

## **Water Scarcity: India's Perspective**

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Clean, safe drinking water is scarce. Today, nearly 1 billion people in the developing world do not have access to it. Yet, we take it for granted, we waste it, and we even pay too much to drink it from little plastic bottles. Water is the foundation of life, but still today, all around the world, far too many people spend their entire day searching for it. In underdeveloped countries, time lost gathering water and suffering from water-borne diseases is limiting people's true potential. If we look into India's perspective, India's fragile and finite water resources are depleting while the multi-sectoral demands for water from sustained economic growth (over 8%) is driving the increased demand for water through coupled dynamics between increased energy and consumption. Exponentially increasing demand for water due to population growth and agricultural use, coupled with a high degree of variability in the availability of water resources throughout the country, will drive per capita accessibility of water to under 1,000 cubic metres if left unchecked.

In India, the agricultural sector uses around 79% of the available freshwater supply and wastes one-half and four-fifths of the irrigation water. The domestic sector consumes around 6% while the industrial sector consumes around 5%. Increasing urbanisation is significantly increasing demand away from the countryside, to the city. There are approximately 50 cities with a population of more than 1 million. Furthermore, the total number of cities and towns in India has increased from 2,250 in 1991 to 5,161 in 2001, and has increased to 7,936 in 2011 (as per the 2011 census indicators). Projected municipal and domestic water demand will also double by 2030, to 108 billion m<sup>3</sup> (7% of total demand), while projected demand from industry will quadruple to 196 billion m<sup>3</sup> (13%), pushing overall demand growth close to 3% per annum.

The above data reflects the need of putting immediate efforts to minimise water scarcity in India. It is a time when Indian government and corporate sector should apply integrated solutions such as- water recycling, better design of water supply process and methods, improved water policies, rain water harvesting, monitoring illegal discharges into natural water resources, low cost and efficient water treatment solution, etc. There is enough freshwater in India for 1.25 billion people but it is distributed unevenly and too much of it is wasted, polluted and unsustainably managed.

**We hope that with cumulative efforts, we will be able to make a change and will not let our current and future generations be thirsty any further.**

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