

# Getting Water Smart

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Water not only sustains our bodies and communities, but also is an integral part of our spiritual lives. (Sojourners, November 2013). It is a foundational symbol of life and renewal in most world religions and cultures.

Water means health, hygiene, dignity, productivity as well as a connection with creation, community and oneself. It can provide peace and harmony.

At the same time, we know that water can mean devastation due to hurricanes, tsunamis, floods and other unpredictable weather events. One of the results is the lack of uncontaminated water which is devastating to health and well being as well as production of food.

While climate change is often referenced as noticeable increasing heat and increased extreme weather events, according to the U-N Water, unpredictable water availability and increased contamination is the underlying greatest concern of climate change. It is putting millions of children at risk (<https://www.unwater.org/>).

According to UNICEF, climate change will have its most direct impact on child survival through three direct channels: changing disease environments, greater food insecurity, and threats to water and sanitation. ([UNICEF, 2019](#)). Take note of these facts:

1. Extreme weather events and changes in water cycle patterns are making it more difficult to access safe drinking water, especially for the most vulnerable children.
2. Around 74 per cent of natural disasters between 2001 and 2018 were water-related, including droughts and floods. The frequency and intensity of such events are only expected to increase with climate change.
3. Around 450 million children live in areas of high or extremely high water vulnerability. This means they do not have enough water to meet their everyday needs.
4. When disasters hit, they can destroy or contaminate entire water supplies, increasing the risk of diseases like cholera and typhoid to which children are particularly vulnerable.

## 101 Fact Sheet



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5. Rising temperatures can lead to deadly pathogens in freshwater sources, making the water dangerous for people to drink.
6. Contaminated water poses a huge threat to children's lives. Water and sanitation related diseases are one of the leading causes of death in children under 5 years old.
7. Every day, over 700 children under 5 die from diarrhoea linked to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene.
8. Climate change exacerbates water stress – areas of extremely limited water resources – leading to increased competition for water, even conflict.
9. By 2040, almost 1 in 4 children will live in areas of extremely high water stress.
10. Rising sea levels are causing fresh water to become salty, compromising the water resources millions of people rely on.

Statistics such as these moves me beyond the conversation about Climate **Change** to conversations about Climate **Justice**. It is essential to become more aware of the extreme impact upon those most vulnerable due to economics and limited resources. Children are certainly in the category of the most vulnerable. Water scarcity is a key concern to be acknowledged and addressed.

One of the many ways Colorado is addressing water issues is through Colorado WaterWise, established to improve water efficiency through diverse community connections, innovative solutions and valuable member resources. <https://coloradowaterwise.org>

Martin Luther King, Jr. often quoted this scripture from the prophet Amos in the Hebrew Bible:

“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!”  
Amos 5:24

Let us be vigilant in our quest for bringing justice to the vulnerable who are threatened by water scarcity and to seek avenues for addressing the impacts of climate change on water, our life-giving source of health, hygiene, dignity, productivity and spirituality.

UNICEF says:

Adapting to the water effects of climate change will protect children's health and save their lives. Using water more efficiently and transitioning to solar powered water systems will reduce greenhouse gases and further protect children's futures.

The world needs to get water smart.