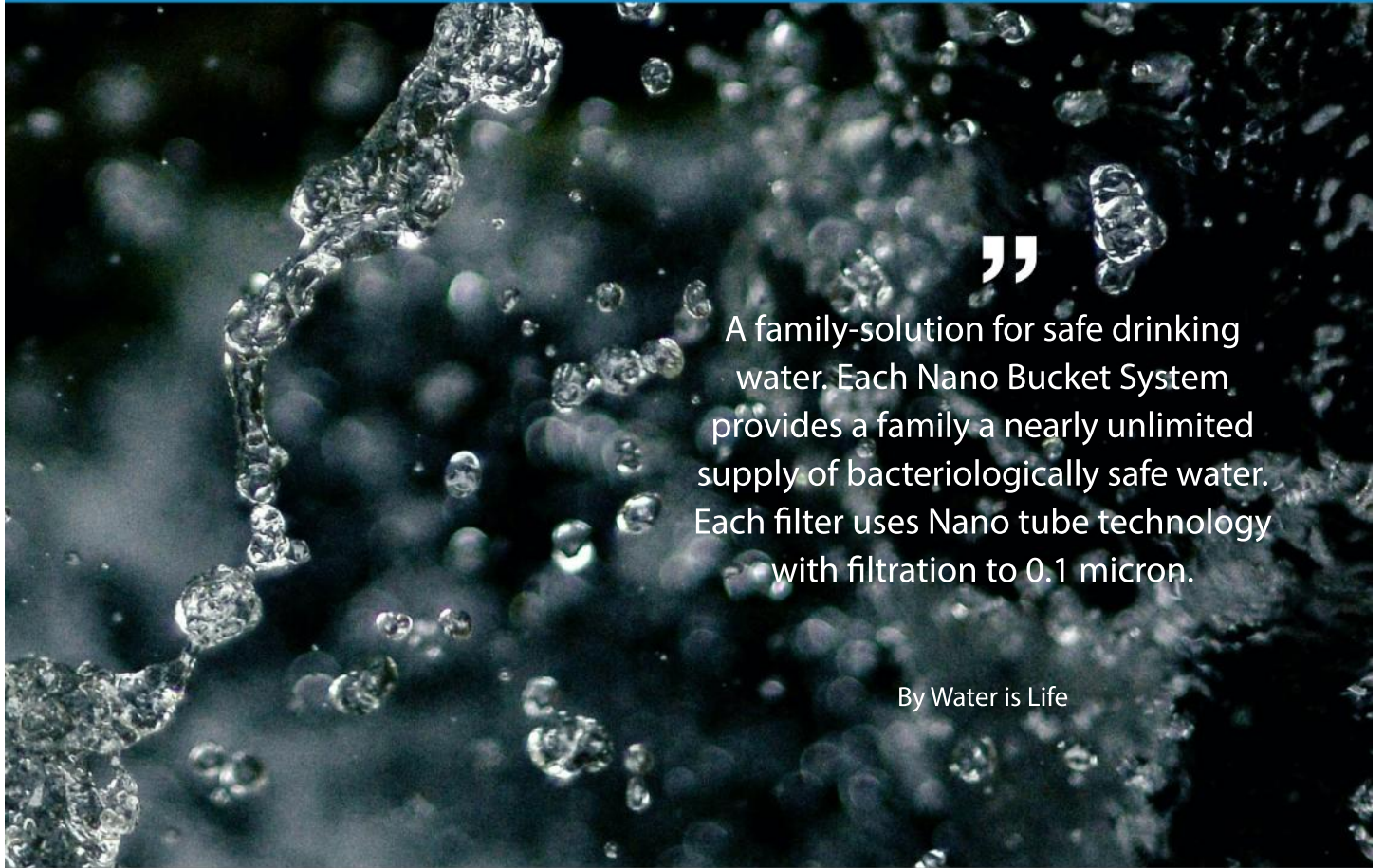


# WATER SECURITY



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By Water is Life

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# WATER is LIFE Sustainable Development Goals Commitments

**WATERisLIFE**

By Cote Terré, Water is Life

*How did you come to work with Water is Life and what is your personal purpose as a leader?*

I started as a volunteer because “giving back” has always been an important thing for me. It all began with social projects back in high school, and continued with them until I finished my journalism degree, when I decided to move to Calcutta and work with Mother Teresa’s nuns. That’s where I learned that the feeling of being useful becomes addictive, it was a life-changing experience. After a few years I went on another volunteer trip to Angola, to help kids with malaria, so I kept it going.

In 2017 I met Ken Surritte, founder of WATERisLIFE, who invited me to join him on a trip to Kenya. I liked the idea, but I was a TV and radio hostess by then, so I was unfortunately too busy. The idea got stuck in my head, so in 2018 I made the time and joined them on a mission to Nairobi. It was another milestone trip, it helped me realize the true importance of water and how it changes people’s lives. It was literally about life and death.

