

THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER AND SANITATION FOR EXILED PEOPLE LIVING ON THE NORTHERN FRENCH COAST

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Collective of associations

Authors: Calais Food Collective, Roots, Solidarités International, Vents Contraires.

The contact and the description of the above-mentioned organizations are available in annex 1.

Signatories: Calais Appeal, Coalition Eau, L'Auberge des Migrants, Médecins du Monde, Refugee Women Center, Utopia 56.

2. Legislative national status

The human right to water and sanitation, enshrined by the UN in a 2010 resolution¹, covers access to several basic services: drinking water, hygiene infrastructure, sanitation facilities, sewage systems and rubbish collection.

- The right to a healthy environment is enshrined in the French constitution: *"Everyone has the right to live in a balanced and healthy environment"*².
- The right to access to drinking water is mentioned in Article L. 210-1 of the Environmental Code: *"the use of water belongs to all and every individual, for his or her food and hygiene, has the right to access drinking water under conditions economically acceptable to all"*.
- The right to water and sanitation is linked to several French constitutional objectives (principle of safeguarding human dignity, right to decent housing, protection of public health)
- Articles 64 and 66 of law no. 2015-991 of 7 August 2015 on the new territorial organization of the Republic (NOTRe law) assigned, on a compulsory basis, the competences of water and sanitation to the *Communautés de communes* (federations of municipalities) and the *Communautés d'agglomération* (conurbation authorities) as of 1 January 2020.
- The French Council of State reiterated in its order dated 21 June 2019 (n°431115) that the mayor, holder of general police powers, must "ensure in particular that the right of any person not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment is guaranteed", including in this case, access to a sufficient number of water points, showers and toilets for migrants.

¹ Resolution 64/292 <https://undocs.org/fr/A/RES/64/292>

² Article 1 of the Environment Charter

- Article 16 of the revised Directive on improving access to water intended for human consumption of 16 December 2020 paves the way for the deployment of measures for access to water for vulnerable and isolated people and provides for the identification and counting of people without access to water.
- In an advisory opinion (2015), the Human Rights National Consultative Commission (CNDH) recalled that compliance with the above-mentioned rights implies the provision of access to basic services, such as water access and sanitation, as well as to garbage collection³.

3. Context

The situation on the northern French coast is the most critical in metropolitan France (excluding French overseas territories) regarding the rights to water and sanitation.

The northern coastal area, bordering the United Kingdom, has experienced a permanent and continuous flow of people in exile for the past fifty years. From Sangatte to Dunkirk, the French coast is an axis of primarily short-term passage and settlement, as one of the main crossing points along the migratory route.

According to local associations, numbers across these northern pressure points fluctuate between 1 000 and 3 000 displaced people. A majority of single men, but also women, families, children and unaccompanied minors (most of whom are in transit) are affected by this situation. People remain at the border for varying lengths of time, ranging from a few days to several months. Their dwellings are made up of tents or makeshift homemade shelters gathered in settlements that vary both in size and density, scattered, more or less close to city centers (in woods, fields, expressways, bridges, etc.).

These living areas are in flux and change according to the very frequent expulsions carried out by the police. For the month of February 2022 alone, at least 153 evictions were recorded in Calais⁴, i.e. an average of one eviction every two days. In the Dunkirk/Grande-Synthe area, evictions take place approximately every fortnight⁵.

- The number of living spaces in Calais varies according to the period, but the independent associations on the ground have identified at least 8 different living places on the land of the municipality⁶. Between 966 and 1653 people were living in the area each month in 2021, including 123 unaccompanied minors on average⁷.
- In Dunkirk/Grande-Synthe area, between 200 and 1200 people were present in 2021, including about 50 children⁸, living on one main site, which moves regularly following evictions by the police⁹.
- In Ouistreham area, the number of people living in informal settlements allegedly reached 350 in 2018. Following the sanitary measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary accommodation was provided for most of the community living there. Currently, there are an estimated 50 people in that living space¹⁰.

All these areas are also characterized by a large number of deaths at the border¹¹.

