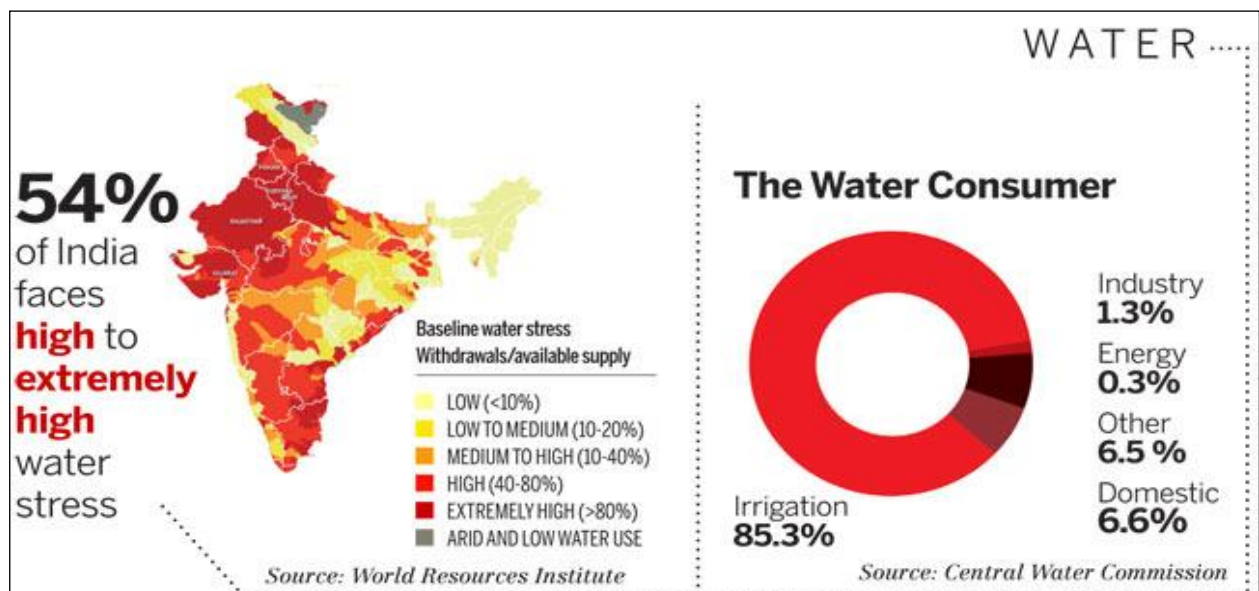


Water Crisis: A perspective view of India

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Water is essential for life. The amount of drinking water required is variable. It depends on physical activity, age, health issues, and environmental conditions. Water covers some 70% of the Earth's surface. Approximately 97.2% of it is saline, just 2.8% fresh. Potable water is available in almost all populated areas of the Earth, although it may be expensive and the supply may not always be sustainable. "There will be constant competition over water, between farming families and urban dwellers, environmental conservationists and industrialists, minorities living off natural resources and entrepreneurs seeking to commodify the resources base for commercial gain"(UNICEF report on Indian water).

The water you drink today has likely been around in one form or another since dinosaurs roamed the Earth, hundreds of millions of years ago. While the amount of freshwater on the planet has remained fairly constant over time—continually recycled through the atmosphere and back into our cups—the population has exploded. This means that every year competition for a clean, copious supply of water for drinking, cooking, bathing, and sustaining life intensifies. More than two billion people worldwide live in regions facing water scarcity and in India this is a particularly acute crisis. Millions of Indians currently lack access to clean drinking water, and the situation is only getting worse. India's demand for water is growing at an alarming rate. India currently has the world's second largest population, which is expected to overtake China's by 2050 when it reaches a staggering 1.6 billion, putting increase strain on water resources as the

