

MEDIA RELEASE

International Year of Sanitation highlights the critical issue of access to safe water and adequate sanitation

Jakarta 27th March 2008: An estimated 2.6 billion people worldwide - including 980 million children – have no toilets at home, says UNICEF. This lack of basic sanitation has reached a critical stage with 5,000 children under the age of five dying every day from diarrhoeal diseases.

The Government of Indonesia launched the International Year of Sanitation in Jakarta today in an effort to highlight issues on sanitation, water and environment among the public, local governments, civil society and other stakeholders in Indonesia.

“We need to work together to ensure that women and children have access to clean water and proper sanitation as a basic right. This is the ideal we should be trying to achieve, and I applaud the Government for their efforts in this regard,” says Dr. Gianfranco Rotigliano, UNICEF Representative to Indonesia.

The International Year of Sanitation 2008 aims to raise the profile of sanitation issues on the international agenda and to accelerate progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing by half the proportion of people living without access to improved sanitation by 2015.

“In East Asia ...almost half the population lacks access to adequate sanitation, such as pit latrines, pourflush or composting toilets. This harsh reality – affecting almost 800 million people – has spawned disease and deprivation on a massive scale, reinforcing a vicious cycle of poverty among the marginalized, and widening disparities between urban and rural, rich and poor households,” says Dr. Rotigliano.

In Indonesia, nearly 69 million people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities and 55 million do not have access to a safe water source. 100,000 children under the age of three die in Indonesia every year from diarrhoea. Diarrhoea remains the second biggest killer of children in developing countries after acute respiratory tract infections.

Improved hygiene behaviour, coupled with access to toilets, lowers child mortality rates and increases the number of girls who go to school, reduces malnutrition and infection rates, and affords a greater dignity and privacy for all, particularly women, who often suffer disproportionately from the lack of safe, clean toilets.

UNICEF is supporting the government of Indonesia to alleviate the problems that exist due to lack of access to adequate water and sanitation. UNICEF supports the construction of water and sanitation infrastructure and capacity development projects in eight provinces of Indonesia. The projects support local government to provide piped water supplies and sanitation facilities at household level. The projects also provide household drinking water treatment, water supply and sanitation in schools, hygiene promotion and awareness at school and community level, as well as capacity building support to local government to improve planning, monitoring and implementation of water and sanitation projects in line with the Community Based Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Policy.

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