

Water Security: Fact Sheet

- Today, one in six people on earth do not have access to a safe and adequate water supply. (*Asia Society report: Asia's Next Challenge*)
- Most of our freshwater is used to grow food and other agricultural crops. Worldwide, agriculture accounts for 80% of global water consumption, and in Africa and Asia it accounts for 90%. To feed a growing world population, it is estimated that 14-17% more fresh water will be needed for irrigation by 2030. (*United Nations Environment Programme*)
- Millions of women and young girls spend hours everyday walking to collect water from distant, often polluted water sources. This chore keeps girls out of school and restricts women's choices and opportunities. (*United Nations Development Programme*)
- Surface water is not the only water source that is being threatened by pollution. An estimated 32% of Asia's population gets its supply of drinking water from groundwater. Even where surface water is abundant, communities prefer groundwater sources because they are considered safer. In actuality, however, groundwater pollution is often difficult to identify and treat. (*Asia Societies, Asia's Next Challenge*)
- 1.8 million people die every year from diarrheal diseases (including cholera), most of whom are children under 5 in developing countries. Nearly 90% of these deaths are attributed to unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation, or poor hygiene. Almost half of these deaths are preventable; access to safe water and improved sanitation and hygiene, such as washing one's hands with soap, could save at least 1 million lives per year. (*World Health Organization, Healthy Environments for Children Alliance*)
- Within 25 years, half the world's population could have trouble finding enough freshwater for drinking and irrigation. (*United Nations Environment Programme*)
- A third of the world lives in water stressed areas where consumption outstrips supply. West Asia faces the greatest threat. Over 90 per cent of the region's population is experiencing severe water stress, with water consumption exceeding 10 per cent of renewable freshwater resources. (*United Nations Environment Programme*)