



WATER AND SANITATION



Access to clean water and proper sanitation is essential to good health, education and economic productivity; yet over one billion people across the world lack access to clean water and 2.6 billion do not have access to basic sanitation. Sub-Saharan Africa faces some of the worst deficits- only 56% of people in the region have access to clean water and only 37% have access to sanitation facilities.

Unclean water and poor sanitation present substantial obstacles to poverty reduction and development:

- Together, unclean water and poor sanitation are a leading cause of child mortality: an estimated 5,000 children die daily from severe diarrhea, which is spread through poor sanitation and hygiene. A baby born in Africa is over 500 times more likely to die from diarrhea than a child born in Europe or the United States.
- On average, women in the developing world walk six kilometers each day to collect water, time which could be spent in school or at work. In total, the World Health Organization estimates that 40 billion working hours are spent collecting water each year in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Studies show that more than half of girls who drop out of primary school in sub-Saharan Africa do so because of a lack of separate toilets and easy access to safe water.

FAST FACTS

- 5,000 children die every day from severe diarrhea.
- Only 56% of Africans have access to clean water and only 37% have access to proper sanitation facilities.
- A WHO cost-benefit analysis found that every \$1 spent on water and sanitation generates returns of \$8 in saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs.

Scarcities of water and sanitation will only be exacerbated as new challenges such as climate change and urbanization emerge. Projections indicate that by 2020, an additional 75 to 250 million people will not be able to meet their water needs in sub-Saharan Africa because of climate change. At the same time, water and sanitation systems in African cities will struggle to provide for an urban population that is expected to double between 2000 and 2030. Past experience demonstrates the stress that this increased demand will place on water and sanitation services: between 1990 and 2004, sub-Saharan Africa saw an 85% increase in its urban population and a doubling in the number of urban dwellers without access to water and sanitation.

Evidence for Action

A growing body of evidence reveals that investing in water and sanitation reaps widespread development benefits:

Health benefits: Improved water and sanitation are two of the most powerful tools in preventative health, especially for young children. Evidence shows that universal access to improved sanitation alone could reduce diarrhea-related morbidity by more than a third. If the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets on water and sanitation are met, there will be 203,000 fewer child deaths in 2015.

More time for work and school: Expanding access to clean water and adequate sanitation would present valuable opportunities for income generation and education, especially for women and girls, who are the world's principal water collectors. Girls are 12% more likely to attend school if water is available within 15 minutes from home versus a one hour walk. In addition, the reduction in water-related diseases could improve attendance levels. If the MDG targets on water and sanitation are met, 272 million school days would be gained with the subsequent

reduction in diarrhea.

High economic returns: Expanded access to water and sanitation frees up scarce resources for families and entire countries. It is estimated that every \$1 spent on water and sanitation generates returns of \$8 in saved time, increased productivity and reduced health costs. If the MDG targets on water and sanitation are met by 2015, national governments in sub-Saharan Africa could save about 12% of annual public health expenditures, which translates into \$2 per capita.

Despite the demonstrated benefits of scaling-up access to clean water and sanitation, there has been very little progress expanding access, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. As part of the Millennium Development Goals, developing countries and donor governments committed to halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa is lagging dangerously behind on achieving both these goals. If current trends continue, the region will miss the water target by 25 years and the sanitation target by 61 years.