

**Access to clean water and sanitation is the key to success of the  
Millennium Development Goals -2015 in Africa.**

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## **Abstract**

Water scarcity is an opaque concept to many and stark reality for others. It is a consequence of myriad environmental, economic, political and social forces. Unclean water and a lack of basic sanitation have exacerbated extreme poverty and diseases in the world's poorest countries. Sub-Saharan Africa is one of those hardest hit. (<http://www.one.org/c/international/issue/954/>) Millennium Development Goal 7 (MDG7) was proposed to help relieve the drastic hardships caused by water scarcity. Gaining access to clean drinking water and basic personal sanitation would dramatically increase the quality of the life of million African people.

## **Introduction**

While important in its own right, MDG7 is powerful in that it provides a foundational basis for other MDG targets. Together, unclean water and poor sanitation are a leading cause of child mortality, an increased number of uneducated women, weakened maternal health, hunger and poverty throughout the African continent. It is for this reason that I believe MDG7 should take highest priority and be 'fast tracked' within the UN implementation mandate.

This paper will conclude with suggestions as how to best prioritize and implement MDG7 through the UN Global Partnership network in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Africa by 2015.

## **Methodology**

In order to support the view of MDG7(C)'s significance on other targets I have used documents from United Nation website and other in-house as well as independent sources. The majority of statistical information was gathered from UN regional reports in Africa from 2010-2012. These reports were based on the United Nation Statistical Division's (UNSD) database which imports data sources from other specialized UN agencies across countries. All 8 goals and 18 targets were complemented by 48 technical indicators to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. The statistic method used in the reports relied on a novel measurement technique called "time -distance" (the time of actual implementation with the time stipulated by the schedule to the 2015 target). This measure allowed the UN to analyze their implementation progress from 2010 to 2012.

## **Results**

According to my observation of the UN reports I gathered several interesting points, divided into focused segments for clarity. These points collectively bind all MDGs and support my previous argument regarding the primary importance of MDG7.

## **Review of the interconnection between access to clean water and others MDGs.**

I will go through six MDGs to discuss and prove the importance of the seventh goal. I will focus on the indicator that is most issued and discussed in highlighting Africa's failure to meet the MDG.

### **I. How MDG7(C) is related to MDG1.**

Besides rapid population growth, food scarcity due to limited access to water that affects agriculture productivity is a major reason of the extreme poverty and hunger in Africa. First of all, droughts and lack of access to water make it difficult to grow crops for many African farmers. Poor agricultural productivity has raised food price. As highlighted in the UN 2012 African regional report, high food prices render the poor even more vulnerable as food is a larger share of their spending. Following the 2010 African regional report, it states that the emergence of alternative users for agricultural products and a growing population have resulted in additional pressure on Africa's capacity to feed itself; resulting in many millions of Africans living on the brink of starvation. Second, old fashion and inefficient mining methods of drinking water are being replaced with more modern technologies that are unfortunately prohibitively expensive. This has led to unaffordable clean water and overpriced food especially after a global crises (FAO,2010 ; UN 2011) Third, after analyzing the causes of extreme poverty and hunger from UN regional reports in Africa, I came to the conclusion that water scarcity and poor agricultural techniques have also increased unemployment. In the 2012 report, there is the statement from the Nigeria Oyo State Government that water access for agriculture could generate about 20,000 jobs in Africa. Improved access to clean water can reduce poverty and hunger through higher employment and sustainable economy growth.

### **II. How the MDG7(C) is related to MDG2 & MDG3.**

The connection between MDG7(C) and achieving primary education and women empowerment is strong. Women are more than twice as likely as men to be responsible for water collection. First, poor access to drinking water is an essential target because time spent gathering water is largely unproductive and wasteful. For example, on average, women in the developing world walk six kilometers each day to collect water, time which could be spent in school or at work. In total, the World Health Organization estimates that 40 billion working hours are spent collecting water each year in Africa - comparable to a year's labor for the entire workforce of France.

Moreover, lack of sanitation decreases the percentage of women attending primary school leading to fewer opportunities to find a job in the future. And studies show that more than half of girls who drop out of primary school in sub-Saharan Africa do so because of a lack of separate toilets and easy access to safe water. According to UNGEI (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative) it was identified that more than half the children out of school were girls –and despite

progress in many countries, that still holds true in most regions of sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, only a few educated women are able to find a well- paid and high -skilled jobs. Following the UNGEI perspective, girls and boys are empowered through high-quality education to realize their full potential, leading to true equality between the sexes.

The regional report 2011 states that an education empowers women in many other ways: it enhances their participation in decision- making at home, provide an access to medical services.

### **III. How the MDG7(C) is related to MDG4 , MDG5 & MDG6**

Lack of sanitation and access to water are detrimental to the economy in Africa but also result in negative knock-on effects for other MDGs. First, as many other records of MDG project pointed out, alleviating water and food scarcity would reduce poverty rates and make great progress towards decreasing U5MR (under-five mortality rate) and increase maternal health. For instance, another measure of the food deprivation is the prevalence of underweight children under five years of age and heightened child mortality rates. The 2012 African regional report maintains that malnutrition of children is the underlying cause of more than a third of under-five deaths and more than 20 per cent of maternal deaths (UNICEF,2011b); p 46 ).

