

Water and Sanitation in the News

Drowning in danger: Worldwide water crisis deemed biggest global risk

The World Economic Forum, which just completed its 2016 meeting in Davos, Switzerland, last year recognized the world water crisis as the most impactful global risk.

The situation is no less complicated or critical today, with California re-evaluating its water policies and structures as a result of pervasive drought; with the mega-city Sao Paulo, Brazil, reacting to a failed municipal water system serving millions; with Flint, Mich., confronting the health consequences of a switch to its polluted river as its drinking water source; with communities in the U.S. and Europe rising up to oppose the water pollution and other destructive outcomes of hydro-fracturing; with global warming, continuing drought, polar melt, sea level rise, extreme weather, and other climate impacts affecting the stability of artisanal and industrial farmers; and with the inter-connected and ever-increasing demand for an ever-decreasing water supply worldwide dislocating communities, driving a new and disparate migrations, and creating conflict in many unexpected places between water-haves and water-have-nots.

So the lack of water, or the availability of existing water, is fast becoming a key determinant in the planning for changing demographics, changing economic conditions, changing demands on national and local tax base and budgets, and changing production technologies and prices. We speak now not so much of "oil rich nations," but of "water rich nations" where this migration will perforce seek to settle and to integrate into existing patterns of governance, social behaviour, and cultural traditions.

Will this global shift be welcomed or resisted? Will the leaders of such places, those left, or those newly come to, be able to manage the consequences of what appears to be a major global adjustment? ...we will need a revolutionary rethinking of what we value most. Will it remain oil, the commodity that has shaped our world for the better and the worse? Or will it be water, the one thing we all need in equal amounts — rich and poor, north and south, of every cultural persuasion — to survive?

...We must move to a new paradigm for the 21st century — a new "hydraulic society" — that links our health and welfare to what unites us, not alienates us, to what feeds and succours our families and communities, not what destroys them by poverty and war...

Source: *NYDaily News*, 02 Feb 2016

WAMTech are specialists in implementing technology systems for improved governance, focussing on Water and Public Health Information Systems

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Context

A new paradigm shift in water use is certainly an urgent necessity. Yet, according to a new study published in the journal *Geoscientific Model Development*, if current trends continue, global domestic and industrial water demand would more than double by the year 2050, and continue to increase after that. This would inevitably result in serious water and sanitation crises in many areas around the globe, affecting billions of people.

While water scarcity is an abstract concept to many, it is already a stark reality for others. South Africa is also becoming more painfully aware of the problem. After failing to respond to many years of warnings by experts in the water sector with concrete solutions, government is struggling to match dwindling supplies to an ever increasing demand. Our vulnerability has been highlighted by the arrival and persistence of the worst drought in decades, which the South African Weather Service has proclaimed as the driest on record (with records dating back to 1904).

The drought might pass within a year or two, but if we continue with our 'business as usual' approach to managing our most precious natural resource (i.e. lack of sufficient asset and operational management including preventive water infrastructure maintenance) the impacts of future droughts will become increasingly worse. Luckily, South Africa has the technological solutions, the expertise, experience and the resilience to tap into for the country adapt to the current and expected future challenges.

Given our vast existing database of water and waste water infrastructure in South Africa, **WAMTechnology** is both well-experienced and uniquely positioned to be able to determine trends regarding infrastructure condition (e.g. deterioration) and management (e.g. maintenance) developments in many parts of South Africa. During the past 6 years, WAMTech conducted detailed assessments with complete inventories of 102 water treatment works, 105 water pump stations, 236 reservoir, 99 bulk pipeline, 118 waste water works, and 263 waste water pump stations in South Africa. The data we have accumulated is of utmost importance for a more efficient evaluation and assessment of the "water situation" in South Africa; and to enable appropriate and cost-effective intervention plans.

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