Once I was back in Chile, a travel agency offered me the chance to take a group in a unique life-experience trip. I chose Kenya. So, I had to travel there before to get everything ready, and while I was there, COVID hit. I was “stuck” there for months, unable to fly out, but I took it as an opportunity to help and reconnect with WATERisLIFE. I have been living in Kenya and working in water projects ever since.

When I started, I didn’t think of myself as a leader. It wasn’t on my plans, I just wanted to do something meaningful while I was unable to go back to Chile. Leadership came to me without even asking for it, but I learned very early on that it was about “doing”, leading by example, not by motivational speeches, meetings or behind a desk. You need to get out there and do something about it.

*What qualities do you believe an ethical leader must possess?*

Passion and full-on-belief in that what you are doing is right. Call it conviction. I didn’t choose to do this, but once I got involved, there was no question in my head that I had to do it to the best of my abilities. That’s where life placed me, and that that’s exactly where I needed to be.

You go all in, in your belief and also your values. You have to be unbreakable, know your limits, and be certain of what you are able and unable to do. It’s a deep self-awareness journey. Leading these projects in countries where corruption is an issue, is a constant test of your ethical compass, but you have to stay strong, I won’t accept it as a condition to get the work done. A lot of times, that way is longer and tougher, but much more rewarding in the end. I try to build everything on honesty, integrity and transparency, as much as I can. Being ethical is also staying true to your word and promises. If you commit to helping someone, you do it. No questions. That’s number one. We don’t take lightly what we offer, because it means something to people, and your word becomes your bond. You cannot be an ethical leader if your word means nothing.

*You mentioned the need for participatory theories in addressing the needs of communities, should organisations behave ethically in relation to society’s*

*demands. How can they go about doing so? Give examples if applicable.*

Yes, engagement is key. Projects simply cannot get done without the active involvement of the community. They need to take ownership of it, or it will fail soon after implementation. At the same time, our empathy level needs to be high, to really listen to their pains and desires, their problems and dreams, to understand them and act accordingly. If you don’t listen, you could be solving the wrong problem, and not changing any lives.

A small example, is when we received an email offering laptops for one of the communities we were getting a project done. They first needed water and they didn’t have electricity, in their own words. It’s part of our jobs to understand those situations, prioritize and make decisions.

One of our successful projects, at a slum with 10,000 people, took 6 months just to create the proper relationships with them. No work was done during that time, we needed to get them involved. It took many visits and conversations, but we were able to create a bond. Then, we finished the project in a month. It takes time, resources, and energy to show that you are ethically committed.

*What are your thoughts on committing to creating good for the collective?*

There’s no helping without committing. There’s no change without commitment to it. Simple as that. You need to give your time, your energy, your resources, your mind, and a piece of your heart as well, if you really want to improve lives. We are fighting the world water crisis, one of the biggest collective challenges of our time, and it can be overwhelming, especially when its more than 780 million people in the world who lack of safe water. If you don’t commit to that responsibility there no chance of making a real change.

*What inspires you and which of the SDGs are you most passionate about?*

For me, it’s not only about doing something, but also showing it to others. It’s creating a platform to open a window into the world’s issues that everyone should know about. That’s why my role in WATERisLIFE is not only leading, but communicating and engaging audiences. It’s not only to bring water to those in need, but to create consciousness and awareness in those who already have it. To be grateful for every drop you use during the day, which many of us take for granted, not realizing how lucky we are. Once you see that safe water is what other people dream of, and connect to it, you might start taking care of it. And feeling a need to help others too. For all those reasons great communicators inspire me. I hope I can get our message across.

SDGs are at the core of what we do. 2030 is around the corner, and the 17 Goals are as important as ever, if not more so. Of course number 6, Clean Water and Sanitation is part of our vision, but in our work we engage strongly with Gender Equality (5) as women empowerment is a vital component of our programs, given that they are in charge of water in the communities. Clean energy (7) through our technology that uses solar and wind power, or Economic Growth (8) due to the fact that safe water has a critical impact on community development and economic activity, as studied by the World Bank, among others, are some of the other Goals that align to.



Cote Terré,  
Director of Communications  
Water is Life



# UN 2023 Water Conference UN Headquarters in New York, 22-24 March 2023

## CO-HOSTED BY TAJIKISTAN AND THE NETHERLANDS

Reporting in association, live at the event



## WATER SECURITY

# Quality, the invisible water crisis: What lies under the surface


 WATER  
is  
LIFE

**W**ater quantity grabs public attention and the media spotlight. Water quality -being predominantly invisible and hard to detect-goes largely unnoticed. Quality Unknown: The Invisible Water Crisis shows how poor water quality stalls economic progress, stymies human potential, and reduces food production. The report calls for a paradigm shift that emphasizes safer and often more cost-effective remedies, combining smarter policies with newer technologies.

