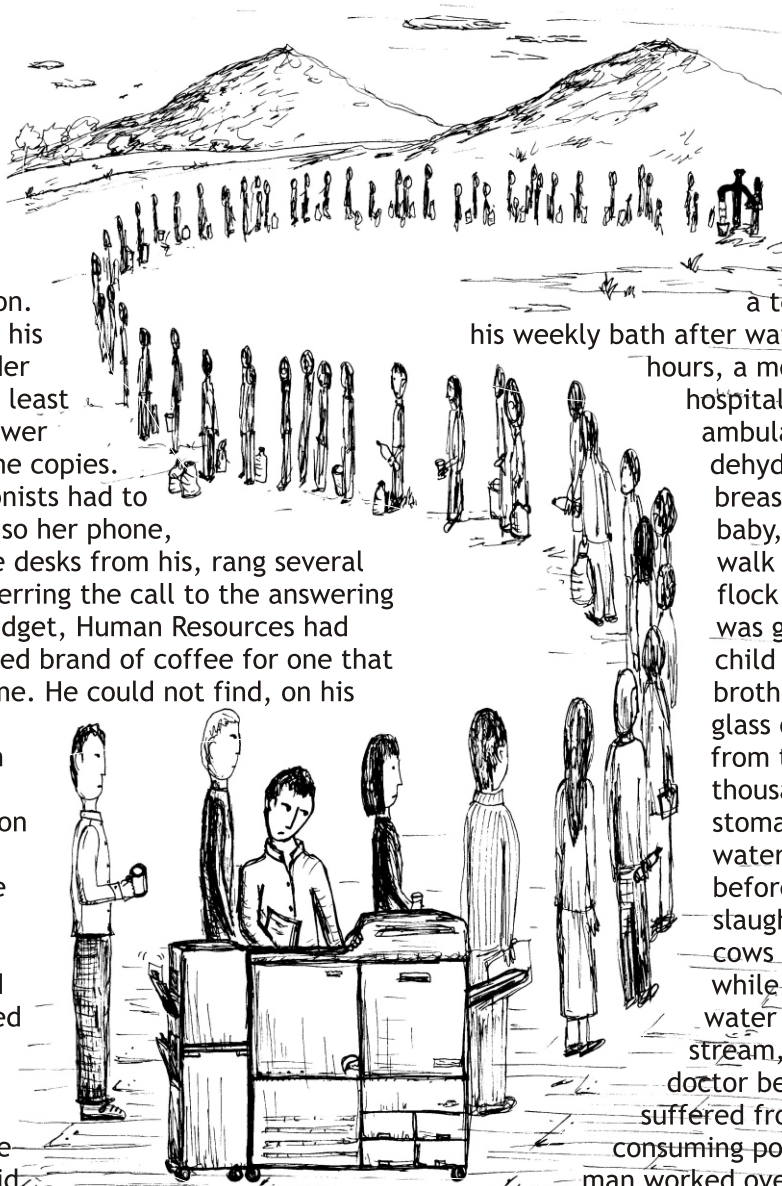


# the shower

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Illustration by www.youtookthatwell.com

Paul returned home grumpy after a long day at work. He had been given a few extra tasks without previous consultation. The photocopier on his floor was out of order and he had to go at least four times to the lower floor to pick up some copies. One of the receptionists had to leave that morning so her phone, located about three desks from his, rang several times before transferring the call to the answering machine. Due to budget, Human Resources had changed his preferred brand of coffee for one that didn't taste the same. He could not find, on his memory stick, the letter he had begun to write the night before to catch up on work. On his way home he missed the first train available and found no place to sit on the second one. A newly married couple who were standing at his side embarked on their first dispute and the station's machine did not recognize his ticket on his way out. He had to wait a few seconds for the station staff. Although it was spring, the wind blew cold and just that day he had left his scarf at home. After a day that seemed more like the anticipation of hell, Paul finally arrived home. He turned on his stereo to hear his soothing mantra collection cd and put the kettle on for a relaxing herbal tea. He also turned on the shower's tap as he did every night. As the water always took a few minutes to warm up he began to sort out the papers lying on his dining table.

Meanwhile, a child died from a disease caused by the lack of drinking water, a woman began her daily walk of 10 miles to collect water from a contaminated well, a man decided whether to give his last litre of dirty water to his animals or his garden, an old woman cried because her water jar



had a crack through which her most precious treasure leaked, a girl queued in line to use the only public toilet available, a teenager gave himself his weekly bath after waiting his turn for 4 hours, a mother was rushed into hospital on an improvised ambulance because she was dehydrated and could not breastfeed her newborn baby, a shepherd had to walk an extra day with his flock because the lake he was going to had dried, a child was beaten by his older brother for having dropped a glass of water, a girl cried from the pain caused by the thousand parasites in her stomach from not having water to wash her hands before eating, a community slaughtered one of their cows as an offer to their God while pleading that the water returned to the stream, a mother went to the doctor because her child suffered from diarrhoea due to consuming poorly treated water, a man worked overtime to pay for an extra litre of water for his family, a half-starved goat died of thirst, some youngsters stole chickens to exchange them for bottled water at the market, a woman lit a candle for 3,575 million people dying each year from the lack of access to clean water, a group of elders gathered around the fire to implore to the sky some rain, a father wept for the second time in a year the death of one of his children due to dehydration, a woman got up before dawn to walk in the darkness towards the railroad tracks to go to the bathroom knowing that she could be attacked.

The windows of Paul's apartment began to fog up with the steam coming out of his bathroom indicating that the water was at his desired temperature. After 3 minutes, 47 seconds, 30 litres and some steamed windows, Paul got into the shower.