



THE WATER REVOLUTION

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Ahead of the Fourth World Water Forum (March 16-22, Mexico City), the Sustainable Development Network -- a coalition of over 30 non-governmental organizations -- has released a new book, "The Water Revolution: Practical Solutions to Water Scarcity."

The authors show, with practical examples, how governments have made water artificially scarce. Where markets have been allowed -- where water is owned and traded -- access is increased, especially for the poor, whose health is consequently improved, and superior outcomes have been achieved for conservation and the environment.

The authors point to many problems plaguing countries with inadequate water supply systems, including:

- The Top-down approach to water management, such as that adopted by China, which usually exacerbates water scarcity, pollution and results in huge losses of water
- A lack of reform in many countries to the massive government subsidies given to agricultural water, which often only benefits wealthy landowners who are politically-connected, at the expense of poor taxpayers and the environment

The authors also show how a privatized water management system can provide benefits over a state run system, for instance:

- Chile's market-driven water system has achieved nearly universal access to water. Between 1970 and 1994, household access to water increased in rural areas from 27 percent to 94 percent, and from 63 percent to 99 percent in urban areas.
- Child mortality due to water-related illnesses dropped significantly after cities in Argentina privatized 30 percent of their municipal water systems in 1990.
- For more than a decade, rural areas of Gujarat, India, have collected rainwater to recharge groundwater aquifers; this creative, innovative and decentralized solution addressed water scarcity which had been induced by the government's obsession with large dams on rivers.

Source: Edited by Kendra Okonski, "The Water Revolution: Practical Solutions to Water Scarcity," Sustainable Development Network, March 13, 2006; and The 2nd United Nations World Water Development Report, "Water, a shared responsibility," United Nations, March 9, 2006.

For text:

http://sdnetwork.net/page.php?instructions=page&page_id=560&nav_id=131

For UN report:

<http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/>

For more on Environment:

<http://eteam.ncpa.org/issues/?c=drinking-water>