

by Christopher Murphy

Going with the Flow

“Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.”

—From *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

EARTH IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE “BLUE PLANET” because of the almost profligate abundance of water on its surface compared to the other planets in our solar system. It is estimated that 71.11 percent of the earth is covered by water. But of this total, UNESCO has estimated that 97.5 percent is salt water. Of the remaining 2.5 percent, approximately 68.9 percent is currently locked up in glaciers and permanent snow pack, 30.8 percent is groundwater, swamp water, or permafrost, and just three tenths of one percent is relatively easily accessible in lakes and rivers.

Although Earth’s water is portioned in this manner, most nations of the world currently have adequate supplies for drinking, agriculture, and industry. But population growth, pollution, and other factors, especially in underdeveloped and poor areas of many parts of the globe—most notably in Africa and the Middle East—are already experiencing significant shortages of clean, potable water. And even in highly developed but arid regions, such as the southwestern United States, heavy agricultural usage of limited supplies of locally available water is verging on the possibility of long-term shortages, which could affect world food supplies down the road.

To assist with this seemingly slow-moving, but inevitable crisis, many colleges and universities around the world are applying their know-how and resources to find solutions, both on the small scale—such as village rain collection projects and wells—and on the macro scale—including regional and even global hydrology studies intended to head off large-scale calamities and international tensions resulting from shortages of this indispensable resource.

In this issue of *International Educator*, Karen Leggett examines a number of university-led projects that are marshalling the efforts of faculty, students, administrators, donors, and others in the higher education community. These projects have helped in many ways and in many locations around the globe, while also developing intercultural awareness, language acquisition, and professional development, for the students who participate.

Also in This Issue...

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