Population with sustainable access to an improved water source (%) -access to improved sanitation (%)

Rationale for use

Access to drinking water and improved sanitation is a fundamental need and a human right vital for the dignity and health of all people. The health and economic benefits of improved water supply to households and individuals (especially children) are well documented. Both indicators are used to monitor progress towards the MDGs.

Definition

Access to improved water source is the percentage of population with access to an improved drinking water source in a given year.

Access to improved sanitation is the percentage of population with access to improved sanitation in a given year.

Associated terms

**Improved drinking water** sources are defined in terms of the types of technology and levels of services that are more likely to provide safe water than unimproved technologies. Improved water sources include household connections, public standpipes, boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs, and rainwater collections. **Unimproved water sources** are unprotected wells, unprotected springs, vendor-provided water, bottled water (unless water for other uses is available from an improved source) and tanker truck-provided water.

Reasonable access is broadly defined as the availability of at least 20 liters per person per day from a source within one kilometer of the user’s dwelling.

**Sustainable access** has two components with respect to water: one stands for environmental sustainability, the other for functional sustainability. The former insists on environmental protection through limiting extraction of water to a capacity below what is actually available. The latter reflects programme sustainability in terms of supply and management.

**Improved sanitation** facilities are defined in terms of the types of technology and levels of services that are more likely to be sanitary than unimproved technologies. Improved sanitation includes connection to a public sewers, connection to septic systems, pour-flush latrines, simple pit latrines and ventilated improved pit latrines. Not considered as improved sanitation are service or bucket latrines (where excreta is manually removed), public latrines and open latrines.

Data sources

Household surveys and assessment questionnaires to complement survey data or to provide estimates where survey data are not available. The latter also captures information related to usage and breakdown of self-built water facilities of which service providers may be unaware.

Methods of estimation
Estimates are generated through analysis of survey data and linear regression of data points. Coverage estimates are updated every two years.

**Disaggregation**

By location (urban/rural).

**References**


- Meeting the Millennium Development Goals Drinking water and sanitation target. (http://www.wssinfo.org)

**Database**

- WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme website: (http://www.wssinfo.org)

**Comments**

Information is missing from many developed countries. More needs to be done to address the issues of sustainability and safety in drinking water provision.