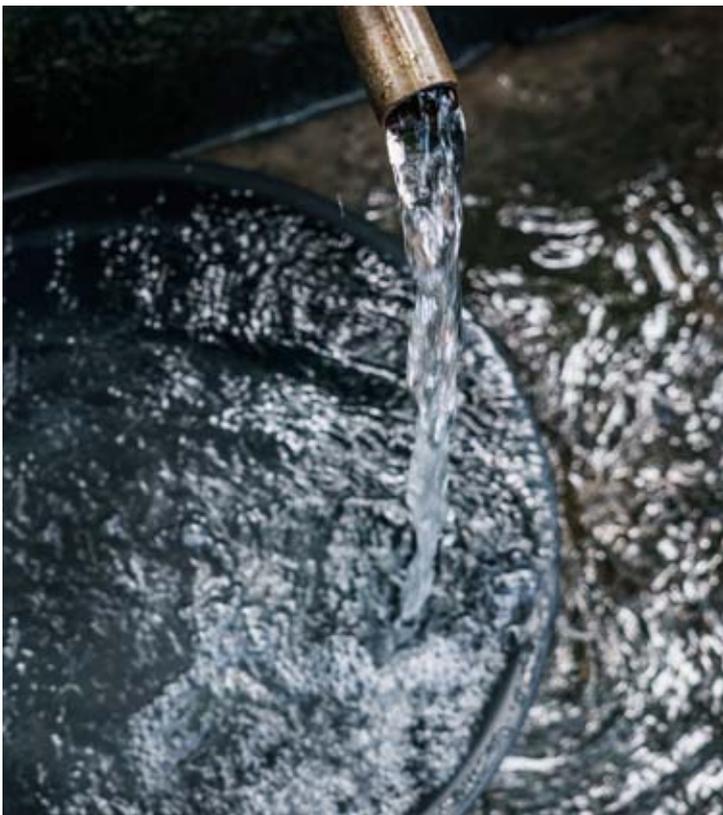


# Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## For Health

### Key Facts

- The water crisis, as a measure of devastation is the number 1 global risk based on its impact to society, and it is the eighth biggest global risk based on likelihood of occurring within 10 years.
- The recently acknowledged Sustainable Development Goals underline that universal access to safe drinking-water and sanitation and adequate hygiene (WaSH) services is a human right and essential to populations' health, welfare and development.
- Lower levels of access to safe drinking-water and sanitation are the main reason for higher prevalence of diarrhoea throughout the developing world – ahead of poorer overall health, hygiene, and nutritional status.
- Globally, diarrhoea kills an estimated 842 000 people every year, that is 2300 people a day. 58% of cases of diarrhoea in middle and low-income countries are estimated to be attributable to inadequate drinking water (502 000 deaths), inadequate sanitation (280 000 deaths) and poor hand hygiene (297 000 deaths). Almost 10% of the global disease burden could be reduced by improving water supply, sanitation, hygiene, and water resource management.
- Most countries accelerated investment in WaSH to achieve the MDG 7 WaSH targets, yet there are still major challenges ahead, especially in rural areas and peri-urban settlements: some 82% of those who lack access to improved water live in rural areas, while just 18% live in urban areas.
- In 2015, only 91% of the global population has access to an improved source of drinking-water, leaving an estimated 683 million people struggling without this lifesaving service. Close to 1 billion still defecate in the open and 2.4 billion have no improved sanitation facilities.
- A UNICEF/WHO report on surveys in 45 developing countries shows that women and children bear the primary responsibility for water collection in the vast majority of households (76%). This is time not spent working at an income-generating job, caring for family members, or attending school.
- Access to WaSH services is a basic human right. A significant proportion of the world's population is still in need to have access to these basic services. The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) propose the complete elimination of open defecation and achieving access to water and sanitation facilities in all households, schools and health facilities.



### Deficiency of WaSH services in the Western Pacific Region

- In 2015, 93% of the population of the Region had access to an improved drinking-water source and 70% could rely on improved sanitation facilities. In other words, 140 million people do not have an improved drinking-water supply and 550 million do not have access to improved sanitation. Over 30 million people still defecate in the open.
- In 2012, 94 000 deaths were attributed to diarrhoeal infections from the use of unsafe water, poor sanitation and lack of hygiene. Another 14 000 deaths from malnutrition are attributed to the lack of access to adequate WaSH services.
- Millions are infected with soil-transmitted worm infections, schistosomiasis and trachoma, which are part of the Neglected Tropical Diseases, most commonly affecting people living in locations with poor access to improved sanitation and other WaSH services.
- Inadequate WaSH services, together with poor water management, play a significant part of the disease burden from malaria and dengue.
- Poor access to water and sanitation is closely associated with higher risks of maternal and neonatal mortality.

### Importance of WaSH in emergencies

- Disasters are often marked by the collapse of WaSH services, leading to diarrhoea from the consumption of contaminated water, affecting large proportions of population.
- Along with food and shelter, the provision of short-term access to safe water and sanitation are among the highest priority interventions in emergency response situations, especially to ensure uninterrupted delivery of health services.
- WaSH services need to be taken into account during disaster prevention and preparedness activities to prevent adverse health consequences of such disruptions.

### WaSH and climate change

- Climate change can reduce access to safe drinking-water due to increasingly variable rainfall patterns.
- Some areas are likely to become increasingly affected by drought, others are prone to more frequent and intense floods, forcing people to consume contaminated freshwater supplies, heightening the risk of waterborne diseases and creating breeding grounds for disease-carrying insects such as mosquitoes.





## WaSH initiatives in selected countries, supported by WHO

- Nine countries in the Region are members of the Water Quality Partnership for Health, an initiative funded by the Government of Australia that since 2005, with support from WHO, has helped introduce and scale up water safety plans (WSP). Under this framework, WSP have now secured a sustained and more equitable access to safe drinking water for over 30 million people; an additional 20 million are due to benefit from this initiative by 2018.
- WaSH activities in countries also include promoting the access to adequate sanitation such as use of latrines for safe disposal of faeces as basic prerequisites for good health.
- In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, WSPs are being implemented through national policies, quality standards and institutional arrangements underpinned with legislation and adequate national budgets to ultimately reduce the burden of waterborne diseases.
- National health authorities in Cambodia and Lao Democratic People's Republic are supporting households to treat drinking water with the use of affordable filters and to store it safely. These initiatives are promoted by WHO in conjunction with other development partners.
- Laos DPR Democratic People's Republic and Cambodia are improving access to sanitation and other WaSH services in schistosomiasis-affected Provinces in an effort to control and eliminate this disease by 2020.
- The recovery effort following Super typhoon Haiyan that struck the Philippines in 2013 included priority actions to assess and restore basic WASH services, improving the performance of health-care delivery in that part of the country.
- According to WHO, 2014, the number of deaths attributable to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene has dramatically reduced; falling globally by over 50% from 1.8 million in 1990 to 842 000 in 2012, and by 79% in the WPR countries. While the reduction in deaths is probably due to improved access to health care, oral rehydration and reduced child undernutrition, it is likely that improvements in the provision of water and sanitation have also played a significant role in this marked reduction of diarrhoeal disease burden.

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