



Key recommendations and an operational plan for national and sub-national governments, bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies, the UN system, service providers, civil society, and international networks and partnerships to achieve the water and sanitation targets and to optimize water resources management for the Millennium Development Goals.



Key Recommendations: UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation Final Report

Health, Dignity, and Development: What Will It Take?

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Water is Life

Four out of every ten people in the world don't have access to even a simple pit latrine; and nearly two in ten have no source of safe drinking water. This silent humanitarian crisis kills some 3,900 children every day and robs the poorest—particularly women and girls—of their health, time, and dignity. Water supply and sanitation services as well as water as a resource are critical to sustainable development—from environmental protection and food security to increased tourism and investment, from the empowerment of women and the education of girls to reductions in productivity losses due to morbidity and malnutrition. The UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation sought to answer two questions: what will it take to reach the MDGs for water supply and sanitation?; and how can the use of water as a resource be optimized to achieve the MDGs?

Five guiding principles

At the conclusion of its three-year project, the Task Force was unanimous in its belief that the water and sanitation target, “to cut in half, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation,” will not be reached unless:

1. There is a **deliberate commitment** by donors to increase and refocus their development assistance and to target sufficient aid to the poorest low-income countries.
2. There is a **deliberate commitment** by governments of middle-income countries that do not depend on aid to reallocate their resources such that they target funding to the unserved poor.
3. There are **deliberate activities** to create support and ownership for water supply and sanitation initiatives among both women and men in poor communities.
4. There is a **deliberate recognition** that basic sanitation in particular requires an approach that centers on community mobilization and actions that support and encourage that mobilization.

Furthermore, the Task Force is convinced that the MDGs as a whole will not be met unless:

5. There is **deliberate planning** and investment in sound water resources management and infrastructure.



Photo: Mats Lannerstad

Ten Critical Actions

The Task Force identified ten critical actions for achieving the water and sanitation target and fostering the sound management of water resources for all the MDGs. They are:

Action 1

Governments and other stakeholders must move the sanitation crisis to the top of the agenda.

Action 2

Countries must ensure that policies and institutions for water supply and sanitation service delivery, as well as for water resources management and development, respond equally to the different roles, needs, and priorities of women and men.

Action 3

Governments and donor agencies must simultaneously pursue investment reforms for improved water supply, sanitation, and water management.

Action 4

Efforts to reach the water and sanitation target must focus on sustainable service delivery, rather than construction of facilities alone.

Action 5

Governments and donor agencies must empower local authorities and communities with the authority, resources, and professional capacity required to manage water supply and sanitation service delivery.

Action 6

Governments and utilities must ensure that users who can pay do pay in order to fund the operation, maintenance, and expansion of services—but they must also ensure that the needs of poor households are met.

Action 7

Within the context of national poverty reduction strategies based on the Millennium Development Goals, countries must elaborate coherent water resources development and management plans that will support the achievement of the Goals.

Action 8

Governments and their civil society and private sector partners must support a wide range of water and sanitation technologies and service levels that are technically, socially, environmentally, and financially appropriate.

Action 9

Institutional, financial, and technological innovation must be promoted in strategic areas.

Action 10

The United Nations system organizations and their Member States must ensure that the UN system and its international partners provide strong and effective support for the achievement of the water supply and sanitation target and for water resources management and development.

An Operational Plan

The five guiding principles and ten actions represent, in broad strokes, the vital conditions needed both to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for water supply and sanitation, and to ensure that sound water resources development and management underpins the broader MDG effort. These principles and actions are further elaborated within an operational plan that specifies the steps that each actor—national and sub-national governments, donors, civic and community organizations, and research institutions—must undertake in support of the goals. Although the operational plan focuses only on actions by actors in the water sector, investments in other sectors are crucial to the achievement of the water and sanitation targets.

The operational plans are summarized in tables 1 to 8. In each table, entries have been categorized into immediate priorities, short-term priorities, and medium-term priorities.

