



Facts and Figures extracted from the 2nd United Nations World Water Development Report

The Challenges to Governance

- The symptoms of inadequate provision of water services and dwindling water resources are being addressed, but root causes are rarely addressed, such as unequal power balances, unfair trade patterns between and within countries, as well as deficits of democratization.
- In many places of the world, a staggering 30 to 40% of water or more goes unaccounted for due to water leakages in pipes and canals and illegal tapping.

Water and Human Settlements in an Urbanizing World

- As the urban population increases, many major cities have had to draw freshwater from increasingly distant watersheds, as local surface and groundwater sources no longer meet the demand for water, or as they become depleted or polluted.
- In 2000, more than 900 million urban dwellers (nearly a third of all urban dwellers worldwide) lived in slums. A slum dweller may only have 5 to 10 litres per day at his or her disposal. A middle- or high-income household in the same city, however, may use some 50 to 150 litres per day, if not more.

The State of the Resource

- Groundwater systems globally provide 25 to 40% of the world's drinking water.
- The last 5 years of the 20th century were characterized by an overall tendency of continuous glacier melting. This decline will have impacts on both the sustainability of the water resources in basins, which depend on glaciers, and on their ecosystems.

Coastal and Freshwater Ecosystems

- Human population growth and the expansion of economic activities are collectively placing huge demands on coastal and freshwater ecosystems. Water withdrawals, for instance, have increased sixfold since the 1900s, which is twice the rate of population growth.
- Freshwater species are apparently more threatened by human activities than species in other realms. On average freshwater species populations fell by about 50% between 1970 and 2000, representing a sharper decline than measured in either terrestrial or marine biomes.

Protecting and Promoting Human Health

It has been estimated that in order to ensure our basic needs, every individual needs 20 to 50 litres of water free from harmful contaminants each and every day.

Sanitation coverage in developing countries (49%) is only half that of the developed world (98%).

In Bangladesh alone, more than 4 million tubewells have been installed over the past twenty years to provide safe drinking water to 95% of the population. However, high concentrations of arsenic found in tubewell water provoked the biggest mass arsenic poisoning in history.

Water for Food, Agriculture, and Rural Livelihoods

Although it covers only 10% of the water used in agriculture, irrigation claims 70 % of all freshwater withdrawals and so comes under heavy scrutiny when discussing freshwater governance.

At present, about 13% of the world's population does not have access to enough food to live a healthy and productive life, yet the ability, technology and resources needed to produce enough food for every man, woman and child in the world do currently exist. Lack of health, financial or natural resources such as land and water, and lack of skills to link productive activities with remote markets and ensure employment, are all intimately related to poverty.

Water and Industry

Given proper incentives, it is generally found that industry can cut its water demand by 40 to 90%, even with existing techniques and practices. However, water conservation policies need to be fair, feasible and enforceable.

Water and Energy

Only about 25% of the world's dams are involved in producing hydropower.

Europe makes use of 75% of its hydropower potential, while Africa has developed only 7%. This is seen to be the possible future cornerstone of Africa's development.

Managing Risks: Securing the Gains of Development

Developing countries are disproportionately affected by disasters; their losses are about 5 times higher per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) than those of rich countries.

During the ten-year period from 1992 to 2001, about 90% of all natural disasters were of meteorological or hydrological origin.

Sharing Water

There are more than 3,800 unilateral, bilateral or multilateral declarations or conventions on water: 286 are treaties, with 61 referring to over 200 international river basins.

Valuing and Charging for Water

The Ramsar Convention, setting aside more than 1400 wetland sites around the world for preservation and protection, is a testimony to the international recognition of the environmental, social and economic importance accorded to these special ecosystems.

The private sector's proportion in the water and sewerage sectors in developing countries is, on average, only 35%, whereas in the developed world it constitutes 80% of the market, in particular because of already high coverage rates and an institutional climate conducive to private investment.

Enhancing Knowledge and Capacity

If children are taught proper hygiene, primary schooling can transform them into health educators for their families, thereby passing on vital information and skills that can reduce household vulnerability to deadly diarrhoeal diseases by at least 40%.

Girls make up most of the 115 million children currently out of school.

Women produce between 60 and 80% of the food in most developing countries. They are major stakeholders in all development issues related to water, yet they often remain on the periphery of management decisions and planning for water resources.