The context and the issue

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are among the most basic human needs, and are a prerequisite to human health and development. To ensure people have this basic need met, monitoring the WASH sector is a prerequisite. A solid evidence base enables the allocation of valuable resources towards targeted interventions.

Improved access also represents a good economic investment – some countries lose as much as 7% of GDP because of inadequate sanitation. Better WASH also results in higher educational achievement and greater productivity.

WHO is charged, along with UNICEF, with officially monitoring the MDG target for drinking-water and sanitation. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme figures show that 89% of the global population now has access to an improved drinking water source. However, 768 million people remain without access, and many of those with access to improved sources still use water that is unsafe to drink, contaminated with pathogens and chemical impurities. Data also show that worldwide, 2.5 billion people lack sanitation and over 1 billion people still practice open defecation – a major public health hazard. In addition, efforts are needed to maintain existing WASH services over time. The situation is aggravated by global environmental changes like climate change and climate variability, including extreme natural events.

What WHO is doing

Regular and accurate tracking of progress and shortfalls is needed, which occurs through two monitoring programmes at WHO. First, the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP), the official UN mechanism for reporting sector outcomes as indicated by progress towards MDG Target 7c: “to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking-water and basic sanitation”. The JMP publishes updated estimates every two years on the use of various types of drinking-water sources and sanitation facilities at the national, regional and global levels. Second, the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-water (GLAAS), complements JMP in analyzing the ‘enabling environment’ for WASH, including policy, institutional, financial and human resources capacity in relation to WASH.
to status and trends in drinking-water and sanitation. GLAAS reports on efforts made by governments, including the inputs required to extend and sustain WASH systems and services. GLAAS provides the evidence used by participants at the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) biennial high-level meetings on WASH.

**Monitoring and the post-2015 development agenda**

Anticipating the discussion on post-2015 development goals, WHO and UNICEF convened a process to formulate options for evidence-based targets and indicators for water, sanitation, and hygiene. The shared vision was:

- No one practices open defecation.
- Everyone has access to safe water and sanitation at home.
- Every school and health centre has WASH services.
- WASH services should be equitable and sustainable.

**Monitoring and accountability: the rights to water and sanitation**

Strengthening accountability emerged as a key element in advancing WASH objectives. Such a focus on accountability aligns with the recognition in 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly of the universal human right to safe water and sanitation (Res 64/292). In 2011, WHO also adopted a resolution recognizing these rights (WHA64.24). It calls on Member States to “ensure that national health strategies (...) support the progressive realization of the human right to water and sanitation that entitles everyone, without discrimination, to water and sanitation that is sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable for personal and domestic uses”. WHA64.24 further points to WHO’s role in “supporting Member States’ capacities in building and maintaining adapted information and monitoring systems”.

**Key messages**

- There is an urgent need to focus global attention on achieving the MDG sanitation target.
- Drinking water, sanitation and hygiene play a key role in the post-2015 development agenda, with significant implications for health and human development.
- Progress in WASH requires more effective targeting of resources (financial and human) to support services for the unserved.
- WASH systems need to be strengthened to ensure funds are allocated and disbursed in accordance with WASH policy objectives.
- Progress in WASH requires effective intersectoral collaboration with health, finance, education sectors.

**Achievements**

- Regularly updated and authoritative global and regional status and trends analyses on all facets of drinking-water supply and sanitation (JMP and GLAAS).
- Provision of data comparable between countries and over time (JMP).
- Almost every national, regional and global report on WASH uses JMP data.
- A means for governments and practitioners to identify shortfalls and disparities, for strengthening policy, institutional, financial, and technical efforts to accelerate progress (JMP and GLAAS).
- Established linkages between environmental drivers, access to WASH services and public health outcomes.

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