The Social and Environmental Impacts of Bottled Water

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Corporate Accountability International is a non-profit, membership-based, grassroots organization that works to protect people and the environment from dangerous and irresponsible corporate practices.

For 30 years, we have been waging winning campaigns that have resulted in getting some of the largest transnational corporations in the world to end their life-threatening abuses. Right now we are addressing one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today—water.
World Water Crisis

- Over 1 billion people lack access to clean, safe affordable drinking water.

- By 2025 two-thirds of the world’s population is predicted to lack access to water.

- The World Bank has predicted that the wars of tomorrow will be fought over water.

- The problem is exacerbated by global warming which is spreading droughts.
Water delivery day India
BACK WITH ENTREPRENEUR CHAD SEVERNSON. WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE ILLUSION OF BOTTLED WATER...

RIGHT, MARK. WE HAVE THE PUREST WATER SUPPLY IN THE WORLD, AND YET WE BUY BILLIONS OF BOTTLES OF THE STUFF!

COKE AND PEPSI BOTTLE MUNICIPAL TAP WATER AS “DASANI” AND “AQUAFINA” AND SELL IT TO US AT TWICE THE COST OF GASOLINE!

BOTTLED WATER IS A TRIUMPH OF PERCEIVED NEED OVER REASON – THE GREATEST MARKETING COUP IN HISTORY.

SO THAT’S WHAT INSPIRED ALPIN-DÁZ?

RIGHT. I JUST KNEW THE WORLD WAS READY FOR BOTTLED AIR!

AHH! LIKE A LITTLE WHIFF OF SWITZERLAND!

ACTUALLY, WE COLLECT IT IN NEWARK, BUT WHO CARES?
The Rise of Bottled Water

- Bottled water market tripled over past 10 years

- More than 75% of the people in this country drink bottled water.

- One in five Americans drink only bottled water even though bottled water is thousands of times more expensive than tap water.
Bottled Water Revenues

- In 2006 in the U.S., bottled water revenues were $15 billion – over $28,000 per minute – and 27.6 gallons of bottled water per person.

- Worldwide the bottled water market was estimated to be more than $100 billion in 2005.
Bottled Water Marketing

“It struck me that all you had to do is take water out of the ground and sell it for more than the price of wine, or for that matter oil.” Gustave Levin, former Chairman of Perrier

“We sell water...so we need to be clever.” Jeffery Caso, former Vice-President of Nestlé.

Advertising budgets run as high as $150 million each year.
Bottled Water vs. Tap Water

- Public water supplies in the U.S. deliver clean, safe, affordable drinking water.

- Studies have shown that bottled water is no safer than tap water.

- Bottled water is less regulated than our public tap water.
Environmental Impacts

- Making the plastic bottles for bottled water for sale in the U.S. required the equivalent of 17 million barrels of oil last year and generated 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide.

- To visualize the entire energy costs of the lifecycle of bottled water, imagine filling each bottle with a quarter of oil.
Environmental Impacts

- Each year, more than 4 billion pounds of PET plastic bottles end up in landfills or as roadside litter.

- Less than 20% of plastic water bottles are recycled.

- It can cost cities more than $70 million in tipping fee disposal costs alone, not including the costs of collection, trucking and litter removal. This is funding not available for other pressing city needs like water infrastructure and public safety.
Environmental Impacts

- Extraction: Some bottlers take water in large volumes from springs and aquifers, which can dry up wells, deplete wetlands and drain rivers.

- Water pumps can extract water 24/7, taking millions of gallons each day.
Mt Shasta: Proposed site for Nestle bottling operation
Social Impacts

- Up to 40% of bottled water comes from already treated municipal water systems; paid for at taxpayer expense. Water bottlers then sell this water back to the public at thousands of times the price, virtually unchanged.

- In 2007, 8.8 billion gallons of bottled water were sold in the U.S.

- In Tap Water Challenges across the country, people can’t tell a difference.
‘Tap Water Challenge’ in Seattle
Social Impacts

If the public and the future generations increasingly believe that the only place to get clean, safe drinking water is from a bottle, there will be decreased political support to fund our public water systems.

The funding gap between municipal water system capital needs and budget authority is presently $22 billion a year and increasing.
Is this the future of our drinking water?
Top 3 Reasons to Think Outside the Bottle

- It’s good for the environment
- It’s good for your institutions’ budgets
- It’s good for our public water systems
Actions to Think Outside the Bottle

- Take the Think Outside the Bottle Pledge
- Cancel contracts/reduce spending on bottled water.
- Promote your city or town’s local public tap water.
- Increase well-maintained water fountains in public spaces.
- Support public water infrastructure improvements.
CHALLENGE CORPORATE CONTROL OF WATER

Because bottle water often travels many miles from the source, results in the burning of massive amounts of fossil fuels, and contributes to landfill of plastic bottles winding up in our landfills.

Because bottled water often ignores community and the environmental impact of taking fresh water when they abstract water and build water plants to get local supply and groundwater.

Because bottled water is not any safer or more pure than tap water and public water systems are more highly regulated.

Because up to 44% of bottled water on the market comes from municipal water systems.

PLEDGING TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOTTLE MEANS:

- I will take action to support public water systems in my community and beyond.
- I will call on my local government to stop buying over bottled water in a way of reducing spending and packaging waste and showing support for our local water systems.

For more information, visit www.ThinkOutsideTheBottle.org

☐ I PLEDGE TO THINK OUTSIDE THE BOTTLE!

Name: ____________________________

Address: __________________________

Phone: ____________________________

E-mail: ____________________________

[options]
- [ ] YES! I WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED.
- [ ] NO

www.ThinkOutsideTheBottle.org

A Bottled Water Free Establishment

Think Outside the Bottle: A Guide to Bottled Water Alternatives

www.ResponsiblePurchasing.org
What is Happening Today?

- In June the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution encouraging cities to phase out spending on bottled water.

- More than 60 cities have taken action to reduce spending on bottled water.

- Some saving as much as $500,000 a year by cancelling contracts.

- Dozens of restaurants, schools, and other institutions have also taken the Pledge.
Contact

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