

## A Final Note about Water

The facts about clean drinking water are sobering when you consider that 1.1 billion people in the world do not have access to safe drinking water, roughly one-sixth of the world's population. Additionally, 2.2 million people in developing countries, most of them children, die every year from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.

Half of the world's hospital beds are filled with people suffering from water related illnesses, and in the past 10 years, diarrhea has killed more children than all the people lost to armed conflict since World War II.

While so many people in the United States fail to drink enough water when it is readily available, millions of people around the world are in dire straits due to a lack of available, clean water. Consider these facts provided by [www.water.org](http://www.water.org):

- 884 million people lack access to safe water supplies; approximately one in eight people.
- 3.575 million people die each year from water-related disease.
- The water and sanitation crisis claims more lives through disease than any war claims through guns.
- People living in the slums often pay 5-10 times more per liter of water than wealthy people living in the same city.
- An American taking a five-minute shower uses more water than a typical person in a developing country slum uses in a whole day.
- Every 20 seconds, a child dies from a water-related disease.
- Diarrhea is more prevalent in the developing world due, in large part, to the lack of safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as poorer overall health and nutritional status.
- In the developing world, 24,000 children under the age of five die every day from preventable causes like diarrhea contracted from unclean water.
- In just one day, more than 200 million hours of women's time is consumed for the most basic of human needs — collecting water for domestic use. This lost productivity is greater than the combined number of hours worked in a week by employees at Wal\*Mart, United Parcel Service, McDonald's, IBM, Target, and Kroger.
- Millions of women and children spend several hours a day collecting water from distant, often polluted sources.
- At any given time, half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.
- Almost one-tenth of the global disease burden could be prevented by improving water supply, sanitation, hygiene and management of water resources. Such improvements reduce child mortality and improve health and nutritional status in a sustainable way.
- 88% of cases of diarrhea worldwide are attributable to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation or insufficient hygiene.

- Investment in safe drinking water and sanitation contributes to economic growth. For each \$1 invested, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates returns of \$3 – \$34, depending on the region and technology.
- Almost two in every three people who need safe drinking water survive on less than \$2 a day and one in three on less than \$1 a day.
- Investment in drinking-water and sanitation would result in 272 million more school attendance days a year. The value of deaths averted, based on discounted future earnings, would amount to US\$ 3.6 billion a year.
- Less than 1% of the world’s fresh water (or about 0.007% of all water on earth) is readily accessible for direct human use.
- More than 80% of sewage in developing countries is discharged untreated, polluting rivers, lakes and coastal areas.
- The UN estimates that by 2025, forty-eight nations, with combined population of 2.8 billion, will face freshwater “stress” or “scarcity”.
- Agriculture is the largest consumer of freshwater by far: about 70% of all freshwater withdrawals go to irrigated agriculture.
- At home the average American uses between 100 and 175 gallons of water a day. That is less than 25 years ago, but it does not include the amount of water used to feed and clothe us.

While being good stewards of the clean drinking water available to us in the United States is a good start to being good stewards of the amazing resource of water that God gave us, supporting organizations that seek to provide clean drinking water around the world is another tangible way to be good stewards and to show our gratitude for having clean drinking water. One such organization is Active Water, and more information can be found at <http://www.activewater.org/>.