



Key messages

World Water Day – 22nd March 2012

Getting the balance right between water and sanitation

(Global figures based on 2012 WHO Update Report, released 6 March 2012)¹

- Despite significant improvements, today there are still **780 million people without access to a safe water supply**.
- Although the UN MDG (7c) has met its target of 'reducing by half those without access to safe water' estimates are that over 600 million people will still have no access in 2015.
- Those still remaining un-served are mostly in rural sub-Saharan Africa and parts of Asia/Pacific.
- Those who have **no access to basic sanitation is 2.5 billion**, mostly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia/Pacific, of which 1.1 Billion still practice open defecation, mostly in Southern Asia.
- The UN MDG target for 'reducing by half those without access to basic sanitation' is unlikely to be met by 2015.
- In the **48** least developed countries (often those who suffer from recurring disasters, socio-economic problems and conflict) the coverage is poorest.
- **71%** of households in Sub-Saharan Africa rely on women and girls to collect water, a total of 16 million hours per year which could be used more productively, or attending school.
- The average woman in Africa and Asia **walks 6 kilometres per day** to collect water.
- The most common recurrent diseases are related to poor water supply, sanitation and hygiene – the single largest cause of morbidity worldwide, especially in young children, of whom over **3 million die each year**.
- **Cholera** is on the increase - over 3 million people are infected with cholera every year causing over 100,000 deaths – ten times more than previous estimates – and over 1.4 Billion people are at risk.
- Over **8000 children die every day due to water, sanitation and hygiene related diseases** - one every ten seconds.
- **Access to water and sanitation is a Human Right** (UN July 2010) and also a question of human dignity and equity – there should be no discrimination in access for the poor, disadvantaged or due to gender, ethnicity or religious beliefs.

What have Red Cross Red Crescent (RCRC) done and is doing?

- The RCRC continues to provide crucial access to water, sanitation and hygiene promotion to those acutely affected by disasters and crises, serving on average over 2 million people each year. This is achieved by maintaining a pool of trained experts and technicians with standardised equipment and methods, that can be mobilised at short notice anywhere in the world.
- The IFRC has scaled up its support to the Global WASH Cluster – to improve assessment and coordination during disaster and crises – IFRC now a member of the Strategic Advisory Group of the Cluster and providing staff for a Rapid Assessment Team (RAT) and Regional WASH Cluster Advisors (RECA).

¹ http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/2012/jmp_report/en/index.html

- The Global Water and Sanitation Initiative (GWSI), an eleven year initiative (2005-2015) is further scaling up RCRC efforts worldwide, in 64 countries, in providing sustainable access to water, sanitation and improved hygiene. At this stage (2012) it has doubled its original target and will provide access to 10 Million people - with a renewed overall target to now treble its original target and reach 15 million people by 2015.
- **For both its emergency and developmental efforts**, the key actor and implementers are RCRC National Societies at country level, working through a network of trained staff, volunteers and local branches and as auxiliary to Government.
- The RCRC is committed to continue its focus upon water, sanitation and hygiene in both disaster and development contexts – but **with an increased emphasis on sanitation and hygiene where the needs are greatest**, not just to 2015 - but beyond.