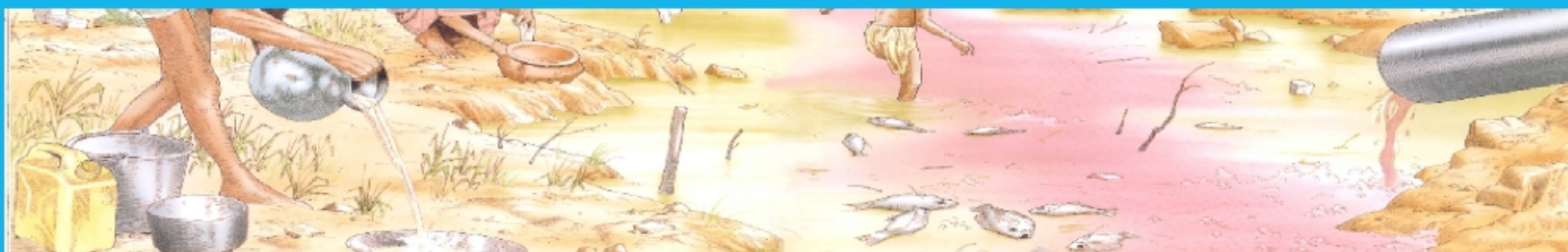


A Thirsty World! Who is to blame?

Water! The Source of Life.

When we take our daily shower or water the lawn, or brush our teeth with a running tap we forget that fresh water is a life-or-death issue in many parts of the world. More than 1 billion people lack access to clean water. The World Health Organization says that at any time, up to half of humanity is suffering from diseases like diarrhea, cholera, typhoid and others associated with poor drinking water. About 5 million people die each year from unclean drinking water, poor sanitation, or a dirty home environment mostly due to water shortage. To sustain life on this wonderful planet of ours, fresh water is the most precious natural resource we have. Life is not possible without it. Thus access to clean, fresh water is a fundamental right of every human being. Is it available to all? The answer is definitely a NO!



We take it for granted that every time we turn on our taps, water will come pouring down but that may not be so if this very precious resource is selfishly exploited as we have been increasingly doing so over the past years. Unfortunately the water we take for granted is becoming scarcer by the day. Water issues, and the looming crisis due to its shortage, are now being considered a top environmental problem. Industrial pollution is contaminating the world's most vulnerable water resources making it unsuitable for human consumption and adding to the plight of poor people.

Do You Know?

- Water is the most common substance found on earth.
- Less than 1% of the earth's water is suitable for drinking. Of all the Earth's water, 97.5 % is salt and 2.5 % is fresh. Of that water, about 70% is locked in glacial ice and 30 % in the soil, leaving under 1 percent readily accessible for human use.
- More than a billion people around the globe survive on just over 4 liters of water per day.
- 6,000 children die each day from preventable water-related diseases.
- 1.2 billion People live without clean drinking water and 2.4 billion are not connected to water and sanitation systems.
- One drop of oil can make up to 25 liters of water undrinkable.
- 70% of the world's water is used for agriculture, 22 % for industry and 8% for domestic use.
- A person is able to survive one month without food but only five to seven days without water.
- More people in the world have cell phones than access to a toilet.



Conserve



Climate change and global warming has completely altered our supply of fresh water. Our oceans are getting warmer, our sea levels are rising thus changing the evaporation and precipitation (snow and rain) patterns, which results in frequent storms all over the world. Countries in Asia including Pakistan are badly affected, as all its major rivers including the Indus are dependent on the mountainous Himalayan region for their water supply. As temperatures warm, more precipitation will fall as rain, the snow will melt sooner thus resulting in frequent flooding, as we have been witnessing for the last couple of years which has caused extensive damage to life and property including the destruction of clean water and sanitation systems. Eventually over the years this pattern will result in less water in the Indus with disastrous consequences.

The water crisis is definitely getting worse. Though water supply is supposed to be renewable but as the existing population grows and as the destructive effects of climate change accelerates we will witness an acute shortage of water for our usage. On top of this industries are using water bodies as a dumping ground for their toxic waste. In the coming years there will be less water for all of us. Thus it is important that we work intelligently with the existing supply and properly manage our water resources.

Pakistan is classified as water stressed country. The waterways of the Himalayan region including the Indus are endangered as climate change takes its toll on this region. The Indus River provides roughly 80 percent of all water consumed in Pakistan and supports the Indus River Basin Irrigation System—the largest government-managed irrigation system in the world. Managing the waterways has been a constant source of tension between India and Pakistan. As the Indus River is literally the backbone of Pakistan's agriculture based economy, in 1960 Indus Waters Treaty was arbitrated by the World Bank between these two countries. This treaty over the years has more than once defused tensions over water between them.

What you can do to conserve water.

1. Water your plants and garden in the morning or evening when temperatures are cooler to minimize evaporation.
2. Make sure that people in your home wash fruits and vegetables in a pan of water instead of running water from the tap.
3. Collect the water used for rinsing fruits and vegetables, and then reuse it to water houseplants.
4. Shorten your shower by a minute or two and you'll save up to 150 gallons per month.
5. Put food coloring in your toilet tank. If it seeps into the toilet bowl without flushing, you have a leak. Fixing it can save up to 1,000 gallons a month.
6. Designate one glass for your drinking water each day or refill a water bottle. This will cut down on the number of glasses to wash.
7. Turn off the water while brushing your teeth and save 25 gallons a month.
8. Listen for dripping faucets and running toilets. Fixing a leak can save 300 gallons a month or more.
9. Share water conservation tips with friends and neighbors.
10. Encourage your school system and local government to develop and promote water conservation among children and adults.

Blame it on climate change or our own lack of futuristic vision, our country is very rapidly moving towards a time when we will experience extreme shortage of fresh water for personal use and agricultural purposes, eventually leading us to extreme food shortages. The ongoing devastation due to excessive rains and flooding is a warning sign of what is to come. Personal and collective measures have to be taken and a national policy needs to be initiated to safeguard our valuable water resources. The time to confront this issue and plan for a solution is NOW!!