

Water for Peace

Why in news?

The theme of 2024 World Water day observed on March 22, 2024 is Water for Peace.

World Water Day- March 22

- **First proposal**-The idea was first proposed during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro under Agenda 21 in 1992.
- **UN Resolution**- In 1992, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution declaring March 22 as World Water Day.
- **Implementation**- It is a United Nations (UN) observance coordinated by UN-Water.
- **Need**- It is now observed globally to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- **Report**- UN launches its flagship report on water and sanitation for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- **2024 theme**- *'Water for prosperity and peace'*, focuses on critical role water plays in the stability and prosperity of the world.

Why there is water crisis in India?

As per World Resources Institute, 17 countries face 'extremely high' levels of water stress which is threatening to result in conflict, unrest and peace among people, India is not an exception to these problems.

- Around 72% of all water withdrawals are for use in agriculture, 16% by municipalities for households and services, and 12% by industries.
- **Groundwater depletion**- [Groundwater tables](#) are declining in nearly every state and major city, with alarming overuse in States like Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, and Haryana.

Key Issue	About	Impact
Rapid Urbanization	The rapid growth of cities and urban areas leads to increased demand for water for domestic, industrial, and commercial purposes	It results in <i>overexploitation</i> of local water sources and strain on water supply systems. Example- Bengaluru water crisis .
Industrialization	Industrial activities require significant amounts of water for manufacturing processes, cooling, and other purposes.	Many industries contribute to <i>water pollution</i> , further degrading water quality and reducing availability for other uses.
Unsustainable agricultural practices	Agriculture is the largest consumer of water in India, with irrigation accounting for the majority of water withdrawals	Inefficient irrigation methods, overuse of chemical fertilizers, monoculture farming contribute to water scarcity and <i>degradation of soil and water quality</i> .

Climate change	Changing weather patterns, including erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and more intense monsoon seasons, exacerbate water stress in many regions of India.	It adversely <i>affects water cycle</i> resulting in worsening floods, rising sea levels, shrinking ice fields, wildfires and droughts.
Inefficient water management	Insufficient investment in water infrastructure, including dams, reservoirs, and water treatment facilities, hinders the efficient management and distribution of water resources.	Leakage from pipes, inefficient irrigation practices, and lack of wastewater treatment facilities result in significant water losses and contamination.
Lack of stakeholder engagement	A lack of engagement and collaboration among stakeholders, including government agencies, communities, and industries	It hampers effective water management and conservation efforts.

How water insecurity affects women?

- **Gendered Burden**-Water collection is often seen as a woman's responsibility, leading to a disproportionate time burden on them.
- **Effects on education**- Girls' school attendance and academic performance suffer due to the time spent on water collection.
- **Health risks**- Lack of access to adequate water often leads to the practice of open defecation exposes individuals, particularly women, to various waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea, typhoid, and cholera.
- **Hygiene**- Women who engage in open defecation may also face challenges related to menstrual hygiene management.
- **Psychological stress**- The lack of privacy and dignity associated with openly defecating in public spaces can cause embarrassment, anxiety, and feelings of insecurity among women, impacting their overall well-being and mental health.
- **Safety concern**-Women who engage in open defecation are at a greater risk of experiencing non-partner sexual violence
- **Impact on health**- Women who engage in open defecation are at a greater risk of experiencing psychosocial stress and non-partner sexual violence.

What can be done to conserve water?

- **Sustainable agriculture**- It's crucial to promote sustainable agricultural production and maintain environmental integrity.
- **Rainwater harvesting**-Implementing both in-situ and ex-situ rainwater harvesting (RWH) can combat water scarcity and support irrigation.
- **Comprehensive waterbody assessment**- It's suggested to conduct a thorough assessment of every waterbody to understand its condition, including water availability, quality, and ecosystem services, this can guide targeted interventions for water management and conservation.
- **Waterbody revival**- There's a need for protocols to revive and create ponds and waterbodies, which are essential for ecosystem services and water quality.

Quick facts

Steps taken by India to conserve water

- **National Water Policy** - It was updated in 2012 to govern the planning and development of water resources and their optimum utilization.
- **Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater** - It has been prepared in 2020 with respective State counterparts which includes artificial recharge in both rural and urban areas.
- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain 2023**- It is targeting “Source sustainability for drinking water” for source strengthening/ source stabilization of rural drinking water supply schemes.
- **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana**- It was launched in 2015 to *enhance water use efficiency* and irrigation coverage in agriculture.
- **Mission Amrit Sarovar**- It was launched in 2002 with the aim to *develop and rejuvenate 75 water bodies* in each district of the country as a part of celebration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana**- It was piloted in 2018 along with *World Bank* to recharge ground water and create sufficient water storage for agricultural purposes.
- **Central Ground Water Authority**- It has advised all States/UTs to take measures to promote and adopt artificial recharge to ground water and rain water harvesting.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission**- The studies conducted in rural areas of Tamil Nadu show that access to safe drinking water under the leads to time savings for women, which they can utilize for household tasks, childcare, and children's schooling

References

1. [The Hindu- Water an instrument to build peace](#)
2. [The Hindu- Water insecurity affects women](#)