



# HMUN 2025

Ensuring equal division of water and other resources in vulnerable regions

**GA1**

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**Forum:** General Assembly 1

**Issue:** Ensuring equal division of water and other resources in vulnerable regions

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## Introduction

The equal distribution of water and many other necessary resources is an important part of sustainable development and global stability. Vulnerable areas are often marked by dry climates, political disputes, and financial troubles. Most of these places encounter unique challenges in accessing such resources. This report will examine and discuss the difficulties surrounding the topic. It will also draft its effects on international peace and security and the essential position that multilateral collaboration plays in confronting crises.

Water and many other natural resources are essential for life, a state's economic progress as well as the conservation of ecosystems. Therefore, the unequal distribution of these resources has intensified already existing conflicts and increased the challenges in LEDCs. Environmental degradation, population increase, and insufficient infrastructure often combine to result in significant scarcity for the major parties involved. Due to the lack of resources such places have for resilience, several of them are vulnerable to humanitarian emergencies and political unrest.

Climate change further worsens the difficult position several nations already are placed in. It has become one of the main causes that affect the water availability and resources nations depend on to further develop. These shifts hinder agricultural productivity and jeopardize livelihoods, especially in areas that heavily depend on natural water sources. Consequently, vulnerable communities encounter heightened threats of food insecurity, economic stagnation, and displacement.

Political implications contribute to another layer of difficulty. Shared bodies of water, like rivers and aquifers, are often used by several nations. This leads to a conflict over their usage rights. The Nile River has been an area of conflict amongst African countries competing for access and power. Similarly, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) projects the challenges of managing shared resources fairly while still respecting national interests.

Economic elements are vital for replacing imbalances of resources. Similarly vulnerable regions do not possess the financial means and technical skills necessary to develop and maintain infrastructure for managing resources. Inadequate investments in water purification, distribution networks, and sustainable agriculture leave these areas dependent on external assistance from the

international community. Furthermore, the commercialization of water typically results in pricing structures that exclude marginalized groups, further exacerbating inequalities.

Social factors, encompassing gender and indigenous rights, also affect resource distribution. In many communities, women are responsible for collecting water, a duty that grows increasingly difficult as resources diminish. This obligation restricts access to education and economic involvement, while also exposing women to safety hazards in conflict-affected regions.

Technological advancements, like sophisticated irrigation systems and desalination facilities, present potential solutions but must be adapted to the specific needs of vulnerable areas. Political collaboration is also vital, with international agreements focusing on fair resource distribution. Economic strategies, including targeted investments and financial support, can enable regions to enhance their resilience. Social programs, such as education initiatives and community empowerment efforts, can rectify underlying disparities and foster sustainable development.

The global community has acknowledged the significance of fair resource allocation in realizing SDGs. SDG 6 specifically emphasizes guaranteeing the accessibility and sustainable administration of water and sanitation for everyone. Realizing this objective necessitates collaborative actions from governments, NGOs, and private sector participants to tackle the diverse challenges of resource inequality. By grasping the intricacies of this matter, delegates can engage in substantial discussions and policy proposals that encourage sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **LEDC: less economically developed countries**

Some states have less developed countries in relation to others. These are often known as 'less economically developed countries.' LEDC is the abbreviation for this term. Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific region include most of the world's LEDCs.

### **MEDC: more economically developed countries:**

In contrast to LEDCs, this term refers to states that are more developed to a greater extent. The abbreviation translates to 'more economically developed countries.' Most of the Western nations are considered MEDCs.

### **Environmental Degradation:**

Environmental degradation is the result of a destroyed ecosystem. Natural resources such as air, water, and soil are taken advantage of and wildlife risks being wiped out. The concept of environmental degradation embodies any sustainable and environmental changes that might disturb the ecosystem in a harmful or negative manner.

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### **Irrigation systems**

Irrigation is an artificial process of water that pushes through various mechanical systems of pumps, tubes, and spays. Irrigation is often used to suffice plant water when natural water resources and rain are not enough to provide the plant with the water demands it needs. It is most commonly used in areas of irregular drought or during times when dryness is expected.

### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

There are 17 sustainable development goals. These are also known as the *Global Goals*. The SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015. They were created to perform as a universal strategy to sustain the planet and eradicate poverty by 2030 by ensuring that all human beings live peaceful lives full of prosperity. The 17 SDGs are interdependent and acknowledge the fact that true sustainability only will occur through shared courses of action.

### **NGO: Non-governmental Organizations**

An NGO is a non-governmental organization. It operates independently from any government. Often the purpose of an NGO is to work on addressing a social or political issue to the general public.

