Hydro Politics Newsletter
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# Water is Politics


Water is politics because every decision about water—who controls it, who uses it, when it is allocated, and for what purpose—is inherently political. As climate change intensifies scarcity and variability, water is rapidly becoming a central element of national security and geopolitical competition

Water has become a political issue becasue of it's scarcity, control and allocation . Declining availability and increasing uncertainty transform water into a security issue rather than a purely environmental concern. Dams, reservoirs, and inter-basin transfers create asymmetric power between upstream and downstream actors, turning infrastructure into a political instrument.Competing demands from agriculture, energy, cities, and ecosystems create distributional conflicts that cannot be solved by engineering alone.Conventional water policies treat water as a sectoral and technical . This approach fails because it ignores transboundary ,underestimates power asymmetries and separates technology from governance and politics. As a result, technically sound projects often generate political tensions and long-term instability.

Transboundary rivers globalized water politics. 286 river basins cross national borders. Water decisions in one country now directly affect food security, energy production, economic stability in another country. This makes water a foreign policy issue . Once water enters diplomacy, negotiations, and treaties, it becomes politics by definition.

In an era of climate stress and geopolitical uncertainty, water is no longer neutral. Those who control water shape development pathways , political leverage , and regional peace or instability.

Water is not only a resource.
Water is politics.

HPA wish you peace and prosperitiy for the new year 2026

**Dursun Yıldız -Director**

# World Annual Fresh Water Losses Could Supply 280 Million People

***New report links poor land and water management to accelerating freshwater loss.***


**November 4, 2025**

**WASHINGTON, Nov. 4, 2025**— The world is losing 324 billion cubic meters of freshwater every year, enough to meet the needs of 280 million people annually, according to the first edition of the *Global Water Monitoring Report* released today by the World Bank. These losses are driven by worsening droughts and unsustainable land and water practices, including poor pricing policies, weak coordination, deforestation, wetland degradation, and excessive irrigation.

The report, *Continental Drying: A Threat to Our Common Future*, provides the most detailed picture yet of global freshwater decline, and offers a roadmap for reversing the trend through smarter policy and investment.

Drawing on two decades of satellite data enhanced through new modeling techniques, the report provides an unprecedented view of how land and water management decisions are shaping water availability. For the first time, leaders can see where water loss is happening— at national and county levels—and therefore identify where action is most urgently needed.

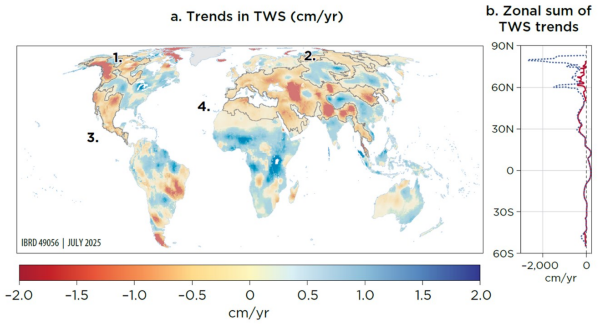
By combining water availability and agricultural water demand data, the report identifies vulnerability hot spots and priority regions for policy interventions. Global water use has risen 25% since 2000, with a third of that increase in areas already drying out. This includes areas already facing freshwater scarcity such as Central America, a large swath of Eastern Europe, and northern India. However, water stress is also emerging in historically water-abundant regions undergoing rapid agricultural, industrial, and urban growth, such as southeastern Brazil.

The strain on jobs, incomes, and ecosystems is most acute in vulnerable regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, droughts leave 600,000 to 900,000 people without jobs each year, disproportionately affecting women, older individuals, landless farmers, and low-skilled workers.

The past two decades have seen a global shift toward the cultivation of more water-intensive crops. Among drying countries, 37 have transitioned to more water-intensive agriculture, including 22 located in arid and semi-arid regions. This structural shift, coupled with inefficiency, further intensifies water demand in already water-stressed countries. More than two-thirds of the inefficient irrigation in drying areas is linked to the cultivation of water-intensive crops, such as rice, wheat, cotton, maize, or sugar cane. This underscores the need for smarter crop choices and incentives that align agricultural practices with water sustainability.

Virtual water trade, which can provide a way for water-scarce countries to import water intensive goods like crops and industrial products, can help reduce global water use. Since 2010, virtual water trade has saved 475 billion cubic meters of water each year or almost 10% of total global water consumption. However, the report finds that many water-scarce countries are exporting products that are water intensive, highlighting the need to align trade policies with water sustainability goals.

