

Globalization, Women and War

One-hour Workshop

Focus

Women carry domestic responsibilities for cooking, cleaning, and bathing that link them to use of water. This workshop focuses on how access to water is a critical issue for women around the world.

Goals

- To understand how economic globalization, in the form of policies of privatization of water, affects women's access to basic resources in times of war and peace
- To explore how the combination of war and privatization causes particular problems in the lives of some women.

Materials and Supplies

- November 2004 issue of *Response* magazine and copies of "Policies of Privatization"
- Colorful cloths, large clear bowl or clear bottle filled with water; flower or a growing plant; copies of the Bible, the Social Principles, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (optional), large candle for worship table
- Hymnal (*The United Methodist Hymnal* or *Global Praise I, II or III*)
- Prepared newsprint sheets (see Preparation), felt-tipped markers and tape
- Index cards
- Newsprint sheets with the 2nd Corinthians and Social Principles texts, definition of privatization, questions for Activities 1 and 2, the closing worship

Preparation:

- Read over Optional Activities 1 and 2 and decide if you will use them in place of the suggested activities.

- The leaders of the session will need to prepare themselves by reading the entire November 2004 issue of *Response* on women and water.
- Cover the worship table with several colorful cloths to symbolize the wonderful diversity of God's world. On the table place the following elements: a large clear bowl or clear bottle filled with water; a flower or a growing plant to symbolize peace; copies of the Bible, the Social Principles, perhaps the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a large candle to represent the presence of the Spirit in the midst of the world. . Check the *United Methodist Hymnal* and *Global Praise I, II or III* for songs that have water themes. Select one for closing worship.
- Prepare and hang newsprint sheets with the topics for the brainstorming activity. Also prepare newsprint sheets of the questions for Activities 1 and 2, the definition of privatization (see Activity 2, the 2 Corinthians and Social Principles texts and the closing worship and post where they can be read easily. Make copies of "Policies of Privatization"
- Obtain four index cards per person with extras available.
- On newsprint, print the litany for the closing worship.

Opening Activity

1. Ways We Use Water (10 minutes)

Ask the members of the group to name some of the ways that they use water every day. Record all these contributions on a sheet of newsprint and post it in the front of the room. Call the group's attention to the second sheet of paper with the following questions:

- Where does the water that we use come from (some of us use municipal water systems; others may have wells while others buy much of their water at the supermarket)?
- What do we take for granted about access to water?
- Who decides who has access to water and how much it will cost? What factors come into play? Who ensures its safety?

Hand out index cards and ask members to jot down quick responses to these questions. Also give participants additional cards for use in the next activity.

Learning Activities

2. Women, Water, War and Privatization (20 minutes)

SAY:

Now we will learn about women in three different places who are experiencing that form of globalization known as privatization. Privatization is based on the idea that a private individual or company can do a better job of providing a service or resource that serves all citizens than a government can. So the government gives up its responsibility to provide that service and there is a loss of direct democratic control over that resource or service. The service might be water, electricity, telephone, radio, highway construction and tolls, prisons, parks, airport control, or even social security.

Ask for three volunteers to read aloud the three stories on "Policies of Privatization". After each example is read invite participants to take a few moments to jot down quick reactions: Who are privatization's winners and losers? Then invite the group to compare their responses to the first questions about their own uses of water to their reactions to the situations of the women they read about.

3. General Discussion (20 minutes)

Ask two volunteers to read aloud the 2 Corinthians text and the excerpt from the Social Principles:

2 Corinthians 8:13-14

I am not trying to relieve others by putting a burden on you; but since you have plenty at this time, it is only fair that you should help those who are in need. Then when you are in need and they have plenty, they will help you. In this way both are treated equally.

Social Principles 161, 162:

The community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their humanity. We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest potential in individuals ... We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained and strengthened.

Divide participants into three small groups. Invite them to take three minutes to think about these texts and the experiences of the women they have just discussed. Ask for volunteers from each group to share the reflections of their group and print their ideas briefly on the posted sheets of newsprint in the front of the room. Encourage them to group their reflections in the following categories:

- new ways of thinking about water
- understandings about how privatization effects women's lives
- any ideas for actions on privatization that might be taken locally.

Closing Worship

4. Prayers for Women and Water in the Midst of War (10 minutes)

Reader 1: 2 Corinthians 8:13-15

Reader 2: Social Principles 161,162

Leader: According to Scripture, the way to equality is to give to others in need because we have abundance now and that they will give to us when they have abundance and we are in need.

All: **Some have an abundance of water and others have none; Some policies in peace and in war deliberately deprive others of water. Help us to find the path to equality so that all can share in the life-giving blessing of water.**

Leader: Our principles affirm a vision of community where each person and each community have possibility of full realization.

