



Philadelphia Global Water Initiative Issues Overview & Resources

Every 20 seconds, someone- usually a child – dies from a water-related problem. This is the equivalent of 15 jetliners crashing every day.

At least 2 million deaths every year are due to lack of access to water or sanitation; most of these deaths are children dying of preventable diarrheal diseases.

According to World Health Organization estimates in 2006, 1.1 billion people do not have access to improved sources of drinking water, and 2.6 billion people – or 40 percent of the global population – do not have access to toilets or latrines.¹ **Lack of access to water or sanitation negatively impacts every aspect of a person’s life, and cripples local, national, and regional development.**

Lack of safe water and adequate sanitation cause and exacerbate:²

Disease	Water contaminated with human and animal waste spreads cholera, typhoid, dysentery and other diarrheal diseases. Water contaminated with parasites can cause schistosomiasis. Poor hygiene and an inability to wash results in scabies, trachoma, and diseases from fleas and lice. Badly-managed water sources result in outbreaks of diseases caused by insects, such as dengue, yellow fever, and malaria.
Poverty	Adults who are ill or who have to care for sick children are less productive The costs of poor health resulting from lack of access to safe water may bankrupt or financially weaken a family Time spent collecting water from distant sources reduces time available for work or childcare
Obstacles to Education	Time spent collecting water from distant sources reduces time available for education Girls often are burdened with water-fetching duties, removing them from school Water-related diseases, and water-fetching injuries, often cause children to be absent from school
Women’s Inequality	Women and girls often are responsible for providing their families with water, causing them to sacrifice time at work or school, and to place themselves at increased risk of injury or violence when water sources are distant
Child Mortality	Sick mothers will have sick infants, and even healthy mothers in water-scarce areas have less time to take care of infants, resulting in higher child mortality An inability to wash infants results in high rates of disease and infection Lack of water in health-care facilities causes poor hygiene and results in high maternal mortality, causing child death
Environmental Degradation	To protect waterways and water resources, wastewater and excreta must be disposed of adequately.

The Philadelphia Global Water Initiative is a group of interested organizations and individuals committed to helping to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals for water/sanitation throughout the world. It includes the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Water Department, Water for People, Aqua America, Pennoni Associates, US Environmental Protection Agency, Uhl, Baron, Rana and Associates, the United Nations Association - Greater Philadelphia Chapter, and Meta Quality of Life Improvement Foundation.

Though the lack of access to safe water and adequate sanitation are a global problem, the severity is not evenly distributed. The situation is most critical in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia, and Eastern Asia.³ Additionally, throughout the world, residents of rural or urban areas face different water crises.

More than 80 percent of people lacking access to improved water sources live in rural areas; in 2006, WHO estimated that approximately 900 million people in rural areas did not have a well or other source of water that can be reached within a half-hour walk.⁴ In some rural areas, water is even less accessible than it was in the previous decade.

“[In India] a soaring population, the warp-speed sprawl of cities, and a vast and thirsty farm belt have all put new strains on a feeble, ill-kept public water and sanitation network.”⁵

In urban areas, though most residents may be near sources of drinking water, many suffer from poor water quality, intermittent service, and failing infrastructure. Additionally, sanitation coverage is inadequate and – in some areas – non-existent. Residents of high density urban areas without toilets or latrines are at enormous risks for infectious disease epidemics. Rapid urban growth without concurrent sanitation and water infrastructure improvements creates the potential for devastating problems in the immediate future.

The UN has set as one of its eight Millennium Development Goals the goal of, by 2015, reducing by half the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water or sanitation. Though some progress has been made since the goals were set in 2000, merely continuing efforts made thus far will not be sufficient to bring water and sanitation to the millions of people who are in desperate need.

Recommendations for Action: (from World Water Forum 2006)⁶

1. Recognize the sanitation crisis. As participants in WEF 2006 stated, advocates and policy-makers must not be afraid of telling the ugly truth: “that 42 percent of the world’s people lack what virtually all [of us] take for granted – a toilet – is a travesty with devastating impacts on peoples’ daily lives, health, and self-respect. We should not be afraid to say so.”⁷
2. Respond appropriately to the different roles, needs, and priorities of women and men. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from a lack of access to water and sanitation; across all cultures, women have greater need for facilities that are safe, private, and close to their homes.
3. Investment and reform should be simultaneously pursued for water supply and sanitation. Governments and donor agencies should increase capacity for dealing with both issues at once.
4. Focus on sustainable service delivery, not just the construction of facilities.
5. Empower local authorities and communities with authority, resources, and capacity to manage water and sanitation.
6. Support a wide-range of water and sanitation technologies and services. Innovation must be promoted to advance systems that are socially, environmentally, and financially appropriate – and sustainable.