*"Continental drying is not inevitable,"* said **Fan Zhang**, lead author of the *Global Water Monitoring Report*. *"By managing demand, expanding supply, and allocating water more fairly and efficiently, countries can stabilize water systems and secure their future. The data show that solutions exist; what's needed now is coordination, investment, and resolve."*




The report calls for a three-part strategy to address the crisis:

- Manage water demand more efficiently through technologies, regulations, and public awareness
- Expand alternative water supply via recycling, desalination, and improved storage

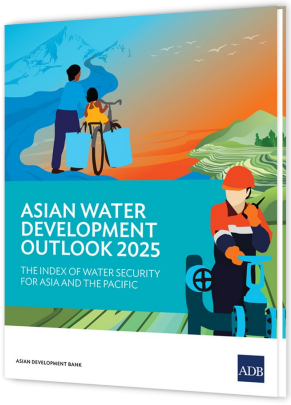
Ensure fair and effective water allocation across sectors and regions.

## Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO) 2025

AWDO is Asia and the Pacific's index of water security, assessing 50 economies using a multidimensional framework and offering a shared, comparable evidence base to guide national planning, investment decisions, and policy reform.

AWDO remains the only recurring, region-specific assessment that captures the full spectrum of water challenges. Its balance of consistency and innovation enables it to track long-term trends while responding to emerging issues.

This 2025 edition of the Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO) highlights significant progress: 2.7 billion people in Asia and the Pacific have moved out of extreme water insecurity since 2013. Yet these gains are under threat from environmental degradation, increased water-related hazards, and a shortfall in investments in water infrastructure. The publication highlights the need for governments, the private sector, and development partners to work together to implement smarter, more inclusive policies and investments toward a water-secure, climate-resilient Asia and the Pacific.




### Key Messages

- ADB's Asian Water Development Outlook (AWDO) is a comprehensive assessment of the state of water security in Asia and the Pacific. Assessing 50 economies, AWDO uses five key dimensions to measure water security and create an evidence base that guides national planning, investment decisions, and policy reform.
- 2.7 billion people in Asia and the Pacific, or about 60% of the region's population, have been lifted from the most extreme forms of water insecurity since 2013. This means that they now have access to basic water and sanitation or are safer from floods and droughts.
- Hard-won gains in improving the region's water security, however, are at grave risk of being reversed due to environmental degradation, increased water-related hazards, and a shortfall in investments in water infrastructure.

Governments, the private sector, and development partners must work together to implement policy reforms that make water services more efficient and sustainable, bridge the investment gap with smarter finance, strengthen governance to empower local institutions, and support social inclusion.

## Glacier Melt Threatens Central Asia's Water Security

16 December 2025

**Sadokat Jalolova**

The accelerating retreat of glaciers poses a serious risk to water security across Central and West Asia, scientists and journalists warned during an online media forum jointly hosted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) on December 10, according to *Asia-Plus*.

The forum focused on the growing impact of glacial melt in mountain regions, including the Pamirs, Tien Shan, Hindu Kush, and Himalayas, where shrinking ice reserves are increasingly disrupting water supplies for agriculture, energy, and drinking water. A key highlight was the ADB's Glacier to Farms (G2F) program, presented by senior climate adaptation specialist Chris Dickinson. The initiative, spanning nine countries including Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia, and Georgia, aims to link glacier monitoring with practical, climate-resilient policy measures.

Unlike past approaches that primarily diagnosed the problem, G2F offers technical and financial solutions designed to support communities in adapting to climate change. The $3.5 billion initiative, backed in part by $250 million from the Green Climate Fund, leverages a co-financing model that aims to attract $10 in additional investment for every dollar committed.

The program envisions a full climate adaptation chain from satellite-based glacier monitoring and mountain observation stations to downstream interventions such as crop insurance, farmer support, and modernization of water infrastructure.

"Glaciers are the origin of the entire food and water system," Dickinson said. "Their rapid retreat threatens lives and livelihoods far beyond mountain regions."

Tajikistan serves as a pilot site for the program due to its heavy reliance on hydropower and its largely mountainous terrain. One of the project's key goals is to enhance the country's hydrometeorological services and strengthen monitoring of snow cover, glacier movement, landslides, and related hazards. A modern early warning system is being developed for the Panj River basin, combining data on glacial lakes, mudflows, precipitation, and seismic activity. The alerts will be sent to vulnerable communities via mobile networks, complemented by local training programs to ensure proper responses.

