

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### **Water Pollution in Asia, Africa, & Latin America Putting Millions at Risk**

The United Nations Environment Programme has warned that water pollution across three continents is placing hundreds of millions of people at risk of dangerous diseases like cholera and typhoid.

A new report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), [Snapshot of the World's Water Quality](#), has highlighted a "worrying rise in the pollution of surface waters in Asia, Africa, and Latin America" which poses serious risk of contracting diseases for hundreds of millions of people, as well as threatening damage to vital source of food and harming the continents' economies. The authors of the report also posit that by making access to clean quality water more difficult — or at least not remedying current inabilities to access such water — further inequality in these regions will only continue to grow, laying waste to the most vulnerable — women, children, and the poor.

**"The increasing amount of wastewater being dumped into our surface waters is deeply troubling,"** explained Jacqueline McGlade, Chief Scientist of UN Environment.

"Access to quality water is essential for human health and human development. Both are at risk if we fail to stop the pollution. "Luckily it is possible to begin restoring rivers that have already been heavily polluted and there is clearly still time to prevent even more rivers from becoming contaminated. It is vital the world works together to combat this growing menace."

The report points to a series of catalysts for the rise in surface water pollution, including population growth, increased economic activity, the expansion and intensification of agriculture, as well as an increase in the amount of untreated sewage being discharged into rivers and lakes. Specifically, pathogen pollution and organic pollution have risen in more than 50% of river stretches from 1990 to 2010 across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while salinity pollution has risen by nearly a third.

Pathogen pollution can most directly be linked to the expansion of sewage systems that discharge untreated wastewater directly into surface waters, and at this point is estimated to affect approximately a quarter of Latin American river stretches, around 10% to 25% of African river stretches, and almost one-half of Asian river stretches.

With some countries' populations relying on surface waters as their drinking water (to the tune of 90%), this presents an immediate and dangerous health risk — and one that is only likely to intensify. The report found that nearly 3.4 million people die

each year from diseases associated with pathogens in the water, such as cholera, typhoid, infections hepatitis, polio, cryptosporidiosis, ascariasis, and diarrheal diseases.

The UNEP currently estimates that up to 25 million people are at risk from such infections in Latin America, up to **164 million in Africa**, and up to 134 million in Asia.

The report also looked at organic pollution and salinity, issues similarly affecting millions of people and thousands of rivers across the three continents. "There is no doubt that we have the tools needed to tackle this growing problem," said McGlade. "It is now time to use these tools to combat what is slowly becoming one of the greatest threats to human health and development around the world."

Sources: *Clean Technica*, 31 Aug. 2016

**WAMTechnology CC** is the sole supplier of the **Municipal Assistant™ system**. In our experience from implementing our system in over **50 municipal sites** in South Africa and Zimbabwe, one of the major problems with the deterioration of infrastructure is lack of or the need of better operational asset management systems, maintenance scheduling and control. There is often too much focus on mere asset register inventories and other financial requirements, instead of actual operational needs.



The focus of the MA system is therefore to help ensure that both **assets and people perform at optimal levels**, which reduce service failures (e.g. water pollution) and other disruptions due to asset failure or human error, thereby reducing environmental risks and future maintenance costs.

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