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Promoting Safe Water at the 3rd World Water Forum



At the eight-day forum in Kyoto Japan being held in the third week of March, UNICEF is organizing a session entitled Safe Water: Household Security and Quality. Session participants will discuss quality, quantity and water security issues and work towards developing a collaborative framework for follow-up action. The session will build on the on-line discussions from the recent [E-Conference on Household Water Security](#). For more information, see the [3rd World Water Forum Web page](#).



Household Water Security
E-conference and Virtual Forum

E-Conference and Web forum on Household Water Security

UNICEF, together with its partners WHO and HTN are hosting an on-line conference on household water security. The conference will be simultaneously run via e-mail and through a special World Water Forum virtual session. For more information, and to sign up, see the [e-conference page](#).

Focusing on Children: UNICEF at the World Summit on Sustainable Development

At the Johannesburg Summit (26 August to 4 September, 2002) UNICEF, through various activities, will advocate that investing in



children is key to sustainable development. In the area of water and sanitation, UNICEF will highlight key lessons learned and programmatic approaches for accelerating progress in the sector, including the imperative of working with communities to ensure household water security and safe sanitation for child health, and the critical role of hygiene and sanitation in schools for improving girls' enrollment, ability to learn and retention. For more information on UNICEF's WES programmes, and the Summit, see: the [UNICEF WES Web pages](#), the official [Johannesburg Summit site](#), and [UNICEF's special site on sustainable development](#).

A healthy future for our children will be ensured only through safeguarding the environment



Children are the most affected by environmental degradation, according to a new study released by UNICEF, [UNEP](#) and [WHO](#) for the UN General Assembly [Special Session](#) on Children. The report, [Children in the New Millennium: Environmental Impact on Health](#), shows that environment-related diseases—notably diarrhoea and acute respiratory infections—are among the leading causes of child mortality. The report concludes

with recommendations for action including a call for increased investment in programmes to improve the immediate environment of young children. See also the UNICEF publication: [Childhood Lead Poisoning: Information for Advocacy and Action](#).

E-Conference on School Sanitation and Hygiene

Education



IRC and UNICEF are organising an e-conference to create a forum for stakeholders to discuss how school sanitation and hygiene education (SSHE) programmes

can best result in healthy and safe school environments, and how children can act as agents of change to promote hygiene and sanitation in their communities. SSHE practitioners, planners and researchers, and other interested people, are invited to participate. See the [e-conference page](#) to sign up and the [school sanitation pages](#) on this site for more information. The SSHE e-conference - running from April 29 to June 7 - is one of the initiatives UNICEF and its partners are sponsoring as a lead-up to the upcoming [Third World Water Forum](#).

WES statistics database now online

UNICEF has launched the [ChildInfo Web site](#) for statistics related to child rights which, for the first time on-line, includes a [comprehensive WES database](#) of global, regional and country level statistics. The database includes separate sections for Sanitation, Water and Guinea Worm statistics and is based on data from the joint UNICEF/WHO [Joint Monitoring Programme](#), UNICEF's multiple indicator cluster surveys and other sources.



Putting hygiene on the agenda

The importance of hygiene is increasingly recognized by policy makers worldwide. For example, at the International Conference on Freshwater in Germany in December 2001, 22 African government ministers called for increased action to reduce disease caused by poor hygiene and unsafe water. Responding to the demand for wider dissemination of hygiene resources, UNICEF and [IRC](#) have reissued the joint paper - [Motivating Better Hygiene Behaviour: Importance for Public Health, Mechanisms for Change](#). Other resources from UNICEF on hygiene include the [Hygiene Promotion Manual](#) and the [Happy, Healthy and Hygienic](#) mini-manuals.





Teachers talking about hygiene

The September 2001 update of the UNICEF Web site, [Teachers Talking About Learning](#), focuses on sanitation and hygiene in schools. The site provides a number of resources for teachers including a case study on how the UNICEF Laos "Learning with Joy" kit is helping children learn about hygiene, sanitation and safe water. See also the [school sanitation and hygiene education section](#) of this site for more resources, including a dedicated [Web site](#) and the full text of UNICEF' [manual on school sanitation and hygiene education](#).

