



# Facing the facts: the water crisis

## The Global Water Crisis

**884 million people, lack access to safe water supplies, approximately one in eight people.**

3.575 million people die each year from water-related disease.

43% of water-related deaths are due to diarrhea.

84% of water-related deaths are in children ages 0 – 14.

98% of water-related deaths occur in the developing world.

The water and sanitation crisis claims more lives through disease than any war claims through guns.

At any given time, half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from a water-related disease.

An American taking a five-minute shower uses more water than the typical person living in a developing country slum uses in a whole day.

About a third of people without access to an improved water source live on less than \$1 a day. More than two thirds of people without an improved water source live on less than \$2 a day.

Poor people living in the slums often pay 5-10 times more per liter of water than wealthy people living in the same city.

Without food a person can live for weeks, but without water you can expect to live only a few days.

## Sanitation

2.5 billion people lack access to improved sanitation, including 1.2 billion people who have no facilities at all.

The majority of the illness in the world is caused by fecal matter.

Lack of sanitation is the world's biggest cause of infection.

At any one time, more than half of the poor in the developing world are ill from causes related to hygiene, sanitation and water supply.

88% of cases of diarrhea worldwide are attributable to unsafe water, inadequate sanitation or insufficient hygiene.

Only 62% of the world's population has access to improved sanitation – defined as a sanitation facility that ensures hygienic separation of human excreta from human contact.

Of the 60 million people added to the world's towns and cities every year, most occupy impoverished slums and shanty-towns with no sanitation facilities.



## Impacts on Children

Every 15 seconds, a child dies from a water-related disease.

Children in poor environments often carry 1,000 parasitic worms in their bodies at any time.

1.4 million children die as a result of diarrhea each year.

90% of all deaths caused by diarrheal diseases are children under 5 years of age, mostly in developing countries.



## Impacts on Women

Millions of women and children spend several hours a day collecting water from distant, often polluted sources.

A study by the International Water and Sanitation Centre (IRC) of community water and sanitation projects in 88 communities found that projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that do not. This supports an earlier World Bank study that found that women's participation was strongly associated with water and sanitation project effectiveness.

Evidence shows that women are responsible for half of the world's food production (as opposed to cash crops) and in most developing countries, rural women produce between 60-80 percent of the food. Women also have an important role in establishing sustainable use of resources in small-scale fishing communities, and their knowledge is valuable for managing and protecting watersheds and wetlands.

## Impacts on Productivity

On average, every US dollar invested in water and sanitation provides an economic return of eight US dollars.

An investment of US\$ 11.3 billion per year is needed to meet the drinking water and sanitation target of the Millennium Development Goals, yielding a total payback for US\$ 84 billion a year.

Other estimated economic benefits of investing in drinking-water and sanitation :

- 272 million school attendance days a year
- 1.5 billion healthy days for children under five years of age
- Values of deaths averted, based on discounted future earnings, amounting to US\$ 3.6 billion a year
- Health-care savings of US\$ 7 billion a year for health agencies and US\$ 340 million for individuals

