



Ensure Clean Water and Sanitation

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



“2030, 193 Heads of State and Governments agree to ensure the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all – including universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, adequate sanitation, to end open defecation and introduce integrated water resource management through transboundary co-operation.”

UN Sustainable Development Goal 6

Good News: The UN has seen global water use rise from about 1 trillion cubic metres a year in 1940 to 4 trillion cubic metres today – and the number of people with access to safe drinking water more than double to 71%.

Bad News: 666 million people lack access to safe drinking water, and 2.3 billion lack safe sanitation.



Clean water is essential for human survival: a human being can survive for 3 weeks without food – but only 3 days without water. Universal access to safe drinking water is a global priority: it would help to ensure no child misses school, goes hungry, or dies from an avoidable disease. To achieve it, governments need to legislate to make pollution of water sources illegal, promote water-use efficiency across all sectors, restore and protect wetland ecosystems, and improve

and distribute sanitation technology globally. Progress has been made in extending access to fresh water, but water stress is an increasing problem: if wars in the 20th century were fought over land, 21st Century wars will be fought over water.



Balance Sheet

Achievements

6.7 billion people, 71% of the population, have access to an improved safe drinking water source (2015). [1]

45% of the global population have access to safe sanitation (2017). [3]

The Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) framework was done by 172 countries in 2018. Of these, 80% had medium levels of implementation or higher, meaning they are working towards sustainable and equal water usage. [2]

Commitments of official development assistance (ODA) rose by 36% between 2016 and 2017; this may reflect a renewed focus on working for universal access to safe water. [2]

In Europe, 80% of the population are connected to fresh water supplies; but up to 60% of fresh water is lost due to leaks and dripping taps. [10]

In developed countries, like the UK, a person on minimum wage spends 0.1% of their income on water. It's very cheap! [7]

Work Left to Do

666 million people still lack safe drinking water (2017). [1]

2.3 billion people lack safe sanitation (2015), and over 600 million people still practice open defecation. In 2016, one-third of all primary schools lacked drinking water. [1], [3]

2 billion people experience high water stress, and up to 700 million could be displaced by water scarcity by 2030. [3] Over 550 wars have been fought over water in the past: it is likely that more will be fought in the future. [8]

70% of the world's wetlands have been destroyed over the last century, and in Africa and Asia most rivers are more polluted now than in the 1990s. Protections need to be enforced. [3]

1 in 4 healthcare facilities lack safe drinking water services. (2016) [4]

Aquifers (underground water reservoirs) supply many millions of people with fresh water from wells. But many are being drained unsustainably [9]

In less-developed countries, the poorest spend up to 50% of their income on water [7]



Sources

1. [Our world in Data](#)
2. [SDG Knowledge Platform - Goal 6](#)
3. [SDGs Report 2019 - Section 6](#)
4. [Clean Water Infographic](#)
5. [The 2030 Agenda](#)
6. [Cholera \(WHO\)](#)
7. [Global Citizen](#)
8. [World Economic Forum](#)
9. [NASA](#)
10. [European Environment Agency](#)

Points to Ponder

- Why are our shops and supermarkets filled with so many plastic bottles of water?
- Is water a human right? If there is a danger that wars will be fought over it, should we make it our top priority to make water FREE and available for all?
- If water is running out in some places, and there are floods in others – how can we sort out the water problem?
- How can we reduce human beings' dependence on water?



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Take Action

- Become a water saver: get storage tanks to store any rainfall from gutters; put a brick or a balloon in your toilet tank; monitor your water use – and try to reduce it;

