



THINK NAMIBIA

FACT SHEET ON:

Saving Water

Practical Options For Conserving Water At Home

Water is a precious resource, particularly for an arid country like Namibia. Unfortunately, the large amount of water used by households has a significant environmental impact, so saving water means protecting the environment and sustaining our long-term development. The purpose of this fact sheet is to share information on simple practices that save water, energy, and money whilst protecting the environment.

Introduction

Water is important for all forms of life. The availability of water, amongst many factors, sets the limit to the amount of life that can exist in any landscape.

As human populations and economies grow, so does the demand for water while the availability of the resource may remain relatively unchanged. As demand increases, it is increasingly important to manage and use water more carefully to ensure there is enough for all, including the environment.

It is predicted that, even without the additional stresses of climate change on the water resources in Namibia, demand will have surpassed the installed abstraction capacity by 2015 (*Republic of Namibia, 2011*).

Namibia aims to address its increasing water scarcity through both supply- and demand-side interventions within a framework of Integrated Water Resources Management (IBID). The focus is on measures to reduce evaporation and improving water resource use efficiency.

Did you know?

70%

OF THE EARTH'S SURFACE IS WATER

97%

OF THE EARTH'S WATER IS IN THE OCEANS AND SEAS - 3% IS FRESH WATER IN GLACIERS, LAKES, GROUND WATER, RIVERS, AND THE ATMOSPHERE.



WATER IS A FINITE RESOURCE, WHICH MEANS THAT WE DO NOT HAVE AN ENDLESS SUPPLY. LESS THAN 1% OF ALL THE WATER ON EARTH CAN BE USED BY PEOPLE SO THE REST IS EITHER PERMANENTLY FROZEN OR IS SALT WATER.



NAMIBIA IS THE DRIEST COUNTRY SOUTH OF THE SAHARA AND WATER IS SCARCE.



ALL THE RIVERS IN NAMIBIA'S INTERIOR ARE EPHEMERAL, WHICH MEANS THEY FLOW ONLY AFTER INTENSIVE RAINS. THEIR SURFACE WATER POTENTIAL IS LIMITED BECAUSE THEY RELY DIRECTLY ON VARIABLE (OFTEN LOW) RAINFALL.

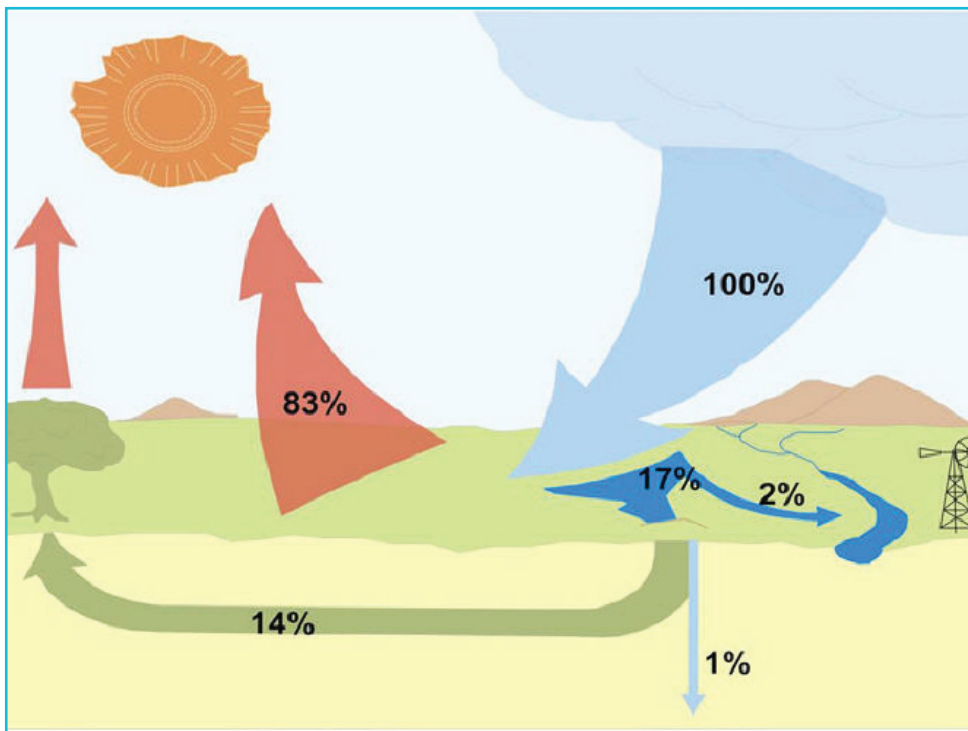


FIGURE 1:
Quantities for the
water cycle applicable
to Namibia

(Source : <http://www.iwrm-namibia.info.na/images/sml127440a2070c-c0c112.jpg>)

Currently, of the water that falls as rainfall in Namibia, 83% evaporates, 1% recharges groundwater, 14% returns to the atmosphere through evapotranspiration, with only 2% remaining for runoff and potential surface water storage.



