



Culture, Traditions and Water Consumption of the Wayuu Community (Colombia): Sustainable Water Management Strategies

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The present paper propose a sustainable strategy for water management within the indigenous Wayuu community linked to the culture and traditions of the population and able to mitigate the risk of waste intangible cultural heritage of the Wayuu indigenous peoples in La Guajira, Colombia.

The paper points as the main target to contribute in reducing the water shortages for the Wayuu communities, but restoring the culture and traditions of the indigenous Wayuu and facing the spatial distribution of the communities and the dispersion of the rural population that prevent to adopt other solutions.

In order to detect the cultural meaning of water for the Wayuu and to evaluate the consumption of water into the indigenous Wayuu communities, a field survey was conducted in January 2017, in the three zones of La Guajira Peninsula. A questionnaire was submitted to 36 families in (9) indigenous communities (Rancherias Wayuu) equally distributed over the three regions (N, C and S) of La Guajira. The results obtained confirm that water for the Wayuu is intimately linked to the traditions and it is not only referred to as source of life, but it is also a considered a spiritual and holy entity. The average daily consumption of water is about 34/60 liters per capita (less than the corresponding water consumption in Colombia and also in South America) and the aboriginal people uses it for domestic and irrigation purposes. In many cases water has to be transported for large distances, from the point where natural resources are to each different household.

Two combined water management strategy are considered, the former must involve Colombian State that should promote investment in educational training for the Wayuu indigenous leaders in order to diffuse the basic concepts of hydrology. Such a training program could provide the leaders the basic understanding of hydrological processes and introduce to the quality and quantity parameters fundamentals for the management of water resources. The latter strategy considers the Rainwater, harvesting (RWH) techniques as crucial for the sustainable development of water supply for any region, especially in arid and semi-arid regions as the Guajira where great fragmentation and dispersion of the rural population occur and low quality of public services creates humanitarian crisis.