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**Cover:** The provision of hand-washing facilities near toilets is critical for supporting school-based hygiene education efforts. Heshima Primary School, Nairobi, Kenya.

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## Foreword

## Sanitation and drinking water – at the heart of human health and development

2008 is the International Year of Sanitation. Accordingly, this report by the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP) has sanitation as its focus.

The importance of sanitation is indisputable. It is a crucial stepping stone to better health: sanitation offers us the opportunity to save the lives of 1.5 million children a year who would otherwise succumb to diarrhoeal diseases, and to protect the health of many more. It is fundamental to gender equity as it protects women's dignity. And it is key to economic development: investments in sanitation protect investments made in other sectors, such as education and health, and bring measurable economic returns.

However, the data in this report show that the world is not on track to meet the MDG sanitation target, and 2.5 billion people still lack access to improved sanitation, including 1.2 billion who have no facilities at all. The message is clear: We need to greatly accelerate progress in sanitation, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. The number of people who still do not have access to improved sanitation is staggering, and we know that the disease, loss of earnings and indignity lock huge numbers of people into poverty.

But the news is not all bad. Although greater impetus is needed, the data show that people are choosing to move up the 'sanitation ladder', abandoning open defecation and revealing a demand for sanitation facilities.

In the case of drinking water supply, the news is good. For the first time, the number of people without improved drinking water has dropped below one billion. More than half of the global population now benefits from piped water reaching their homes, and the numbers using unimproved water supplies are going down. But we must maintain our efforts and galvanize the global community to continue to advance, focusing on those countries and regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, which are struggling to stay on track.

The overall message from this report is positive. Progress can be made, and the sanitation and drinking water battle can be won. Our agencies are proud to present this report on status, and to press forward together.

Ann M. Veneman Executive Director UNICEF Dr Margaret Chan Director-General World Health Organization

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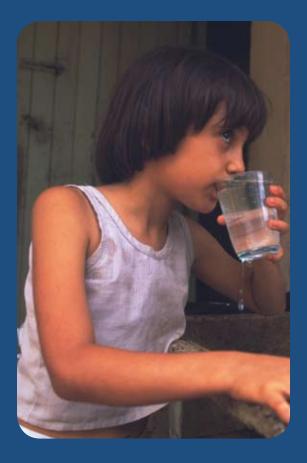


# The drinking water ladder

Drinking water supply can be broken down into three categories, which are illustrated in the form of a 'drinking water ladder' similar to that developed for sanitation. The category 'improved drinking water sources' includes sources that, by nature of their construction or through active intervention, are protected from outside contamination, particularly faecal matter. These include piped water in a dwelling, plot or yard, and other improved sources. 'Unimproved sources' make up the third part of the ladder.

In this report, drinking water coverage is presented as a three-step ladder that includes the proportion of the population using:

- unimproved drinking water sources
- improved drinking water sources other than piped water
- water piped into a dwelling, plot or yard.



Unimproved drinking water sources:

Unprotected dug well, unprotected spring, cart with small tank/drum, tanker truck, and surface water (river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal, irrigation channels), bottled water.

OTHER MPROVED

UNIMPROVED

Other improved drinking water sources:

Public taps or standpipes, tube wells or boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs and rainwater collection.

PIPED INTO DWELLING, PLOT OR YARD

**Piped water on premises:** Piped household water connection located inside the user's dwelling, plot or yard.

### The population not using improved drinking water sources has fallen below one billion

Today, 87 per cent of the world's population uses drinking water from improved sources: 54 per cent uses a piped connection in their dwelling, plot or yard, and 33 per cent uses other improved drinking water sources.

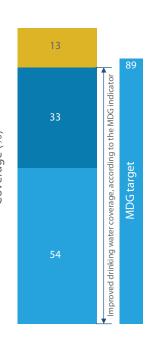
This translates into 5.7 billion people worldwide who are now using drinking water from an improved source, an increase of 1.6 billion since 1990. About 3.6 billion people use a piped connection that provides running water in or near their homes.

Estimates for 2006 show that the population reliant on unimproved drinking water sources is below one billion, and now stands at 884 million.

Improved drinking water coverage in sub-Saharan Africa is still considerably lower than in other regions. Nevertheless, it has increased from 49 per cent in 1990 to 58 per cent in 2006, which means that an additional 207 million Africans are now using safe drinking water.

#### Figure 19

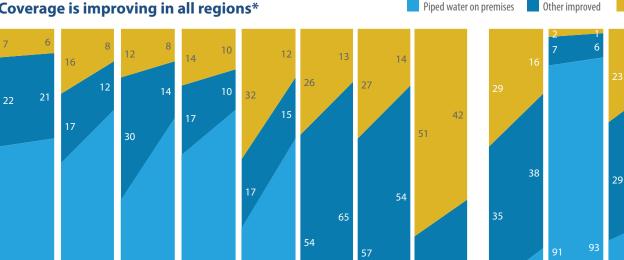
Proportion of the world's population using a piped drinking water connection, another improved drinking water source or an unimproved source, 2006



Unimproved

33

## DRINKING WATER SUPPLY COVERAGE Coverage is improving in all regions\*



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