

Forum: United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

Issue: Enhancing access to clean water and sanitation to improve child health outcomes in developing nations

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Introduction

A faint screeching sound fills the otherwise vast ocean. The infinite blue expanse, usually a comforting sight, is replaced by a sudden current of despair. As the waves grow larger, distress becomes evident on the faces of those walking nearby. The ocean waves rise in immense height consuming everything in its way. Metal twists grotesquely as the children suffer in pain begging for rescue. In the blink of an eye, everything disappears. Water, food, liberty. Peace destroyed and nowhere to be found. Children fragmented by the cruelty of the world asking for water, it’s a repugnant sight to see. This is daily life for children demanding clean water and sanitation.

As days turns into months and months turn into years, the ethical issue of clean water and sanitation is far from a concrete solution addressing children and developing nations. It seems like this denouement is colossally imminent in modern age. Diseases created by the unpurified water include as Cholera, Diarrhea, Dysentery, Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Polio can be deadly and are common diseases experienced by the children living in developing nations. Every day, conditions are becoming more deficient and demands immediate action. The lives of children hangs in balance.



Figure #1: Boy infected by typhoid from polluted water (May 2013, Muzaffar Salman)In modern age, also known as “The Age of Acceleration”, the number of people not possessing

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access to clean water represents a vast amount of 2.2 billion. These contaminated waters contain deadly diseases such as schistosomiasis who was responsible for over the deaths of 251.4 million people in developing nations. The number of stunted development of children caused by malnutrition decreased by 90 million over the last 3 decades (1990-2020). Although it is an impressive step forward, however the problems seem to be growing in recent years, including civil global wars occurring. The rate of progress isn't fast enough to meet the SDG 2.2 goal for the year 2030 with feeding, Water, sanitation and hygiene. The WASH program which is a branch of the UNICEF playing a significant role to prevent malnutrition. These joint programs foster international collaborations between member states to further fund these nations development such as LDCs. This is even more important in the context of the planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution, and biodiversity loss, which has put virtually every child in the world at risk, those especially in developing nations. Threats to these children remain high.

Key Terminology

LDCs (Least Developed Countries)

Low-income countries which are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets, these nations are responsible for the greatest number of casualties caused by sanitization problems. There are currently 46 LDCs as classified by the United Nations, 33 of which are in Africa, these nations include: "Afghanistan", "Myanmar", "Madagascar", "Burundi" ...etc. Advancements in education and science, as well as the safeguarding of cultural heritage, can play a critical role in building more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive economies to further enhance clean water supplies in these nations.

Schistosomiasis

Schistosomiasis is a disease often associated with poverty that leads to Chronic Disease Infection is acquired when people come into contact with dirty water infested with the larval form of parasitic blood flukes, known as schistosomes. The microscopic worms live in the veins

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draining the urinary tract and intestines. Most of the eggs they lay are trapped in the tissues and the body's reaction to them can cause massive damage and even deaths. In 202, 251.4 million people had to be cured from this disease and killed over 51 million. Schistosomiasis alongside with many other diseases such as diarrhea and typhoid are the principal diseases caused by not sanitized water.

WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)

The WASH is a global program aimed at improving access to clean water supplies, proper sanitation, and hygiene practices mainly in developing countries. This program promotes the importance of excretion to provide adequate sanitation while encouraging developing nations to further collaborate with non-governmental organizations, and NGOs to create a reliable infrastructure providing access to clean water. This program has an immense impact on the outcome of local projects related to hygiene, however, this program lacks financial funds from member states therefore the creation of local projects regarding the issue has been extremely complicated in 2023.

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Background

Lack of awareness

UNICEF and the WHO created many different and smaller programs such as the WASH program to make awareness of these issues. However, the whole point of the programs was destroyed as it lacked enormous funding from the WHO because it had to fund the COVID-19 projects first. To this day the issue of addressing clean water and sanitation is often ignored among more developed states.

