

Increased global water stress - Vital Water Graphics

According to Population Action International, based upon the UN Medium Population Projections of 1998, more than 2.8 billion people in 48 countries will face water stress, or scarcity conditions by 2025. Of these countries, 40 are in West Asia, North Africa or sub-Saharan Africa. Over the next two decades, population increases and growing demands are projected to push all the West Asian countries into water scarcity conditions. By 2050, the number of countries facing water stress or scarcity could rise to 54, with a combined population of four billion people - about 40% of the projected global population of 9.4 billion (Gardner-Outlaw and Engleman, 1997; UNFPA, 1997).



Many African countries, with a population of nearly 200 million people, are facing serious water shortages. By the year 2025, it is estimated that nearly 230 million Africans will be facing water scarcity, and 460 million will live in water-stressed countries (Falkenmark, 1989).



Today, 31 countries, accounting for less than 8% of the world's population, face chronic freshwater shortages. Among the countries likely to run short of water in the next 25 years are Ethiopia, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Peru. Parts of other large countries (e.g. China) already face chronic water problems (Hinrichsen et al., 1998; Tibbetts, 2000).



Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have resorted to the desalinization of seawater from the Gulf. Bahrain has virtually no freshwater (Riviere, 1989), while three-quarters of Saudi Arabia's freshwater comes from fossil groundwater, which is reportedly being depleted at an average rate of 5.2 km³ per year (Postel, 1997).