

Water Classroom 2-2 (version 2)
Water as a human right (access, caste, poverty)

Teaching plan for learning on water for middle school students

Under a project initiated by the Living Waters Museum, Centre for Water Research, IISER Pune and
Research and supported by Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures, IIHS, Bangalore

2-2-1 Proposed plan

Lesson Plan number	WC-2-2
Topic	Water as a human right (access, caste, poverty)
Discipline	Social studies
Time	120 minutes (can be split into multiple sessions)
Prior learning	Basic understanding of terms like caste, poverty, diversity and discrimination
Learning objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will <i>engage</i> in the Water Privilege game (in small groups), to <i>demonstrate</i> some of the ways in which structural inequality shapes people's access to water.• Students will <i>outline</i> their experiences from the WC-2-2-Activity-I through quick-write exercises and group/class discussions.• Students will <i>identify</i> some water and sanitation (sustainable development goal 6), related inequalities and efforts to manage these in the Indian context

Learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are able to <i>identify</i> that water is considered a fundamental human right and <i>discuss</i> the structural inequalities that shape access to water Students are able to <i>analyze</i> their lived experiences and <i>identify</i> structural inequalities around themselves. Students are able to <i>design and discuss</i> ways in which such structural inequalities can be managed.
Resources/materials	<p>A space that can allow playing of the Water Privilege game.</p> <p>Print outs or ways to make the character available to the students.</p>
Use of teaching time	<p>2-3 mins</p> <p>Facilitator/educator will introduce students to the session. They will explain to the students that they will play a game followed by reflecting on the game with some questions and discussions.</p> <p>5-7 mins</p> <p>Students are divided into 6 groups of ideally not more than 6 students. Each group is given a character from WC-2-2-Activity-I (Water privilege game)</p> <p>5-10 mins</p> <p>Student read, understand and discuss the characters they are given within their groups.</p> <p><i>Refer to – WC-2-2-Activity-I</i></p> <p>15-20 mins</p> <p>Take students outdoors or in a corridor where there is enough space</p>

(refer to the image below) and conduct Activity-I

Refer to – WC-2-2-Activity-I



All groups will start at one end. Facilitator/educator will ask them questions or present them with statements. Whichever groups' character(s) answers 'yes' to the statement/question, they will take 1 (or 2) steps forward. At the end of the game, the physical distance between the characters is indicative of the privilege of their characters.

Refer to – WC-2-2-Activity-I

15-20 mins

Facilitator/educator will use the 'Ripple' technique, Facilitator/educator will ask each student to do a 'quick write' answering the following questions. Give **2 minutes**.

After each question, the facilitator/educator will ask students to discuss their answers in their table group for **3 minutes**.

