Water is on the verge of becoming a serious problem. Within the next decade, areas of strategic value to the United States will experience an increase in water-related problems, such as shortages, poor water quality, or floods. Meanwhile, fresh water availability will not keep up with quickly growing populations due to ineffective water resource management. These problems will create instability, regional tensions, possible state failure, and lack of cooperation with U.S. policy objectives. The synthesis of these issues will further limit the production of food and energy, creating a global food crisis and the attendant economic and security difficulties for the U.S. and the world.

The failure of the international aid community, states, and local organizations to satisfy the basic human need for water has led to unnecessary and preventable human suffering on a large scale. Over one billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and an additional two and a half billion more live without adequate access to adequate sanitation systems, increasing their exposure to waterborne diseases. On average, a child dies from a water-related disease every 15 seconds, according to a 2006 United Nations report. One billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and an additional two and a half billion more live without adequate access to adequate sanitation systems, increasing their exposure to waterborne diseases. On average, a child dies from a water-related disease every 15 seconds, according to a 2006 United Nations report.

Nor Any Drop to Drink: Global Water Security is Key to U.S. Long-Term Security

Cori W. Curtis

The U.S. is in the position to lead the quest to improve water security. The U.S. should utilize the importance of water to build international and regional state and non-state relationships toward the United States, both developed and developing countries, to achieve their food security. The U.S. can do this by leading a global water initiative. This initiative should encompass experts and practitioners from the U.S., international organizations, and donor countries to support or halt water infrastructure projects. The U.S. should continue development and investment in water resource management expertise and other countries to achieve their food security.

The U.S. has led the way in creating and implementing initiatives to improve water security. The U.S. should continue to lead, support, and coordinate its academic and industrial partners in the quest to improve water management. Active American engagement to resolve water challenges will improve U.S. influence and may forestall other actors achieving the same influence at the United States’ expense.