

*Facts and guidance to get informed, engaged and inspired to act*



# A DAY TO GET INFORMED, ENGAGED AND INSPIRED TO ACT

The only limit is imagination

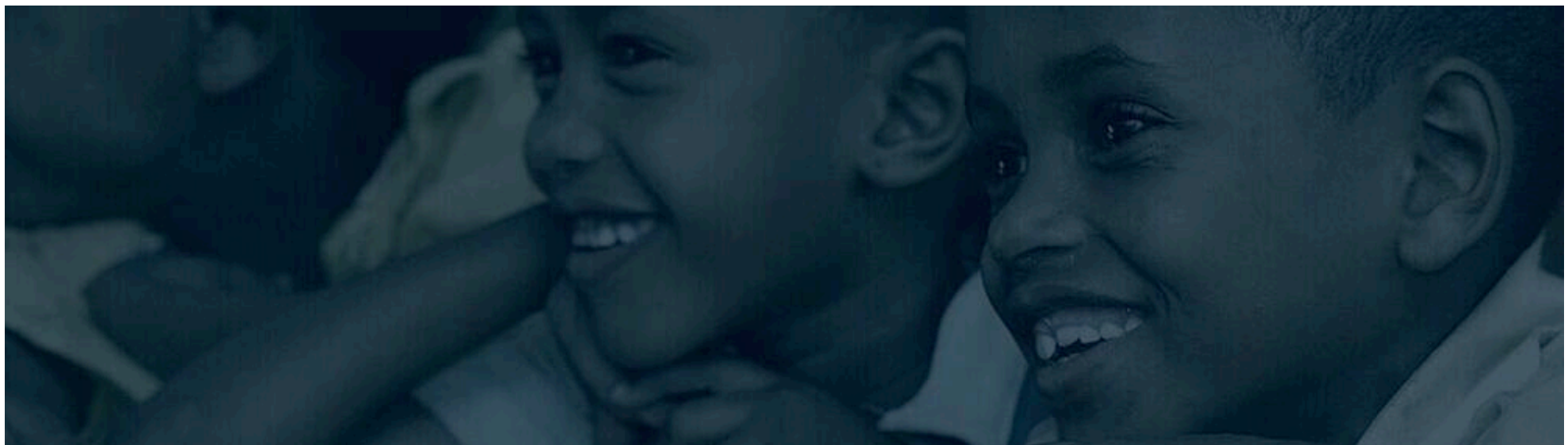
World Water Day is an international observance and an opportunity to learn more about water related issues, be inspired to tell others and take action to make a difference. This guide is aimed at giving a brief background to World Water Day, an introduction to the theme, some key facts and hopefully provide inspiration to how you can get involved.

World Water Day dates back to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio, Brazil where it was recommended to designate an international observance for water. The United Nations General Assembly responded by designating 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day. It has been held annually since then.

Each year, UN-Water - the entity that coordinates the UN's work on water and sanitation - sets a theme for World Water Day corresponding to a current or upcoming challenge. The engagement campaign is led by one or several of the UN-Water Members with a related mandate.

On World Water Day, countries and tens of thousands of individuals and organizations get involved in several ways. They get informed, engaged and act. Together they make a difference – especially for the most vulnerable people on our planet but also for future generations.

The only limit for their action is their imagination and in 2015, their social media voice reached **1.2 billion people**.



# THEME IN 2016: WATER AND JOBS, COORDINATED BY THE ILO

Better water, better jobs

“Water and Jobs” is the theme of World Water Day 2016. It is coordinated, on behalf of UN-Water, by the International Labour Organization (ILO) - the UN entity that promotes rights at work, encourages decent employment opportunities, enhances social protection and strengthens dialogue on work-related issues.

The theme highlights how both water and jobs have the power to transform people's lives: Water is central to human survival, the environment and the economy and decent work can provide income and pave the way for broader social and economic advancements.

Today, almost half of the world's workers - 1.5 billion people - work in water related sectors and nearly all jobs depend on water and those that ensure its safe delivery. Yet the millions of people who work in water are often not recognized or protected by basic labour rights. Take the example of a young girl who has to walk for hours every day to fetch water for her family. This is a job. But it's not paid and it's not recognized. If the delivery of water was ensured, this girl could be in school instead.

Water and sanitation also has a strong impact on workers' lives and health. 2 million work related deaths happen every year. Out of those, 17% are water-related (poor quality drinking water, poor sanitation, poor hygiene and related lack of knowledge). For example, in some factories women use rags from the factory floor for menstrual cloths as there is no access to improved sanitation facilities. These cloths are charged with chemicals and often freshly dyed which can lead to infections and even death.

