

Our goals need water

The Stockholm Statement to the High Level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs

The management and provision of water resources, water services and sanitation are some of the most cost efficient ways to address all the Millennium Development Goals. It is a fact: the MDGs will only be achieved by wise management of water resources and secure and equitable access to safe water and adequate sanitation. Wide application of current knowledge and practice will alleviate the suffering of billions of children, women and men. It will also free up scarce human and financial resources to be spent on meeting other development challenges. But water needs more attention: policy, investment and management. Continuing to neglect it is a recipe for disaster, and the failure of all MDGs.

- Lack of water and sanitation makes people poor. Inadequate access to water and sanitation deprives billions of people, especially women and girls, of opportunities, dignity, safety and wellbeing. [MDG 1]
- We fear drastic increases in hunger from more floods and more droughts. Improved water management is key to food production, especially in a changing climate. [MDG 1]
- We deplore that the diseases of poor water quality still cause half of the malnourishment in our world. [MDG 1]
- Hauling water takes a huge toll on unserved households' time. Poor access hampers democratic participation and economic development as well as hindering children, especially girls, from attending school and causes girls to drop out. [MDG 2]
- Deprivation of water and sanitation perpetuates gender inequality and disempowers women. Access improves women's safety and their opportunities to participate in society, to work, and to care for families. [MDG 3]
- Clean water and sanitation are among the most powerful preventative measures for child mortality. [MDG 4]
- Access reduces the incidence of diseases and afflictions that undermine maternal health and contribute to maternal mortality. [MDG 5]
- Half of all hospital beds, and countless sick beds, are occupied by people suffering from water related diseases. Appropriate management and provision will save millions of lives and prevent enormous suffering. It will also release resources in the health systems to be spent on curing other ills. [MDG 6]
- Improved management and governance of water resources is indispensable for a healthy environment. Recent weather related calamities unambiguously show that water is the harbinger of a changing climate. Water is indispensable for all living things. Green economies need water to grow and flourish. [MDG7]

We urge the participants of the High Level Plenary Meeting on the MDG's to recognize fully, and act upon, the fundamental roles of water resources, drinking water, sanitation and hygiene for achieving the MDG's. In particular, we request the High Level Plenary Meeting to raise international commitments from all governments for the provision of sanitation and water for all, with a 5 year drive on sanitation that is seriously lagging behind. [MDG8]

Sanitation and water are not just targets or sectors. They are the fundamental basis for life and indispensable to sustainable economic and social development. They must feature prominently in your priorities.