	<p>Facilitator/educator will then pick a volunteer from each table group to present their perspectives to the entire class. Each table/group will be given 2 minutes to present the main points.</p> <p>Then the facilitator/educator can add comments for 2 minutes.</p> <p>Q1.</p> <p>(a) What happened in this game?</p> <p>(b) What were the different factors that allowed some children to move forward? What do all the children who moved forward in the room have in common? Use the word privilege in your answer. (privilege = a right, advantage, favor, or immunity specially granted to one; esp., a right held by a certain individual, group, or class, and withheld from certain others or all others)</p> <p>(c) What were the different factors that didn't allow some children to move forward? What do all the children who didn't move forward in the room have in common? Use the word privilege in your answer.</p> <p><i>Refer to – Background content for facilitator/educator – section 2-2-2d – to visualize some factors that can be brought forward</i></p> <p>15-20 mins</p> <p>Facilitator/educator will use the 'Ripple' technique,</p> <p>Facilitator/educator will ask each student to do a 'quick write' answering the following questions. Give 2 minutes.</p> <p>After each question, the facilitator/educator will ask students to discuss their answers in their table group for 3 minutes.</p>
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	<p>Facilitator/educator will then pick a volunteer from each table group to present their perspectives to the entire class. Each table/group will be given 2 minutes to present the main points.</p> <p>Then the facilitator/educator can add comments for 2 minutes.</p> <p>Q2. In what ways am I and my family privileged in our daily lives? How does it affect others around me who are not as fortunate as I am?</p> <p>5-20 mins</p> <p>Facilitator/educator discusses water as a human right, access to water and relationship with caste and poverty and efforts made to address such challenges in the Indian context.</p> <p><i>Refer to –</i></p> <p><i>Background content for facilitator/educator – section 2-2-2a-c</i></p> <p><i>WC-2-2-ppt-Water_Human_Right</i></p> <p>15-20 mins</p> <p>Facilitator/educator will use the ‘Ripple’ technique,</p> <p>Facilitator/educator will ask each student to do a ‘quick write’ answering the following questions. Give 2 minutes.</p> <p>After each question, the facilitator/educator will ask students to discuss their answers in their table group for 3 minutes.</p> <p>Facilitator/educator will then pick a volunteer from each table group to present their perspectives to the entire class. Each table/group will be given 2 minutes to present the main points.</p> <p>Then the facilitator/educator can add comments for 2 minutes.</p>
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	<p>Q3. What can each one of us do as individuals to make access to water more equitable and fairer for those who are disadvantaged? As a society?</p>
Differentiation	<p>This session will be influenced by the diversity of the classroom. During discussions, depending on the level of the class the discussions on efforts to address structural inequalities can include <i>comparison</i> of methods.</p>
Additional activities	<p>The following can be given as homework instead of classwork:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading and understanding the characters 2. Writing the answers to the questions 3. Reading about the efforts to address the challenges due to structural inequalities – this could also be given as project work.
Anticipated challenges and solutions	<p>There might be a need to reduce the time required for the session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Timing of the session can be reduced by giving the reading, understanding of the characters as homework, and answering the questions as homework. Follow-up discussions can be held in the classroom. -Timing can be reduced by shortening the presentation by the educator/facilitator – content can be given as homework reading -Timing may be reduced by leaving out some portions/discussions as per the requirement of the educator/facilitator.
Keywords	<p>Caste, access, poverty, discrimination, water scarcity, sanitation, water is a human right, sustainable development goal</p>

2-2-2 Background content for facilitator/educator

2-2-2a What does Right to Water mean?

The idea of the ‘right to water’ as a basic human right has come into focus since the last quarter of the 20th century. It is not directly stated by any formal or legal instruments but is implicit under the larger umbrella of human rights, such as the right to food, health, housing, well-being and life which requires the right to water to fulfill these needs. Broadly speaking, the right to water lays emphasis on access to water, affordability, ownership, delivery and participation in decision making processes (management of water), efficiency of water use with focus on non-discrimination (including gender, caste, class), and equality across different generations.

The concept of water as a human right became important due to the growing importance of the human rights approach in general, lack of access to water even for basic needs, inequality in water sharing, problems related to sustainability of water resources and the emergence of water as an economic commodity or ‘goods’ which led to questions related to pricing of water and privatisation.

The most explicit formal adoption of the right to water was made by the General Comment (No. 15) by the United Nations Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the 2002 and 2005 draft guidelines in the Report of the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. In 2010, the UN declared the right to water as a fundamental human right. In India, the right to water is implicitly interpreted by courts as the constitutional right to life (Article 21) as including the right to clean and sufficient water. It is also important to note that the right to water does not mean free water, but water that is affordable to all, including socially disadvantaged groups.

In 2015, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the ruling political party in Delhi announced that it will provide ‘water as a basic right’ to all residents by bringing about changes in the Delhi Jal (Water)

Board Act. They introduced a new system which promised the provision of 20,000 litres/month free water to a family of 4, anything above this amount was to be charged. Such an announcement was made to resolve the issue of unequal distribution of water supply in the city and ensuring access of water to all the Delhi residents. AAP leader Ashish Khetan stated that “There are around 5 million (50 lakhs) residents in Delhi who do not get piped water supply. Only 20 lakh (2 million) households receive piped water and even in these houses, the supply is erratic...The Swaraj (self-rule) concept will (now) also be applied to the issue of water — we will promote ‘Jal Swaraj’ or water democracy (governance and management by residents).”¹

AAP also announced a time-bound plan of action to cover all households with piped water and sewage networks irrespective of their legal status – planned or non-planned, authorised or unauthorised, regularised or non-regularised. The Delhi government has been pursuing its plan to solve the capital’s water woes but effective execution remains a challenge because of the limited political power and the huge demand and supply gap which raises the issue of sustainability.

2-2-2b Complexities related to the Right to Water:

Right to water concept deals with complex issues related to:

- 1) Establishing a minimum quantity of water for basic needs including drinking, sanitation, hygiene, cooking and other domestic uses.
- 2) The issue of ‘unit of holder of water’, i.e., whether the minimum quantity of water should be made available to an individual or a household.