The authors welcome the willingness of Member States to highlight the issues related to the right to water and sanitation in France in one recommendation for the 2018 UPR of France:

³ [Avis sur le respect des droits fondamentaux des populations vivant en bidonvilles - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](#)

⁴ [HRO Monthly Report 2022-03-05-1646476887049 \(humanrightsobservers.org\)](#)

⁵ [HRO Monthly Report 2021-12-30-1640878828963 \(laubergedesmigrants.co.uk\)](#)

⁶ See annex 2 – “Map – Access to water in Calais”

⁷ The figures quoted in this document come from observations/estimates from independent field associations..

⁸ Association Project Play: [Grassroots NGO | Project Play \(project-play.org\)](#)

⁹ See annex 3 – “Map – Access to water in the Dunkirk area”

¹⁰ See annex 4 – “Map – Ouistreham settlement”

¹¹ [Deaths at the Calais Border | Calais Migrant Solidarity \(wordpress.com\)](#)

- **145.262 Ensure equal access to basic rights, including access to water and sanitation, health insurance and health care, and access to emergency shelter for all minorities, including the Roma (Recommendation of the Islamic Republic of Iran)**

A recommendation made in 2018 was directly aimed at the situation of exiled people on the French North Coast:

- **145.267 Establish coherent and long-term strategies to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in Calais and Northern France (Sierra Leone Recommendation)**

This recommendation was accepted by France, which implies an obligation to adopt measures and act in order to implement this recommendation.

In addition, on the specific case of the northern French coast, several alerts have been issued by national and international human rights authorities:

- In 2021, the National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) made several recommendations about the situation on the Northern French coast, including: "that sufficient food be distributed close to where people live" and "that sufficient and accessible shower and sanitation facilities be installed"¹² ;
- In 2020, the *Défenseur des Droits*¹³ published a press release after a visit to Calais, denouncing the "degrading and inhumane living conditions" of exiles¹⁴;
- In 2019 the UN Special Rapporteurs on adequate housing presented her preliminary observations after a visit in Calais and Grande-Synthe, highlighting "the systematic and flagrant violation of the right to adequate housing under international human rights law" as constituting of "violations of the rights to health, food and physical integrity"¹⁵;
- Two reports of the *Défenseur des droits* in 2015 and 2018 highlighting the violations of the fundamental right to water, hygiene and sanitation of exiled persons at the border (in Calais, Grande-Synthe and Ouistreham)¹⁶ ;

However, despite the fact that the situation has been widely known by the authorities and reported in the media since 2016, no satisfactory action has been taken by the authorities in terms of access to water, hygiene and sanitation.

It is important to emphasize that it is difficult to obtain official information about the situation on the northern French coast, as the information put forward by state services and the municipalities is very often different from the information relayed and transmitted by the field associations following their observations. Despite numerous attempts, no dialogue concerning these data is possible with the relevant and competent authorities¹⁷.

II. STATE OF THE EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Identified needs

The knowledge and identification of needs, in a context of particularly precarious housing and far from any infrastructure, makes it possible to analyze the extent of the shortcomings in terms of water, hygiene and sanitation.

On the North Coast, water is used by displaced people for the following purposes:

¹² [Opinion on the situation of exiled persons in Calais and Grande-Synthe - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](#)

¹³ French "Ombudsman"

¹⁴ [Visite de la Défenseure des droits mardi 22 et mercredi 23 septembre à Calais | Défenseur des Droits \(defenseurdesdroits.fr\)](#)

¹⁵ [Déclaration de fin de mission de la Rapporteuse spéciale sur le droit à un logement convenable présente ses observations préliminaires au terme de sa visite en République française du 2 au 11 avril 2019 | OHCHR](#)

¹⁶ [report_calais-num-14.12.18.pdf \(defurdesdroits.fr\)](#)

¹⁷ E.g. Prefecture of the Pas-de-Calais, Préfecture of Dunkirk, Prefecture of the Calvados, City hall of Calais, Dunkirk, Grande-Synthe and Ouistreham

- Drinking
- Basic cooking: despite food distributions by several actors, associations and displaced people testify that a certain volume of water is used for cooking and washing dishes.
- Corporal and general hygiene: due to the inadequacy or total absence of hygiene infrastructure, part of the water is used for hygiene by the population (e.g. through hand washing, bucket shower).

These needs involve only the amount of water needed for survival. Needs can vary according to many indicators such as individual characteristics, seasons and cultural habits.