Do not use the toilet as a waste basket - Every time you flush a facial tissue or other small bit of rubbish, you waste up to 12 litres of water for an old style toilet, while the new one uses up to 9 litres.



Flush with less water - You can reduce the amount of water used by your flush toilet by placing a brick or two water-filled 500 ml plastic bottles in your cistern. If you flush the toilet five times in day, you use on average 50 litres of water. This is the basic amount of clean water that a rural person needs for an entire day's household requirements.



Save water when bathing - The bathroom is usually the largest consumer of water in any household. Installing a water-saving showerhead and a timer in your shower can dramatically reduce your water use. A standard showerhead may use up to 25 litres of water per minute whereas a water-efficient showerhead will use as little as seven litres per minute. In addition, limit your shower time to 5 minutes. The average 5-minute shower requires only 40 litres of water. When bathing in a tub, you use between 150 and 200 litres of water. As such, ensure your tub is not filled beyond a 10cm depth.

Why saving water matters?

- Water is necessary to sustain life - water equals life. However, fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource.
- Water is the primary limiting factor to development in Namibia.
- If you use less water you also save on energy.
- Water is important for protecting and sustaining vital ecosystems.

Some practical tips for saving water at home



Turn off the tap when you brush your teeth - This can save 6 litres of water per minute. The same is true when washing dishes. Do not wash dishes with running water in the sink.



Keeping a bottle of drinking water in the refrigerator - Running tap water to cool it off for drinking is wasteful. If you do not drink all of the water in your glass, rather than throwing the rest down the drain, use it to water a plant.



Always use full loads in your washing machine and dishwasher - This cuts out unnecessary washes in between. Set your washing machine to an appropriate water level when doing your laundry. You can also save energy by washing in cold water. Front loading washing machines use significantly less water than top loaders, and also require less energy and soap. While the investment may be higher to begin with – in the long term they will save water, energy and money.



Fix a dripping tap - If you cannot completely close a tap, then you need to replace the washer. Washers are cheap and easy to replace. A dripping tap can waste up to 60 litres of water a day, which adds up to 1800 litres a month.



Find and fix leaks - You can check whether you have leaks in your system or not by turning off all taps and seeing if the water meter is still running. Read your water meter regularly, at least once per month. Leaks should be fixed as soon as they are noticed or huge amounts of water can be wasted.



Do not break or damage water pipelines - If you live in an area where water is supplied by pipeline, do not damage it in any way. Not only does this waste water but it also denies people down the pipeline access to water.



Water your garden with a watering can rather than a hosepipe - A hosepipe uses 1,000 litres of water an hour. Mulching your plants (with bark chippings, heavy compost or straw) and watering in the early morning and late afternoon will reduce evaporation and also save water. You can also reduce the need to water your garden by planting drought tolerant native plants. Ask your local nursery for advice.



Purchase and use water saving devices - Invest in water-efficient and water saving devices when you need to replace household products. These include water-efficient showerheads, taps, low-flush toilets, washing machines, dishwashers, taps which turn themselves off and many other water-saving products.



Use a bucket to wash cars - Instead of using a hose pipe or a pressured nozzle, use a bucket to wash, it could save up to 90% of the water you might usually use for washing your car.



Sweep the pavement - Use a broom, not a hose to clean pavements, driveways, patios, and sidewalks.



Reuse grey water - Install a water butt to your drainpipe and use the water collected to water your plants, clean your car and wash your windows.



FIGURE 2:
Grey water system in Omaheke region (piloted by DRFN)

Conclusion

We all use water for many different things, but while using it we should always remember that water use today should not jeopardize the quality or quantity available in the future. So play your role by conserving water through adopting a new approach to water use. Use water efficiently, reuse, recycle and conserve this finite resource.

Glossary:

Grey water

Refers to all waste water generated from households. This untreated waste water should not contain any faecal matter. Grey water is normally generated from the kitchen sink, shower, bath tub, washing machine, dish washer and any other household activities excluding the toilet.

Blue water

Refers to fresh surface and groundwater, in other words, the water in freshwater lakes, rivers and aquifers.

Green water

Refers to the precipitation on land that does not run off or recharge the groundwater but is stored in the soil or temporarily stays on top of the soil or vegetation. Eventually, this part of precipitation evaporates or transpires through plants.

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