

UNICEF FAST FACTS: WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE EDUCATION

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene Education – An Emergency of Simple Needs:

- Access to clean water and sanitation is the foundation of a healthy childhood – central to our human right to life and dignity.
- But every day, more than 4,000 children die before their fifth birthday for lack of these basic essentials. Millions more are left severely debilitated and on the brink of survival.
- Young children are the first to get sick and die from water and sanitation-related illnesses—including diarrhoeal diseases, which kill 1.6 million children every year.
- This emergency of simple needs is eroding the health and economic development of whole societies.

A Global Commitment to Child Survival and Poverty Reduction:

- Through the Millennium Development Goals, the world has committed to halving the proportion of people living without safe water and basic sanitation.
- But UNICEF data shows that even where national averages are improving, the poorest children are still not being served.
- Access to clean water and sanitation facilities is a reliable yardstick for measuring poverty and vulnerability.
- Within both developed and less developed nations, some children will enjoy full access while some have little or none.
- These children will inevitably be the poorest - sickening quicker, dying faster and learning less than their counterparts. They are the most vulnerable to natural disasters and conflict, the first to lose their access to water and sanitation facilities and the last to see it restored.



Girls suffer most without clean water and basic sanitation facilities nearby. The arduous task of collecting water usually falls to them, and without proper sanitation facilities at school they are often denied an education. Photo: UNICEF WCAR/Kent Page

UNICEF In Action:

- UNICEF has made helping these “un-reached” children our biggest priority. They are the key to reducing the unacceptable toll of preventable child deaths and improving basic health indicators across entire countries.
- We concentrate on areas where child survival is already most at risk – often remote rural villages - installing wells, hand pumps, sanitation facilities and promoting hygiene education in homes and schools.
- We also work to mitigate the devastating effects of water-related illnesses such as diarrhoea by distributing and counseling families in the use of oral re-hydration salts.

Water For Schools:

- UNICEF is committed to providing water & sanitation for schools, as one of the best ways to bring equal opportunity to children born into a world of unfair disparities – particularly women and girls.
- Simply installing separate toilets for girls and boys at school can help bring girls into the classroom – the first step in breaking a generational cycle of poverty and wasted potential.
- UNICEF is part of a global coalition working to bring water, sanitation and hygiene education into all primary schools by 2015.