World Water Day 2025

World Water Day is celebrated every year on March 22nd. It was established on February 22nd, 1993, by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The theme for the 32nd edition is "The Preservation of Glaciers."

In Africa, only three mountain ranges have glaciers: the Ruwenzori Mountains in Uganda, Mount Kenya, and Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has reported that these three glaciers are projected to completely disappear by 2040. The same report indicates that these glaciers are insufficient to serve as water reserves in their respective areas. Therefore, on this 32nd World Water Day, African nations need to concentrate on safeguarding and enhancing the quality of surface and groundwater, which are their primary sources of freshwater supply and reserve. Groundwater refers to all the water located beneath the Earth's surface, found in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the soil or subsoil.

Per UNESCO, groundwater accounts for almost 98% of the Earth's unfrozen freshwater resources. It is also seen as a dependable source of drinking water in arid and semi-arid regions, as well as in nations where connections to drinking water supply systems still have gaps or issues, regardless of their causes. Therefore, it is crucial, if not imperative, to safeguard it from all forms of pollution, especially anthropogenic pollution (i.e., pollution caused by humans), which is one of the primary contributors to the contamination of both groundwater and surface water, with the latter being particularly vulnerable to human-induced pollution.

In nations lacking a reliable and efficient system for wastewater collection, disposal, and treatment, septic tanks and cesspools are the primary contributors to groundwater contamination, which in turn leads to the rise of waterborne illnesses, including typhoid fever, dysentery, and even cholera. These diseases frequently emerge in several African nations and have already resulted in the deaths of many individuals across the continent. These pits are usually not impermeable, they lead to the contamination of groundwater, which serves as the water supply for a significant number of households through wells or boreholes, either diffusely or by means of infiltration. It is evident that numerous African nations, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, lack wastewater treatment facilities, not to mention a dependable wastewater collection infrastructure. In these regions, wastewater is discharged directly into the environment, primarily into various waterways, without undergoing any treatment.

These watercourses are the primary, or sometimes only, source of water for many rural areas and even some urban populations in various African nations. The contaminated waterways and stagnant pools of unhealthy water that arise from improper disposal of wastewater serve as breeding sites for the outbreak and transmission of waterborne and skin diseases, as well as malaria.

The relevant authorities must implement essential actions to maintain the quality of these water resources. This will start with replacing individual septic tanks in each property with a centralized system for wastewater collection and disposal, along with the establishment of wastewater treatment

facilities. These urgent measures will enhance and safeguard the quality of both surface and groundwater, thereby significantly decreasing the incidence of waterborne illnesses and even malaria, which affected 263 million individuals globally and resulted in 597,000 fatalities in 2023, as reported by the WHO.

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