

# Water and the Community

Wangari Maathai of Kenya, winner of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize, put it best when she said,

"When our resources become scarce, we fight over them. In managing our resources and in sustainable development, we plant the seeds of peace."

What does water mean to you? It sounds like a simple question, but it can have a complex answer. We know that people, animals, and plants cannot live without clean water, but we also know that too much water can cause streams to overflow, homes to flood, and plants to die.

Water-based technologies that help with energy generation and transportation have been in use since humans began spreading out around the world. Throughout history water, with many forms and functions, has been at the center of our communities, influencing our prosperity and driving innovation—both in times of plenty as well as in times of scarcity. Outlined below are a few of the many ways in which water continues to be the center of our global community.

## Purification

We all know people need clean drinking water to live, but how many people know where their water comes from? In some cases, people can get drinkable water directly from the ground by using a well. However, in most cases water must be purified before it is used. There are many different steps and methods to purify water. The steps and methods that are used depend on what needs to be removed from the water (contaminants), how much water needs to be purified, and the equipment available to use for purification.



## Conservation

If you live near an ocean, lake, or river, you may think that the world has endless water to drink. That isn't true, and many communities struggle to provide enough water for the people who live there. Many individuals, community groups, and businesses are focused on water conservation. There are many different ways to conserve water, including encouraging people to use less water and working at cleaning up lakes, streams, and oceans that are already contaminated.



## Distribution

A third thing to think about is how to get good drinking water from the water source to people's homes, schools, and community buildings. Historic records suggest the ancient Romans were the first ones to invent a way to get drinking water to people throughout the city—they invented aqueducts. Today many companies are thinking about and designing new ways to make sure everyone has clean water to drink, clean water to give to their animals, and clean water to use to grow their food.





