



A Framework for Action for Sustainable Development



Water

At a glance

- + Between 1990 and 2010 over 2 billion people gained access to safe drinking water, meeting early the Millennium Development Goal set in 2000 to halve the number of people without access by 2015, according to a new UNICEF/WHO report. Also during that time 1.8 billion people gained access to improved sanitation. Still, 783 million and 2.5 billion people remain without water and sanitation, respectively.
- + Stresses such as rapid urbanization and climate change are growing on all water uses. For example, cities in developing countries will face meeting the demand of 70 million more people each year over the next 20 years. By 2030 we will need 45 percent more water just to meet our food needs. Further, over 1.3 billion people are still without access to electricity worldwide and closing the energy gap has implications on water, such as for fuel extraction, cooling water, and hydropower.
- + With water at the nexus of so many areas—education, energy, food, health, and jobs—doing a better job managing it is essential to reaching almost all development goals. The World Bank is the largest external source of financing for water and sanitation projects (US\$7 billion in FY11), but financing is only part of the solution. To protect the poor today and in the future, the world must look to the knowledge, technology, and infrastructure that are needed now to meet tomorrow's demands.

The challenge

Population and economic growth are expected to increase demand for food, energy, and water further. Yet, globally

billions of poor people still lack access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The resulting diarrheal disease is killing millions of people, mainly children, and wreaking billions of dollars in economic costs every year, the equivalent of up to 7 percent of gross domestic product in some countries. Meanwhile, water scarcity is increasing. About 2.8 billion people live in areas of high water stress and 1.2 billion live in areas of physical scarcity. It is estimated that by 2030, nearly half of the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress. Further, climate variability and related extreme weather is already causing major floods and droughts, putting populations, livelihoods, and assets in danger. This variability is likely to worsen under current trends. The number of people affected by climate-related disasters doubled every decade in the last 40 years. Decreasing water quality also impacts growth as it degrades ecosystems; causes health-related diseases; constrains economic activities such as agriculture, industrial production, and tourism; impacts the value of property and assets; and increases wastewater treatment costs.

The future we want

Countries that own and implement better management of water, including sanitation, will have achieved a significant prerequisite to any successful green growth scenario. Countries can achieve 100 percent access to safe water, sanitation, food, and environmental services for their citizens. The World Bank shares the global water community's vision to help countries reduce poverty and increase all-inclusive growth through the right water policies and behaviors. Green and inclusive growth is climate resilient, water smart, land saving, energy efficient, and reliant on diverse energy sources. It also generates jobs and improves livelihoods across a diverse set of productive and service sectors.

How do we get there?

There are three things that will help the world reach that vision.

- + The growing complexity and global nature of these water challenges calls for more sophisticated planning that successfully addresses the linkages of water across all economic sectors. To do this, countries can manage water similar to a portfolio of investments, which looks at the short-, medium-, and long-term. Such an approach would give decision makers a bird's-eye view of the way water is used at the moment, and allow them to identify those water assets with economic potential and those that are liabilities in need of careful management. The latter might include falling water tables, climate change impacts, and the opportunity costs of using water in one way rather than another. Opening such a portfolio to public debate would quickly identify gaps in behavior and social norms, financing, infrastructure, data, knowledge, governance and policy, productivity, and services, and help the development community and investors to target financial and technical support more efficiently.
- + Countries and the development community can invest more in "softer" infrastructure, such as personal behavior and incentive structures for people and institutions. Such as investing time and money in understanding the impediments to sustainable water management, whether it is a lack of political will, barriers to citizen and private sector participation, or factors that undermine the viability of water utilities. We also need a deeper understanding of the preferences and behaviors of the poorest segments of society, especially women and girls who spend much of their time managing their water needs.
- + Technology is another area with game-changing potential. The world is living through a technological revolution. Today, more people in developing countries have a cell phone than a toilet. Countries can seize enormous opportunities by working with nontraditional players, such as from the information technology sector. We are only starting to realize the potential of technology in our sector, but there are already examples of results at scale. In 2011, with partners' and World Bank support, post-conflict Liberia was able to map more than 10,000 previously unknown water points within six months by sending 150 data collectors around the country on motorbikes equipped with phones using mobile technology called FLOW. The knowledge gained from this survey provided a significant pillar for the country's water investment plan.

The Rio+20 Summit provides the international community with an important opportunity to shape the development agenda for decades to come. This must include strong and balanced proposals for water, including sanitation.

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