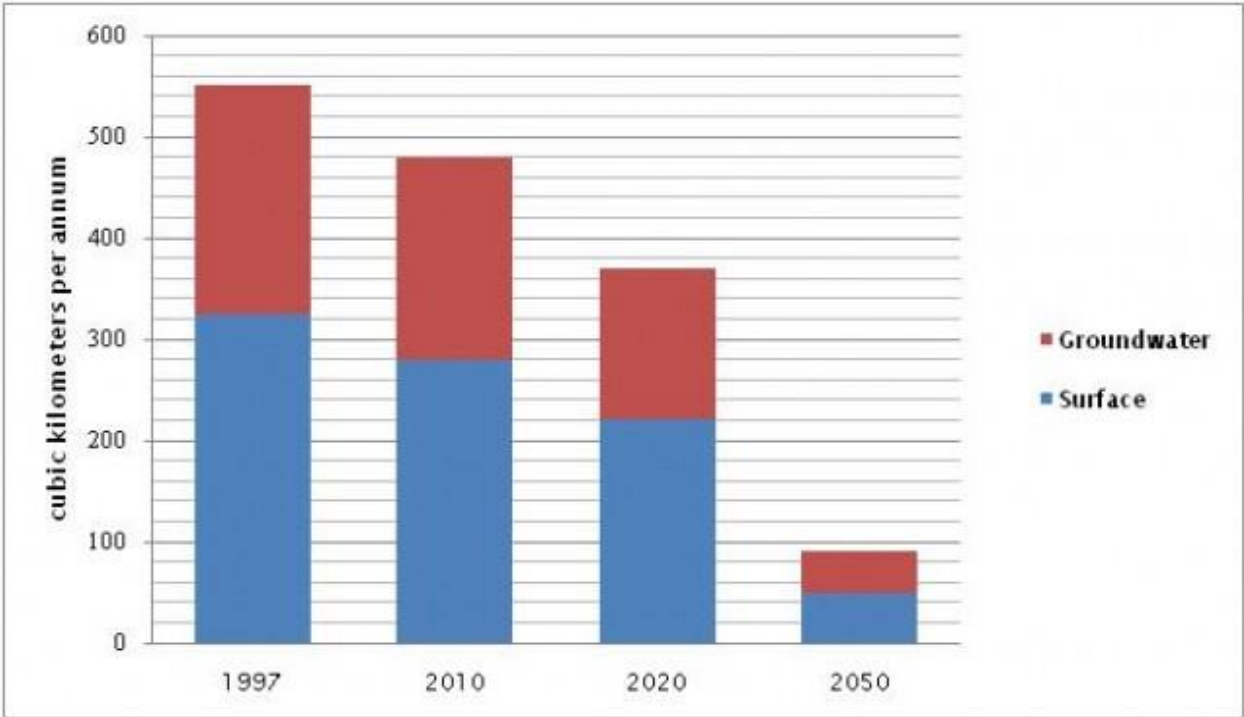


number of people grows. Water scarcity is an abstract concept to many and a stark reality for others. It is the result of myriad environmental, political, economic, and social forces.

Due to geography, climate, engineering, regulation, and competition for resources, some regions seem relatively flush with freshwater, while others face drought and debilitating pollution. In much of the developing world, clean water is either hard to come by or a commodity that requires laborious work or significant currency to obtain. According to the United Nations, water use has grown at more than twice the rate of population increase in the last century. By 2025, an estimated 1.8 billion people will live in areas plagued by water scarcity, with two-thirds of the world's population living in water-stressed regions as a result of use, growth, and climate change.

