

Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation

2012
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Foreword

Since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation has reported on progress towards achieving Target 7c: reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. This report contains the welcome announcement that, as of 2010, the target for drinking water has been met.

Since 1990, more than 2 billion people have gained access to improved drinking water sources. This achievement is a testament to the commitment of Government leaders, public and private sector entities, communities and individuals who saw the target not as a dream, but as a vital step towards improving health and well-being.

Of course, much work remains to be done. There are still 780 million people without access to an improved drinking water source. And even though 1.8 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation since 1990, the world remains off track for the sanitation target. It is essential to accelerate progress in the remaining time before the MDG deadline, and I commend those who are participating in the Sustainable Sanitation: Five Year Drive to 2015.

This report outlines the challenges that remain. Some regions, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, are lagging behind. Many rural dwellers and the poor often miss out on improvements to drinking water and sanitation. And the burden of poor water supply falls most heavily on girls and women. Reducing these disparities must be a priority.

The recognition by the UN General Assembly, in 2010, of water and sanitation as a human right provides additional political impetus towards the ultimate goal of providing everyone with access to these vital services. Many countries and agencies have joined hands in the Sanitation and Water for All partnership. Such collective efforts offer real promise and I urge all partners to contribute.

I commend this report to all those working towards universal access to safe water and sanitation. Achieving the MDG drinking water target is a major step, but ultimately, only one step on a long journey that we have yet to finish. Let us use this success to invest our mission for sustainable, equitable development with renewed vigour so we can create the future we want.



Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General, United Nations

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Looking Forward, Looking Back

The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, known as the JMP, reports every two years on access to drinking water and sanitation worldwide and on progress towards related targets under Millennium Development Goal 7. This 2012 report is based on data gathered from household surveys and censuses, including both recent and older data sets that have come to the attention of the JMP. The estimates presented here describe the situation as of end-2010 and supersede those of the JMP update published in March 2010.

The report brings welcome news: The MDG drinking water target, which calls for halving the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water between 1990 and 2015, was met in 2010, five years ahead of schedule. However, the report also shows why the job is far from finished. Many still lack safe drinking water, and the world is unlikely to meet the MDG sanitation target. Continued efforts are needed to reduce urban-rural disparities and inequities associated with poverty; to dramatically increase coverage in countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania; to promote global monitoring of drinking water quality; to bring sanitation 'on track'; and to look beyond the MDG target towards universal coverage.

Still, much has been achieved. As this progress report shows, over 2 billion people gained access to improved water sources and 1.8 billion people gained access to improved sanitation facilities between 1990 and 2010. This is impressive, particularly when the gains of countries that started at a low baseline and faced high population growth are considered. Indeed, much of the progress of the last 20 years has been in the context of rapid population growth, and this is why some of the news in this report is sobering. Over 780 million people are still without access to improved sources of drinking water and 2.5 billion lack improved sanitation. If current trends continue, these numbers will remain unacceptably high in 2015: 605 million people will be without an improved drinking water source and 2.4 billion people will lack access to improved sanitation facilities.

As we approach the 2015 target date for the MDGs, WHO and UNICEF are addressing current monitoring challenges and those that lie ahead. The safety and reliability of drinking water supplies and the sustainability of both water supply sources and sanitation facilities are not addressed by the current set of indicators used to track progress. Accordingly, this report details work under way to refine both indicators and methods of monitoring, as part of the 2010-2015 JMP strategy. It also discusses the beginnings of a process to develop new water, sanitation and hygiene goals, targets and indicators beyond 2015, in alignment with the human right to water and sanitation and the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation.



Global Drinking Water Trends 1990-2010

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