## **General Overview**

### **Historical Context**

The issue of resource allocation stems from the exploitation of resources during colonial times. However, the unequal agreements and the environmental impacts of industrial advancements are also leading causes of how resources currently are distributed. Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East have endured persistent water shortages that have worsened as increases in population

have occurred. Colonial nations have often chosen to focus on extracting resources for their own national gain. Hence leaving domestic communities with no access to the important resources needed for sustainable growth. Simultaneously these regions have incorporated unjust systems that account for how their resources used to be distributed, and how they continue to be distributed today. MEDCs

During the 20th century, large industrial growth led to an escalation of weak distributions of resources. MEDCs utilize large amounts of water and other similar natural resources. The MEDCs often source and extract these natural resources from vulnerable regions, LEDCs. This creates a loop that weakens the economies of the LEDCs because the states end up depleting their own resources to provide for the MEDCs. Thereby the LEDCs will not be able to use their resources to advance their own regions into greater developments. The absence of investments in the infrastructures and technology of LEDCs has also contributed to sustaining this cycle of poverty by trapping the nations to stay how they are.

### **Current Situation**

There are currently 2 billion individuals who reside in water-stressed regions that contain vulnerable areas facing the worst consequences. The effects of climate change have enlarged such difficulties and resulted in extended dryness and drought. As well as diminished freshwater supplies and increased rivalry over limited resources. Water scarcity has also escalated into a critical issue. These are especially noted in arid and semi-arid regions where patterns of rainfall have become unpredictable.

Conflicts over shared water sources have occurred in large numbers. These are disputes over waters such as the Nile and the Jordan Rivers, further highlighting the geopolitical factors that evolve around resource scarcity. States that share such water sources frequently result in conflict over their access, usage, and administration of them. An example of this is the conflict surrounding the Nile River which includes various stakeholders who each have conflicting interests and claims. These disagreements underline the need for collaborative measures to secure fair and just distributions of resources.

Other than water scarcity, several vulnerable areas experience difficulties related to other important resources. This includes cultivable land and energy. The extreme exploitation of such resources has resulted in large environmental declines.

### **The Role of International Organizations**

International organizations are vital in tackling the challenges associated with resource scarcity. Forums such as, but not limited to the United Nations and the World Bank offer technical support, financial backing, as well as policy recommendations to at-risk areas. These organizations simultaneously promote dialogue and cooperation among countries that aim to resolve disputes in hopes of achieving fair resource management.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has initiated various programs aimed at encouraging sustainable resource management. These efforts include capacity-building initiatives, research on effective practices, and campaigning for robust international agreements. Likewise, the World Bank has put funds into infrastructure projects that enhance water access and improve resource utilization efficiency.

### Social Impacts

The unequal distribution of resources has led to several social consequences. Less fortunate groups such as women and indigenous populations have often encountered the harshest barriers when it comes to accessing resources. Women specifically are disproportionately impacted as they mostly hold the responsibility for water collection and household management. Not only is this a restriction on their manners of living, but also on their economic and educational opportunities. Hence continues the existence of their cycles of poverty.

Indigenous communities experience threats to their traditional lifestyles as resource exploitations spread through their lands. The limited access to natural resources threatens the cultural identity and economic stability of the various groups. It is important to have these aspects in mind to make sure to avoid misrepresenting people who are experiencing difficulties related to the topic.

### Future Challenges

As nations move into the future the challenges revolving around resource scarcity are expected to escalate. Climate change, population increases, and economic growth will continue to force competition about the already very limited resources existing.

Therefore, solving these challenges will demand creative solutions in fields of technological and social advancements. All that will favor the environment and economy of the global world.

A crucial focus will be the inclusion of resource management into national and regional frameworks of development. This strategy will guarantee that resources are distributed in a manner that fosters long-term sustainability and resilience. Furthermore, initiatives to tackle resource scarcity must be sustainable by also considering the needs and viewpoints of marginalized communities.

## Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
1992	Rio Earth Summit emphasizes sustainable water management
2000	Millennium Development Goals include access to safe drinking water as a priority.
2015	Adoption of the SDGs, with great emphasis on Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
2022	The UN Water Conference highlights the urgency of equitable water distribution.

## Major Parties Involved

### United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Since its establishment in 1972, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been leading efforts to advance sustainable resource management. Some of the duties of UNEP involve providing technical assistance to LEDCs by encouraging international collaboration on transnational water management. Through partnering with local authorities, the government, and other communities, UNEP seeks to apply integrated methods of water resource management (IWRM). These practices will guarantee efficient and fair water utilization. They also place great focus on raising awareness regarding the environmental effects of resource mismanagement and climate change. UNEP's partnerships with other UN organizations, including UN-Water and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), enhance its capacity to tackle the convoluted nature of resource allocation issues. Nonetheless, UNEP encounters difficulties in securing sufficient funding and managing political sensitivities among member states. This may restrict the execution of its programs.

### Ethiopia

Ethiopia is the upstream nation that is responsible for the creation of the GERD. GERD is an abbreviation for Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The country itself regards the project as a crucial aspect of its development strategy. The nation hopes that the dam in Ethiopia will produce enough hydroelectricity to provide for the nation. Through its propelling economic growth, it is able to support millions of Ethiopians with power and electricity. Ethiopia evaluates that the GERD is a



sovereign right that performs as a crucial tool for reducing inequalities and promoting domestic integration through energy expansions. The nation has been reassured that the creation of GERD and the dam's functioning will not negatively affect the downstream countries around it. Further affirming the nation's dedication to international collaboration. Ethiopia's stance illustrates the complexities of balancing national development with regional responsibilities, highlighting the need for international diplomacy and technical collaboration in resolving conflicts.

