

MARCH/APRIL 2022

Looking back at World Water Day 2022

SEMINAR ORGANIZED BY IHE DELFT AND
NICC FOUNDATION IN COLLABORATION
WITH WITH ACACIA, DELTARES, IAH
NETHERLANDS, AND IGRAC ON THE 22ND
OF MARCH 2022



CONCLUSIONS:

The theme of this year's World Water Day was 'Groundwater: Making the invisible visible'. During the presentations about this theme, the word 'management' was used quite often. We need to be careful that this does not become a buzzword. Management comprises many dimensions: the level of management, its enabling governance environment, power relations, and allocation issues. A rational and fair allocation of groundwater resources and its proper implementation is key. Hopefully, as part of sustainability, this can be a focus and priority in a next discussion. Allocation of resources depends on power relations; in every country, the power relations are completely different, and there are even reasons why some people 'misuse' water. Therefore, power relations are crucial to consider as well in future discussions.

Secondly, the presentations also showed that in many cases there is sufficient data available and a lot of in-depth information. However, the financial consequences of data collection and information production are different per country. If we look at the Pakistan case and we look at the Netherlands, the number of attention at all levels, including the political and the number of institutions involved in the groundwater, cannot be compared. The finances of the government, and thereby the liberty to focus on data and knowledge, are also related to the power balance. So: the financial aspects of proper management are very important.

Finally, referring to the timeline as produced by NICC: how do we as presenters and audience want to look back on today? In the future, others will analyze the trend we are part of today, and we will be the next bullet in the timeline. Remember, today is tomorrow's history.



The presentations:

The seminar organized by IHE Delft and NICC Foundation in cooperation with Acacia, Deltares, IAH Netherlands Chapter and IGRAC turned out to be an inspiring and informative event. Around 70 guests and IHE students participated in the IHE auditorium and over 100 in the livestream.

Five minutes before the opening, a movie was shown named 'Izzat ka Pani', focusing on the right to water in slumps in Mumbai. Great remarks were: water is a need, poor or rich, and no one has invented water. Efforts of unity resulted in formal (cheaper) supply to the poor.

Moderators Sabrina Salsabillo, IHE student, and Rianne Janssen, intern of NICC, opened the session.

An excellent intro by Prof. Dr. Eddy Moors, the rector of IHE, via a video message from the 2022 World Water Forum in Dakar, highlighted the importance of groundwater as stated in Dakar.





The president of the **International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) Netherlands, Niels Hartog**, continued the opening with a great overview highlighting the interaction between visibility and its reverse in the communication on groundwater.

The first presentation about the overall picture of the importance of the Groundwater theme in 2022 was given by the new **director of IGRAC, Elisabeth Lictevout**. She started with an eye-opener for all by asking the audience where the water from the tap at IHE originated from. Highlights were: we can do more, it is no problem that we have more questions than answers, and be creative! See the recording for some answers.

This was followed by a historical review of the development, use, and misuse of groundwater by **Albert Tuinhof of NICC**. The NICC timeline starts in the seventies of last century: the overall trend since then is clear: 'management comes in when it is too late!' Also, management requires monitoring, WaPOR is as an example. The latest worldwide trend: Managed Aquifer Recharge and Governance are central themes and main challenges.

