

BASIC SERVICES

Billions remain unserved as world races towards meeting the SDGs

Some three in ten people worldwide, or 2.1 billion, lack access to safe, readily available water at home, while six out of ten or 4.5 billion, lack safely managed sanitation. This is according to the latest Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) report, Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and Sustainable Development Goal baselines. The JMP is a joint initiative of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).



The JMP has produced regular estimates of global progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene since 1990. The 2017 update is the most comprehensive assessment to date, and establishes the first global estimates for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets that deal with access to sustainable water and sanitation services.

The SDG targets call for universal and equitable access for all, which implies eliminating inequalities in service levels. The targets also include hygiene, which was not addressed in the Millennium Development Goals. The new targets also specify that drinking water should be safe and affordable, and that sanitation should be adequate. They include explicit references to ending open defecation, and to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

Safely managed drinking water and sanitation services means drinking water free of contamination that is available at home when needed, and toilets whereby excreta are treated and disposed of safely. Basic services means having a protected drinking water source that takes less than thirty minutes to collect water from, using an improved toilet that does not have to be shared with other households, and having handwashing facilities with soap and water in the home.

The overriding conclusion from the latest status report is that too many people still lack access, particularly in rural areas. "Safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home should not be a privilege of only those who are rich or live in urban centres," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. "These are some of the most basic requirements for human health, and

Basic services

all countries have a responsibility to ensure that everyone can access them.”

Billions of people have gained access to basic drinking water and sanitation services since 2000, but these services do not necessarily provide safe water and sanitation. Many homes, healthcare facilities and schools also still lack soap and water for handwashing. This puts the health of all people – but especially young children – at risk for diseases, such as diarrhoea.

As a result, every year, 361 000 children under five years of age die due to diarrhoea. Poor sanitation and contaminated water are also linked to transmission of diseases such as cholera, dysentery and hepatitis A, and typhoid.

“Safe water, effective sanitation and hygiene are critical to the health of every child and every community – and thus are essential to building stronger, healthier and more equitable societies,” noted UNICEF Executive Director, Anthony Lake. “As we improve these services in the most disadvantaged communities and for the most disadvantaged children today, we give them a fairer chance at a better tomorrow.”

Significant inequalities persist

In order to decrease global inequalities, the new SDGs call for ending open defecation and achieving universal access to basic services by 2030. Of the 2,1 billion people who do not have safely managed water, 844 million do not have even a basic drinking water service. This includes 263 million people who have to spend over 30 minutes per trip collecting water from sources outside the home, and 159 million who still drink

untreated water from surface water sources, such as streams or lakes.

In 90 countries, progress towards basic sanitation is too slow, meaning they will not reach universal coverage by 2030.



IN 2015,
most countries
in Africa had
less than 50%
COVERAGE
WITH BASIC
handwashing facilities.

WaterAid/Layton Thompson



Only 39% of the global population use a safely managed sanitation service.

Handwashing critical to Africa's future – AMCOW Chief

The African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) has described handwashing as a critical element in Africa's plan for the future.

In a message delivered on Global Handwashing Day (15 October), AMCOW Executive Secretary, Dr Canisius Kanangire, urged Africa to "stand up and ensure every child has access to handwashing tools and services". According to him, handwashing remains one of the most effective measures of avoiding illnesses and spreading bacteria and viruses to others.

With diarrhoea and pneumonia together accounting for almost 3,5 million child deaths annually, and 42% of this estimate occurring in Africa, Dr Kanangire believes that the time to start washing our hands is now. Handwashing with soap is estimated to reduce incidents of diarrhoea by 30% and respiratory infections by 21% in children under the age of five.

The AMCOW chief further reiterated his organisation's commitment to handwashing as an integral part of its water, sanitation and hygiene interventions following the proactive step taken by African Ministers responsible for sanitation at the 4th AfricaSan Conference in Dakar, Senegal, through the 4th and 6th Commitments of the N'gor Declaration.

The declaration commits African governments to ensuring strong leadership and coordination at all levels to build and sustain governance for sanitation and hygiene across sectors, especially water, health, nutrition, education, gender and the environment; and ensure inclusive, safely-managed sanitation services and functioning handwashing facilities in public institutions and spaces.

Of the 4,5 billion people who do not have safely managed sanitation, 2.3 billion still do not have basic sanitation services. This includes 600 million people who share a toilet or latrine with other households, and 892 million people – mostly in rural areas – who defecate in the open. Due to population growth, open defecation is increasing in sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania.

Good hygiene is one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent the spread of disease. For the first time, the SDGs are monitoring the percentage of people who have facilities to wash their hands at home with soap and water. According to the new report, access to water and soap for handwashing varies immensely in the 70 countries with available data, from 15% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa to 76% in western Asia and northern Africa.

Additional key findings from the report include:

- Many countries lack data on the quality of water and

sanitation services. The report includes estimates for 96 countries on safely managed drinking water and 84 countries on safely managed sanitation.

- In countries experiencing conflict or unrest, children are four times less likely to use basic water services, and two times less likely to use basic sanitation services than children in other countries.
- There are big gaps in service between urban and rural areas. Two out of three people with safely managed drinking water and three out of five people with safely managed sanitation services live in urban areas. Of the 161 million people using untreated surface water, 150 million live in rural areas.

SDG Goal 6: Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- 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 minimising 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.

To download the report, *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines*,

Visit: https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_96611.html