- **National and Sub-National Governments:** National governments have principal responsibility for initiating the planning procedures and policy reforms, as well as for committing the financial and human resources, necessary to achieve the MDGs. In addition, efforts by other stakeholder groups are often contingent upon strong initial action by national governments. The proposed operational plan should therefore be spearheaded by the actions that have to be taken by national governments, as summarized in table 1 (a and b). Since some actions, such as setting of standards for water and sanitation technologies, are carried out at the national level in some countries and at the sub-national level in others, these actions have been grouped together in this table, on the assumption that they would be assigned to the responsible parties within a given country. Actions that are typically exclusive to national governments, such as the carrying out of national planning processes, have been noted with an asterisk.
- **Bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies, regional development banks, donor agencies and countries:** If the target is to be reached, fundamental changes by the bilateral and multilateral development agencies, regional development banks, donor agen-

Modest dreams

"At least my daughter's education will ensure that she will get a groom who comes from a home with a toilet."
—*Manjulaben, age 38, a daily wage laborer from Nagalpur village (Kachhbh district, Gujarat state)*

"I do wish that I get married in a family which has the facility of toilet and separate water tap. It is a dream for me."
—*Barkha, age 12, Sanjay Amar Colony, Delhi, India*
From UN-HABITAT's "Unheard Voices of Women" project

cies and countries will be required, as summarized in table 2.

- **The United Nations System:** Key actions that have to be taken by the United Nations system organizations and their Member States are outlined in table 3.
- **Other National and International Actors:** Actions to be undertaken by other key actors—service providers, civic and community organizations, international networks and partnerships, and research organizations—are summarized in tables 4 to 7.

Other important actions that should be undertaken by all actors on a continual basis—both during the MDG process and beyond—have been summarized in table 8.

The Task Force recommends that all organizations engaged in the effort to achieve the MDGs—from national and sub-national governments to donors to NGOs—should themselves prepare an operational plan in order to focus their support on the achievement of the MDGs.

Photo: WHO/P. Virat





To reach target 10

Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that water supply and sanitation are included in national planning processes, especially Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. • Undertake assessments of water and sanitation infrastructure endowments and deficits. • Create a national-level “institutional home” for sanitation. • Obtain current, accurate information about the characteristics of unserved households, so that appropriate policies to expand access to these households are pursued. • Review and modify subsidy policies as necessary to ensure that improved water and sanitation services are affordable to the poor, and subsidies are provided only to low-income households. • Prioritize activities and programs that raise the profile of and demand for improved sanitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor changes over time to gauge the effectiveness of interventions and the impact of policy reforms and investments at national and subnational levels. • Ensure that appropriate, flexible standards for water, sanitation, and wastewater treatment technologies are in place. • Initiate policy reforms that improve the financial and technical sustainability of water and sanitation service provision, such as tariff reforms, “ring fencing,” and adequate support for ongoing operations and maintenance. • Initiate policy reforms to attract financing to, and facilitate efficient use of human and financial resources in water and sanitation service delivery. • Initiate policy reforms that improve the accountability of service providers, such as the establishment and funding of credible regulatory institutions, reform of civil-service legislation, and limiting political interference in decisionmaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor changes over time to gauge the effectiveness of interventions and the impact of policy reforms and investments at national and subnational levels. • Remove barriers to service provision in unregularized areas. • Shift principal control over water and sanitation planning and service delivery to local administrations, including budgetary authority. • Support decentralization by retaining strong oversight and support functions, particularly with respect to ensuring access to services by poor households. • Provide funding to support community mobilization and organization for actions towards the water and sanitation targets.

To improve water resources management for all the Goals

Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Goals-based planning and policy development by an integrated approach to land, water, and ecosystems. • Use the action target set by WSSD in Johannesburg for countries to develop IVVRM and water efficiency strategies by 2005 as an opportunity to infuse Goals planning processes with consideration of water resources. • Develop a coherent approach toward deciding on the investments in water resources infrastructure and management needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor changes over time to gauge the effectiveness of interventions and the impact of policy reforms and investments at national and subnational levels. • Define and promote strategies that will contribute to multiple Goals and avoid strategies that create conflicts among them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor changes over time to gauge the effectiveness of interventions and the impact of policy reforms and investments at national and subnational levels. • Disseminate small-scale water technologies to provide livelihoods to small and landless farmers, while addressing the hunger and environment Goals. • Reduce the vulnerability of communities to water-related natural disasters by land reform, infrastructure construction for water storage and flood protection, and improved land-use planning, including slum upgrading. • Invest in community-based natural resource management, including urban agriculture, for hunger, poverty, and environment Goals.