### **Sudan**

Sudan is geographically placed downstream of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). It plays a significant role in the management and equal distribution of the Nile River's waters. The state of Sudan heavily relies on the Nile for agricultural purposes. It has a significant position in the South Sudanese economy as it provides for millions of livelihoods. Sudan has raised concerns regarding the dam barriers' effect on water flow and its possible impact on the nation's irrigation and hydropower systems. South Sudan also recognizes the probable benefits that might result from this. These would be such as regulated water flow, which might decrease flooding and promote hydroelectric energy production. South Sudan has actively participated in negotiations, striving to balance its interests with regional stability. Its position highlights the importance of transparency in the sharing of data. As well as collaborative measures to alleviate risks and maximize benefits.

### **Egypt**

Egypt is one of the downstream nations mostly dependent on the Nile. It sees the GERD as an important threat to the country's water security and scarcity. More than 95% of Egypt's freshwater supply is sourced from the Nile. This shows Egypt's dependency on the river. The GERD facilitates fears of declining water flow that may jeopardize agricultural productivity, availability of clean drinking water, and industrial operations. Egypt's position urges its need for a binding legal agreement to guarantee the equitable and predictable distribution of the Nile's waters. The state has taken part in several rounds of negotiations, frequently urging for international mediation to settle the conflicts. Egypt's concerns reflect the wider causes of international water management that challenge the national sovereignty and regional harmony of Egypt.

### **NGOs - WaterAid and Oxfam**

WaterAid and Oxfam are two important organizations when aiming to tackle the inequalities of resource distribution. They place great attention on following the demands of the WASH program



created by the World Health Organization (WHO) to help at-risk areas. They hold a grassroots strategy that guarantees that aid is delivered to those who need it the most. Thereby avoiding bureaucratic obstacles. Simultaneous with their humanitarian help, the organizations advocate for policy reforms at national and international levels. This has been done to foster fair resource distributions across the globe. They also take part in capacity-building projects, equipping local communities to sustainably manage their resources. Their adaptability and flexibility enable them to swiftly respond to emerging situations, such as droughts or resource conflicts. However, their dependence on donor funding and sponsors restricts their effectiveness. This highlights their need for a greater extent of collaboration with governments and international forums.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

### The Helsinki Rules (1966)

These rules established guidelines for the equitable and reasonable use of international waters, emphasising the need for collaboration and fair resource allocation between countries that share water bodies. It was adopted by the International Law Association (ILA) in Helsinki, Finland in 1966.

### UN Watercourses Convention (1997)

The UN convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses provided a framework for equitable water sharing and resource management. However, it was set back by limited adoption as not all nations ratified the agreement and its implementation through interpretation varied widely.

### Sustainable Development Goal 6

The sustainable development goals are set to be in effect by 2030. The sixth goal aims to expand efforts to achieve universal access to water and sanitation. While significant processes have been achieved, challenges persist due to uneven development, implementation, and the rising impacts of climate change.

### International Aid Programs

Organizations such as the World Bank and UNEP have funded projects such as the Integrated Water Resource Management to coordinate the development and management of water, land, and

related resources. It was successful in some regions such as Europe, however, its adoption in LEDCs has been hindered due to financial and technical constraints.

## Possible Solutions

### Strengthening International Agreements

This can be done through the improvement of current treaties that regulate transboundary resources to guarantee fair distribution by incorporating climate adaptation strategies, robust enforcement mechanisms, and equitable sharing of resources.

### Investing in Technology

This can be achieved through the promotion of advanced technologies such as desalination plants, water recycling systems, and solar-powered irrigation systems. Furthermore, the development of cost-effective technologies tailored to LEDCs to reduce dependence on expensive imported solutions can reduce the uneven distribution of solutions in specific regions.

### Capacity Building

This can be achieved through the training of local communities in sustainable resource management techniques, including rainwater harvesting and soil conservation. Furthermore, providing technical assistance to governments and local organizations to create long-term strategies can result in equitable resource allocation.

### Climate Adaptation Measures

This can be done through designing climate-resilient infrastructure such as dams and reservoirs to store and manage water supplies during periods of water scarcity. For further cooperation between states, encouraging nations to adopt early warning systems for droughts and floods can allow for mitigating impacts on vulnerable populations and communities.

### Global Funding Mechanisms

Through the establishment of a Global Water Equity Fund, which is supported by voluntary contributions by MEDCs, projects can be financed in LEDCs for equitable management of resources. Furthermore, introducing innovative financing mechanisms, such as water bonds, can be utilized to attract private investment in water infrastructure.

## Further Reading

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2. Research on water stress and resource management.(World Resources Institute. <https://www.wri.org> )
3. Insights into the impact of climate change on global water resources.(Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Reports: <https://www.ipcc.ch> )

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