¹ <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/water-as-a-right-is-aaps-new-promise-to-residents/>

- 3) This gives rise to the question of pricing of water which is rationalised on the basis of three arguments - recovering costs, capturing the true value of water as a resource for multiple uses and providing incentive for judicious use of water.

All these aspects related to the right to water are inherently interlinked with the issues of social inequality related to gender, caste, and class. The differences in minimum water requirement rising due to culture, climate and technology further adds to the complication. For example, the number of individuals in a household differs from region to region, therefore raising difficulty in setting a universal minimum standard. The idea of basic requirement is not just limited to domestic use, but also needs to include water for livelihoods such as agriculture. Pricing of water leads to questions related to affordability not just within different income groups but also between genders and caste groups.

Further, as the right to water is considered as a universal human right, it is to be accorded to every individual - which includes people living in slums, migrants, refugees, tribals who very rarely have formal recognition in terms of citizenship, etc. Volunteer organisation groups in Mumbai like the Pani Haq Samiti (started in 2010 by Sitaram Shelar, Founder Director of PHS and Centre for Promoting Democracy, Mumbai) have been working tirelessly over the years to make sure that the migrants living in informal communities in Mumbai with little legal recognition receive water as a basic right.

In Mumbai, 2.5 million people were denied access to municipal water from 1996 on the cut-off-date and land ownership basis. In December 2014, the Bombay High Court upheld the right to water as compulsion for maintaining the Right to Life and ordered the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) to provide water for all in its judgment. However, MCGM **refused** to move ahead and kept delaying any decision on this matter.

In November 2016, the Pani Haq Samiti organised 'Pani Pilao Abhiyan'. Around 1000 people participated in the Abhiyan. School dropouts, children, the homeless, women and men from 19 communities came to MCGM headquarters to submit their application for water along with a water bottle from their home to give to the Municipal Commissioner and Mayor.



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/panihagsamiti/photos/684112561751730>)

The momentum of this public participation was successful in speeding up the MCGM meeting discussions and the 'Water For All Policy' got sanctioned without any opposition. This is a milestone victory in the journey of the Right to Water. However, the implementation of this policy is still flawed as Pani Haq Samiti's convenor Sitaram Shelar weighs in on the recently announced Water for All policy, 2022 and highlights how it still leaves around 1 million homeless people and slum dwellers without a connection. Especially those who live on the pavements, as well as people residing in shanties on elevated or hillside areas.

(Source: <https://confluence.mumbaiwaternarratives.in/water-equity/exhibit01.php>)

2-2-2c Caste politics and water

Since centuries, caste discrimination in India has manifested itself in different forms with aspects related to access to housing, education, livelihood opportunities, food and water as well. The upper caste in India consider the lower castes to be impure and therefore, untouchable. This notion of impurity is directly related to the hereditary-based occupational structure of society, which was based on hierarchy in the division of labour. (Elaborated in detail in this article: [The Caste System of India](#) by Mason Olcott). Apart from not being allowed to enter into temples, homes or eat under the same roof, people from the lower caste communities are not allowed to use water from community wells, tanks or at times even from rivers as their touch is considered to be impure which could pollute the water.

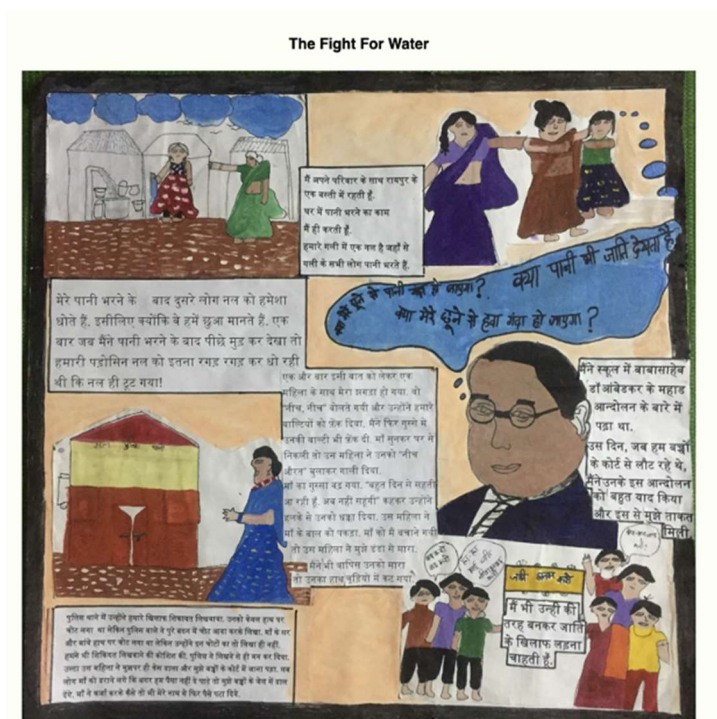
In 1923, a resolution moved by C.K. Bole in the Bombay Legislative Council was passed which clearly stated that no form of caste discrimination should be practised and everyone should be allowed access to water from all public watering places, wells and *dharmshalas*. In spite of such a resolution, the discriminatory practices continued. In 1927, thousands of Dalits (lower castes) walked to the Chavdar Lake in Mahad, Raigadh district to claim their moral and legal **right** to access a public water body under the leadership of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. This was later known as the Mahad (name of the village) Satyagraha. However, after drinking water from the tank, the Dalit community was brutally attacked by the upper castes.