Table 1. Priority actions for national and sub-national governments



Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase current aid in the water and sanitation sector to levels commensurate with the costs of attaining the water and sanitation target in the poorest countries. • Redirect aid to the poorest countries and, within countries, toward programs that provide basic services for poor households. • Prioritize investments in basic sanitation and hygiene. • Reform aid procedures, so that aid supports policy reforms and infrastructure investment simultaneously, thereby enhancing institutional and policy frameworks while expanding services. • Increase funding to Joint Monitoring Programme and refrain from setting up parallel structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantially accelerate the process for making aid available, and simplify the procedures for allocating aid. • Prioritize investments in programs that help “crowd in” community and private resources to benefit the poor, as well as initiatives that have the potential to yield results at scale. • Use the upcoming second Water Decade, 2005-15 (“Water for Life”), to mobilize international awareness and political commitment to sound water resources management and expansion of water and sanitation services to meet the Millennium Development Goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support initiatives that seek to encourage more open and frank discussion of sanitation needs and practices. • Promote and finance research and development that fosters innovations in appropriate technologies, social marketing, and institutional arrangements that improve access to water and sanitation services by the poor. • Promote initiatives that address multiple Millennium Development Goals. • Support, where useful, the creation of new, regional-level multilateral donor mechanisms such as the African Water Facility.

Table 2. Priority actions for bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies



Photo: UNICEF/HQ98-0928/ Giacomo Pirozzi



Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen UN country team efforts to provide technical and capacity-building support to governments. • Effectively coordinate actions at the country level, including harmonization of procedures and joint programs, both within the UN system and with development banks and bilateral donor agencies. • Support the Joint Monitoring Programme as the key global mechanism for monitoring sustainable access to water and sanitation and provide it with the necessary resources to carry out its work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand monitoring efforts to include information on the actions and investments undertaken by the international community toward meeting the Goals, as well as on the impacts of those activities. • Use the upcoming second Water Decade, 2005–15 (“Water for Life”), to mobilize international awareness and political commitment to sound water resources management and expansion of water and sanitation services to meet the Millennium Development Goals. • Ensure the independence and adequate funding of the Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation as a means of achieving high-level strategic focus among the international community. • Focus the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation on providing high-level policy commentary on progress toward the water and sanitation target. • Ask the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation to comment independently and boldly on developing country, donor country, and UN system practices, and produce a periodic, brief, focused, high-profile report with pointed recommendations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop clear mechanism to provide leadership and strategic guidance to the international community. • Mandate UN-Water to periodically report through World Water Development Report on progress in water resources development and management for the Goals, including progress on the development of IWRM strategies by 2005. • Strengthen UN-Water and WWDR and provide with greater funding to fulfill these roles successfully. • Reform monitoring systems such that they measure access to sustainable services, rather than the presence of particular infrastructure. • Support the use of scientific sampling and household surveys for water and sanitation monitoring. • Ensure that data collected in global monitoring is widely disseminated in “user friendly” formats. • Support initiatives that seek to encourage more open and frank discussion of sanitation needs and practices.

Table 3. Priority actions for the United Nations system

Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and lobby for policy reforms in water and sanitation subsidies, so that benefits are targeted to poor households. • Support and lobby for policy reforms in water and sanitation tariffs, so that service provision becomes financially sustainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out opportunities for partnerships with civic organizations that can improve access to water and sanitation services by poor households. • Revise budgets and institutional incentive structures, so that sustainable operations and maintenance of installed infrastructure receives sufficient priority and resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursue innovative strategies, including lower cost appropriate technologies, to expand services to unregularized settlements.

Table 4. Priority actions for service providers



Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize activities and programs that raise the profile of and demand for improved sanitation. • Use accurate information—the end product of reliable monitoring efforts—as a powerful advocacy tool for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strategies for encouraging more open and frank discussion of sanitation needs and practices. • Seek out opportunities for partnerships with service providers that improve access to water and sanitation services by poor households. • Share information and experiences with service providers, as well as with subnational and national governments, seeking to better understand the characteristics of and obstacles faced by unserved households. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to identify strategies for ensuring access to services by poor households while also maintaining financial sustainability for service providers. • Help to hold service providers and governments accountable for expanding and improving water and sanitation services to the poor through audits, public information campaigns, etc.