Forum participants noted that the effects of glacial retreat are already evident. Glaciers in the Tien Shan and Pamir ranges feed the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, vital water sources for Central Asia's agriculture, energy, and drinking needs. An estimated 74% of the Amu Darya's flow comes from snow and glacier melt. In the Indus basin, the figure is about 40%. Yet only a small number of the region's more than 54,000 glaciers are regularly monitored, leaving gaps in early warning systems and long-term planning.

Experts from ICIMOD and ADB described glacier melt as a "cascading crisis." Rising temperatures are fueling more frequent landslides, floods, and mudflows, while droughts reduce crop yields and damage pastures. Glacial lake outburst floods, sudden and destructive releases of water, pose grave risks to nearby settlements. Since the 19th century, the region has recorded around 500 such incidents, and their frequency could triple by the end of this century. Heatwaves and water quality issues further compound the risks.

Recent glacial activity in Tajikistan underscored the forum's urgency. In October, a massive segment of a glacier broke off Mount Ismoil Somoni in the Tajikabad district, near the village of Safedobi. The ice mass measured approximately two kilometers in length, up to 25 meters in height, and between 150 and 200 meters wide. It slid into a gorge, but emergency services quickly stabilized the situation, with no casualties reported.

In a separate incident, a large portion of the Didal Glacier in the same district detached and slid more than five kilometers downslope. Experts from Tajikistan's Center for Glaciology reported that the ice continued to shift for several days and remained unstable. Field teams measuring the glacier in the Surkhob River basin found it to be 1.5 kilometers long, 200 meters wide, and up to 50 meters high.

Research shared by ICIMOD and Norway's Water Resources and Energy Directorate revealed that Central Asia accounts for roughly 8.5% of global glacier mass loss, one of the highest regional shares worldwide. Miriam Jackson, an ICIMOD representative, warned that if global temperatures rise by 1.9°C, the region could lose up to 50% of its glaciers, significantly worsening pressure on already strained water supplies.

Source:https://timesca.com/glacier-melt-threatens-central-asias-water-security-experts-warn-at-regional-forum/

## A New Water Horizon Opens in Marrakech

December 1, 2025

The 19th World Water Congress opened this week in Marrakech with a stirring call for political courage, technological innovation, and a renewed global commitment to water security. Hosted by the International Water Resources Association (IWRA) and the Government of Morocco, the Congress brought together ministers, international organizations, researchers, and global water leaders — among them the World Water Council (WWC), which set the tone with an ambitious and forward-looking agenda.

From the outset, WWC President Loïc Fauchon reminded participants of Marrakech's deep relationship with water. In a city shaped by gardens, khettaras, fountains, and centuries-old irrigation knowledge, he invoked the idea that water is "a gift from God, from our ancestors, and for our descendants." Yet, behind the poetry lay an unmistakable warning: the world is failing to keep pace with its growing water challenges.


### A Frank Assessment: Water Security Is Falling Behind

Echoing recent concerns shared across the global water community, the opening session underscored a stark reality: water insecurity is accelerating faster than our solutions.

As climate pressures intensify, megacities expand uncontrollably, aquifers decline, and pollution grows, many essential water and sanitation targets remain out of reach.

## Four Major Initiatives Announced by the


## World Water Council

### 1. A Coalition for Water in Megacities

With more than 100 megacities now exceeding ten million residents — many facing rising floods, sinking deltas, depleted groundwater, and aging infrastructure — WWC is calling for an international coalition dedicated to urban water security. The coalition will focus not only on technological solutions but also on rebalancing the relationship between urban and rural development.

### 2. An International Center for Non-Conventional Water

In partnership with Moroccan authorities, the World WaterCouncil announced the creation of a global center devoted to desalination, wastewater reuse, and the management of non-conventional water resources powered by renewable energy. Morocco's leadership in solar, wind, and desalination — from Ouarzazate to

### 3. A Digital Sobriety Laboratory

Recognizing the soaring water and energy demands of data centers, industrial facilities, and digital infrastructure, WWC is launching a laboratory to define and promote "digital sobriety." The goal: ensure that the digital revolution strengthens — rather than strains — global water sustainability.

### 4. A New Deal for Sanitation

Fauchon reminded participants that sanitation remains "the great forgotten issue." The Council is advocating for sanitation to be treated as a political priority essential to health, food security, biodiversity, and human dignity.