Regarding personal hygiene, needs include access to facilities (showers, washing machines). This need for hygiene is accentuated by the living conditions on the coast, outside in tents and often in the mud. In terms of sanitation, needs consist of a continuous and safe access to toilets as well as waste management.

2. Existing infrastructure proposed by the public authorities

2.1. In Dunkirk, Grande-Synthe and Ouistreham, the total absence of water, hygiene and sanitation infrastructure

The Dunkirk/Grande-Synthe area is characterized by a total absence of guaranteed access to water by public authorities. Since November 2021, the only access to water is provided by independent associations, via the installation and filling of water tanks on the main living site by the association Roots¹⁸, or the punctual supply of water by other associative actors. Frequent evictions by the police often result in the destruction or confiscation of the water tanks provided by Roots¹⁹, which are the only continuously accessible source of water for exiles.

The situation is very similar in Ouistreham, with only one public tap easily accessible, but located in a remote area. In the settlement itself, there is a total absence of state-provided water and sanitation infrastructure. Water supply is mainly provided by the association Vents Contraires via the filling of a water tank two times a week²⁰.

Personal hygiene facilities are very insufficient. In the Dunkirk area, the weekly provision of showers in gymnasiums is compensated by associations via on-site mobile shower slots in the Grande-Synthe camp²¹. In Ouistreham, no showers facilities are available near the settlement. In all the areas analyzed, exiles have no way to wash their clothes, nor do they have decent access to bodily and buccal hygiene in the camp in a continuous and guaranteed manner (see below, 3.2).

Access to sanitation is not guaranteed either, as there is no toilet infrastructure in most of the settlements in Calais as well as in the Dunkirk, Grande-Synthe and Ouistreham camps, except self-built toilets that do not ensure safe and hygienic access to all exiled people, and involves several risks especially for the most vulnerable such as women, children and unaccompanied minors.

In these areas, the State and municipalities refuse to undertake any direct or indirect action in terms of access to water, hygiene and sanitation. Despite the willingness of independent associations to ensure minimal access to water and sanitation, their capacity is very limited, as they rely solely on volunteers (extremely small teams) and receive no public financial support.

2.2. In Calais, insufficient state-implemented measures²²

¹⁸ See annex 5 – Roots’ activities in Grande-Synthe (pictures)

¹⁹ [Camp de Loon-Plage : les autorités pouvaient-elles saisir une cuve d’eau destinée aux migrants ? – Libération \(liberation.fr\)](#), [Démantèlement d’un camp de migrants à Grande-Synthe : "Le lieu de vie a été complètement démolit" - InfoMigrants](#)

²⁰ See annex 6 – Vents Contraires’ activities in Ouistreham (pictures)

²¹ See annex 5 – Roots’ activities in Grande-Synthe (pictures)

²² For further details, see: Marta LOTTO, “On the border – La vie en transit à la frontière franco-britannique”, 2022. Available at : [Nextcloud \(psmigrants.org\)](#)

Due to the 2017 condemnation of the Pas-de-Calais Prefecture by the Council of State following a dispute initiated by independent associations, state-mandated mobile water distributions were introduced on the territory of the municipality in 2018. The forced nature of these measures is made particularly evident by the prefecture's simultaneous pursuit of the harassment of displaced people living on its territory through the routine expulsion of their places of life on a 48-hour basis (seizure of tents etc.)

These water distributions are carried out by La Vie Active, an association mandated by the Prefecture (State operator) in the municipality of Calais. However, they are largely insufficient because they do not serve all of the living sites (only 4 out of 8 living areas were served in 2021; and only 2 sites in 2022²³). Therefore, several independent associations working with displaced people consider it vital to supplement them by distributing water directly at the living sites²⁴.

In terms of access to hygiene, some showers are offered in a gymnasium by the state operator La Vie Active. However, state-provided laundry facilities are non-existent, as well as water points that allow people to wash their teeth and hands.

The right to sanitation is also denied to exiles: the vast majority of displaced people do not have access to toilets in their living place and are forced to defecate in the vicinity of their living quarters. Although some sites are equipped with some chemical toilets, several problems (absence of cleaning, lack of maintenance) make them unusable. Moreover, these toilets are sometimes moved without informing the exiled persons and independent associations²⁵.

2.3. Barriers limiting associative action

Along the northern French coast, independent associations face numerous obstacles intentionally created by the state to limit their activities regarding water and sanitation.