Table 5. Priority actions for civic and community organizations

Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise public awareness of the deficits in coverage and quality of water supply and sanitation services through public statements, articles, events, celebrity endorsements, and other innovative strategies. • Test, refine, and publicize effective strategies for water and sanitation service delivery to the poor that have the potential to yield results at scale. • Collectively strengthen and rationalize efforts and align them towards the achievement of the Goals while at the same time taking steps to ensure accountability to the communities of the developing world. • Use accurate information—the end product of reliable monitoring efforts—as a powerful advocacy tool for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the upcoming second Water Decade, 2005–15 (“Water for Life”), to mobilize international awareness and political commitment to sound water resources management and expansion of water and sanitation services to meet the Millennium Development Goals. • Publicly support policy reforms that better target subsidies to poor households, promote sustainability of service delivery, and heighten accountability of service providers to households. • Support initiatives that seek to encourage more open and frank discussion of sanitation needs and practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to hold service providers and governments accountable for expanding and improving water and sanitation services to the poor through audits, public information campaigns, etc. • Package and disseminate information collected in national and international monitoring efforts such that it is accessible to community organizations, the media, and the general public. • Explore ways to use the new UN ECOSOC affirmation of the Right to Water to influence national policy on water and sanitation.

Table 6. Priority actions for international networks and partnerships



Immediate priority actions	Short-term priority actions	Medium-term priority actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better document and communicate the economic benefits of improved water and sanitation services. • Conduct research and disseminate findings on effective strategies for providing sustainable water supply and sanitation services in persistently challenging settings (unregularized urban communities, small towns, poor rural villages). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of appropriate technical standards for water supply, sewerage, and sewage treatment. • Increase research and development on technologies and institutional innovations aimed at meeting several Goals simultaneously and reducing tradeoffs among the uses of water resources to meet the various Goals. • Develop new sanitation technologies to reuse wastewater for periurban agriculture. • Develop a conceptual framework for defining and measuring the contribution of water resources development and management to the Millennium Development Goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out research and development of appropriate, affordable sanitation technologies.

Table 7. Priority actions for research organizations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an operational plan that outlines what they will do during the period 2005–15 to help achieve target 10 and the development and management of water resources for the Millennium Development Goals. • Maintain a focus on sustainability to ensure that gains made in expanding access to water and sanitation services and improving water resources management during the Millennium Development process will be maintained in the long term. • Incorporate gender considerations into policy recommendations and program design; address gender biases within their own institutions. • Take measures to reduce corruption at all levels, whether in donor organizations, international agencies or companies, or public, private, or civic institutions in developing countries.

Table 8. Priority actions for all actors throughout the Millennium Development process and beyond

“Collecting water takes me five hours a day.”
—Joyce Tunda, Tanzania
From the BBC’s Global Village Voices

“How long are we going to live this way? It is affecting our pride and dignity.”
—Charlene, age 42, Caribbean urban slum
From UN-HABITAT’s “Unheard Voices of Women” project

Photo: UNICEF/HQ00-0507/ Radhika Chalasani





MillenniumProject

Key Recommendations from Health, Dignity, and Development

The UN Millennium Project is an independent advisory body commissioned by the UN Secretary-General to propose the best strategies for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are the world's targets for dramatically reducing extreme poverty in its many dimensions by 2015—income poverty, hunger, disease, exclusion, lack of infrastructure and shelter—while promoting gender equality, education, health, and environmental sustainability. Ten Millennium Project task forces, including one on Water and Sanitation, were charged with identifying what it would take to achieve the Goals.

In this brochure version of the report's key recommendations, the Task Force outlines the bold yet practical actions needed to increase access to water and sanitation. The report underscores the need to focus on the global sanitation

crisis, which contributes to the death of 3,900 children each day, to increase access to domestic water supply, and to invest in integrated development and management of water resources. All are necessary for countries to reduce poverty and hunger, improve health, advance gender equality, and ensure environmental sustainability.

Implementing the recommendations of the report and this brochure will allow all countries to halve the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation by 2015. This brochure was prepared by the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Water and Sanitation and published by the Swedish Water House, an initiative of the Government of Sweden which supports international policy development and cooperation on water. The full report is available at www.unmillenniumproject.org.



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