

## BACKGROUND BRIEF

### UNICEF ETHIOPIA'S WATER AND SANITATION (WES) PROGRAMME

#### ISSUE

Coverage levels for water and sanitation in Ethiopia are among the lowest in the world. According to official figures, 41.2 per cent of households have access to safe water, and 21.34 per cent of households have access to sanitation facilities. This puts strain on girls and women who are widely responsible for the collection of this vital resource. Those affected by HIV/AIDS are also vulnerable to poor sanitation and water deprivation, as both leave the body open to opportunistic infections

Access to safe water is defined as 20 litres per person per day within a distance of 1-2 kilometres. The effective coverage is even lower, as 30-60 per cent of existing water schemes are not functioning and many constructed latrines are not in use. Furthermore, there are considerable gaps between rural and urban coverage levels.

In addition to low coverage levels, water quality is another major problem, as evidenced by frequent outbreaks of water related epidemics in both rural and urban areas. Contamination of water supplies by cattle dung and human excreta is frequent.

High fluoride levels in groundwater are a particular problem in the Rift Valley regions. Approximately 7.5 million Ethiopians in the Rift Valley area suffer from problems related to high fluoride levels. Nearly 80% of children are affected by dental fluorosis. Many suffer from debilitating skeletal problems later in life.

In general, there are low levels of hygiene awareness, which compound the health risks associated with low water and sanitation coverage levels. The main problem is increased susceptibility to water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea and dysentery, water-washed diseases such as trachoma and scabies, water-based diseases such as schistosomiasis, and water-related insect vectors including malaria.

In Ethiopia, almost three quarters of health problems in children and communicable diseases originate from the environment. Diarrhoeal disease alone accounts for 46 per cent of total under-five mortality. In addition to diarrhoeal disease, a large section of the population is afflicted with trachoma and helminthiasis, especially guinea-worm disease.

Low levels of water and sanitation coverage also have important social implications. Women and children spend several hours every day fetching water. The water carried often equals 70 per cent of the carrier's body weight, which has a heavy impact in terms of physical exertion and burning up calories from a meager dietary intake. The time spent fetching water could be used to care for children in the home, rest or employment in income generating

activities. For girls, the task of carrying water combined with lack of sanitary facilities in schools often stands in the way of their education.

## ACTION

The challenges to meet the water and sanitation needs of Ethiopia are immense. There is a need to coach millions of additional families to adopt a sanitary lifestyle. At least US\$ 29 needs to be spent per capita to meet Millennium Development Goals' targets in a country with a population of 77 million. A total of US\$ 616 million needs to be spent on upgrading sanitation facilities.

In addition, the technical skills of water and sanitation staff need to be upgraded, as well as extensive promotion of water, sanitation and hygiene related behavior, with a primary focus on women to achieve the full benefits of improvements in facilities.

UNICEF WES programme aims to reduce of IMR (Infant Mortality Rate), U5MR (Under Five Mortality Rate) and MMR (Maternal Mortality Rate) from water-related diseases, eradication of dracunculiasis (guinea worm), as well as to improve health in general, overall socio-economic development and quality of life for women and children. The means of reaching these objectives will be by fulfilling of the basic right of the Ethiopian people to have access to clean water, adequate sanitation facilities and a healthy living environment. UNICEF's support has been 20% of the total need, but pivotal to reach the remaining 80%.

Supporting water and sanitation for schools and creating a child/girl friendly environment are also two major objectives of UNICEF WES. Achieving quality education and increasing girls' enrollment are the expected results.

UNICEF will assist the Government of Ethiopia in its Universal Access Plan initiative to bring water and sanitation supplies to 80% and 100% of the population respectively. UNICEF's contribution will be the construction of new water supply schemes and rehabilitation of old systems.

Finally, UNICEF WES will provide special care and protection to those affected by HIV/AIDS, both patients and orphan children.

## IMPACT

UNICEF Ethiopia is entering a dynamic new programme cycle, initiating new projects and upgrading existing ones from 2007 to 2011.

The WES programme aims to achieve the following results: i) 6 million people (of which 4.5 million are vulnerable children and women) should have equitable and sustainable access to safe water, basic sanitation services and improved hygiene in drought-prone and underserved areas; ii) 650 health infrastructures and 1,000 schools provided with the complete WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) package, and 3,200 schools provided with

components of hygiene education, sanitation and water supply; iii) preparedness plans in place to provide assistance to 150,000 people affected by natural or man-made disasters within 72 hours; and iv) WASH capacity enhanced nationally and regionally in 120 woredas (districts).

Through UNICEF's interventions in the water and sanitation sector, we expect a reduction of mortality levels, higher enrollment of girls in school and improved quality of life - especially for women and children and people affected by HIV/AIDS.

## FUNDING

To achieve these objectives UNICEF requires an estimated US\$ 111, 800, 000 for the whole programme cycle. Despite intense efforts to ensure enough funds are available, WES will be starting the first year of the five year cycle (2007) with a US\$ 15 million shortfall.

**UNICEF relies on donations and does not have a guaranteed budget. We need the continued support of all our benefactors.**

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