What's more, poverty also decreases access to, and utilization of, healthcare services. This results in a high proportion of malaria -related deaths among children under- five years of age and women. For instance, the UN regional report 2010 in Africa estimates that from 91 percent deaths in Africa about 85 percent were of children under-five years of age and pregnant women who also vulnerable to a malaria epidemic. Unaffordable medical treatment is largely the cause (GAVI, 2009).

And finally, the lack of sanitation and clean water also leads to other dangers to children's lives. According to the UN survey, it is estimated that about 2,000 children die daily from diarrhea diseases, which are spread through poor sanitation and hygiene. As with many challenges in development, children and their mothers are disproportionately impacted by scarcities of clean water and adequate sanitation.

In light of these findings, I believe that to achieve MDGs by 2015 in Africa more realistic, the UN and private organization should turn their attention to MDG7(C). Access to water and basic sanitation can improve millions lives in Africa. It is a way to reduce starvation among women and children, and lessen diseases caused from poor hygiene and access to medical care.

### **IV. The mission MDG7(C) is an opportunity for UN to create a sustainable Global Partnership – MDG8.**

The United Nation along with the initiative of Security General Kofi Annan has created a special network that provides a bridge between the UN with private and public organizations in a Global Partnership. "The UN Global Compact was officially launched in New York on July,

2000 and it became a leadership platform for the development, implementation and disclosure of responsible and sustainable corporate policies and practices" ([http://unglobalcompact.org/Issues/Business\\_Partnerships/index.htm](http://unglobalcompact.org/Issues/Business_Partnerships/index.htm)). Such a network provides the opportunity to create a strong and inclusive global economy. The Organization has two main objectives: make ten principles part of business strategy and operation in all countries (the principles are available in the UN Global Compact website <http://unglobalcompact.org>) and take actions in UN goals and issue. And one of their main concentrations supports the Millennium Development Goals.

Such network facilitates and encourages dialogue (policy dialogues, learning, local networks and projects) and maintains plans for actions towards MDG project on Global level. Unlike other networks or organizations, the Global Compact involves civil society and labor organizations to participate and contribute towards Millennium Development Goals.

As it has been pointed out in the Global Compact Conference, businesses play a huge role in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a financial tool for the development and implementation progress. The Global Compact provides a bridge between units of the UN and businesses within the private sector. Practical and efficient implementation of the network towards MDG7(C) can create a new Global Partnership.

### **Solutions:**

Universal access to improved sanitation alone could reduce diarrhea-related morbidity by more than one third. If the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets on water and sanitation are met, "there will be 203,000 fewer child deaths in 2015 and 272 million school days would be gained with the subsequent reduction in diarrhea and related issues". The benefits of improving access to water and sanitation go beyond any one sector. Meeting the water and sanitation MDG would have "a total annual economic benefit of \$22 billion for the continent. It is estimated that every \$1 spent on water and sanitation generates returns of \$4 in increased economic opportunity. If the MDG targets on water and sanitation are met by 2015, national governments in sub-Saharan Africa could save about 12% of annual public health expenditures". (<http://www.one.org/c/international/issue/954/>)

Even though the issue of water sources has been discussed at the Global Compact's Private Sector Forum, my research supports the view that Water Management should concentrate not only improving agricultural benefits but also prioritize expanding access to clean water for households. A major focus should be on generating wider access to water, spring protection and waste-less use water on Agricultural Infrastructure as a fast way to achieve MDG7(C) and other targets.

Why is protecting water spring is important? First, spring protection dramatically improves source water quality. It's been shown to eliminate fecal matter contamination by two -third at the water source and by nearly one -quarter in users' home water supply. Second, spring protection is

a cost effective option to reduce diarrhea and other decease in young children and pregnant women (MDG2 & MDG3).

Other efforts yield similarly positive results and should be pursued aggressively. Water purifying technologies, such as chlorine dispensers, provide long term and extremely cost effective solutions. Rudimentary pipes and pumps could transport drinking water much closer to rural living areas greatly enhancing quality of life for women and children.

Dr. Atul Gawande of Harvard Medical School noted in his recent New York Times article titled 'Slow Ideas' that basic health and sanitation education in developing countries is often much more productive than costly technological solutions. With these findings in mind I suggest the implementation of lectures and seminars targeting the young generation and households stressing proper drinking water and waste management.

### **Conclusion:**

The idea of Millennium Development Goal was born as a hope and path to change lives of million poor people all over the World. But short time frame and life conditions create a challenge for many poor countries. It has been concluded that Africa will fail to meet most targets.

There is a strong correlation between access to sanitation and safe drinking water and successful development and achieving other Millennium Goals. Improved sanitation and clean water source could make a huge impact not only on Africa but also around the World. Even though all identified targets seem to be achievable and progress has been made in many countries, it remains as a slow process in Sub-Saharan Africa and there is a small chance of meeting the targets by 2015. Nevertheless, I believe that achievement of the MDG project in Africa can become successful if UN will use the Global Compact as a tool towards achieving MDG7(C) through creating a new Global Partnership.

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