



STATEMENT OF UJAMAA CENTER SUBMITTED TO THE UN WATER CONFERENCE

Ujamaa Center is a Public Benefit Organization founded in 2001 in Kenya to work with peoples and communities to enhance popular participation in public policy processes, community based decision-making and the governance and efficient use of natural resources.

BELIEVING that entrenched systemic exploitation of local and indigenous rural communities and urban communities of density that produces a further entrenched system of social exclusion can only be challenged through social action and;

BELIEVING also that community development is a cause to which one must be deeply committed, if the expectation is to raise the competence of communities, their institutions and representatives to defend and demand their rights in the face of climate variabilities, corporate greed and a shrinking civic, political and operational space;

ACKNOWLEDGING that while there is a general acceptance by actors across the board that water access for humans, livestock and other beings is unreliable and inadequate across the world, and that the reasons for this vary from high temperatures, reduced water volumes (all known sources and water tables), unpredictable rainfall patterns all depictions of climate variability;

WE participating as UJAMAA CENTER and;

HAVING attended and participated in this year's UN Water Conference as a member of the Voices for Just Climate Action (VCA) an alliance of NGOs and CSOs [Led by four strong Southern CSOs – Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Fundación Avina, Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and SouthSouthNorth (SSN) – and two Global CSOs – Hivos and WWF-Netherlands] that prioritises the often-marginalised voices of the most vulnerable: women, youth, Indigenous people, the urban poor, and people with disabilities and amplifies and advocates for locally-led climate-resilient solutions, many of which focus on water in Kenya, Zambia, Tunisia, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay and Indonesia do hereby make this submission to the UN Water Conference;



1. Water for Cooperation: Our experience suggests that the water transition chain (source to end use) and infrastructure operates in a political economy in which water management mechanisms are ill-suited not only to respond to the rights of access, equity and needs of downstream and upstream users but also a context in which water governance produces intractable conflicts. While access to water is accepted as a key challenge by the state in Kenya, water sector privatization remains the general policy thrust even as we all agree, commodifying water works against the poor for whom access is crucial. A second challenge is the introduction of policies that separate the functions of water courses management from water resource distribution and services in to three distinct functions managed by distinct national entities, in a Constitutional context that makes water a devolved function. While the latter means in law is that each County/devolved unit should manage its entire water transition chain and infrastructure, the former in practice is however the case as regional water services boards manage the water. Inter-County water sharing arrangements remains completely unclarified in these incoherent policies whose net effect at best produces conflict and at worst makes interventions and adaptations impossible.
2. Water for Climate, Resilience and Environment: We must do everything in our power to improve water equity and fairness especially for marginal communities that are most affected by extremes of climate variability and by lack of adequate and just water governance frameworks. We in particular believe that sustainable community water seeking behavior at household level should move towards increasing water storage capacity, water re-usage practices and water conservation and rain-water harvesting. Such a paradigm shift will require improved engagement with stakeholders, targeted technical assistance, extensive sensitization for behavior change among water providers and users as well as deepened collaboration across sector and ecosystems.
3. Water for Sustainable Development: To address poverty and water vulnerability in a rounded and holistic manner requires behavior change in which building skills and mobilizing agency in local climate action will be crucial. A continuing focus on rights and building capacity for people to understand and act in pursuit of their rights will be important. Reconciling



indigenous mechanisms for water retention and modern practices should help clarify the place of portable and tap water and how this robs communities of their retention resilience, this should be combined with an ecosystems and advocacy approach in which all-community, whole ecosystem or water courses is addressed to integrate the impact of water transition from source to the table and how this affects communities as well as environmental options to protect water towers that exacerbate the problem.

4. Water for Health: According to statistics available on SDG 6 for Kenya, on clean water and sanitation, as at 2020 only 61.6% of the population was using at least basic drinking water services while only 32.7% of the population was using at least basic sanitation services. In addition to these grim statistics only 33.2% of fresh water resources was available for withdrawal as of 2018 compared to 0.5% of anthropogenic wastewater that receives treatment in the same year. Users, communities and future generations must become part of efforts to design strategies that can address this stagnation which the Sustainable Development Report 2022 confirms.

5. Water Action Decade: A focus on action must seek to fix the complexities of regulation to eliminate conflicts of overlapping mandates, water sharing arrangements, ecosystem management etc. This must seek to address the ineffectiveness, disorganization and unaccountability of water governance structures. Communities must be supported to understand and respond to climate variabilities by acknowledging their own indigenous knowledge and water management practices. Carrying out robust advocacy to keep water as a public good will be crucial. There is no justification why water should be more expensive per liter than petrol or milk. Commodifying water must be rejected and multi-lateral agreements such as the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) must be evaluated and all suggestions that make water tradable rescinded and exceptions introduced in recognition of the outcomes of the Water Conference and the crisis that was canvassed.

**DRAWN & SUBMITTED ON 24TH MARCH 2023 BY
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