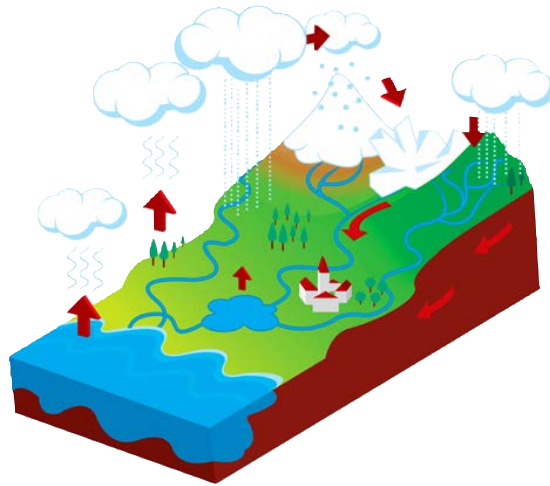


Drought

Water rises from the ground and falls back down in a continuous cycle called the **water cycle**. Heat from the sun makes water **evaporate** and lift into the atmosphere as **water vapour**. This rises in the atmosphere and forms **clouds**. Water vapour is also released by plants through **transpiration**. When the water vapour cools, it **condenses** and falls back to Earth as **precipitation**.



Not all areas in the world get the same amount of precipitation. Rainfall can depend on many different factors. Areas near oceans or large lakes are more likely to get more rain than areas that are further inland. Wind patterns and other natural factors can also change how much rain an area gets.



A **droughts** is a temporary water shortage that can occur when an area doesn't get as much rain as usual. Droughts can last a few weeks, months or even years. Sometimes the wind is not strong enough to carry water vapour from the coasts to the inland areas where it is needed. Droughts can also be caused or made worse by dammed rivers, poor farming practices and other human factors.

The effects of droughts can be devastating. As well as meaning that people and animals do not have enough to drink, they can also cause crops to fail which leaves people without enough food to eat. This creates a **famine**. A drought can cause thousands, even millions, of people to die through starvation and thirst.

Forest fires are another danger that can be caused by droughts. When trees and plants become very dry through lack of water, they become like kindling. They ignite easily and the flames spread extremely quickly, making it very hard to get the flames under control. Anything in the fire's path is destroyed, including animal habitats and human homes.

