

Information about the drinking-water and sanitation situation in Africa

1 Key facts and quotes

- **Contaminated Water:** At least **1.8 billion people** globally use a source of drinking water that is fecally contaminated.
- **Water Scarcity:** Water scarcity affects more than **40%** of the global population and is projected to rise.
- **Basic Sanitation:** **2.4 billion people** lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines.
- **Water Purification:** More than **80%** of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers or sea without any pollution removal.
- “When students are freed from gathering water, they return to class. With proper and safe latrines, girls stay in school through their teenage years.”
- “Access to water leads to food security. With less crop loss, hunger is reduced. Schools can feed students with gardens, reducing costs.”
- “Safe water, clean hands, healthy bodies. Time lost to sickness is reduced and people can get back to the work of lifting themselves out of poverty.”

2 Clean Water and Sanitation

Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in. There is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve this. But due to bad economics or poor infrastructure, every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene. Water scarcity, poor water quality and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, worsening hunger and malnutrition.

3 The Sustainable Development Agenda

On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN Summit – officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The SDGs build on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and aim to go further to end all forms of poverty. The new Goals are unique in that they call for action by all countries, poor, rich and middle-income to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

The new 2030 Agenda has water and sanitation at its core, with a dedicated Goal #6 and clear linkages to Goals relating to health, food security, climate change, resiliency to disasters and ecosystems, among many others.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

1. Zero Hunger
2. Good Health
3. Quality Education
4. Gender Equality
5. **Clean Water and Sanitation**
6. Affordable and Clean Energy
7. Decent Work and Economic Growth
8. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
9. Reduced Inequalities
10. Sustainable Cities and Communities
11. Responsible Consumption and Production
12. Climate Action
13. Life Below Water
14. Life on Land
15. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
16. Partnerships for the Goals

4 Poverty and Water

"Poverty in Africa is often caused by a lack of access to clean, safe water and proper sanitation."
(The Water Project)

There are a number of reasons why poverty has become an epidemic in Africa. Poverty can be the result of political instability, ethnic conflicts, climate change and other man-made causes.

But one of the greatest causes of poverty in Africa is also the most overlooked... the lack of access to clean drinking water.

5 How much water is needed?

Water is essential for life, health and human dignity. In extreme emergency situations, there may not be sufficient water available to meet basic needs and in these cases, supplying a minimum level of safe drinking-water for survival is of critical importance.

People use water for a wide variety of activities. Some of these are more important than others. Having a few litres of water to drink each day, for example, is more important than having water for personal hygiene or laundry, but people will still want and need to wash for the prevention of skin diseases and meeting other physiological needs. Other uses of water have health and other benefits but decrease in urgency.

6 The Situation in Africa

Population growth and rural-urban migration

Africa's rising population is driving demand for water and accelerating the degradation of water resources in many countries on the continent. Among developing regions, Sub-Saharan Africa is estimated to have the highest prevalence of urban slums and it is expected to double to around 400 million by 2020. Despite the efforts of some Sub-Saharan African countries and cities to expand basic services and improve urban housing conditions. Rapid and unplanned urban growth has increased the number of settlements on unstable, flood-prone, and high-risk land where phenomena such as landslides, rains, and earthquakes have devastating consequences.

Economic development and poverty

Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's poorest and least developed region, with half its population living on less than a dollar a day. About two-thirds of its countries rank among the lowest in the Human Development Index. Even when opportunities exist to address outstanding water

issues, deep and widespread poverty across the African region constrains the ability of many cities and communities to provide proper water and sanitation services, sufficient water for economic activities and to prevent water quality from deteriorating.

7 Investing

What would it cost to correct the problem?

A study by the World Bank Group, UNICEF and the World Health Organization estimates that extending basic water and sanitation services to the unserved would cost USD 28.4 billion per year from 2015 to 2030, or 0.10% of the global product of the 140 countries included in its study.

What would it cost if we don't correct the problem?

The costs are huge – both for people and for the economy. Worldwide, more than 2 million people die every year from diarrhoeal diseases. Poor hygiene and unsafe water are responsible for nearly 90% of these deaths and mostly affect children. The economic impact of not investing in water and sanitation costs an enormous 4.3% of sub-Saharan African GDP. The World Bank estimates that 6.4% of India's GDP is lost due to adverse economic impacts and costs of inadequate sanitation. Without better infrastructure and management, many millions of people will continue to die every year and there will be further losses in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, undermining prosperity and efforts towards a more sustainable future.

8 UNICEF WASH

UNICEF's water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) team works in over 100 countries worldwide to improve water and sanitation services, as well as basic hygiene practices. Over the last 15 years, UNICEF has led a global effort to improve water, sanitation and hygiene conditions for millions of people worldwide. In 2010, a full five years ahead of schedule, the target for water within Millennium Development Goals was met. Today, 91% of the world's population has access to clean drinking water and 68% use improved sanitation (a facility that separates human waste from human contact).

However, development efforts made during the Millennium Development Goal era failed to reach millions of children in poor and rural communities. As a result, massive inequalities exist between those with access to clean water and basic toilets, and those without. In the pursuit of the new Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the rights of children, UNICEF works to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

9 Beneficiaries from direct UNICEF WASH support

In 2015, UNICEF helped more than 39 million people secure access to drinking water and more than 18 million people secure access to sanitation (see Table 2). This is an increase of 20 per cent since 2014 and the second highest number of total direct UNICEF beneficiaries in the past 10 years. The greatest increase was in emergency water beneficiaries, due to a growing crisis in and around the Syrian Arab Republic; in response to natural disasters (such as the earthquake in Nepal); and for needs related to ongoing complex emergencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and other countries. UNICEF reacts quickly in times of crisis to ensure that affected populations have the knowledge, supplies and facilities for hand washing with soap, which is critical in preventing the spread of disease. These efforts reached more than 14 million people in 2015.

10 What can we do?

Civil society organizations should work to keep governments accountable, invest in water research and development, and promote the inclusion of women, youth and indigenous communities in water resources governance.

Generating awareness of these roles and turning them into action will lead to win-win results and increased sustainability and integrity for both human and ecological systems.

Sources

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