

# Who Owns Your Water?

**Water is essential for life.** Yet, more than one billion people lack access to clean drinking water, 31 countries face water scarcity, and water sources are rapidly being polluted and depleted. By 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will face water shortages. In the U.S. consumers are finding it harder to pay the increased costs of our essential services such as water.

***Water must be kept affordable for all to ensure universal access, in the U.S. and internationally.***

Access to safe and affordable water is essential to public health and welfare. 6,000 children die every day from diseases due to the lack of clean and affordable water – primarily in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Universal access to safe, affordable water is an unfulfilled promise in much of the developing world.

***We have an obligation to fund water infrastructure.***

Several multinational corporations have exploited the lack of funding for water infrastructure to privatize water and have manipulated governments, global trade agreements and international financial institutions to let them profit from water. They often get public subsidies to do



**Watch the new film on prepaid water – *A Drop of Life***

Set in the near future, the film, *A Drop of Life*, is a tale of two women whose disparate lives intersect when they each experience inhumane lack of clean drinking water.

Mirabai, an impassioned schoolteacher, witnesses growing illness among the village children after a pre-paid water meter is installed. Nia, an ambitious young African-American water executive, goes Mirabai's village to demonstrate a new pre-paid water pump credit card.



Watch what happens! Check out the trailer on <http://www.adropoflife.tv/trailer.html> or host a showing of the movie in your community.

their dirty work. When water is privatized accountability is undercut and prices increase. These corporations are not concerned about providing full access – but concentrate on profits for their investors.

Access to safe, clean and affordable water is a right. Our essential water resources should not be controlled by private corporations with a profit interest.

## Say NO to prepaid water meters

Imagine having to insert a coin in your faucet every time you wanted a glass of water or needed water to cook rice. It sounds absurd but it's a reality that many poor people are forced to suffer.

There are several types of prepaid water meters but the outcome is the same: If you cannot pay upfront, you are unable to access water. Water from prepaid water meters costs more than water billed from the utility. Prepaid water meters are used in poor neighborhoods, and as a result, those in most need are denied access to water.

Following privatization of water in the U.K. in the 1990's, several water utilities installed prepaid water meters in low-income areas. They were eventually outlawed due to the negative social and health effects on users who could no longer afford the water and simply went without.

But prepaid water meters are still widely used in South Africa, as well as in countries such as Brazil, the United States, the Philippines, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Brazil, Nigeria, and Curacao.

Large corporations seek to:

- **Buy and sell** water rights
- **Privatize** public water systems, increase rates and cut off water to those who can't afford it
- **Lobby** to weaken water quality standards and increase public handouts in the form of corporate subsidies
- **Push** for trade agreements that open local water resources to corporations, undermine local democracy and regulatory oversight.

### For more information:

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Municipal water is more tightly regulated than bottled water and tests shows high level of contamination in bottled water.

## What can I do?

### Know Your Water

Is your water clean? Is it affordable to all people in your community? Is it owned by a private company or overseen by local officials? In the U.S. water utilities are obliged to share their annual Water Quality Report. Ask if there is an affordability policy, and if not suggest that your community gets one. If your water is private contact us for more information at [water@fwwatch.org](mailto:water@fwwatch.org).

### Avoid Bottled Water

With glossy ads and labels depicting quiet mountain streams, a consumer is led to believe what they're drinking is healthier than what comes from the tap. But chances are it's not. In fact, municipal water is more tightly regulated than bottled water and tests shows high level of contamination in bottled water. Read more about bottled water at [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org).

### Get Involved

Stay updated by joining Food & Water Watch's Water-for-All e-mail list (two to three e-mails per month). We share urgent actions you can take to support the right to water, fight the use of prepaid water meters and learn more about your water. You can sign up on our website or contact us at [water@fwwatch.org](mailto:water@fwwatch.org).

### Do Something Now

Host a film screening at your school, place of worship, workplace, community group, or neighborhood. Sign up to host a screening of *A Drop of Life*, email [kshalini@riseup.net](mailto:kshalini@riseup.net). You could also start a "water film series" – borrow films from Food & Water Watch's Film Library [www.foodandwaterwatch.org/films/films](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/films/films) or call us at (202) 797-6550.