

Source: Population Action International

Water

A Resource Vital to Every Ecosystem, Society, and Individual on Earth

EVERY ecosystem, society, and individual on Earth depends on water, making this indispensable resource vital to nearly every sector in which the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) works. Water impacts food security, health and hygiene, ecosystems and biological diversity, transportation, regional and global climate, energy supplies and industry. Poor water management and water shortages can lead to disease, malnutrition, reduced economic growth, social instability, and conflict.

International tensions are building over transboundary water management issues as the demand for water outstrips the supply in a growing number of countries, and the quality of that supply declines rapidly. Worldwide, the health of more than 1.2 billion people is at risk because they lack access to clean water. By 2005, half of the world's population will live in urban areas, increasing the demand for potable water; and by 2025,

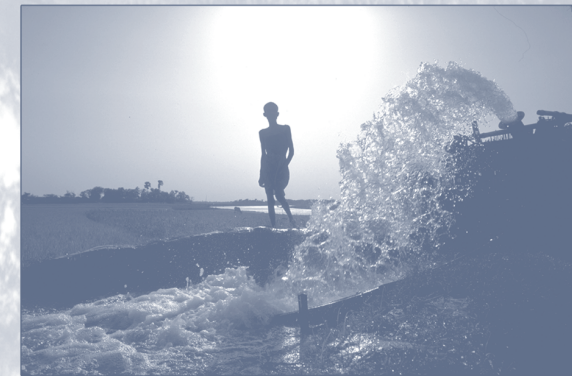
that figure will rise to 60 percent. Already more than half of the world's population lives within 100 kilometers of a coastline. These demographic changes create massive challenges for water allocation, treatment, and management. By 2050, it is estimated that one-third of the world's population—2.8 billion people—will experience severe water-scarcity.

But water quality and scarcity is only half the picture. Floods, droughts, fires, and catastrophic storms are becoming more frequent as a result of the combined forces of global climate change and poor natural resources management. Amplifying the problems are deforestation, soil erosion, the destruction of wetlands, and development in disaster-prone and otherwise inappropriate areas.

In recognition of water's critical and crosscutting role in sustainable development, USAID has adopted an Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) approach.

Integrated Water Resources Management

Ushering in a Blue Revolution



www.usaidwater.org

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