- **Physical barriers**

At several living sites²⁶ in Calais and Grande-Synthe, state and municipal services have placed large rocks on the roads and other public spaces in order to prevent associations from accessing the living sites for water distributions²⁷.

- **Deliberate destruction of temporary infrastructures**

Despite the physical barriers, associative activities aiming at improving access to water for exiles are subject to degradation and destruction from police forces and local residents. Indeed, in Calais, water tanks installed and filled regularly by independent associations are regularly vandalized, by the police or local residents²⁸. These degradations or thefts can occur up to three times a week. The Calais Food Collective recently filed a complaint which the authorities have not responded to at the time of writing.

- **Administrative barriers and criminalization of solidarity**

In Calais, the Prefecture has been hindering distributions by associations since September 2020, through the delivery of prefectural decrees which were renewed every month between September 2020 and May 2022 (ban on distributions of food and water at more than 30 sites across the city under the penalty of a 135 euros fine. This effectively creates a penal framework for prosecuting those assisting migrants, making solidarity an offense). A new prefectural decree was delivered in Calais in August 2022, preventing associations from distributing water and food at 2 camps where thousands of people are living.

These administrative decisions have contributed to an increase of volunteer' harassment by the police in Calais during independent associations' service-delivery (through disproportionate police checks of vehicles and volunteer IDs). From January to August 2022, at least 186 volunteer intimidations were recorded by the Human Right Observers project²⁹, i.e. almost one per day.

²³ See annex 2 – “Map – Access to water in Calais”

²⁴ See annex 7 – Calais Food Collective's activities in Calais (pictures)

²⁵ Médecins du Monde, Programme Nord-Littoral

²⁶ Settlements of « Coquelle » and « Old Lidl »

²⁷ See annex 7 – Calais Food Collective's activities in Calais (pictures)

Exil : à Calais, la bataille pour l'eau fait rage - ASH | Actualités sociales hebdomadaires

²⁸ See annex 7 – Calais Food Collective's activities in Calais (pictures). See also : [Water tank for migrants vandalised in Calais: "an obstacle to solidarity" - La Voix du Nord](#); Exil : à Calais, la bataille pour l'eau fait rage - ASH | Actualités sociales hebdomadaires

²⁹ [HRO : Human Rights Observers](#)

III. ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION BY CRITERIA

The analysis of the situation of exiles is based on several criteria characterizing the realization of the human right to water and sanitation³⁰.

1. Continuity & availability

Availability is a primary criterion for assessing whether a state does provide a consistent water supply in sufficient quantities to meet basic human needs. In terms of access to hygiene and sanitation, availability implies the existence of continuously accessible facilities and services, in sufficient quantity and frequency.

1) Discontinuous access to water, hygiene and sanitation

There are almost no fixed water points accessible 24/7 on the northern French coast. There is only one public water point accessible 24/7 in Calais but is located in an outlying area where almost no one lives since the occupants were evicted and the area was fenced off³¹. The city has two public fountains located in the city center far away from the camps³² for a population of almost 76.000 inhabitants (i.e. a very low ratio in comparison with broader public fountain infrastructures in France). In Grande-Synthe, the single tap is located 1.5 kilometers from the main living area.

Although mobile water distributions have been set up by the state in Calais, these are characterized by great irregularity and unreliability in terms of location and timetables. Thus, some distribution points are sometimes not served for weeks without any justification or communication

This total lack of continuous access to water and sanitation is the result of the policy implemented by the French state in Calais and Grande-Synthe of "non-fixation" imposed on displaced people, through repeated expulsions and the harassment of exiles. However, the absence of drinking water or toilets does not in fact prevent the presence of displaced people on the north coast, and this ineffective, costly and futile policy demands financial resources that could rather be invested in guaranteeing dignified living conditions for displaced people³³.

2) Insufficient volume of water available and delivered

In all the camps on the northern French coast, the volume of water available per person and per day is far from the international humanitarian standards in complex emergency situations (15 liters minimum per person and per day). Yet, the crisis situation on France's northern coast has been ongoing for years and France is a country with the full capacity to provide an adequate volume of water to displaced people.

