

## **IMPLEMENTING THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER IN CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY: BUILDING A DEMOCRATIC VOICE IN WATER POLICY DECISION MAKING**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Global efforts to secure the human right to water must focus not just on allocation but also on quality. In California's Central Valley, groundwater is the primary drinking water source and suffers from widespread contamination due to decades of intensive industrial agriculture. The Valley's most disadvantaged residents cannot afford to purchase bottled water or install expensive treatment systems, so contamination in this region has significant environmental justice implications, especially in rural communities. Community Water Center's model for sustainable implementation of the right to water does not depend solely on codifying enforceable rights and financing the construction of new wells, because even the most protective regulatory regime is meaningless in the long term without sufficient social and political capital. Lasting change requires disadvantaged communities to carve out a space at the decision making table to assert a voice in policy decisions that impact their drinking water.

**PALAVRA-CHAVE:** water justice, public participation, community, sustainability, disadvantaged, decision-making