Managing urban waters in Africa: challenges ahead

Cape Town's current water crisis should be a wake-up call to improve urban water services across Africa. By ASIT K BISWAS and CECILIA TORTAJADA

Urban water and wastewater management systems have been unsustainable in many developing countries for centuries. The situation in African countries is deteriorating to such an extent that a water crisis is expected to continue to worsen until at least 2050, according to the United Nations. By 2050, Africa's population is expected to reach 1.3 billion people, nearly double the current population of 700 million. However, many African countries lack the infrastructure and technology to provide clean and safe water to their citizens.

The problems in the water sector in many African countries are largely due to a lack of investment and poor management. This has led to a situation where the demand for water is not being met, and people are forced to rely on unsafe and unclean sources of water. The problem is further compounded by the fact that many African countries have a high rate of population growth, which puts a strain on the water supply system.

One of the main reasons for this situation is the lack of investment in the water sector. Many African countries lack the funds to build and maintain water infrastructure. This is particularly true in rural areas, where the demand for water is highest but the funding is lowest. The lack of investment has been compounded by the fact that many African countries lack the necessary technical expertise to manage their water systems effectively.

Another problem is the lack of political will to address the water crisis. Many African countries lack a strong political commitment to addressing the water crisis. This is particularly true in countries where political instability is a common occurrence. The lack of political will is further compounded by the fact that many African countries lack the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks to address the water crisis.

The situation in Cape Town is particularly concerning. The city is facing a severe water crisis, and the government has imposed strict water use restrictions to try to conserve the remaining water supply. This has led to many residents being forced to rely on boreholes for their water supply, which is not always safe and clean.

The government has been criticized for its slow response to the water crisis, and many residents have expressed frustration at the lack of action. The government has announced plans to build new water treatment plants and to improve the infrastructure, but these plans will take time to implement.

Despite these challenges, there is hope that the situation can be improved. Many organizations are working to address the water crisis in Africa, and there are many innovative solutions being developed. However, the situation requires a long-term commitment and a significant amount of investment to be successful.

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