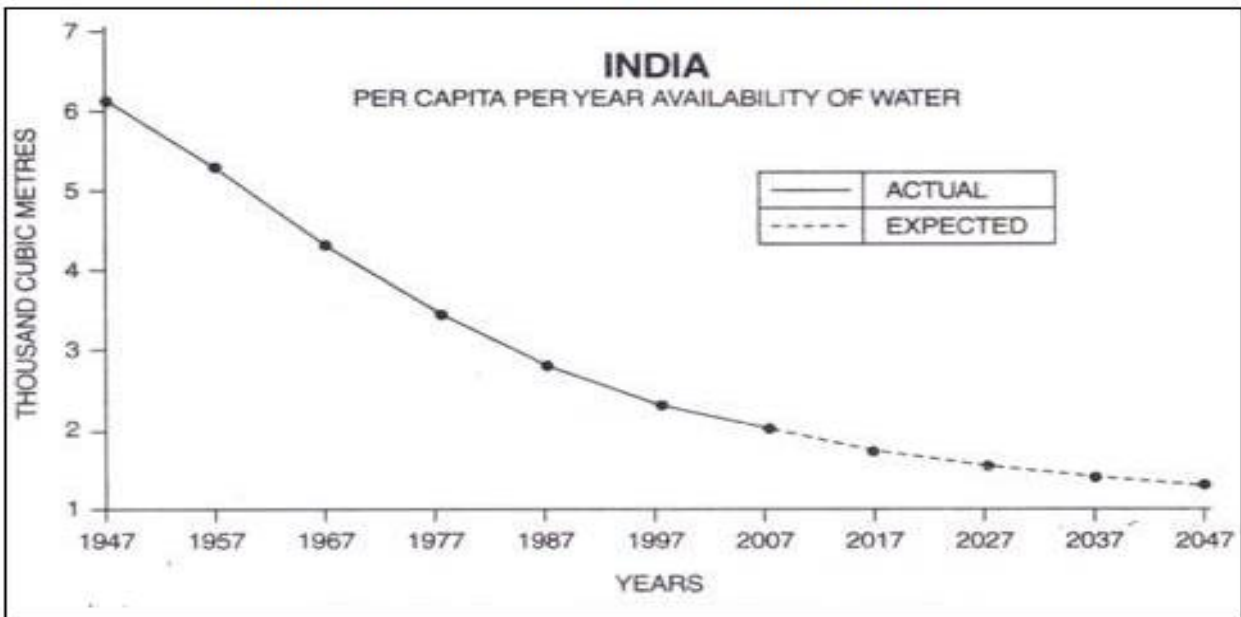
Surface water and groundwater are the sources of India's water supply. Other sources, such as desalination, are negligible because they are not cost effective.

Figure: Surface Water, Groundwater over Time



(Source: World Bank Report on Water in India)

Figure: India's declining availability of water



(Source:WRIS India)

India's water crisis is predominantly a manmade problem. India's climate is not particularly dry, nor is it lacking in rivers and groundwater. Extremely poor management, unclear laws, government corruption, and industrial and human waste have caused this water supply crunch and rendered what water is available practically useless due to the huge quantity of pollution. In managing water resources, the Indian government must balance competing demands between urban and rural, rich and poor, the economy and the environment. However, because people have triggered this crisis, by changing their actions they have the power to prevent water scarcity from devastating India's population, agriculture, and economy.

The challenge we face now is how to effectively conserve, manage, and distribute the water we have. India's demand for water is growing even as it stretches its supplies. Water infrastructure is crumbling, preventing the government from being able to supply drinking water to its citizens. Pollution is rampant due to unfettered economic growth, poor waste management laws and practices. Although many analysts believe that demand will outstrip supply by 2020, there is still hope for India. Water scarcity in India is predominantly a manmade problem; therefore if India makes significant changes in the way it thinks about water and manages its resources soon, it could ward off, or at least mollify, the impending crisis. India has had success with water

infrastructure development, which allowed the country to take advantage of its water resources in the first place and achieve food security. India has the power to avoid this dark future if people take action immediately: start conserving water, begin to harvest rainwater, treat human, agricultural, and industrial waste effectively, and regulate how much water can be drawn out of the ground.

There are number of ways to save water.....And they all start with you.

Save water Save Earth
