

4

Water for All: Making it Happen

"By means of water we give life to everything."
Koran

Water is the essence of life and human dignity. As a fundamental human right "sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses" is vital for all. Governments are responsible for ensuring that this human right is progressively fulfilled. As a result of their action, in collaboration with partners, 900 million more people gained access to an improved water supply during the 1990s.

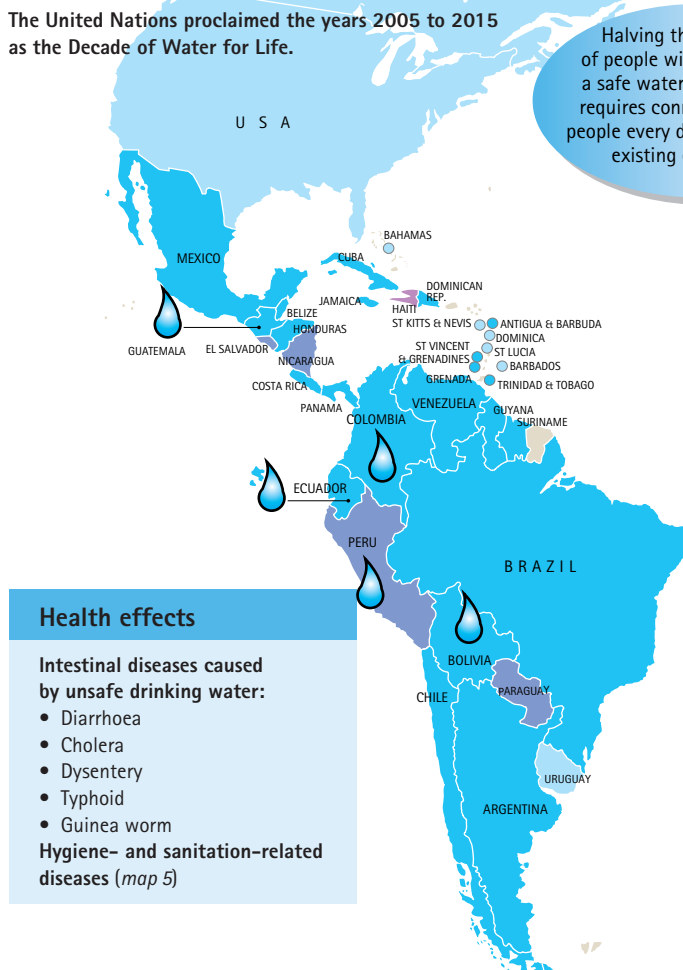
Yet 1.1 billion people in rural areas and urban slums still rely on unsafe drinking water from rivers, lakes and open wells. Children, in particular, suffer from water-related illnesses. Each episode of diarrhoea sets back a child's growth by lowering their appetite and reducing their calorie and nutrient uptake. Persistent diarrhoea and severe diseases, such as typhoid and dysentery, jeopardize children's healthy development. Every year, nearly 2 million children do not survive this struggle.

Continued progress towards providing everyone with access to protected wells and, ultimately, piped water supplies will radically reduce childhood illness. In the meantime, disinfection and filtration at home are simple and cheap measures that make an immediate difference to the lives of the worst affected.



The United Nations proclaimed the years 2005 to 2015 as the Decade of Water for Life.

Halving the proportion of people without access to a safe water supply by 2015 requires connecting 125 000 people every day and sustaining existing connections.



Health effects

Intestinal diseases caused by unsafe drinking water:

- Diarrhoea
- Cholera
- Dysentery
- Typhoid
- Guinea worm

Hygiene- and sanitation-related diseases (map 5)

- Water is essential for hygiene, especially for hand-washing after defecation (map 5)
- Pools and marshes are breeding sites for malaria-carrying mosquitoes (map 7)
- Arsenic and high levels of fluoride in drinking water cause severe illness (map 8)
- Children and women often spend many hours collecting water (map 6)
- During daily water collection, children face the risk of drowning and injuries (map 12)



Water supplies

Percentage of households with access to an improved water supply 2000 or latest available data

An improved water supply is defined according to the type of technology (piped drinking water, protected well or spring, rainwater), the distance from the source (available within 1 km of the home) and water quantity (at least 20 litres per day).

Striving ahead multiple projects on household water management are underway 2004

over 95%	41% - 60%
81% - 95%	40% and under
61% - 80%	no data