The basic provision of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services at home and in the workplace enables a robust economy by contributing to a healthy and productive population and workforce, with benefit-to-cost ratios as high as 7 to 1 for basic water and sanitation services in developing countries. Conversely, people who

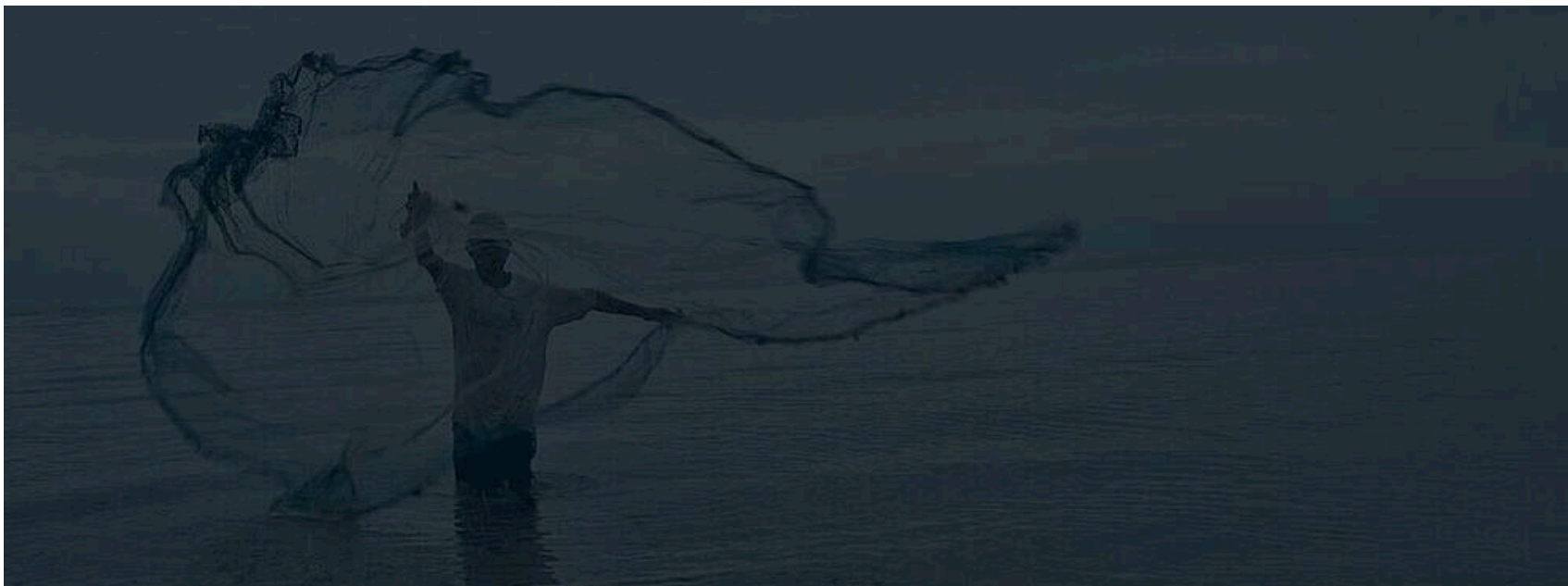


have the least access to water and sanitation are usually the most likely to have poor access to health care and stable jobs, thus feeding the cycle of poverty. In this regard, equality gaps persist between urban and rural dwellers, across genders, and between the richest and poorest segments of the population.

Water also affects workers lives through its quality. Water affects workers' lives through its presence, its quality and its quantity. In the irrigated agriculture sector for example, which represents 70% of freshwater withdrawals worldwide, a farmer's job depend on their ability to manage the available freshwater while at the same time facing challenges such as groundwater depletion, climate change and water scarcity. In the forestry sector, it is sometimes necessary to reduce deforestation to avoid water shortages or excess water flows with negative impacts on a region, resulting in lay-offs in the industry.

Sustainable water management in its broadest sense, which encompasses ecosystems protection and restoration, integrated water resources management (IWRM) as well as infrastructure development, operation and maintenance, combined with access to a safe, reliable and affordable supply of water and adequate sanitation services, creates an enabling environment for long-term employment opportunities, as well as development and growth across different economic sectors.

Water has the ability to create paid and decent jobs. It can contribute to a greener economy and sustainable development. But for this to happen, we need more qualified workers. And we need those workers to work in dignity, equality, safety and have a fair income. You can read more about the relationship between water and jobs in the resources on page age 8 in this guide but also in the World Water Development Report that is released on 22 March 2016 .



