

In Papua New Guinea, most people don't have access to clean water

By Carla Kweifio-Okai, The Guardian, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.25.16

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Children fetch drinking water at a pump well in Myanmar, Aug 5, 2015. World Water Day is held every year on March 22. It is a day for understanding problems related to water. A group called WaterAid said that Papua New Guinea is the hardest place in the world to get clean water. Photo: AP/Khin Maung Win. BOTTOM: A vendor delivers water to residents in Papua New Guinea. Tom Greenwood/WaterAid

A new report shows that Papua New Guinea has the worst access to clean water in the world. It is difficult for many people in this South Pacific country, located near Australia, to get clean water. In fact, 60 percent of the population live without a clean water supply.

This report was released on World Water Day 2016. World Water Day is held on March 22 every year. It is a day for the world to talk about problems related to water. This year the charity WaterAid released a report on the problem of water access. It looked at how hard it is to get clean water.

WaterAid's report ranked countries based on how hard it is for families to get clean water. Papua New



Guinea was ranked last. The four countries with the next lowest rankings were all located in Africa. These countries were Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Chad and Mozambique.

Everyone Needs Clean Water

Clean water is important for all people, everywhere. However, not everyone has a way to get clean water. Around the world, there are 650 million people who do not have an "improved" source of drinking water. "Improved" sources of water are ways to get water that have been made better by people. Two "improved" sources of water are protected wells and water piped into households.

"Unimproved" water sources might come straight from the ground, such as rivers and ponds.

Henry Northover is a member of WaterAid. He said these water problems were not due to a limited supply of water. Instead, Northover said the problems were because of the difficulty of getting clean water to people.

Water Costs More For The Poor

WaterAid's report also explained why the poorest people pay the most money for water. When there is no public access to clean water, people are forced to buy their water from others. Not everyone who sells water charges a fair price. In fact, those who both sell and deliver water often charge very high prices.

The capital of Papua New Guinea is Port Moresby. In this city, the cost of 50 litres (13.2 gallons) of water from a delivery service is £1.84 (\$2.61). This water costs half a day's pay for some workers. In the U.K., which has piped water, the same amount of water costs only £0.07 (\$0.10).

The following chart shows how much of a day's pay is spent on water in four countries. Three are countries without public access to clean water. The other country is the U.K.:

Northover made this point another way. He said that if you live in country without public water access, you pay more for water "than if you were living in Manhattan."

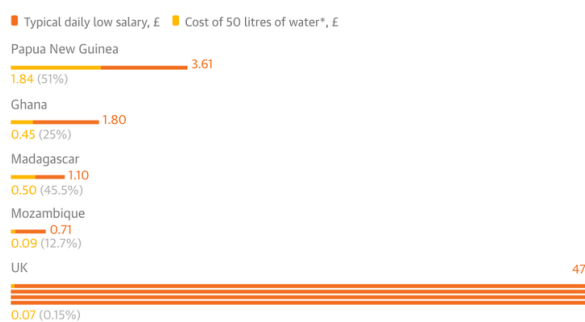
It's Not All Bad News

WaterAid's report was not all bad news. It also showed that some water problems are being solved.

For example, 2.6 billion people around the world have gained access to clean water since 1990. Cambodia, a country in Southeast Asia, has had the greatest improvement in this area. This chart shows which other countries have gained the most access to safe water:

In 2001, many countries from around the world united to achieve a set of goals. These were called millennium development goals, or MDGs. Each goal was one way to improve life for people living in poverty. One MDG was to cut in half the number of people without access to safe drinking water.

The cost of water



*The WHO specifies 50 litres per person per day as the recommended 'intermediate' quantity needed to maintain health, hygiene and for all domestic uses. Source: WaterAid

This MDG was achieved in 2015. However, WaterAid's Northover thinks there is still more work to do.

"The MDG target was met, but that was largely due to progress made in China and Southeast Asia," Northover noted.

"We know it's still achievable," Northover said of making clean water available to more people. "Many countries have proved it's possible." Still, he does not want to celebrate success in just one country or one region. Northover wants clean water to be available to all people, everywhere.

Increasing access to safe water

Country	Increase between 2000 and 2015 (percentage points)	Percentage of population with access to safe water in 2015
Cambodia	33.9	75.5
Mali	30.4	77.0
Laos	30.2	75.7
Ethiopia	28.4	57.3
Malawi	27.7	90.2
Guinea-Bissau	27.2	79.3
Afghanistan	25.0	55.3
Paraguay	24.6	98.0
Uganda	22.6	79.0
Burkina Faso	22.4	82.3