

## World Water Development Report

### Why in news?

\n\n

\n

- The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR) was released ahead of World Water Day (March 22).

\n

\n\n

***Ensuring the sustainable use of the planet's resources is vital for ensuring long-term peace and prosperity.***

\n\n

### What is the report on?

\n\n

\n

- The WWDR is an annual and thematic report that focuses on different strategic water issues each year.

\n

- It aims to provide decision-makers with the tools to implement sustainable use of our water resources.

\n

- The development of the WWDR is coordinated by the *World Water Assessment Programme* (WWAP).

\n

- The report is a joint effort of the UN agencies and entities which make up UN-Water.

\n

- The latest report was released at the 8th *World Water Forum* in Brasilia, hosted by Brazil.

\n

\n\n

### What are the highlights?

\n\n

\n

- **Water** - Global demand for water has increased six-fold over the past 100 years and continues to grow at the rate of 1% each year.

\n

- Demand for water is projected to rise faster in developing countries.

\n

- The report highlights that more than 5 billion people could suffer water shortages by 2050.

\n

- This could be due to the effects of climate change, increased demand and polluted water supplies.

\n

- Climate change will put an added stress on supplies because it will make wet regions wetter and dry regions drier.

\n

- **Drought** - It is arguably the greatest single threat from climate change.

\n

- Drought and soil degradation, the biggest risks of natural disaster, are likely to worsen.

\n

- **Water quality** - Pollution has worsened the water bodies and water is expected to deteriorate further in the coming two decades.

\n

- This would be mainly due to agriculture runoffs of fertiliser and other agrochemicals.

\n

- They load freshwater supplies with nutrients that lead to the growth of pathogens and choking algae blooms.

\n

- Industry and cities are also a significant problem.

\n

- About 80% of industrial and municipal wastewater is discharged without treatment.

\n

- **Threat** - Water scarcity can lead to civil unrest, mass migration and even to conflict within and between countries.

\n

- The report thus warns of conflict and civilisational threats unless actions are taken.

\n

\n\n

**What is the concern with the present approach?**

\n\n

- \n
- For too long, the world has turned first to human-built, or ‘grey’, infrastructure to improve water management.
- \n
- In doing so, it has often brushed aside traditional and indigenous knowledge that embraces greener approaches.
- \n
- But accelerated consumption, multi-faceted impacts of climate change and increasing environmental degradation is the reality now.
- \n
- All these call for new ways of managing the competing demands on freshwater resources.
- \n

\n\n

### **What are the suggestions?**

\n\n

- \n
- **Water** - Reducing the stress on rivers, lakes, aquifers, wetlands and reservoirs is important.
- \n
- Water shortage cannot be offset by groundwater supplies, a third of which are already in distress.
- \n
- Nor is the construction of more dams and reservoirs likely to be a solution.
- \n
- The report emphasises a shift away from watershed management.
- \n
- It calls for a wider geographic approach that takes in land use in distant areas, particularly forests.
- \n
- Although farmers have long seen trees as a drain on water supplies, the vegetation helps to recycle and distribute water.
- \n
- Evidently, the São Paulo (Brazil) drought of 2014-15 has been linked to Amazon deforestation.
- \n
- The key for change, even for the water problem, will be agriculture.
- \n
- **Agriculture** - This is the biggest source of both water consumption and pollution.
- \n
- The report thus emphasises the importance of **nature-based solutions**.

\n

- Nature-based solutions can be personal - such as dry toilets - or broad landscape-level shifts in agricultural practices.

\n

- In agricultural practices, it is essentially an approach to rely more on soil and trees than steel and concrete.

\n

- It calls for shift to “conservation agriculture”.

\n

- This would make greater use of rainwater rather than irrigation, and regularise crop rotation to maintain soil cover.

\n

- This is crucial to reverse erosion and degradation, which currently affects a third of the planet’s land.

\n

\n\n

\n

- The suggestions imply that the potential savings of such practices exceed the projected increase in global demand for water.

\n

- This would ease the dangers of conflict and provide better livelihoods for family farmers and poverty reduction.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Guardian**

\n\n

\n\n

**Quick Fact**

\n\n

**World Water Assessment Programme**

\n\n

\n

- The WWAP focuses on assessing the developing situation of freshwater

throughout the world.

\n

- The primary output of the WWAP is the periodic World Water Development Report.

\n

- UNESCO hosts the WWAP Secretariat.

\n

\n\n

## **World Water Forum**

\n\n

\n

- The World Water Forum is the world's biggest water-related event and is organized by the World Water Council.

\n

- It is the biggest single gathering of policymakers, businesses and NGOs involved in water management.

\n

- Its mission is to promote awareness, build political commitment and trigger action on critical water issues.

\n

- It takes place every three years.

\n

\n\n

## **World Water Council**

\n\n

\n

- The World Water Council is an international multistakeholder platform organization.

\n

- Its members include organizations from the UN and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, governments, academic institutions, civil society groups, etc.

\n

- Its mission is to mobilize action on critical water issues at all levels, including the highest decision-making level.

\n

- The Council focuses on the political dimensions of water security, adaptation and sustainability.s

\n

\n



**SHANKAR**  
**IAS PARLIAMENT**  
*Information is Empowering*