(Source: <https://confluence.mumbaiwaternarratives.in/water-equity/exhibit02.php>)

Since then the situation has improved, today people can drink water from any public space but domestic spaces still have reserved opinions about equality and the right to water. Various household workers are denied the use of toilets. Some discriminate with their utensils. Some are discriminatory on the basis of 'hygiene'. There are still some villages in rural parts of India where this kind of discrimination is still practised, at times leading to violence and other forms of injustice towards the lower castes. This struggle is not just limited to the right to water but it is about the human right to live with dignity.

Tripti Pathak a 13-year-old girl from Raipur district tries to illustrate her personal experience related to caste discrimination and violence for trying to get access to water in her community through the drawing below.



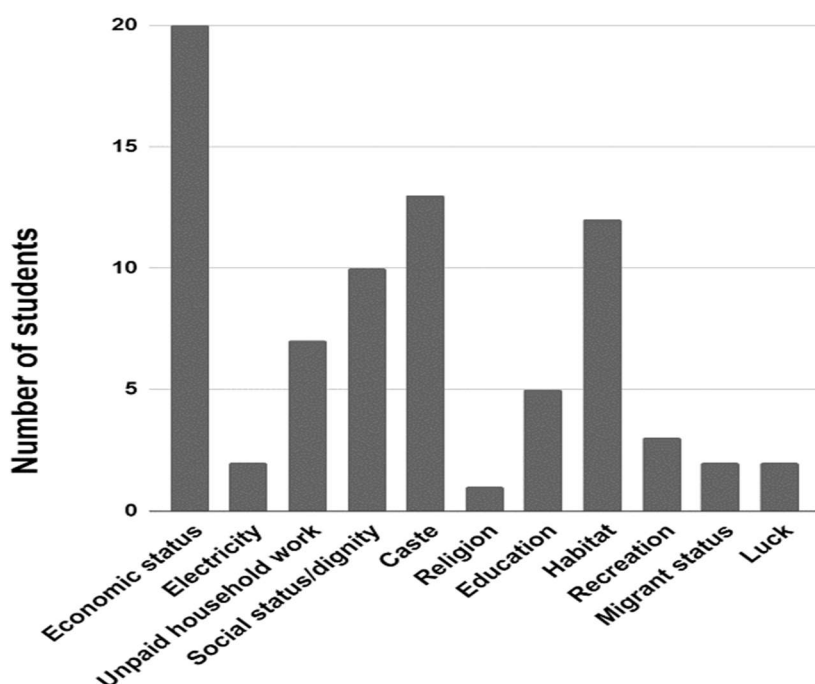
Tripti Pathak | Shaheed School, Raipur | Age: 13

Developed in collaboration with Shreya Khemani – a teacher at Shaheed school and a TESF India grant awardee. Current source: Art for Climate Advocacy, Living Waters Museum

(<https://www.livingwatersmuseum.org/art-for-climate-advocacy>)

2-2-2d Pilot study

Student responses to ‘What allows you to move forward or makes you stay behind?’ in our pilot run of this session is given in the figure below.



Few anecdotes from student:

“Rich people use money and takes more water – and therefore lower class families can’t get water...”

“...Lower caste status (not respected, had to wait because of certain reasons related to caste). Getting exhausted while getting water...”

“... The factors that disallowed some children to move ahead were their unequal right to water....”

