



# Media Update

21 March 2015

## UNICEF

### Press Release

## World Water Day

### **Nearly 750 million people still without adequate drinking water – UNICEF**

**Despite tremendous global progress on drinking water, gains not trickling down to the most marginalized**

**NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD, 21 March 2015** – Access to drinking water has been one of the biggest successes of the Millennium Development Goals, UNICEF said ahead of World Water Day, falling on Sunday, March 22. However, for 748 million people around the world, just obtaining this essential service remains a challenge.

In Pakistan, more than 110 children under the age of five years, die every day from diarrheal related diseases caused primarily due to unsafe water and poor sanitation. Though nine out of ten people have access to improved drinking water sources, only 65 per cent of the total population is considered to have access to water that is safe for drinking. While overall access to water and sanitation has improved, populations from lower wealth quintiles, continue to miss out.

"The story of access to drinking water since 1990 has been one of tremendous progress in the face of incredible odds," said Sanjay Wijesekera, head of UNICEF's global Water, Sanitation and Hygiene programmes. "But there is more to do. Water is the very essence of life and yet three-quarters of a billion people – mostly the poor and the marginalized – still today are deprived of this most basic human right."

During 2014 in Pakistan, UNICEF as a major partner with the Government of Pakistan has taken improved water, hygiene and sanitation services to almost 1.2 million people.

On this World Water Day, UNICEF is launching a report titled 'Mapping of Inequities in Basic Water Supply and Sanitation Services in Pakistan'. The report shows large gap in access to toilets and safe water between the rich and poor as three out of four poorest rural households have no toilets.

Globally, some 2.3 billion people have gained access to improved sources of drinking water since 1990. As a result, the Millennium Development Goal target of halving the percentage of the global population without access at that date was reached five years ahead of the 2015 deadline.



But, despite this progress, significant disparities persist. Of the 748 million people globally still without access, 90 per cent live in rural areas, and are being left behind in their countries' progress.

For women and girls, collecting water cuts into time they can spend caring for families and studying. In insecure areas, it also puts them at risk of violence and attack. UNICEF estimates that in Africa alone, people spend 40 billion hours every year just walking to collect water.

Working with governments and partners UNICEF is pushing for innovative and cost effective methods to make progress.

- In Bangladesh, UNICEF has used an exciting new approach to collect rainwater and then pump it into shallow aquifers, achieving water security for approximately 1 million people whose groundwater had become salinized.

- In 2014 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the 'healthy villages' model, more than half a million people gained access to improved drinking water and sanitation in their communities, and 229 schools were equipped with water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Building on a successful roll-out last year, UNICEF and partners are again this year engaging the public in a social media campaign with the hashtag #wateris, to help raise awareness of the issue and highlight the plight of those who are still without drinking water.

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