



World Water Day raises the profile of water quality

Countries around the world will be observing World Water Day on Monday 22 March, which each year serves as a timely reminder that we need to actively preserve this increasingly scarce resource, says Water New Zealand's Susannah Peddie.

"Observed since 1993, the theme for 2010 is Clean Water for a Healthy World. While first world nations take adequate supplies of clean water as a given, this is not the case across most of the globe," she said.

"About 1 billion people lack access to clean water and use about 5 litres a day, which is one tenth of the average daily amount used in rich countries just to flush toilets. For women and girls the reality of living in such conditions is that up to three hours daily is spent physically carrying often contaminated water from source to dwelling places."

"Over 2.5 billion, one third of the world's people lack access to adequate sanitation."

"Adequacy of water supply and sanitation are coupled, since, without sufficient water for sewage disposal, cross-contamination of drinking water with untreated sewage is likely to occur," said Miss Peddie.

"With a third of the world now water stressed, New Zealanders by and large take it for granted, because we are so rich in the resource. Here we think nothing of consuming over 500 litres per person per day in some non metered communities."

"Each year thousands of cubic kilometres of wastewater are produced globally, and in developing countries 80 percent of it is being discharged untreated. Combined with urbanisation, population and industrial growth, this sewage threatens human and environmental health, drinking and agricultural water supplies both now and for the future."

"Various estimates put human deaths at 5 million annually from water borne enteric diseases, of which 2 million are infants and children. This is 10 times the number that dies annually from wars," said Miss Peddie.

"World Water Day will be celebrated with activities across the globe to raise the profile of water in the public consciousness. There will be walks for water, photography competitions, even a facebook group. Here in New Zealand, Oxfam held two sponsored corporate water challenges over the weekend in Auckland and Tauranga, which saw teams of four racing to carry 20 litres of water across the finish line. Activities like this all help to raise awareness of the resource."