Clean, accessible water for all is an essential part of the world we want to live in and there is sufficient fresh water on the planet to achieve this. However, due to bad economics or poor infrastructure, millions of people including children die every year 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. At the current time, more than 2 billion people are living with the risk of reduced access to freshwater resources and by 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of fresh water. Drought in specific afflicts some of the world’s poorest countries, worsening hunger and malnutrition. Fortunately, there has been great progress made in the past decade regarding drinking sources and sanitation, whereby over 90% of the world’s population now has access to improved sources of drinking water.

To improve sanitation and access to drinking water, there needs to be increased investment in management of freshwater ecosystems and sanitation facilities on a local level in several developing countries within Sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia, Southern Asia, Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia.

1 in 4 health care facilities lacks basic [water services](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/03-04-2019-1-in-4-health-care-facilities-lacks-basic-water-services-unicef-who)

3 in 10 people lack access to safely managed drinking water services and 6 in 10 people lack access to safely managed sanitation facilities.

At least 892 million people continue to practice open defecation.

Women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80 per cent of households without access to water on premises.

Between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of the global population using an improved drinking water source has increased from 76 per cent to 90 per cent

Water scarcity affects more than 40 per cent of the global population and is projected to rise. Over 1.7 billion people are currently living in river basins where water use exceeds recharge.

2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation services, such as toilets or latrines

More than 80 per cent of wastewater resulting from human activities is discharged into rivers or sea without any pollution removal

Each day, nearly 1,000 children die due to preventable water and sanitation-related diarrheal diseases

Approximately 70 per cent of all water abstracted from rivers, lakes and aquifers is used for irrigation

Floods and other water-related disasters account for 70 per cent of all deaths related to natural disasters

By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all

By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations

By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally

By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity

By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate

By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes

By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies

Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management

Despite progress, billions of people still lack safe water, sanitation and handwashing facilities. Data suggests that achieving universal access to even basic sanitation service by 2030 would require doubling the current annual rate of progress. More efficient use and management of water are critical to addressing the growing demand for water, threats to water security and the increasing frequency and severity of droughts and floods resulting from climate change. As of the time of writing, most countries are unlikely to reach full implementation of integrated water resources management by 2030.

Globally, the proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services increased from 61 to 71 per cent between 2000 and 2015 and remained unchanged in 2017. An additional 19 per cent of the global population used basic drinking water services. This means that 785 million people still lacked even a basic drinking water service.

The global population using safely managed sanitation services increased from 28 per cent in 2000 to 43 per cent in 2015 and to 45 per cent in 2017, with the greatest increases occurring in Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and East and South-East Asia. Between 2000 and 2017, the proportion lacking even a basic sanitation service decreased from 44 to 27 per cent, yet 701 million people still practiced open defecation in 2017. E/2019/68 19-07404 13/39

In 2017, some 60 per cent of people worldwide and only 38 per cent in least developed countries had a basic handwashing facility with soap and water at home, leaving an estimated 3 billion people without basic handwashing facilities at home.

In 2016, one third of all primary schools lacked basic drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services, affecting the education of millions of schoolchildren, but particularly girls managing menstruation, and one in four health-care facilities worldwide lacked basic water services, affecting more than 2 billion people.

Approximately one third of countries have medium or high levels of water stress. Almost all countries that have registered high water stress are located in North Africa and West Asia or in Central and South Asia, and these levels indicate serious water difficulties in the supply of freshwater, at least during parts of the year.

Of 172 countries, 80 per cent have medium-low implementation or better of integrated water resources management. However, 60 per cent of countries are unlikely to reach the target of full implementation by 2030.

A significant effort is needed to ensure that cooperation is operational in all transboundary basins. According to data from 67 of 153 countries that share transboundary waters, the average percentage of national transboundary basins covered by an operational arrangement was 59 per cent in the period 2017–2018, with only 17 countries reporting that all their transboundary basins were covered by such arrangements.

Following several years of steady increases and after reaching $9 billion in 2016, ODA disbursements to the water sector declined by 2 per cent from 2016 to 2017. However, ODA commitments to the water sector jumped by 36 per cent between 2016 and 2017, indicating a renewed focus by donors on the sector.