

Facts about Water

1.1 billion (or one in every six) people do not have access to safe drinking water. 2.6 billion people (about 1/3 of the world's population) do not have access to a toilet.

The lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitary latrines is the top public health problem in the world. Water related diseases, such as diarrhea, are the number-one cause of child death in the world. *World Health Organization*

Approximately 4,000 children worldwide die every day of diarrhea. Diarrhea, largely caused by water-related diseases, then leads to dehydration, which can eventually lead to death.

Hand-washing with soap could prevent up to 1.4 million deaths per year in developing countries.

Much of the world gets by on 2.5 gallons of water per day. The average American uses 400 gallons per day, 30% of which is for outdoor uses (and half of this just for watering lawns- totaling 7 billion gallons per day). *(EPA)*

In Ethiopia women carry 5-gallon containers of water, weighing approximately 40 pounds, several hours a day.

Only 4% of the rural population of Ethiopia has a toilet.

If no action is taken to address unmet human needs for water, as many as 135 million people will die from water-related diseases by 2020. *Peter Gleick, Author, co-founder and President of the Pacific Institute for Studies in Development, Environment, and Security.*

The World Health Organization estimates that 80% of the world's illnesses are water-related.

Women make up a higher percentage of the world's poor and powerless, with much less access to opportunities than men, making it even more difficult for them to escape from poverty. Ending poverty has to be about gender equality, and in no aspect of life is this truer than for water, as women bear the burden of meeting the family's basic needs.

Facts about Water (continued)

Lack of access to clean water has a devastating effect on women and girls who are traditionally responsible for water collection. Collecting water is a difficult and time-intensive task, leaving women with little or no time to manage their households or participate in income-generating work. Illnesses in children and adults add to women's workloads, as they are often the caregivers for the sick.

Young girls often help their mothers collect water, making them unable to attend schools. The resulting lack of education means that very few women in developing countries are leaders and decision-makers. The countries with the least educated people are the poorest.

By 2020, water will have replaced petroleum as a main cause of strategic tension.
High Noon 20/20

In response to this crisis, international organizations have recommended taking action to address water and sanitation among the top development priorities. The United Nations Millennium Goals (United Nations, 2000) specifically target water and sanitation measures, and the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the years 2005 to 2015 as the International Decade for Action on 'Water for Life'.

At current government funding levels, under-funding for sanitation means the sanitation goal is 90 years off target and will not be met until 2105. The cost of missing this goal: 133 million lives.

The Global Water Partnership estimated that to meet the Millennium Goals, annual spending on water and sanitation needs to double from \$14 billion to \$30 billion.

In 2006, Americans spent \$15 billion on bottled water.

In a poll carried out by the British Medical Journal in January 2007, sanitation was voted the most important medical milestone since 1840, ranking higher than antibiotics and vaccines.

Quotes about Water

"When the well is dry, we learn the worth of water"

Benjamin Franklin

"A river is more than an amenity, it is a treasure."

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes

The wars of the twenty-first century will be fought over water.

Ismail Serageldin, World Bank Vice President for Environmental Affairs

"Water is life's mater and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water."

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Hungarian biochemist and Nobel Prize Winner for Medicine.

"Thousands have lived without love, not one without water."

W.H. Auden, Poet

"The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

Mahatma Gandhi

"... success in combating environmental degradation is dependent on the full participation of all actors in society, an aware and educated population, respect for ethical and spiritual values and cultural diversity, and protection of indigenous knowledge."

Ministers of the Environment, First Global Ministerial Environment Forum, Malmö, Sweden, May 2000