In Calais, state-mandated distributions provide less than 10 liters of water per person and per day³⁴ (i.e. 8 times less water than people living in other informal settlements in France³⁵, and 30 times less water than the average French person)³⁶. Since July 2020, the volume of water available per person and per day has been stable and has never exceeded 13 liters³⁷. Yet, the French state uses these numbers to highlight its actions in Calais and to justify the prohibition of water distributions by independent associations³⁸.

In all the camps not served by the state mandated association in Calais, as well as in the Dunkirk/Grande-Synthe and Ouistreham³⁹ areas, associations try their best to ensure minimal access to water. However,

³⁰ [rapport-leo-heller-cooperation-au-developpement-et-la-realisation-des-droits-humains-a-leau-et-lassainissement-2016.pdf \(coalition-eau.org\)](#)

³¹ See annex 2 – “Map – Access to water in Calais”. See also : L’Auberge des Migrants, « Calais : accès à l’eau, la sécheresse de l’accueil ? », 23 July 2022. Available at : <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1241986689940524>

³² See annex 2 – “Map – Access to water in Calais”

³³ The state spends half a billion euros of public money per year to harass a few thousand exiles - Basta!

³⁴ See annex 8 – Database “Access to water in Calais”

³⁵ Solidarités International, Délégation Interministérielle à l’hébergement et à l’accès au logement. Available at: https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2021/10/faq_si_acces_a_leau.pdf

³⁶ [Economie | Un site du service public Eaufrance](#) : the average water consumption in France in 2021 is 149 liters per person and per day.

³⁷ See annex 8 – Database “Access to water in Calais”

³⁸ [Calais : distributions de vivres sanctionnées - ASH | Actualités sociales hebdomadaires](#)

³⁹ In Ouistreham, the association Vents Contraires provides an average of 80 liters per day, i.e around 1.6 liters per person.

despite the constant efforts of the dozen volunteers working on the ground, financial and technical barriers prevent them from providing more than 15 liters per person and per day⁴⁰.

3) Lack of availability of sanitation facilities and services

Access to hygiene is also hampered: in Calais, shower facilities are only accessible 5 days a week. Several displaced people living at the border identified the total lack of personal hygiene as causing multiple health problems that are exposed below (see below, 3.2). Moreover, the functioning of the system, which implies getting undressed as a group before being authorized to use the individual showers, has been the source of many violence and traumas for people who are already in a physically and mentally precarious situation.

In the whole area, access to toilets is discontinuous, with the absence of facilities in the majority of the settlements. As stated above, the few chemical toilets present on two living sites are not safely usable. In some places, several self-constructed pit latrines have been made by displaced people; however, these infrastructures cannot guarantee safe access (no lighting and proper closing) and create conditions for sexual harassment and abuse. Finally, these infrastructures are regularly destroyed by police forces during evictions.

At all living sites on the northern French coast, nothing is implemented by public services regarding rubbish collection, except a few times a year during big evictions. In all camps, since there are no bins available and no bin bags distributed, people are forced to put their rubbish nearby, or even in the camp. This absence of services inevitably leads to open-air waste piles that have immediate negative effects on the smell and the presence of pests, with serious health consequences (see below, 3.2)

2. Physical accessibility

Another human right to water and sanitation implies that facilities are physically accessible for all, even if they do not receive these services in their home. According to humanitarian international standards, a water point must be located at 500 meters maximum from the living place, and the waiting time to access water, hygiene and sanitation must not exceed 30 minutes⁴¹. In France, which is a developed country perfectly capable of managing critical situations both financially and technically, the NGO Solidarités International recommends a distance of 200 meters maximum⁴².

- **Distance**

Access to drinking water is severely restricted and hampered on the northern coast. In Calais, in September 2021, more than 8 out of 10 people were forced to walk 1.5 hours to access a state-led water distribution⁴³.

Access to hygiene is also hampered by the distance of the facilities. In Calais, showers are accessible by free shuttles but it is not possible to go there spontaneously: people are obliged to go via the La Vie Active meeting point where they often have to wait in long queues. In Dunkirk, showers are provided by an association once a week in a gymnasium located 9.6 kilometers from the main campsite (2h walking), and without the provision of any means of transport. Similarly, in Ouistreham, exiles have no access to showers – they mainly rely on small-scale initiatives by local residents, which are inconsistent and time-sensitive.

