

Water Access and Health

According to the United Nations, 782 million people or 11% of the global population remain without access to an improved source of drinking water (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2012). Africa as a whole faces huge challenges with multiple issues that adversely affect public health, but the issues are especially severe in Sub-Saharan Africa. In that region, only 16 % of people had access to drinking water through a household connection, such as indoor tap (World Health Organization, 2006). By contrast, 100 % of the population in Sweden has sustainable access to improved drinking water sources (The Guardian, 2009).

There are limited sources of water available to provide clean drinking water to Africa's population, since surface water sources are often highly polluted and there is a lack of infrastructure to pipe water from fresh and clean sources to arid areas (The Water Project). Moreover, overcrowding in urban areas makes it even more difficult to control sanitation issues and disease outbreaks associated with exposure to raw sewage. Within this context, the implications of the lack of clean water and access to adequate sanitation are widespread, especially considering that it causes the deaths of millions of young children. Diarrheal illnesses, Schistosomiasis (related to unsanitary excreta disposal and absence of nearby sources of safe water) and Hepatitis A are the main diseases related to water issues among Africa's population (World Health Organization, 2004). Those diseases could be prevented by clean water and good hygiene.

References

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Additional articles

- http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/en/factsfigures04.pdf?ua=1
<http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/water/>
<http://thewaterproject.org/water-in-crisis-rural-urban-africa>
<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2009/mar/03/access-water>
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