All: **Our community is the whole world and water is a precious resource for all. We acknowledge the need for complicated and creative policies and strategies to protect this common resource for the good of all.**

Unison Prayer:

O God, creator of waters that quench every thirst, water every crop, cleanse bodies and spirits, help us to learn the path of equality and work to build community that nurtures and strengthens us all.

Hymn: (choose a hymn about water)

Optional Activity 1 (30 minutes)

In small groups or in the total group, reflect on 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 and Matthew 20:1-6 (the parable of the laborers). Both of these texts help to focus attention on the presence of newcomers or different groups within a community and God's understanding of what to do about that situation. After reading both texts aloud, consider the following:

- What do these readings mean for our personal lives, the life of our community, our national policies and for the world as a whole?

Brainstorm possible changes, contradictions that will need to be resolved and actions that these readings suggest

Optional Activity 2 (30 minutes)

Use the session to plan how to gather information about water access in your community. For example, poll your UMW unit or local church on the following:

- How many families use bottled water? Why?
- How safe is local water?
- Who decides the water rates in your community and what happens to those who cannot pay?
- Does your community already have privatized water in the form of private wells?
- Does everyone in the community have access to safe water?

Discuss how this information might be used.

Policies of Privatization

Afghanistan

Much of Afghanistan has suffered six years of drought. Wells are running dry...The lack of water for irrigation and drinking are threatening the survival of whole villages. One woman, who spoke up ...added (that) her area had received rain in recent months but still there was not water for their fields. "The warlord (one of the local leaders, many of whom joined with the U.S. in the overthrow of the Taliban) upstream is diverting all the water to irrigate fields in villages that support him, he's even dumping water into the desert to keep it from reaching our village where a rival warlord is in charge..."

Afghan families and whole communities are devoting more and more time and energy to getting safe drinking water, water for their fields and adequate sanitation. The burden of finding water falls heaviest on women. As they are forced to walk greater distances to get water, they become more vulnerable to attacks by men with guns.

International agencies like UMCOR are supporting water and reforestation projects to help communities resist this privatization resulting from war. International partners are helping to harness streams and irrigation canals as a source of renewal hydroelectric power.

Michigan

United Methodist Women members in Michigan were among citizens challenging Nestle Waters North America, which was bottling water pumped from four wells drilled in a delicate ecosystem one hour north of Grand Rapids, Michigan. The company is extracting 500 gallons a minutes – 720,000 gallons a day. The water...is sold as Ice Mountain String Water.

Nestle Waters...told the State of Michigan that harvesting the water would not harm the environment. The company said it would provide as many as 200 jobs in an area of high unemployment. Nestle received a permit to dig the wells, a \$9.5 million tax break, and a 12-year reprieve in paying property or school taxes. Michigan...has no clear authority to regulate underground water unless it is a health threat...Privatization of water--the selling of water, water rights, public trust and water diversion are being debated in many arenas.

Lois Hartzler, a leader of the citizens group, is a member of United Methodist Women at Wideman, Mich. "Water must stay under public domain. If it is allowed to be under private control, there will be no conservation and poor people won't be able to afford it."

Vicky Sladek, United Methodist mission coordinator for social action for the district, said: "We decided to make this issue a priority because not only is this a local happening but it affects the world."

United Methodist Women resist privatization for the sake of poor people and the environment. A conference resolution called for a moratorium on bottling and/or selling water without public process.

Laurel Fork Valley, Frakes Kentucky

Water seeping through abandoned mines left groundwater and surface water contaminated with arsenic, mercury, lead, copper, chromium, sulphuric acid and other chemicals...available government funding for drinking water systems is often subject to systems of patronage that leave the most isolated communities waiting for solutions.

Linda Hurst said her contaminated well water not only left her clothes and dishes orange and smelling like rotten eggs, it also provoked anguish at the beauty parlor when it regularly turned gray hair green. To avoid drinking sulfur-flavored water, she drove 36 miles to a store to buy jugs of drinking water.

Tired of waiting for state or county officials to help, residents of the valley decided to put in their own water system. Laurel Fork, where three-quarters of the population lives below the poverty level, has long been home to Henderson Settlement, a United Methodist mission agency. The Settlement spent thousands of dollars a year attempting to make its water drinkable. Frustrated with local officials, local residents turned to the settlement and appealed to United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries for assistance. The Board provided Henderson Settlement with \$100,000 toward the water project. "They (local government) had laughed us off until we got that \$100,000. Citizen privatization forces government action.

(adapted from *Response* magazine, November 2004)