



WWF

FACT SHEET

2013

Freshwater is scarce

Oceans cover around 70% of the Earth's surface and account for 97% of its water. But only 3% of all water on Earth is freshwater. Freshwater is scarce and most of it is locked away in the form of ice caps and glaciers located in the polar regions – though perhaps not for much longer the way climate change is taking hold. However, it will not change the fact that only about 1% of all water found on this planet is easily accessible for human use.



GERMUND SELLGREN

Water demand already exceeds supply in many parts of the world, and many more areas are expected to experience this imbalance in the near future.



LUCIAN COMAN

1.6 MILLION

In 2005, 1.6 million children under the age of 5 died from the consequences of unsafe water and inadequate hygiene. That's an average of 4,500 every day.

Sanitation coverage in developing countries is only half that of the developed world (49% as compared to 98%). 1.1 billion people lack access to water and 2.6 billion lack adequate sanitation services; most of these people live in the poorest countries.



SAM DCRUZ

2.6 BILLION LACK SANITATION SERVICE



SIMON ALVINGE

30-40%

In many parts of the world, 30 to 40% of our fresh water goes unaccounted for due to water leakages in pipes and canals and illegal tapping.

This is at stake!



SATORI



48 COUNTRIES

Population growth alone will push a further 17 countries, with a projected population of 2.1 billion, into water-short categories within the next 30 years. By the year 2025, 48 countries will be affected by water stress or scarcity – affecting around 35% of the projected global population in that year.

This is what we're losing!



64 FREE-FLOWING

Only 64 of the world's 177 large rivers (1,000 km and longer) remain free-flowing, unimpeded by dams or other barriers. Dams and other infrastructure have caused the fragmentation of 60% of the large river systems in the world. There are more than 45,000 large dams in over 150 countries. Some 40 to 80 million people have been displaced by dams worldwide.

MICHEL ROGGO / WWF-CANON

RICHARD VINCENT



70%

The vast majority of freshwater – about 70% – is used in agriculture. Rice, cotton and sugar are among the thirstiest crops of all. It takes 3,000 to 5,000 litres of water to grow just one kilo of rice!

JURGEN FREUND / WWF-CANON

References

- UNEP
- Rivers at Risk, WWF, 2004 (PDF)
- Free-flowing Rivers, WWF, 2006
- The World Commission on dams report (WCD), 2001
- The Coming Water Crisis
- Population report: solutions for a water-short world, 1998
- WHO and UNICEF Report
- 2nd United Nations World Water Development Report, March 2006

For further information, please visit: www.panda.org

On average freshwater species populations fell by about 50% between 1970 and 2000, representing a sharper decline than that measured in either terrestrial or marine biomes. Since 1900, more than 50% of the world's wetlands have disappeared.



50% DISAPPEARED

BRENT STIRTON / WWF-CANON