The same applies to laundry hygiene: no infrastructure is provided by the state to allow exiles to wash their clothes. The only free options are located in Calais at the Secours Catholique daycare (located in the city center, far from the living areas) who provides some basins for washing laundry and some free detergent. This solution is inoperant during winter, when it is impossible for the laundry to dry outside⁴⁴.

Access to toilets is also very precarious. In Calais, the majority of displaced people do not have any toilets at their place of residence and are forced to relieve themselves outside, close to their place of residence. In Dunkirk, the only public toilets are located in a shopping center 30 minutes' walk from the main living site (1.5 kilometers). However, people are regularly discriminated against at the entrance, where they are often prevented from entering.

⁴⁰ In Dunkirk, the independent association Roots' volunteers distribute between 12.000 and 19.000 liters of water per day on the living sites through the filling of water tanks.

⁴¹ UNHCR : <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/32947/emergency-water-standard>

⁴² Solidarités International, Délégation Interministérielle à l'hébergement et à l'accès au logement. Available at: https://www.gouvernement.fr/sites/default/files/contenu/piece-jointe/2021/10/faq_si_acces_a_leau.pdf

⁴³ See annex 8 – Database "Access to water in Calais"

⁴⁴ Secours Catholique Calais

3. Access security and health risks

Access to water, hygiene and sanitation on the northern French coast, which is already hampered at various levels explained above, is characterized by access that, where it exists, is very unsafe – even dangerous – for exiled people.

3.1. Risks intrinsic to the access

The precariousness of access to water, hygiene and sanitation at these living sites is not only due to the lack of availability, but also to the barriers to physical accessibility.

- **Police presence and repression during water distributions**

In Calais, non-continuous access to water is amplified by the systematic police presence during water distributions carried out by state service-provider La Vie Active. In a context where police violence against exiled people is frequent and has been denounced many times by associations⁴⁵ and national human rights authorities⁴⁶, this may deter displaced people from accessing this vital resource. Accessing state-provided drinking water in Calais therefore systematically involves the risk of intimidation, physical and psychological violence. Moreover, associations and exiles testify of police harassment and the theft of tents by police forces during water distributions, which can lead some people to opt out.

- **Water chore**

The distance to water access points and toilets are risk factors for people, who face long walks along the road without pavements and dangerous road crossings (without pedestrian crossings or traffic lights)⁴⁷.

Moreover, these chores have direct consequences on protection and personal security. Indeed, the water chore exposes people who are already in an extremely vulnerable situation to several risks (exploitation, violence or harassment by police forces, etc.)

- **Monetization and hold of water points**

The absence of state-guaranteed access to water for all entails a risk of monopolization or monetization of water through practices of control or domination⁴⁸. These systems are frequent in informal living settings and imply limitations to water access for all in a free and equitable way, particularly impacting the most vulnerable, who are forced to pay (also implying a greater risk of abuse, in particular gender-based violence).

Access to hygiene and sanitation is very limited and also poses strong protection concerns regarding sexual harassment and abuse risks for the most vulnerable (unaccompanied minors, LGBTQI+, women, children, people with disabilities...)

3.2. Health and vital consequences

Due to the absence of continuous and sufficient access to drinking water on the northern French coast, exiles use alternative water sources that are perilous and unprotected.

- **Use of alternative and unprotected sources of water**

At the aforementioned sites, people use unsafe and unprotected water (canals, rivers) for their personal hygiene which has very serious consequences on the life and health of exiled people.

⁴⁵ See for example, <https://humanrightsobservers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/HRO-Annual-Report-2020.pdf>

⁴⁶ See for example, [rapport_calais-num-14.12.18.pdf \(defenseurdesdroits.fr\)](#)

⁴⁷ In the context of achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6, which aims to ensure universal and equitable access to safe drinking water at an affordable cost by 2030, several States have data on the distance to a source of drinking water, whether it is less than 30 minutes to the nearest point or further. This indicator can thus be used to distinguish a "basic" service from a limited or non-existent service. See : [Working towards the MDGs through improved data on drinking water \(worldbank.org\)](#)

⁴⁸ Calais Food Collective

In Ouistreham, many exiles tend to wash their clothes and bathe in the canal, exposing themselves to the risk of being hit by a boat. Furthermore, waterborne diseases are more likely to spread and develop quickly as a consequence of these practices. These risks are real: in August 2022, a 22-year old person died by drowning next to the Grande-Synthe camp, while he was washing himself in the canal⁴⁹.