Worms, sanitation and AIDS

South African researchers have warned that helminthiasis (worm infestation) could compromise the success of a potential AIDS vaccine as is the case with established vaccines against viral diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis. Worm infestations are widespread in poor communities, largely due to poor sanitation. In schools around Cape Town, for example, up to 96% of children have worms. The [Medical Research Council of South Africa](#) argues that the large amounts of money being spent to develop vaccines will be wasted unless sanitary conditions are first improved and worm eradication measures stepped up. (Sources: Lancet 357:1799 and Mail and Guardian, 24 August 2001)

Water crisis in Iran

The drought in Iran, now in its fourth year, is affecting more than half of Iran' s 62 million people. According to a [recent inter-agency mission](#) (comprised of UNDP, UNICEF and FAO), the severity of the drought is far greater than last year. In Tehran, the drought has resulted in an "absolute water crisis" according to city authorities, and has prompted the introduction of strict water rationing measures. Elsewhere in the country an increasing number of people are forced to rely on water

tankers to survive, livestock is being decimated due to malnutrition and disease, and wheat production has plummeted. See the [full report](#) from the inter-agency mission for more information. (Sources: United Nations, AP and IFRC)



The poor pay more for water

At **Istanbul+5**, the United Nations Special Session for reviewing implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the water problems in African cities was one of the items on the agenda. Rich people use drinking water to water lawns and wash cars, said Kwamena Bartels, Ghana' s Minister for Public Works and Housing, meanwhile, slum dwellers buy expensive bottled

water from people who illegally siphon it out of the city' s pipes. See the [special session Web site](#) for more information, including the 2001 [State of the World' s Cities Report](#). See also UNICEF' s booklet on child-friendly cities [below](#). (Sources: AP and United Nations)

Half of the world's wetlands lost in one century

A new documentary that explores the connections between human well-being and ecosystem conditions was recently aired on US public television. [Earth on Edge](#), by acclaimed producer Bill Moyer, examines the impact human activities have had on the vital life-support systems of our planet, and features five case studies from around the world including a study on how invasive plants in South Africa are devastating freshwater resources. The documentary is based in part on the new [World Resources Institute](#) report: [People and Ecosystems: The Fraying Web of Life](#). (Source: WRI)

"A child-friendly city requires...

...good access for all children to affordable, quality basic health services, clean water, adequate sanitation and solid waste removal."



In a new publication, [Partnerships to Create Child-Friendly Cities](#), UNICEF highlights the issues facing children in cities and calls for renewed efforts to free cities from poverty, discrimination, violence and disease. For more information see: UNICEF' s web pages on [urbanisation and children](#), the [urban sanitation issue](#) of the WES newsletter, and the web site of UNICEF' s partner - the [International Union of Local Authorities](#). (Source: UNICEF)



Myanmar celebrates National Sanitation Week

With the support of UNICEF, Myanmar launched its fourth annual National Sanitation Week in Yangon. Supplemented by social mobilisation activities in more than 100 under-served townships, the National Sanitation Weeks have successfully promoted the self-help approach in installing sanitary latrines by communities. Recent figures indicate that more than 2.5 million latrines have been installed in the last three years in the country and that 63% of households now use sanitary latrines. See UNICEF Myanmar' s website for additional information on the [water and sanitation programme](#) and a [photo gallery](#) of WES programme activities. See this site for more on [sanitation and hygiene promotion](#). (Source: UNICEF Myanmar)

UNICEF supports Nepal's new drive to promote latrines and hand-washing nationwide

In March 2001, Nepal launched a Five-year National Sanitation Campaign to improve hygiene and sanitation practices in a major new effort to tackle child illness. Major activities in the campaign include an annual National Sanitation Action Week, a five year social mobilization campaign, education programmes in communities and schools, and sanitary infrastructure development based on the principle of self-help. The campaign will be led by the Department of Water Supply and Sewerage with the support of UNICEF and WHO. Additional information: full [press release of the Nepal campaign](#), more information on [sanitation in general](#) and

the [school sanitation programme](#) from this site. (Source: UNICEF Nepal)



Earth Summit 2002 to focus on water and children

South Africa, the host of the next year' s Earth Summit, has announced that it plans to focus on worldwide access to drinking water and safeguarding children. Other key issues to be discussed at the Summit will include poverty alleviation, health and the emancipation of women. (Source: Reuters)



Young people's views on water and sanitation

Youth in developing countries experience water and sanitation problems directly and, if asked, have valuable ideas on how to improve the situation in their countries. Youth from more affluent regions can be effective advocates for the sector and for child rights in general. UNICEF WES is exploring methods of more fully engaging with adolescents as partners in our water and sanitation programming efforts throughout the world. Recently, as a step in this process, UNICEF organised an [internet chat on water and sanitation issues](#) through its Internet forum for young people, [Voices for Youth](#).

