by and for all countries, including Aotearoa New Zealand.

While access to water affects the achievement of many of the goals, [SDG 6](#) on clean water and sanitation and [SDG 14](#) on Life Below Water are focal points for action. All the goals are linked.

Earlier this year, ACT Alliance, the World Council of Churches and others produced the [Sustainability Book](#) which looks at the Agenda from a Christian perspective. Each goal is considered in turn using the see-judge-act method. There is valuable theological material that will add depth to what is produced here, plus prayers and questions for reflection.

Our partners can reach communities where governments cannot go. They know that change happens when people work together, sharing knowledge and skills. Donations to the Christmas Appeal will support their work and make sure no one is left behind.



IN NUMBERS

- 2.2 billion people lack safe drinking water.
- 4.2 billion people lack safe sanitation.
- Globally, at least 2 billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces.
- Some 297 000 children under five who die annually from diarrhoeal diseases due to poor sanitation, poor hygiene, or unsafe drinking water.
- Universal access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation and hygiene would reduce the global disease burden by 10%.
- 1 million deaths each year are associated with unclean births.
- 2 out of 5 people or 3 billion people around the world lack basic handwashing facilities at home.
- Loss of productivity to water- and sanitation-related diseases costs many countries up to 5% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

ABOUT THE POSTER

Three years ago ACT Alliance photographer Havard Bjelland took the image of nine year old Asanti featured in this year's Christmas Appeal. With her mother and sister, she is collecting water in Ethiopia after unexpected rain. In the small village where they live, drought is very familiar and getting worse. As small farmers they depend on being able to predict when the rain will come, but no more. In recent years, they have had to eat their seed grain more often, leaving them dependent on ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) local partners to dig new wells to keep the people, their animals and crops alive.

Without water, they cannot reliably grow food. People become sick and even if they can get medicine, they may become sick again because of water-borne disease.

This Christmas we remember the people who need water and those who depend on the ocean and waterways in our prayers and with our gifts. Give water the essence of survival.