These initiatives will be complemented in the coming days by the unveiling of a One Water, One Health Center, developed with Turkish partners and the European Union

### A Call for Collective Action

President Fauchon urged the global community to speak "a little less about what water costs, and a little more about what water brings" : prosperity, stability, health, and peace.

He concluded by inviting all partners to pair innovation with responsibility, and poetry with action:
"Water is the mirror of the soul," he said, quoting the poet Rumi. "It never stops, it flows toward infinity."

# Water Politics in Sub Saharan Africa

**Dursun Yıldız**

**Director**

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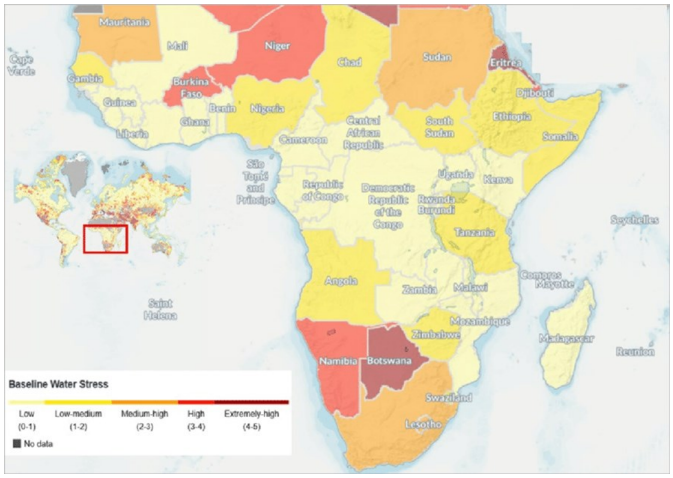
840 million people or 68% of the population had access to at least basic improved water in 2024, up from 587 million people (59% of population) ten years prior. But the number of people with this level of access remains unacceptably low in rural areas at only 53% in 2024 (up from 44% in 2014), according to the 2025 Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) report which tracks Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene data. Progress on sanitation is also slow, hovering at a third of the population in 2015 and 2024. Because progress has not kept up with demographic growth, that means more people are living without basic sanitation in 2024 than in 2015 (803 million vs. 686 million, nine years ago).




This gap is rooted in service delivery failure, lack of sector prioritization and weak governance, and results in lost productivity, stunted children, and persistent poverty, all exacerbated by climate shocks such as droughts and floods. Women and girls shoulder a disproportionate burden, often spending hours each day collecting water, which limits their opportunities for education and participation in the economy

According to JMP 2025 report, 281 million people in Eastern and Southern Africa (2024 data, excluding Eritrea and Sudan) did not have access to basic drinking water services, and 476 million people lacked access to basic sanitation services. The situation is worse in rural areas than in the cities.About 82% of the population without access to basic sanitation live in 8 countries - Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique and Angola in that order. For drinking water, 82% of the underserved live in Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Madagascar, Angola and Mozambique (in that order).

## Water Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa: Power, Scarcity, and Cooperation

Water politics in **Sub-Saharan Africa** is shaped by a complex interaction of **water scarcity**, **shared river basins**, **state power asymmetries**, and **climate variability**. In the region, water is not only a natural resource but also a strategic asset that influences **development**, **food security**, and **regional stability**.

Sub-Saharan Africa hosts both water-abundant and water-stressed areas. Large river systems such as the **Nile**, **Niger**, **Congo**, **Zambezi**, and **Senegal** basins cross multiple national borders. However, **hydrological endowment** (hidrolojik donanım) is uneven, and rainfall is highly variable. Climate change has intensified **hydrological extremes**—longer droughts and more intense floods—making water availability increasingly unpredictable.

## Climate Change Effects

Climate change acts as a **risk multiplier** rather than a direct cause of conflict. Reduced rainfall, declining groundwater, and ecosystem degradation amplify existing political and social vulnerabilities. Competition over water increasingly intersects with **food security**, **energy production**, and **migration**, turning water into a central element of broader **human security** debates.

## Conclusion

Despite these challenges, Sub-Saharan Africa also offers examples of **cooperative water governance**. River basin organizations and regional frameworks promote **data sharing**, **joint planning**, and **benefit-sharing** approaches. While often under-resourced, these mechanisms show that water can serve as a platform for **diplomacy and cooperation**, not only conflict.

Water politics in Sub-Saharan Africa is not simply about scarcity; it is about **power, governance, and adaptation**. As climate pressures grow, the future stability of the region will increasingly depend on the ability of states to transform shared waters from sources of competition into instruments of **regional cooperation and sustainable development**.



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Where people live in harmony with nature

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