

## Global Water Crisis Reading

### 1) Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a landlocked country in the eastern Horn of Africa. It is slightly less than five times the size of UK with a population of 85 million. The average temperature throughout much of the country is about 16° C. However, lower-lying parts of the country near the borders with Sudan, Kenya and Somalia can be much hotter. There are nearly 80 languages spoken in Ethiopia, but the most common are Amharic, Tigrinya, and Oromigna. The need for water and sanitation in Ethiopia is severe. 77.6% of the population live on less than \$2 dollars a day. Only 42% of the population has access to an improved water supply, and only 11% of the population has access to adequate sanitation. The picture is better in urban areas but worse in rural areas.

#### Water Crisis in Ethiopia

In rural areas, women and children walk up to six hours to collect water. Most people collect water from shallow, unprotected ponds which they share with animals. Other people collect water from shallow wells. Both these sources are subject to contamination as rain water washes waste from surrounding areas into the source. They then carry the large clay jugs of water back to their villages. These jugs can weigh up to 18 kilograms! Often, young children are left at home while their mother and older siblings collect water and their father tends animals or tries to earn money at a job outside the house.

### 2) India

India has a population of 1.2 billion people. The population is diverse. Hindi is the national language, but there are 14 other official languages. India's schools teach 58 languages and its national newspapers are published in 87 languages. Although overall poverty in India has decreased in the last 50 years, there is an ever-widening gap between poor people and those who are better off. 54% of the population live on less than \$2 a day. 80% of the population has access to an improved water supply but only 31% has access to adequate sanitation.

#### Water Crisis in India

India's huge and growing population is putting a severe strain on all of the country's natural resources. Most water sources are contaminated by sewage and agricultural runoff. India has made progress in the supply of safe water to its people, but this varies greatly between different parts of the country. Only 14% of the rural population has access to toilets. Although access to drinking water has improved, the World Bank estimates that 21% of infectious diseases in India are related to unsafe water. Diarrhea alone causes more than 1,600 deaths daily. In order to decrease the amount of disease spread through drinking-water, use of toilets and hygiene (particularly washing hands after going to the toilet) must be improved simultaneously.

### 3) Honduras

Honduras is in Central America, bordered to the south by Nicaragua and El Salvador and to the west by Guatemala. It has a population of 8 million. They speak mainly Spanish though there are also 7 local languages. 30% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. In the rural

regions, nearly 63% of the population is considered extremely poor. 84% of the population has access to an improved water supply and 66% has access to adequate sanitation.

#### **Water Crisis in Honduras**

In 1998 Honduras was devastated by Hurricane Mitch. Mitch was followed by three days of rain that caused landslides and floods, burying towns and killing thousands of people. Many of the rural communities were devastated. The hurricane caused \$58 million in damage and left 75% of the country without safe drinking water, resulting in a cholera epidemic. Rebuilding is still ongoing. In 2008 severe hurricanes and rains again hit Honduras and resulting flooding again contaminated water supplies. Many women and children in the rural areas of Honduras still spend up to six hours each day fetching water and carrying it home on their heads.

#### **4) Kenya**

Kenya is in East Africa. It borders the Indian Ocean and Somalia on the east, Ethiopia and Sudan on the north, Uganda and Lake Victoria on the west, and Tanzania to the south. It has a population of 39 million. Official languages are Kiswahili and English but there are also around 69 local languages. 20% of Kenyans live on less than \$2 a day. HIV/AIDS has resulted in increased levels of poverty. 59% Of the population has access to an improved water supply and 30% has access to adequate sanitation.

#### **Water Crisis in Kenya**

The water crisis in Kenya is disrupting social and economic activities throughout the country. Unfortunately, the current wave of droughts and water shortages in Kenya and the rest of East Africa is expected to continue. The water crisis is due not only to the wave of droughts, but also to poor management of the water supply, under-investment, unfair allocation of water, deforestation, pollution of water supplies by untreated sewage, and a huge population explosion (thirty-fold increase since 1900). In rural areas women and children spend up to 3 hours a day collecting and carrying water, which prevents many girls from attending school and women from earning money.

Main source: <http://water.org>