



JESUIT CENTRE FOR ECOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT (MALAWI)

Briefing Note

MAPPING JESUIT ENGAGEMENT IN WATER AND SANITATION INITIATIVES ACROSS AFRICA: JCED'S CONTRIBUTION IN WATER ENGAGEMENT, SANITATION INITIATIVES AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

1. Introduction

The Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development (JCED) is grateful for the invitation by the JCAM Justice and Ecology Office (JCAM JEO) to reflect on JCED's engagement around water, sanitation, and ecological justice considering the African Union 2026 theme and World Water Day 2026, "A water-secure and resilient Africa with safe sanitation for all" and the theme for this year's World Water Day (22 March), "Where water flows, equity grows".

At present, JCED is integrating water and sanitation concerns within its broader ecological justice and social advocacy work. JCED's efforts focus on promoting community awareness of the human right to water, strengthening local conversations around environmental stewardship, and supporting initiatives that highlight the link between access to safe water, public health, and human dignity.

JCED is also exploring opportunities to incorporate water governance and climate resilience perspectives into JCED's research, formation activities, and policy dialogues, particularly where vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected. This briefing note gives an overview of JCED's current engagement in water and sanitation; the nature and focus of JCED's initiatives, JCED's interest in regional or conference-level collaboration and JCED's long-term plans.

2. JCED's Current Engagement in Water and Sanitation

JCED is actively engaged in water and sanitation initiatives as part of an integrated climate action, food security, education, and disaster response programming. JCED's interventions are primarily community-based, while also contributing to broader climate justice and ecological advocacy efforts.

Water-related work is embedded within:

- Climate action and food security programmes
- Community resilience and disaster response initiatives
- Education access and gender equity efforts
- Public health, hygiene, and sanitation promotion

JCED's approach is both developmental and humanitarian, addressing long-term water insecurity while also responding to climate-induced emergencies.



Water Challenges



Reticulated water systems



Access to clean water

3. Nature and Focus of Our Initiatives

a) Access to Clean Water and Community Infrastructure

In several communities, particularly in Central Malawi, women and girls often travel long distances to access water, especially during periods of drought. This has historically affected school attendance for girls and increased household burdens.

In response, JCED has:

- Facilitated the provision of water points, including tapped water systems and the rehabilitation of boreholes.
- Reduced the time and physical burden placed on women and girls.
- Contributed to improved school retention among girls by easing the conflict between education and domestic responsibilities.

- Strengthened hygiene practices within communities and schools, leading to improved public health outcomes.

These interventions affirm the link between water access, human dignity, gender equality, and social development.



Students at Katanthona Primary School accessing clean water from one of the taps from the reticulated water system provided by JCED in the area

b) Water for Food Security and Climate Resilience

Water access is also central to our climate resilience and food security programming. To reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture and strengthen adaptation to climate variability, JCED has:

- Promoted solar-powered irrigation systems to enhance crop production among smallholder farmers.
- Supported climate-smart agricultural practices that rely on sustainable water management.

- Strengthened community resilience to drought through improved water stewardship and conservation practices.

These efforts have contributed to increased agricultural productivity, improved household incomes, and enhanced food security in vulnerable communities.



A woman from Talandira Women Banana Growing Group watering bananas using a solar powered borehole provided by JCED.

c) WASH and Emergency Response

Following the devastation caused by Cyclone Freddy, water systems in districts such as Mulanje, Phalombe, and Chiradzulu were severely damaged. Many communities were displaced, and outbreaks of diarrhoeal diseases were reported due to limited access to safe water and sanitation.

In response, JCED:

- Rehabilitated damaged boreholes.
- Restored access to safe and clean water.

- Supported hygiene and sanitation measures in affected communities and temporary camps.

These actions formed part of our broader commitment to resilience-building and humanitarian response, ensuring that vulnerable populations regained access to essential water and sanitation services.



JCED handed over a solar powered reticulated water point for survivors of Cyclone Freddy at Mussa Village.

As for the long-term measures, JCED wishes in future to acquire the machinery for drilling boreholes. With this, JCED will be able to drill as many boreholes as possible in various communities across the country.



JCED's long-term plan in water engagement, sanitation initiatives and ecological justice.

4. Interest in Regional or Conference-Level Collaboration

Every year, JCED organises local initiatives to mark the World Water Day and World Water Week. Some initiatives include: conferences, community awareness events, multi-stakeholder community visits and others. This year we are interested in doing the same.

JCED also has strong interest in collaboration at regional or Conference level in alignment with the AU 2026 theme and World Water Day 2026. The Province Social Justice Assembly and the conference on Food Security organised by Arrupe Jesuit University later this year are some of the opportunities.

Potential areas of engagement include:

- Advocacy for equitable water governance and sustainable resource management
- Climate-resilient water systems for food security
- Solar-powered irrigation and sustainable agriculture
- Gender-responsive water access initiatives
- WASH in schools and rural communities
- Disaster preparedness and post-disaster water system rehabilitation

Given our integrated approach that links water, climate resilience, food security, education, and health, we see significant opportunities for knowledge exchange, joint advocacy, coordinated research, and shared pastoral reflection within the Jesuit Conference.

Conclusion

In alignment with the 2025–2031 Strategic Plan, JCED continues to implement water-related initiatives that promote access to clean water, climate resilience, gender equity in education, hygiene and sanitation, and post-disaster recovery.

These efforts reflect our commitment to human dignity, ecological sustainability, and accompaniment of vulnerable communities. JCED remains open and committed to deeper collaboration in advancing water justice and ecological resilience as we move toward 2026.

With gratitude and solidarity in mission,

Reuben Chifundo Nazombe SJ
Acting Executive Director
Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development