



Access to clean water is becoming a global problem.

Although 70% of the Earth's surface is covered with water, this is becoming an increasingly scarce commodity. Water has many qualities: it is a natural element, a force of nature and a component that is essential to all life. People cannot live without it. Water serves us as a vital substance, economic commodity and production component, and has a powerful bearing on all the social conditions of life.

Only three percent of it is drinkable fresh water, and scarcely a third of that is available for human consumption. The other two thirds are locked up as glacier water.

There are currently 1.5 billion people living throughout the world without access to fresh water. Increasing population figures and the unequal distribution of resources mean that scarcity and complete lack of water are set to become even more acute. Even now, 20 percent of the world's population across thirty countries suffer from lack of water, and this will rise to 30 percent across fifty countries by 2015. Advancing climate change is adding to the problem. In many regions of the world, a prophecy made in the 1990s now seems to be coming true: in future, wars would not be fought over oil, but water (Ismail Serageldin, Vice President of the World Bank, 1999).

Fresh water is not only essential to life – it is also an important resource for industry e.g. as a raw material, cleaning or cooling agent. However, one of the world's biggest consumers of water is agriculture. Many water-intensive products such as rice, cotton and strawberries are irrigated artificially. Apart from the huge demand for energy involved, immense volumes of water are lost through evaporation and seepage.

As a short-term solution, increasing volumes of water are being drawn from surface and ground water reservoirs. However, this does not constitute a sustainable solution. The over-exploitation of the world's water reserves is having a devastating effect on the amount of water remaining and the ecosystems that depend on it.

Long-term, we will be forced to stifle demand, reducing volumes used to a minimum and increasing water usage efficiency.

We're working on it!