UN: 500 Million Live in 19 African Nations Deemed Water Insecure

1st assessment of water security in Africa is based on 10 indicators

HAMILTON, ONTARIO, CANADA, March 21, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Despite global Sustainable Development Goals and commitments made in 2015, just 29 African nations have made some progress over the past three to five years, 25 have made none, according to the UN's first-ever assessment of water security in Africa.

Published on the eve of World Water Day (March 22) by [UN University's Canadian-based Institute for Water Environment and Health](#), the assessment employed 10 indicators to quantify water security in Africa's 54 countries. Water security is elaborated below.

UNU-INWEH authors Grace Oluwasanya, Duminda Perera, Manzoor Qadir and Vladimir Smakhtin, the Institute's Director, say the assessment is limited by "very poor" data on water security-related issues such as access to drinking water or sanitation, but it nevertheless offers some "preliminary but obvious conclusions."

Cover of the report, "Water Security in Africa: A Preliminary Assessment," by the UN University Institute for Water Environment and Health (UNU-INWEH)

"Data limitations do not change the main outcome of this assessment, which is strong and clear," says lead author Grace Oluwasanya. "Overall levels of water security in Africa are low. Not a single country let alone a subregion have at present achieved a state that can be seen as 'model' or even 'effective' stage of water security."

Says co-author Duminda Perera: "This assessment for African countries aimed to create a quantitative starting point and a platform for subsequent discussions with national, regional and international agents; it is neither a prescription nor a guide."

"As this quantitative tool develops, it will help generate targeted policy recommendations and inform decision-making and public-private investments toward achieving water security in Africa."
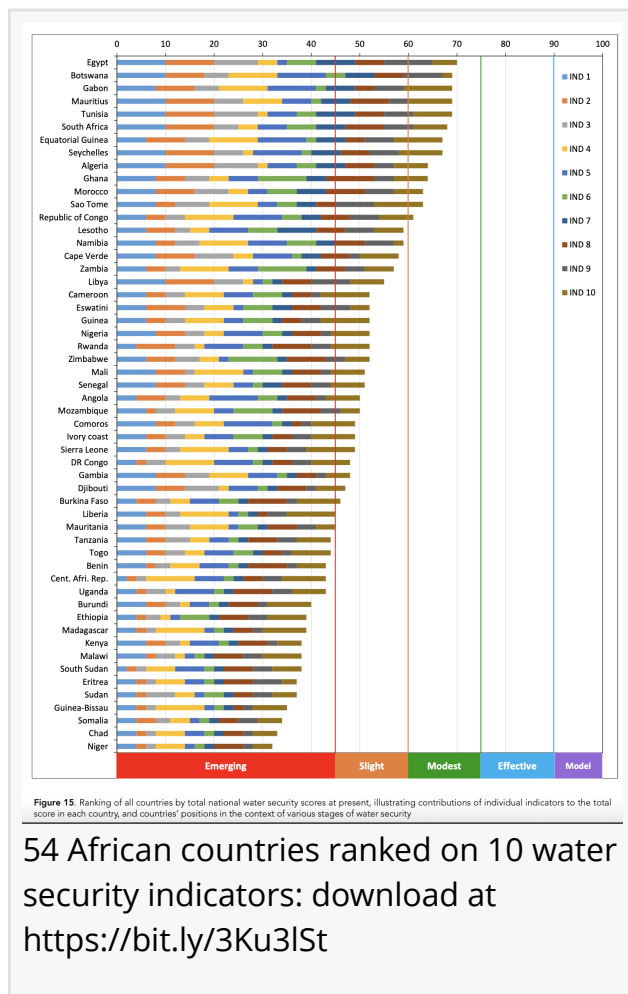
Results in brief
Overall

Except for Egypt, all country scores are below 70 (on a scale of 100). Only 13 of 54 countries reached a modest level of water security in recent years, and over a third are deemed to have levels of water security below the threshold of 45.

Together, the 19 countries below the threshold are home to half a billion people.

Egypt, Botswana, Gabon, Mauritius and Tunisia are Africa's top five most water-secure countries in Africa, yet with only modest absolute levels of water security achieved.

Figure 15. Ranking of all countries by total national water security scores at present, illustrating contributions of individual indicators to the total score in each country, and countries' positions in the context of various stages of water security

54 African countries ranked on 10 water security indicators: download at https://bit.ly/3Ku3lSt

Somalia, Chad and Niger appear to be the least water-secure countries in Africa.

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>
> *Grace Oluwasanya, UNU-INWEH*

There has been little progress in national water security of most African states over the past three to five years, the report finds. The number of countries that made some progress (29) is close to the number of those that made none (25).

See news release in full at https://bit.ly/3CT8dhG for overall results in Africa based on these 10 indicators:
Indicator 1: Access to drinking water
Indicator 2: Access to sanitation
Indicator 3: Access to hygiene facilities and practices (e.g. hand washing)
Indicator 4: Per capita water availability

Indicator 5: Water use efficiency
Indicator 6: Water infrastructure
Indicator 7: Wastewater treatment

Indicator 8: Water governance
Indicator 9: Disaster risk
Indicator 10: Water dependency on neighboring nations and water resources variability

Call for global standards

To compare Africa's situation globally, the authors call for global standards for water security measurement data and assessment.

UNU-INWEH logo

"Some critical components of water security simply cannot be assessed without introducing surrogates or proxies," as used in the report in the case of drinking water and sanitation, for example.

"With such poor data availability, progress toward water security is difficult to assess accurately."

For example, it is not possible to estimate the percentage of the African population that will have access to safely managed drinking water services or safely managed sanitation by 2030, a key UN Sustainable Development Goal globally agreed in 2015.

"Data availability – or the lack of it – in itself may be an excellent indicator of water security," says Dr. Oluwasanya. "Action needs to be taken immediately by national governments with support from international agents to radically improve data collection efforts for Africa."

What is water security?

The UN's concept of water security encompasses various needs and conditions — water for drinking, economic activity, ecosystems, hazard resilience, governance, transboundary cooperation, financing, and political stability.
See https://bit.ly/3hUzIh4

Hence water security is not just about how much natural water a country has but also how well the resource is managed. It is defined as "The capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability."

UNU-INWEH led the UN's development and definition of water security and its related tools are

now the most widely-accepted in the world. This was a fundamental milestone, contributing to conceptualization of the SDGs and to on-going efforts to assess national water security in a quantifiable way.

The assessment tool is still a work in progress, Dr. Smakhtin notes, adding that UNU-INWEH's goal is to have by 2025 — five years before the deadline for meeting the UN's Agenda 2030 — "an improved, influential and nationally-owned tool" for assessing water security in all African countries.

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