

# 6 To Fetch a Pail of Water

A mother and her children take turns trekking 14 km to the nearest water source. The journey is exhausting. They each carry a bucket weighing up to 20 kg, causing backache and, over the years, spinal injury. Some women have been picked on by men; others have been attacked by stray dogs or bitten by snakes. Water is so hard to come by that there is barely sufficient for drinking.

Fetching water prevents mothers from looking after their children and generating household income. The time children spend carrying heavy buckets, queuing at the water source or being sick with diarrhoea could be spent in school or on other productive tasks. In urban slums, paying hefty sums of money to a water vendor may be the only way to obtain drinking water at all.

With scarcely enough water to quench children's thirst, even less remains for hand-washing. Dirty, insufficient water causes diarrhoea and other intestinal diseases in children: the worst hit families often have no access to medical care and are least able to pay for the cost of treatment, such as oral rehydration salts.

Difficulty in obtaining water causes disease, and denies families opportunities for education and income generation, perpetuating poverty.

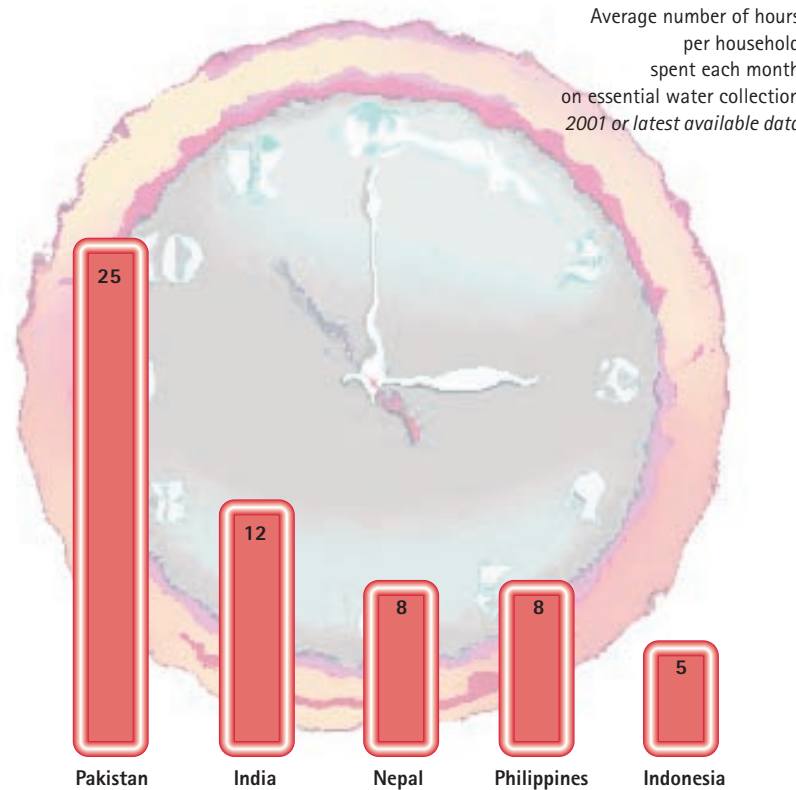


**A heavy burden**

Percentage of people who must travel more than half an hour to fetch water and return home 2001 or latest available data

- over 50%
- 26% – 50%
- 25% and over
- no data

## Time ticking away



Time spent on water collection represents time lost to household and national economies. Every month, the Indian economy misses out on over 100 million working days in this way. With its large population, Asia loses more time than any other continent.