Water Classrooms WC-2-2-ACTIVITY-I

Water Privilege Game

(Adapted from Biswas & Thomas, 2017)

Rules:

1. Each participant (or group) chooses or is assigned one of the characters (given below).
2. Decide a starting point preferably at a long-side corner of a room/corridor. All participants stand behind this point.
3. Statements (given below) will be read out to the participants.
4. Every time the participant thinks that the statement holds true for their character, they will take a step forward.

Characters:

1. **Laxmi** is a 12 year old girl from a Dalit family who lives in a low- income urban community (slum) in Pune. Everyday her mother goes to stand in the queue at the public stand posts to fill her meagre two pots with water for the family. Her mother has to make several trips daily, and Laxmi often accompanies her. Fights are not uncommon and sometimes Laxmi has to wait for the other women to fill their pots before she can go forward as no one wants to touch her. Sometimes there is no water at the stand post, and they have to purchase water from a private tanker. Quite often she misses school either because she has to help with household work, look after her younger siblings or is unwell with some infection or the other, especially diarrhoea.

2. **Megha** is a 11 year old girl from a Brahmin family who lives in a bungalow with a garden in a posh locality of Pune. Her father is an executive at a MNC, and her mother is a lecturer at a well-known college of management studies. She has a 24- hour water connection at home. Her house also has a water tank and a pump, so she doesn't have to worry about water shortages. Her family has a RO water purifier to clean their drinking water and she enjoys taking a bath daily.

3. **Simi** is a 13 year old girl, living in a large, joint Muslim household somewhere in the heart of Pune's old city. Her father runs a small motorcycle repair shop. Her mother runs the entire household, including cooking and organising all the children's daily schedules. They get about two hours of water everyday through a piped connection, but Simi has to wake up early every morning to help her mother fill the water required for the day. Sometimes she gets late for school. The water pressure is often so low that they have to purchase water from a private tanker. They also often face power cuts so their water filter at home doesn't work. Simi sometimes becomes ill with diarrhoea when they get water from a tanker, or the water filter doesn't work.

4. **Satinder** is a 13 year old Sikh boy whose family has migrated from Punjab and lives in a traditional village house on a farm outside the city of Pune shared with relatives. His family gets water from a borewell shared with relatives on a neighboring farm. Water needs to be pumped, but electricity is only available 3 days a week, and there is no fixed schedule. Water needs to be stored in a tank for household needs, and for the family's cattle for drinking and washing. For their agricultural needs, the family has dug a pond and lined it with plastic to store water for irrigating their crops. However it's only enough for half the crops. Satinder has to help out with running the pump, filling water and sometimes grazing the cattle so he misses school regularly.

5. **Deepak** is a 14 year old boy who lives in a traditional Jain family on the 4th floor of an old, run-down housing society. He and his friends play after school in the narrow space between buildings. His father runs a small provision store in a narrow lane in the old city. His mother stays at home and runs the household. He and his younger sister sometimes help out in their father's small provision store after school. They have a regular water supply because they are on the same line as some important government officers' residences. The municipal water pressure is sometimes low on the 4th floor, but they never face a water shortage. Water never needs to be stored for household needs.

6. **Azad** is a 16 year old boy belonging to a migrant Muslim family from Eastern Uttar Pradesh. He and his mother and father are all employed as daily wage labour to work on the metro line

construction. They live under a flyover near their work site. Azad and his younger brother who is only 8 stand in queues at public stand posts to fill their recycled plastic oil containers with water every morning and evening. Sometimes their mother accompanies them when extra water is needed for washing and bathing. Sometimes there is no water at the stand post, and they have to purchase water from a private tanker. Sometimes the water is dirty and smells bad, and they fall ill from diarrhoea.

Statements:

1. You live in a modern, concrete house.
2. You get time to play with your friends.
3. You can go to school every day.
4. You can wake up late in the morning.
5. You miss school sometimes because you are sick or have household chores to do
6. You have enough water to have a bath every day.
7. You get water from a tap.
8. Your family has to store water in large drums or pots.
9. Your family isn't able to always purify water to make it safe to drink (like boiling, filtering etc.).
10. You don't get physically exhausted just from the effort of fetching water.
11. You can drink enough water every day to keep yourself healthy.
12. Water isn't a worry for your family.
13. You don't become ill from drinking contaminated water.
14. Sometimes your family has to purchase water from a private tanker