Sources:

1,3,4: World Health Organization and UNICEF. *Meeting the MDG Drinking Water and Sanitation Target: The Urban and Rural Challenge of the Decade*. 2006.

www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmp2006/en/index.html

2,6,7: UNDP, UN Millennium Development Goals, UN-HABITAT, UNICEF. "Water Supply and Sanitation for All: Local Actions for a Global Challenge." Mexico 2006: World Water Forum. 2006.

www.worldwaterforum4.org.mx/uploads/TBL_DOCS_80_11.pdf

5: Sengupta, Somini. "In Teeming India, Water Crisis Means Dry Pipes and Foul Sludge." *New York Times*, September 29, 2006.

Additional Resources:

Tapped Out: The Coming World Crisis in Water and What We Can Do About It, by Sen. Paul Simon. Welcome Rain Publishers, New York, 1998.

WaterAid. "Bridging the Gap: Citizens' Action for Accountability in Water and Sanitation." March 2006. www.wateraid.org/documents/wateraidreport_1.pdf

UN MDG Progress & Other Reports:

Beyond Scarcity: Power, poverty, and the global water crisis. Human Development Report 2006. UN Development Program. <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/>

For Her It's the Big Issue: Putting Women at the Centre of Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene. UNICEF, Gender and Water Alliance, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. 2006.

www.wash-cc.org/pdf/publication/FOR_HER_ITs_THE_BIG_ISSUE_Evidence_Report-en.pdf

This 36-page publication emerges from a joint undertaking by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and the Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) to collect and analyse noteworthy examples that demonstrate the widespread impacts of women's contributions to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions, worldwide.

Water: A Shared Responsibility. The United Nations World Water Development Report 2. World Water Assessment Report, UNESCO, Berghahn Books, UN Water. 2006.

unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001454/145405E.pdf

Visualization of MDG progress (charts and maps): unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/default.aspx

Water Quality Worldwide (Searchable Database): www.gemstat.org/

Detailed Health & Water Statistics:

Gleck, Peter. "Dirty Water: Estimates from Water-Related Diseases 2000-2020." Pacific Institute Research Report. August 15, 2002.

www.pacinst.org/reports/water_related_deaths/water_related_deaths_report.pdf

More 

Additional Resources (cont):

Running Dry is a comprehensive public information/education project, established to raise awareness regarding the worsening global humanitarian water crisis. The project's centerpiece is an explosive and enlightening in-depth documentary, *Running Dry*. It was inspired by former U.S. Senator Paul Simon's book *Tapped Out: the coming world crisis in water and what we can do about it*.
www.runningdry.org/

The Water Barons: How a few powerful companies are privatizing your water, by The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a project of The Center for Public Integrity, Public Integrity Books, Washington, D.C. , March 2003.
ISBN 1-882583-16-7, www.publicintegrity.org

In The Public Interest: Health, Education, and Water and Sanitation for All. Oxfam International and WaterAid. 2006. 126-page report. http://www.oxfam.org.nz/imgs/pdf/public_interest.pdf

Background on finance issues:

Hall, David. "Water Finance – A Discussion Note." Public Services International, World Social Forum Delhi/Mumbai. January 2004. www.psir.org/reports/2004-01-W-finance.doc

Mehta, Meera and Kameel Virjee. "Financing Small Water Supply and Sanitation Service Providers: Exploring the Microfinance Option in Sub-Saharan Africa." Water and Sanitation Program. December 2003. www.wsp.org/publications/af_fin_small.pdf

World Water Council. "Costing MDG Target 10 on Water Supply and Sanitation: Comparative Analysis, Obstacles and Recommendations." March 2006.
www.financingwaterforall.org/fileadmin/Financing_water_for_all/Reports/FullTextCover_MDG.pdf

Press:

"Jay-Z to Dramatize World Water Crisis in MTV Video Diary." *Environmental News Service*. August 11, 2006. <http://www.ens-newswire.com/ens/aug2006/2006-08-11-03.asp>

Specter, Michael. "The Last Drop." *The New Yorker*. October 23, 2006.

"Worldwide Water Crisis is a "silent emergency," UN agency says" *British Medical Journal*. 11 November 2006, 333:986. <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/333/7576/986-a>