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UNEP: Topic #2 - Clean Water Availability

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In recent years, water scarcity, or the lack of fresh water resources to meet the standard water demand, has affected more than 40% of the world's population. Unsafe water, inadequate sanitation, and insufficient hygiene kill 3.5 million people every year.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations took a clear stance on this topic as expressed in 2010, saying "the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights."<sup>2</sup>

Despite this emphasis, the presence of contaminated water and a lack of basic sanitation continue to undermine efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and disease in the world's most impoverished countries, significantly compromising the quality of life for millions of people around the globe.<sup>3</sup> A lack of access to clean water in a community also raises the likelihood of child mortality by 10 to 20 times when compared to areas with consistent access to clear and clean water.<sup>4</sup>

These dangers exacerbate the phenomenon of increasing "water inequality," where more affluent countries can effectively supply their citizens with clean water, while citizens of poorer countries suffer and are unable to realize their fundamental human right to clean water.<sup>5</sup> This inequality is starkly represented by "day zero" measures in different parts of the world, where water supplies are completely shut off for a period of time, representing a misallocation of this vital resource away from those who need it most.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter/goal-6>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ohchr.org/en/water-and-sanitation/about-water-and-sanitation#:~:text=OHCHR%20and%20the%20rights%20to%20water%20and%20sanitation,-Overview&text=On%2028%20July%202010%2C%20the,RES%2F64%2F292\).](https://www.ohchr.org/en/water-and-sanitation/about-water-and-sanitation#:~:text=OHCHR%20and%20the%20rights%20to%20water%20and%20sanitation,-Overview&text=On%2028%20July%202010%2C%20the,RES%2F64%2F292).)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/water>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/resource-efficiency/what-we-do/cities/water-and-sanitation>

<sup>5</sup> <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/water-inequality/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/10/water-inequality-developing-world-usa-west/>

To adequately address water inequality and ensure universal access to clean water in all countries, the international community must collaborate and devise innovative strategies to allocate resources as we progress further into the 21st century.

The following questions are meant to guide you in your research of the topic:

- How is your country impacted by water scarcity?
  - What is the primary cause of drinking water contamination in your country?
- What unique experiences and perspectives can your country bring to the table when discussing the future of water reallocation to combat water inequality?
- What are the key priorities for UNEP to concentrate on to guarantee the availability of clean drinking water to people of all countries?
- What are the most pressing issues regarding clean water availability and water inequality, and how can countries work together to resolve these issues?

Keep in mind that these questions are meant to guide your research, and not to limit it. Feel free to address more questions and come up with more solutions that relate to the topic, while representing the views of your country. Additionally, make sure to cite sources that you use in your research, as all submitted papers will be run through Turn-It-In to check for plagiarism, which will not be tolerated. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at [rsapers1@mail.yu.edu](mailto:rsapers1@mail.yu.edu). I look forward to addressing these important questions with you all!

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