## Other June 2021 - July 2022 milestones

- Finalized registration in Kenya. Now, WIL has legal presence in the US, Brazil and Kenya.
- WIL was selected as a finalist in the Analyst Fund by GOLDMAN SACHS in the U.S. and in the Ecoimpacta innovation challenge by CCU & CORFO in Chile (both processes ongoing).
- First Annual Fundraising Gala will be held in October 2022. Preparations continue, as we secure big sponsors.
- WIL was selected as one of the TOP 10 nonprofits fighting the global water crisis, by Donorbox, reaching #9.
- WIL added new volunteer lead in Chile, for South America projects, to work with Brazil as well.

## Our goal, our dream

Solve the world water crisis through better WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) initiatives, focusing on the invisible water quality problems by leveraging innovative solutions, projects and partnerships, actively involving the communities where we work.

## These three concepts give life to WATER is LIFE (WIL)

- WASH
- Invisible crisis
- Leveraging innovation



## Partnerships for the Goals

With offices in the US, Brazil, Kenya and Chile, WATERisLIFE has focused its efforts and resources in Africa and Latin America, projecting an impact of close to 100,000 people by the end of 2022. Ghana, Kenya, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Haiti, Madagascar, Puerto Rico, El Salvador are either completed or in planning phases.

A large portion of these projects were implemented in collaboration with our key partners. Betterfly and TECHO from Chile, Urban Hydration from the US, Pure Life from Norway, Machakos Government from Kenya and many others.

## Water is Life on Re-affirming SDGs Commitment for 2023

### What is 'Water is Life's main focus in your ESG mandate in relation to partnerships for the global goals in 2023?

**A**s a water-centered organization, our core activities are inevitably linked to environmental and social impacts. On a human level, by providing safe drinking water to communities in need, we're not only touching on health or sanitation, but also economic growth, education, and empowerment; and, at the same time, we're providing alternatives and more efficient ways of consumption, that allow more water for livestock, wildlife, or irrigation. Our strategy for both the Environmental and Social components of WATERisLIFE's work, is based on three pillars: (1) Strengthen our public-private partnerships with governments and companies properly engaged with ESG; (2) Develop deeper relations with water experts and innovators, that can bring new light and technology into the water issues we face; and (3) Broaden our scope of work, from small communities and slums into a more holistic approach, incorporating Conservation and all the conflict-related issues they face because of water. We're taken some steps in that direction already, with some of our newest partners.

Finally, as far as Governance goes, we look at it in two different ways. First, by having a diverse and strong board of directors to lead our mission, but also to create equal community groups to lead the projects we implement, where women are the key. We want women at the head of the new water points we provide, as they have been historically in charge of the resource collection and management for their villages or groups, now we want them to have a platform that makes them community leaders.

### What are your key commitments for the SDGs in 2023?

The World Bank said it best, in its 2019 paper Quality Unknown: The Invisible Water Crisis: "poor water quality stalls economic progress, stymies human potential, and reduces food production (...). An important step toward tackling the world's water quality challenge is recognizing its scale (...). The report calls for a paradigm shift that emphasizes safer, and often more cost-effective remedies by combining smarter policies with newer technologies". In that light, our commitment towards Safe Water grows stronger every year, so we're focusing all our efforts and resources into providing it to the best of our abilities, partnering with world experts that can help us tackle it in the best way possible.

Our main commitment for 2023, is to stay strong and dig deeper into Safe Water, in Africa and Latin America.

### How do you intend on maximising your marketing solutions for the SDGs for 2023?

Our model is based on implementation. Most of our resources go into projects and operation, so a big challenge for us moving forward is to be more involved in the tech industry and go beyond our current systems, both for water generations and filtration, as well as for communications. We've had good success so far, but it's a growing necessity to engage with multidisciplinary teams to attack the issues in a more comprehensive way.

We're currently based in Kenya, a big technology hub for Africa, so 2023 will be a good year to start.

### Any partnerships you are most looking forward to reinforce post-pandemic?

As part of our strategy, we're looking into strengthening partnerships with corporate players with an ESG vision towards the future, and with National and Local Governments that align with our philosophy. At the same time, we're exploring new ground with the impact we want to have, so we're partnering also with Conservancies as a new niche. They deal with heavy water-related issues, including conflict, so I think we have the tools and network to help. I'm very excited about the new possibilities that 2023 brings, because WATERisLIFE needs to grow with partners. That's the way we've designed it, to create impact through collaboration and joined efforts.

### Do you have a purpose-driven leadership and incentive system for sustainability at Water is Life?

Absolutely. Our Global Board, myself as Executive Director, our Global Development & Strategy Director and our Country Volunteer Leaders are fully aligned towards our purpose. What we want to achieve is very clear, safe water for all, so we'll never get confused or lose sight of where we're going. Since WATERisLIFE started more than 15 years ago, it's been driven by a strong sense of purpose, which now is stronger than ever. That's been Ken Surritte's biggest legacy, to go above and beyond for the goal ahead.