# FACTS

## Water, economy and jobs

- Improving water productivity to close the worldwide gap between supply and demand for water will cost US\$50-60 billion annually over the next 20 years. With private sector investment comprising about half of that spending, positive returns could be expected in just three years (Boccaletti et al., 2009).
- It is estimated that 95% of jobs in the agriculture sector, 30% of jobs in the industry sector, and 10% of jobs in the services sector are heavily dependent on water. It is estimated that 5% of jobs in the agriculture sector, 60% of jobs in the industry sector and 30% of jobs in the services sector are moderately dependent on water. Nonetheless, not every job in the various subsector categories is equally dependent on water.
- An estimated 40% of the global economically-active population work in crop and animal production, fisheries or hunting. Yet, only 20% are employed as waged workers (World Bank, 2005), and the remaining are self-employed or contribute family labour to around 570 million farms.
- Worldwide, some of the most water-intensive industry sectors employ great numbers of people: 22 million in food and drink (with 40% women), 20 million in chemical, pharmaceutical, and rubber and tyres, as well as 18 million in electronics.
- Water supply and wastewater facilities operators employ about 80% of the workers in the water industry (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012).
- The energy sector, with growing water withdrawal that currently accounts for about 15% of the world's total, provides direct employment.

## Global perspectives on water

- Freshwater withdrawals have increased globally by about 1% per year since 1980's, mainly due to growing demand in developing countries.
- Water resources are under pressure, with water scarcity affecting around 40% of the global population (CAWMA, 2007).
- An estimated 663 million people lack ready access to improved sources of drinking water (WHO/UNICEF, 2015).
- Between 2011 and 2050, the world population is expected to increase by 33%, growing from 7.0 billion to 9.3 billion (UN DESA, 2011), and food demand will rise by 70% in the same period (Bruinsma, 2009).
- Agriculture accounts for roughly 70% of total freshwater withdrawals globally and for over 90% in the majority of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) (FAO, 2011). Without improved efficiency measures, agricultural water consumption is expected to increase by about 20% globally by 2050 (WWAP, 2012).

## Human rights, sustainable development and gender

- The right to work is enunciated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), which states: 'Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.' The 1998 adopted ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Adopted further commits Member States to respect and promote principles and rights in four categories, whether or not they have ratified the relevant Conventions.
- There are 2.3 million work-related deaths annually. Work-related communicable diseases contribute to 17 % of these deaths and, in that category, the main contributing and preventable factors comprised poor-quality drinking water, poor sanitation, poor hygiene and related lack of knowledge.
- The male to female employment ratio has remained steady over the past 25 years, with women accounting for 40% of the global active workforce.
- Globally, in 2014 roughly 520 million men and 410 million women were employed in agriculture, accounting for one third of all employed women.
- Globally, about 50% of women were working in 2014, compared to 77% of men. In 1995, these figures were 52% and 80% respectively (ILO, 2015).
- About three quarters of households in sub-Saharan Africa fetch water from a source away from their home (WHO/UNICEF, 2012) and 50% to 85% of the time, women are responsible for this task (ILO/WGF, n.d.).



# WHAT YOU CAN DO

Every year, tens of thousands of people get involved in World Water Day. Below are some examples of activities:

- Make your voice heard on social media by sending a selfie or groupie on how water is part of your daily job;
- Tell us how water has changed your - or the people in your community's - life;
- Think about what water means to you and make an art work;
- Organize a debate in your school, university, community, office or organization;
- Organize a concert or a play;
- If you are a teacher or student, propose/organize a lesson on water;
- Record a film and send it to us;
- Write a song;
- Organize a photo contest;
- Organize a sports event;
- Develop a game or an app;

To get informed, engaged and to take action, have a look at:

**The better water, better jobs film:** <https://www.youtube.com/user/UNwater1> (released in early February 2016)

Please use the film as you see fit – why not as an introduction to your event or by spreading it on social media?

**The better water, better jobs page:** [www.Waterandjobs.org](http://www.Waterandjobs.org) (launched in early February 2016)

This page is a quick introduction to understand the relationship between water and jobs and how better water leads to better jobs.

**The World Water Day website:** [www.worldwaterday.org](http://www.worldwaterday.org) (available in early February 2016)

- INFORMATION: Go to the **Learn page** and get information on what the UN system and partners are doing;
- INSPIRATION: Go to the **Ideas** and **News page** to be inspired by – or inspire - others and read about initiatives that are taking place;
- TOOLS: Go to the **Tools page** and download the logo to use on your material, download posters and banners to use in your events;
- TAKE ACTION: Register your event on the **Event page** and promote your activities to the world; Add you voice on social media by showing what your job is, send us your art work or your innovative ideas on how to care about water.

# KEY RESOURCES

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