



World Water Day - 'Water and Sustainable Development'

Water - a colourless, odourless, tasteless liquid - so simply described, yet so valuable. It covers three-quarters of Earth yet most of it (97 percent) is found in oceans and therefore salty and unsuitable for humans to drink. Just a mere 3 percent of Earth's water is suitable for humans to use to drink, cook, bathe and water our crops.



Despite differences in our language, cultural beliefs or location, people all over the world agree that water is a vital resource both for human life and that of plants and other species of animals. Water performs important functions in our bodies and that of other animals and plants, for example, it serves as a medium for the circulation of nutrients to tissues and the removal of wastes from them.

Goods are transported across oceans from where they are grown or manufactured to far-off countries. Water still remains the cheapest form of transportation allowing people to access goods at an affordable price. Water is also vital to the manufacture of modern-day food, equipment and even medicine and cosmetics.

Despite the importance of water to our lives, few of us have knowledge about water issues facing the world today. More often than not we take water and its convenience for granted. Yet water – this vital resource faces serious threats that are both natural and man-made. Water is increasingly under threat from environmental pollution, urbanization and industrialization. Climate change compounds the situation as frequent occurrences of drought and floods compromise the quality of water in rivers and lakes. A World Health Organization Study done in 2004 found that 1.1 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water and globally - one in six people have no alternative but to consume unsafe water. The Study predicts that in the face of increasing global water stress, the difficulties associated with assuring access to clean drinking water will only escalate. The study



further concludes that by 2050 it is estimated that two-thirds of the global population will be living in water scarce countries with 1.8 million people living in areas of absolute water scarcity.

Though Guyana is a “*land of many waters*”, it is not exempted from the alarming statistics of the WHO Study. The time is now to change attitudes and inculcate best practice methods in the next generation. Another publication by the WHO further convinces us of this need from a health perspective as it points out that poor water quality accounted for more than 1/3 of deaths which are in children under the age of five as a result of communicable diseases in the Caribbean and Latin America region alone.

Facts

- **750 million people around the world** lack access to safe water; approximately one in six people.²
- **More than twice the population** of the United States live without access to safe water.^{2,3}
- **Diarrhea caused** by inadequate drinking water, sanitation, and hand hygiene kills an estimated 842,000 people every year.
- **1 in 9 people** worldwide do not have access to safe and clean drinking water.
- In developing countries, **as much as 80% of illnesses** are linked to poor water and sanitation conditions.
- **Half of the world's hospital beds** are filled with people suffering from a water-related disease.
- **Over half of the developing world's** primary schools don't have access to water and sanitation facilities. Without toilets, girls often drop out at puberty.
- Nearly **1 out of every 5 deaths** under the age of 5 worldwide is due to a water-related disease.



Source: World Health Organization

About the Day

World Water Day is marked on 22 March every year. It's a day to celebrate water. It's a day to make a difference for the members of the global population who suffer from water related issues. It's a day to prepare for how we manage water in the future.

In 1993, the United Nations General Assembly designated 22 March as the first World Water Day. 22 years later, World Water Day is celebrated around the world shining the spotlight on a different issue every year. In 2015, the theme for World Water Day is 'Water and Sustainable Development'. It's about how water links to all areas we need to consider creating the future we want.

The Environmental Protection Agency in recognizing the importance and need for awareness, encourages all to be mindful of the need to conserve water in our homes, factories and fields. In this age of information, resources are available on ways to conserve this precious resource both in terms of quantity and quality. In the words of former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in his World Water Day Message in 2001: *“Access to safe water is a fundamental human need and therefore a basic human right, contaminated water jeopardizes both the physical and social health of all people.”*

Share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O EIT Division, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com