

NEWS NOTE

World Water Day 2009

Managing the world's water resources key for future generations

NEW YORK, 22 March 2009 – World Water Day 2009 calls for collective action to tackle the issue of access to safe drinking water and water sharing. This year's theme -- transboundary waters -- aims to increase global understanding of the need to manage water resources in an integrated manner.

Cooperation is the key to properly managing the world's water resources, particularly when watercourses cross national boundaries. Access to clean, safe water is essential to the health and wellbeing of children, wherever they may live.

"Inaction on water issues is not an option," said Clarissa Brocklehurst, UNICEF Chief of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. "Access to clean water and sanitation is fundamental to every aspect of a child's life – from health to survival and dignity. Water, which is a limited natural resource that can unite or divide communities, is also essential to ensuring children's rights."

The good news is that 87 per cent of the global population, or approximately 5.7 billion people worldwide, are now using safe drinking water. However, it is a sobering fact that globally more than 125 million children under five years of age live in households without access to a safe drinking-water source.

Even more people - a total of 2.5 billion people - are without sanitation, and this further threatens their health and jeopardizes the quality of water they rely on.

UNICEF supports water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes in more than 90 countries around the world with a focus on simple, affordable and accessible interventions at the community and household level. UNICEF WASH programmes focus on sustainable, long term solutions through the use of low cost technologies, such as, rainwater harvesting, hygienic latrines, and the promotion of simple household practices including handwashing with soap and treatment of drinking water.

Increasingly UNICEF is recognizing the impact of climate change on water, sanitation and hygiene issues. Protecting the world's most vulnerable children will not be possible without specific measures to shield them from the consequences of climate change.

UNICEF is celebrating World Water Day around the world. In Mongolia, for example, UNICEF has invited technical experts from the national government and other United Nations agencies to discuss the impact of climate change on transboundary waters. Additionally, an essay contest for local school children on water issues will help increase their knowledge on transboundary waters.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and HIV/AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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