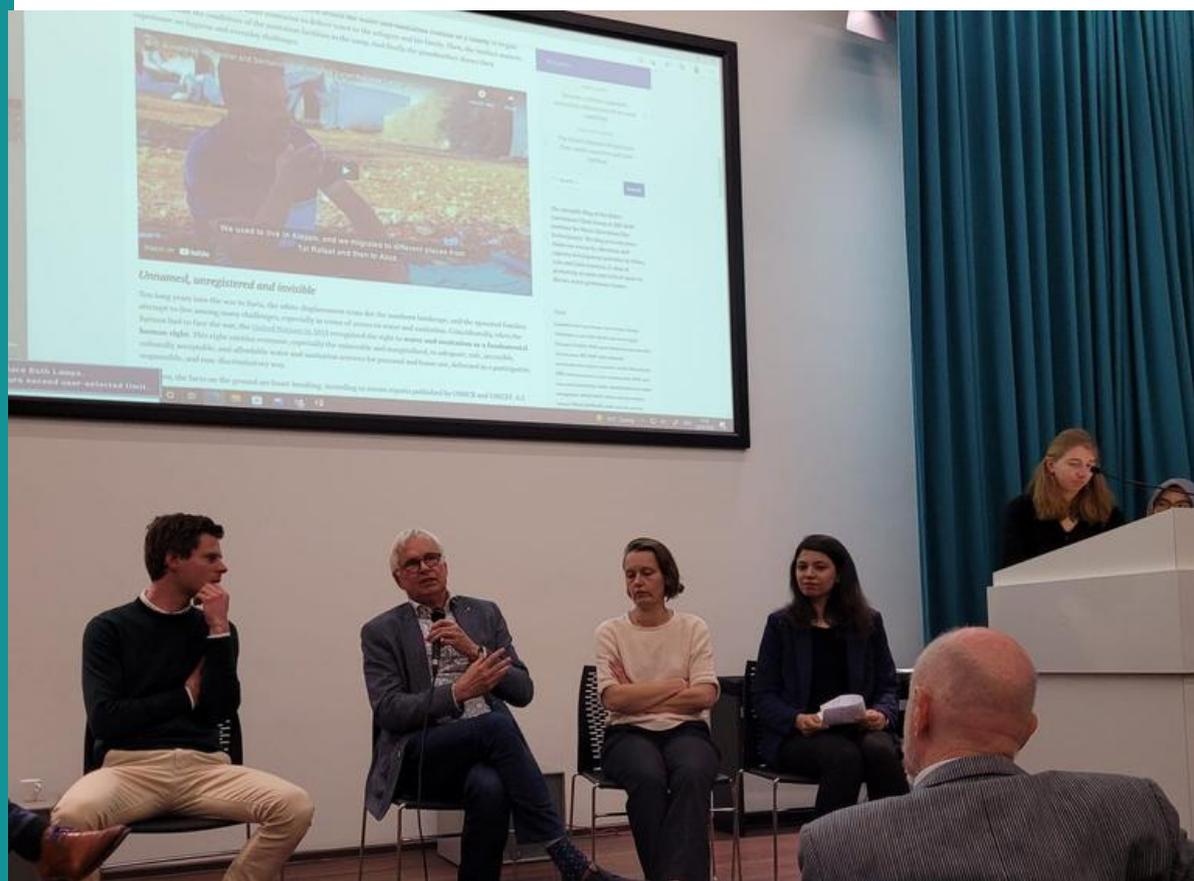
Gualbert Oude Essink (Deltares) guided us through the developments and status of groundwater in the Netherlands. Fascinating to realize all developments, very innovative (COASTER) and above all practical, focused on the principle that groundwater is a key to a resilient and sustainable future. Statement to remember: 'more knowledge does not mean you use less', more to be found in recording of the presentation.

Marloes Mul of IHE Delft presented innovations by using Remote Sensing in managing groundwater resources and we all felt like students again. She showed great developments and proofs of the reliability of the products such as WA+ and WaPOR and field examples of the practical use of remote sensing data in Jordan in estimating groundwater recharge, safe yield and actual abstractions. Innovation that particularly in water scarce countries provide the right data for decision makers and farmers by looking from the sky.

Simon van Meijeren from Acacia presented 'boots on the ground' with fieldwork ongoing in Ethiopia and Yemen. Hydro(geo)logical mapping supports the introduction of climate resilient WASH and avoids dry wells in future. Techniques applied by Acacia give insight into the groundwater trend analysis and can visualise different water use impacts on future groundwater developments.

The last presenter, **IHE student Maha Sheikh**, explained very clearly the history and challenges of groundwater development in Pakistan. She challenged the audience by posing the question: are we too late for proper groundwater management? She came up with a set of realistic answers about the way forward that you can find in the slides and recording.

Finally, the **lively discussion** with the presenters and the audience focussed on the lack of generic exploration and management frameworks, and the importance of good showcases of successes as accelerators in the debates on groundwater management and governance, capacity building, and political economy. Groundwater remains both part of the solution and part of the sustainability challenges and its underlying problems.



After a short video presented and made by IHE students named 'the wake up call on WASH in an invisible Syrian refugee camp', the conclusions and final remarks were made by **Job Kleijn of NICC Foundation**. After thanking the presenters, moderators, and audience, he mentioned **FOUR TAKEAWAYS** from all the inspiring presentations.

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1. Worldwide and in the Netherlands more attention is given to the management and governance of groundwater.
 2. Realize that groundwater is a good buffer, especially in crisis and transition periods
 3. Capacity building remains a priority
 4. Bridge the gap between policymakers and innovators
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