In Calais, some people living in a camp in the city center use the water from a canal, which is dangerous to access and contaminated by several pathogenic agents responsible for waterborne diseases including acute diarrhea. The use of this water source, which is directly linked to the absence of hygiene infrastructures, leads to the development of dermatological pathologies and parasites (see below, 3.2).

- **Sanitary impact of the lack of access**

Furthermore, the lack of access to water described above has direct and serious health consequences for exiled people, who are already very vulnerable to health problems due to the precariousness of their living conditions. Thus, the lack of available water coupled with the use of unprotected containers to transport and use water (dirty jerrycans, sharing of bottles, etc.) have direct consequences on health, as does the lack of access to hygiene, toilets or even promiscuity with waste on the living sites.

In 2021, Médecins du Monde estimated that 94% of consultations were directly linked to the conditions of survival and harassment experienced by exiles on the French north coast⁵⁰, such as consultations for dermatological pathologies in Calais (19%) and Grande-Synthe (27%). Of these, scabies was the main pathology (18% in Calais and 20% in Grande-Synthe)⁵¹. Many infected or super-infected wounds are linked to limited access to care and limited or no access to hygiene. The absence of toilets also has a direct impact on people's health: in May and June 2022 for example, urinary and kidney disorders in Loon-Plage represented 12% of the consultations⁵².

These health consequences are all the more important for the most vulnerable groups: irregular and limited access to water has a direct impact on health and hygiene. For example, many of the dozens of children living in the Dunkirk area were observed with dirty faces and teeth. This is directly related to the lack of sanitation facilities and irregular, limited access to water⁵³.

IV. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions of this analysis of the situation on the northern French coast clearly show that the objective highlighted by Sierra Leone in its 2018 recommendation, which implied the implementation of coherent and long-term strategies to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation for migrants in Calais and northern France, is far from achieved.

We ask the Member states to demand accountability to the French government regarding the measures implemented to answer this recommendation supported by France. This recommendation must be extended to the northern French coast more broadly, to all the sites where needs are far from being reached.

In Calais, the Sierra Leone recommendation has only been partially implemented. Indeed, if public authorities have been forced by judicial powers to enforce water distributions and the provision of free showers and toilets, these measures are not sufficient: the level of available services does not even meet the minimum standard defined for humanitarian emergency situations by the UNHCR⁵⁴. In the Dunkirk/Grande-Synthe and Ouistreham areas, the above-mentioned recommendation has not been implemented at all. No actions have been undertaken by the public authorities regarding the access to water and sanitation of people in exile, not even through the provision of funding to civil society actors.

The associations who took part in writing this contribution envision several concrete measures to ensure a safe, accessible and free access to basic infrastructures for water, hygiene and sanitation in compliance with international human rights standards:

⁴⁹ [Grande-Synthe : un jeune migrant mort noyé dans un canal aux abords d'un campement d'exilés \(francetvinfo.fr\)](https://francetvinfo.fr)

⁵⁰ Médecins du Monde, Programme Nord Littoral

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Project Play: [Advocacy Infographics | Project Play Website \(project-play.org\)](https://project-play.org)

⁵⁴ <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Sphere-Handbook-2018-EN.pdf>

- Develop free water access points in public spaces and public in accordance with Ordinance n°2022-1611 of December 22, 2022.
- Ensure access to a volume of drinking water continuously and in a secured way for all exiled people present on the French northern coast in compliance with SDG 6.1.
- Ensure continuous, unconditional and safe access to sanitation facilities (toilets) in sufficient number according to SPHERE humanitarian standards for all exiled people present on the French northern coast, in compliance with SDG 6.2.
- Ensure continuous, unconditional and safe access to sanitation facilities (toilets) in sufficient number according to SPHERE humanitarian standards for all exiled people present on the French northern coast, in compliance with SDG 6.2.
- Take measures to improve the sanitation of living areas on the French North Shore by implementing regular garbage collection to ensure the absence of waste.
- Ensure regular cooperation and communication between the State's services and associations in the design and evaluation of the above-mentioned EHA solutions for exiled people on the French north coast.

All the above-mentioned actions should be put in place by the public authorities or facilitated by the public authorities in order to respect minimum humanitarian standards and France's human rights commitments. Concrete plans and operational details already exist for most sites and situations.