Developing Countries (1950s-1960s)

As many developing countries in modern era gained independence in the 1950s and early 1960s, the lack of infrastructure in the countries meant that the wide spread of

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contaminated water was imminent. In the early 1950s places such as parts in Africa and India, millions of children died because of diseases like diarrhea and cholera due to not sanitized water and public spaces. Most noticeably in slums where access to clean water becomes more exotic and almost impossible.

Bangladesh Arsenic Crisis (1970s)

In the 1970s, Bangladesh faced numerous problems regarding sanitation, especially surface water. The country's water sources mainly from surface water was highly contaminated by lethal pathogens and leading it to the widespread of diseases such as diarrhea and cholera which primarily affected children. It was not until the 1990s that scientists discovered that the groundwater in Bangladesh contained high levels of Arsenic which is a toxic element that can cause cancer and developmental effects in children. By 1990 over 35 million people were drinking this contaminated water. This crisis lacked awareness in the public's eye and the aftereffects of this crisis still remain in Bangladesh after 5 decades.



Figure #2: Man in Bangladesh, hand affected by arsenic

Sub-Saharan Africa (2000-2010)

Persistent issues regarding clean water and sanitation in the Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) was always a major problem, however in the late 2000 and 2010s this issue reached new heights. We estimate about 1.5 million children below the age of 5 died every year because of the large number of contaminated water and sanitation issues in bathrooms. This also led to numerous problems such as lack of school attendance especially amongst girls during

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menstruation. This problem highlighted the need of immediate action regarding children, even though the problem is now far better than before, the problems in the SSA seems to be a never-ending cycle.

Haiti Cholera Outbreak (2010)

On January 12th, 2010, a devastating earthquake of magnitude 7.0 struck Haiti killing over 200,000 people and displacing a million more. This earthquake was considered one of the most devastating earthquakes in modern history. This earthquake also destroyed infrastructure including sanitation and water systems that created a hole for outbreaks of diseases most noticeably Cholera. This disease brings severe dehydration especially amongst kids, the symptoms included continued vomiting for several days and the after math, death. Cholera was not seen in Haiti for over 100 years before the outbreak therefore indicating a reemergence of this disease. By 2019, 9700 deaths were caused because of cholera and more than 820,000 of reported cases. However, the number of new cases of cholera have been drastically reduced thanks to a sustained public health effort.

Major Parties Involved

Myanmar

Myanmar has been experiencing significant disparities in water and sanitation access between urban and rural areas throughout the years. Formerly known as Burma, it gained its independence from the British empire in 1948. This new country suffers from recent droughts and sanitation needs. The WASH estimates that about over 60 per cent of households have no safely managed drinking water service. Furthermore, one out of four schools have limited access or no drinking water service. Therefore, Myanmar demands immediate actions and is considered as a number one priority from the WASH program.

The United States of America

The US actively plays an important role to improve clean water access and sanitation in developing nations. With the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) playing a huge role to fund developing nations. Since 2018, the USAID mobilized \$590 million

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For the funding of clean water and sanitation. This still remains as one of the biggest funding from an individual country to developing nations.

[Water, Sanitation and Hygiene \(WASH\)](#)

The WASH program is a branch created by the UNICEF in the early 2000s is considered the most important sector as it encourages collaboration between nations and NGOs for a better future. The WASH program is responsible to almost every problem related to clean water and sanitation as it has a major impact on local projects. In 2022, 30 million people from all around the globe was reached by the WASH mainly in developing countries. The WASH program is considered as an essential program to solve this eradicating issue.

