# #WorldWaterLossDay: Water Loss In India – The Biggest Challenge

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SPML Infra Limited World Water Loss Day

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By Subhash Sethi, Chairman, SPML Infra Limited

**On World Water Loss Day today, Subhash Sethi, Chairman, SPML Infra Limited has shared his views with Smart Water & Waste World team to tackle this issue.**

Damaged Supply Line in Bengaluru, India

Estimated global water losses from drinking water supply networks are 34.6 billion liters per day. If these water losses were reduced by only 30%, 800 million people could be supplied with clean and treated drinking water globally.

Water Loss or Non-Revenue Water (NRW) is treated and cleaned water that is lost in the water distribution system and never reaching its final destination. This amount of water is not used for the purposes it was meant and paid for thus affecting the economies as well as resources of the water utilities. This a universal problem across the globe and it varies from developed to under-developed nations and the quantity of water loss varies from about 5% to as much as 80% in certain areas. A recent study conducted by the Global Water Intelligence (GWI) in the world's top 40 water markets shows that the water loss is properly managed in Netherland with 4%, Denmark with 6% to Japan having 7% and very poorly managed in countries like India with almost 50%, Jordan having 47% and Algeria with 45% being at the bottom of the water loss pyramid within the top water-markets. The ratio is much higher in the under-developed nations across the globe where it reaches as much as 80% of the total supplied water.

India's over one-third of the population is living in cities and the trends of urbanization are quite faster than what was planned. The urban population is set to grow to half of the total populace in a matter of a few years. This change in living standards has already started putting major pressure on water supply services in the cities. The water infrastructure in most of our cities is very old with vulnerable water distribution networks having aged pipelines that are well beyond their useful life cycle but still in use. These service networks of water supply are very often breaking and continuously leaking that not only interrupts the normal supply to customers but also driving up costs for the utilities.

The traditional water resource in India is being confronted with a serious challenge and over 600 million people in the country have started facing the severe nature of water scarcity. Many large cities in India including Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad have been affected by the shortage of water. The situation is deteriorating faster than any assumptions and it is projected that more than 40% of India's population will have no access to drinking water by 2030.

If we consider the GWI report on water loss estimation in the country, the situation is very stressful as it is not only the loss of water that matters; there is another big issue of water contamination due to dilapidated supply networks. More than 2,00,000 people die every year in India due to inadequate access to safe water. The NitiAayog has also flagged the issue that almost 70% of our water sources are already been contaminated with hazardous chemicals and pathogens.

The water utilities in India are struggling to provide clean drinking water to increasing urban populations and expanding service areas with a high level of water loss. Reducing water losses is critical to efficient resource utilization, efficient utility management, enhanced consumer satisfaction, and reduction in capital-intensive capacity addition. The utility which has initiated and sustained water loss management programs have significantly gained in terms of financial returns and better consumer services.

Bangalore's water loss management project is an example that has delivered good results in terms of reducing water losses and non-revenue water. SPML Infra Limited is executing this project and helped the client, Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board in significantly reducing water losses from a staggering 56% to about 27% thus saving 40 million liters of potable treated water per day. The saved water is being used to provide drinking water facilities to 110 extended colonies of Bengaluru.

Reducing water losses is very important for the efficiency and financial sustainability of the water utilities in India. Although it is not possible to eliminate the water losses completely, even reducing it by half of the current level in cities appears a realistic target. If we can achieve this much reduction, the utilities can save a good amount of money every year from both increased revenues and reduced costs and can service the increasing demand without much investments in production facilities or drawing further on scarce water resources.

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