Focus on Urban Environmental Sanitation

What can be done to improve the living conditions of children in low-income urban settlements? A [new article on urban sanitation](#) on this site attempts to provide some answers. See also the [latest issue of WATERfront](#) (UNICEF' s newsletter on water, environment, sanitation and hygiene) for a new collection of case studies and articles on urban sanitation.



UN Agrees to stage new Earth Summit in 2002

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development ([CSD](#)) concluded its eighth

session on 6 May 2000 in New York, agreeing to stage another "Earth Summit" in 2002. The commission is monitoring the implementation of [Agenda 21](#), the global environment and development programme that was adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Agenda 21, in addition to covering a wide range of global environmental issues, dedicates specific chapters to children' s issues, water resources management, and environmental health.

World Education Forum:

The Importance of Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools

In her address on accelerating progress towards education for all (on 27 April to the [World Education Forum](#) in Dakar), UNICEF' s Executive Director Carol Bellamy noted the importance of a safe and nurturing school environment for learning, and the need for sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools. On the need to eliminate gender biases in education systems, Bellamy cited the provision of "*separate and functioning latrines for girls and boys*" as one of the key steps that can be taken to encourage girls to remain in schools (see also [the full speech](#), and additional information from this site on [school sanitation and hygiene education](#)).

Earth Day 2000

On 22 April the world celebrated Earth Day. On this occasion, UNICEF stressed the vulnerability of children to environmental hazards and degradation. [UNICEF' s address at the United Nations Earth Day ceremony](#) highlighted the importance of a safe household and community environment on the survival, growth and development of children (see also [Earth Day: Stake for children](#) and [Children and the Environment](#) on this site).



A Museum of Toilets on the Web?

Believe it or not, the Sulabh Sanitation Movement in India has established a Web version of its [museum of toilets](#) in New Delhi. Given the continued need to put sanitation on the agenda, UNICEF applauds this effort (see also the [Sanitation Brochure](#) for

information and tools for promoting sanitation, and other UNICEF WES [publications](#) on sanitation and hygiene).

Our Earth our Future: [Pachamama Site](#) Launched

The previously released Pachamama book, and the newly launched website, contain information, case studies, artwork and poetry produced by youth, and compiled as a worldwide assessment of environmental issues ranging from atmospheric and freshwater problems to urbanization and the protection of polar regions. Pachamama is based on UNEP' s Global Environment Outlook Report 2000, and produced by UNEP and Peace Child International in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF.



Water: "*the world's most indispensable resource*"

In her speech on 10 April US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright calls for an [Alliance for Global Water Security in the 21st Century](#) to promote cooperation amongst countries on water issues. In her speech Albright stressed the costs of water scarcity and poor water quality in Africa: "*...Almost half the people on the continent suffer from water-related disease. The result is economically crippling and from a humanitarian standpoint, flat out unacceptable*" ' ' .

Clinton: "*We should all be investing more in clean water*"

The US president, in a speech on 5 April to the participants in the White House conference on The New Economy, stressed the seriousness of the diarrhoea problem worldwide, and the importance of water: "... *First of all, with regard to the health issue, while I think the vaccine matter is terribly important, we haven't mentioned something that may be even more important: Clean water*" ([full text of speech](#)).

[UNICEF puts Sanitation on the Agenda](#)

At the World Water Forum (see item below), UNICEF

stressed the importance of environmental sanitation and hygiene in the discussion of water issues by government ministers and hundreds of participants from around the world.



World Water Day 2000: *Water for the 21st Century*

The UN system and its partners celebrate World Water Day every year on 22 March. In 2000, World Water Day coincided with the [Second World Water Forum](#) in which hundreds of people discussed visions for the future of the water and sanitation sector. Information on this year' s activities is provided on the [2000 World Water Day site](#) by UNESCO, this year' s lead agency. Information on previous years' celebrations is available on IRC' [World Water Day page](#).

Kader Asmal Awarded 10th Stockholm Water Prize

Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education in the Republic of South Africa, was awarded the 2000 Stockholm Water Prize in recognition of his unprecedented efforts in the development of vision, legislation and practice in the field of water management in South Africa. Information on the prize and its winners are available from the [Stockholm International Water Institute](#).