[Water.org](#)

Water.org is an organization that works exclusively to unlock finance for water and sanitation in countries in need. Water.org is also one of the UN's few partners, therefore it is a trusted organization. We estimate about 10-20 million (USD) is the budget of this organization. The organization is still in need of massive funding to have a major impact on addressing this issue.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description/Note
1854	In 1854 a Cholera outbreak happened in London, killing over 315 per 10,000 people. Dr. John Snow identifies that contaminated water as the source of the Cholera outbreak, establishing a connection between clean water and health.
1948	The World Health Organization (WHO) is established with sanitation and clean water as a key component of public health initiatives
1960s-1970s	The UN begins emphasizing the importance of sanitation and clean water after events such as the Bangladesh Arsenic crisis.
2000	The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is established, with Goal seven targeting the reduction of people without access to clean water and basic sanitation by 2015. This Goal had massive success as 2.6 billion people gained access to improved water supplies.

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2002	The WASH program was finally defined during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). This summit was crucial as global leaders recognized the importance of the WASH program achieving health outcomes especially for Children.
2015	The United Nations launch the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with Goal six aiming for an equitable access to clean water and sanitation in developing nations for 2030. The SDG goals are showing lots of success. However, the pace in which goal six is developing, is still far to reach the maximum goal for 2030.
2015-Today	Despite many attempts to solve this ethical issue, the need for acceleration is crucial to solve this issue regarding developing nations. In present day, the UN estimates about 2 billion still doesn't have access to clean water and 634 million without basic sanitation.

Previous Attempts/Solutions

Millenium Development Goals (MDGs)

As stated before, there was many different attempts to solve this ethical issue, however these attempts either lacks details or failed to be incorporated into modern age Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDG lasted from 2000-2015, it aimed to have a proportion of people without sustainable drinking water as well as sanitation. Progress was made for the 15 years of this project, however, it still lacked consistency in modern era and its targets were never fully met. National Government programs were encouraged by the UN to create a better more consistence implementation of sanitation in countries.

India (Swachh Bharat Abhiyan)

Countries like India has launched a massive program named Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, clean India mission to further eliminate defecation in streets. Launched in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan aimed for a cleaner India with improved sanitation as 564 million people of the State suffered from horrendous conditions. The renewable resource flows, data and information that is sustainable, innovative, cost saving and revenue generating) of India grew to

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US\$ 62 billion in 2021 all thanks to the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is still considered as a revolutionary change in the country's sanitation drive.

[Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are specific goals to be completed by 2030. Goal 6 specifically focuses on ensuring the availability of clean water supplies and sanitation rights amongst children. As this goal is still yet to be completed, it is hard to say if this attempt is useful. However, the SDG program seems a lot more efficient than the MDG goals, with more member states present in the making of this goal.

Potential Solutions

Enhancing the access to clean water and sanitation to improve child health outcomes in developing nations will take a significant effort from all involved. The following are examples of possible solutions, ranging from collaboration with NGOs, financial fundings and awareness:

- Demands the WHO to take an immediate call for action to create a new funding including a massive funding for the WASH program. As mentioned before, in 2022, the WASH program made an essential impact as 30 million people were reached by the WASH program. However, in 2023, it was extremely difficult as it lacked funding from member states.
- Collaborate with known NGOs to further encourage local programs for safe water and sanitation. Many NGOs such as "Water.org" are willing to help developing nations. However, in many cases these NGOs lacks funding and back up from nations. It will be essential as some of these NGOs has already established a system in these developing nations.
- Demanding member states to create a joint international fund to financially aid countries in favor. Many of the issues still remain financial funding from the UN and

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member states. Therefore, it will be essential that member states are obligated to pay a certain amount of money to the UNICEF to further fund NGOs or the WASH program.

- Create a forum of definitions of diseases and their impacts to spread awareness at schools and public spaces in collaboration with the UN. In the modern age, much information is spread throughout social and often times the audience may not understand the seriousness of the issue and definitions that are related to these issues. Therefore, it is essential that a forum of definitions is created to spread awareness.
- Encouraging member states to address issues regarding sanitation and clean water to encourage cooperation and transparency as it is a global problem. Often times the issue of clean water and sanitation is ignored in many member states. It is essential that member states to address the major issues regarding clean water and sanitation in conferences.

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