



Paris 2012, 2nd Political Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 6th World Water Forum

Are we asking the right questions? Do we have the right data?

New approaches and new values needed to set the post 2015 goals on access to drinking water

Dear Delegate,

The section of the “Ministerial Process Draft Document” titled “*Ensure Everyone’s Well-Being: Implement the Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation, Expand Sanitation and Deliver on Water and Health* (Paragraphs 3 - 8)” is a section that we support very strongly. However we call on governments to ensure that by pursuing the current MDGs they are not overlooking the real scale of people’s needs.

Our concern is that paragraph 4 of the draft text contains a misleading interpretation that arises from a common confusion between the MDG objective of “safe water” and what the MDG monitoring process measures, which is access to “improved” water sources. These things are not the same. Improved sources do not necessarily ensure safe water.

While any progress on the MDGs is good, this should not lead to complacency. Safe water is the current goal. It concerns many more than the 884 million people who lack “improved water”. More than 3 billion people use water that is of doubtful quality and potentially unsafe. In the context of the human right to drinking water, the Marseille Ministerial Declaration should target all of them.

This message also needs to be passed on to Rio+20 in preparation for the revision of the post 2015 goals.

To find out more please visit AquaFed’s web site www.aquafed.org

For several years AquaFed has been raising questions such as:

- How many people need a better access to drinking water than they have today?
- How many people have their human right to safe drinking water unsatisfied?

The Federation believes that billions of people are concerned, not hundreds of millions as many people are led to believe.

Drawing on the most recent UN statistics*, Gerard Payen, has made a rigorous analysis and estimated that:

- at least 1.9 billion people regularly use water that is unsafe,
- 3.4 billion people use water of doubtful quality at least from time to time.
- for about half of mankind the water they use is not guaranteed to be safe.
- nearly 4 billion people get water in more difficult, more risky or more costly ways than those who are lucky enough to have permanent access to safe drinking water in their home.

Thus, even if these estimations** contain a high level of uncertainty, one can conclude that today roughly half the people in the world have no assurance that the water that they use is safe and that even more have their human right to safe drinking water unsatisfied

These findings support the statement made publicly by AquaFed on July 29 2010 that “the number of people who do not have a regular and safe supply of tap water in their homes every day is close to 4 billion, or half the world’s population”.

As we declared in 2008 to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, “People expect a better level of access to water than is currently measured to monitor the water MDG. The number of drinking water and sanitation projects worldwide is totally insufficient to meet the needs. A renewed effort is needed urgently.”

* Information released publicly by WHO and UNICEF [Joint Monitoring Programme](#)

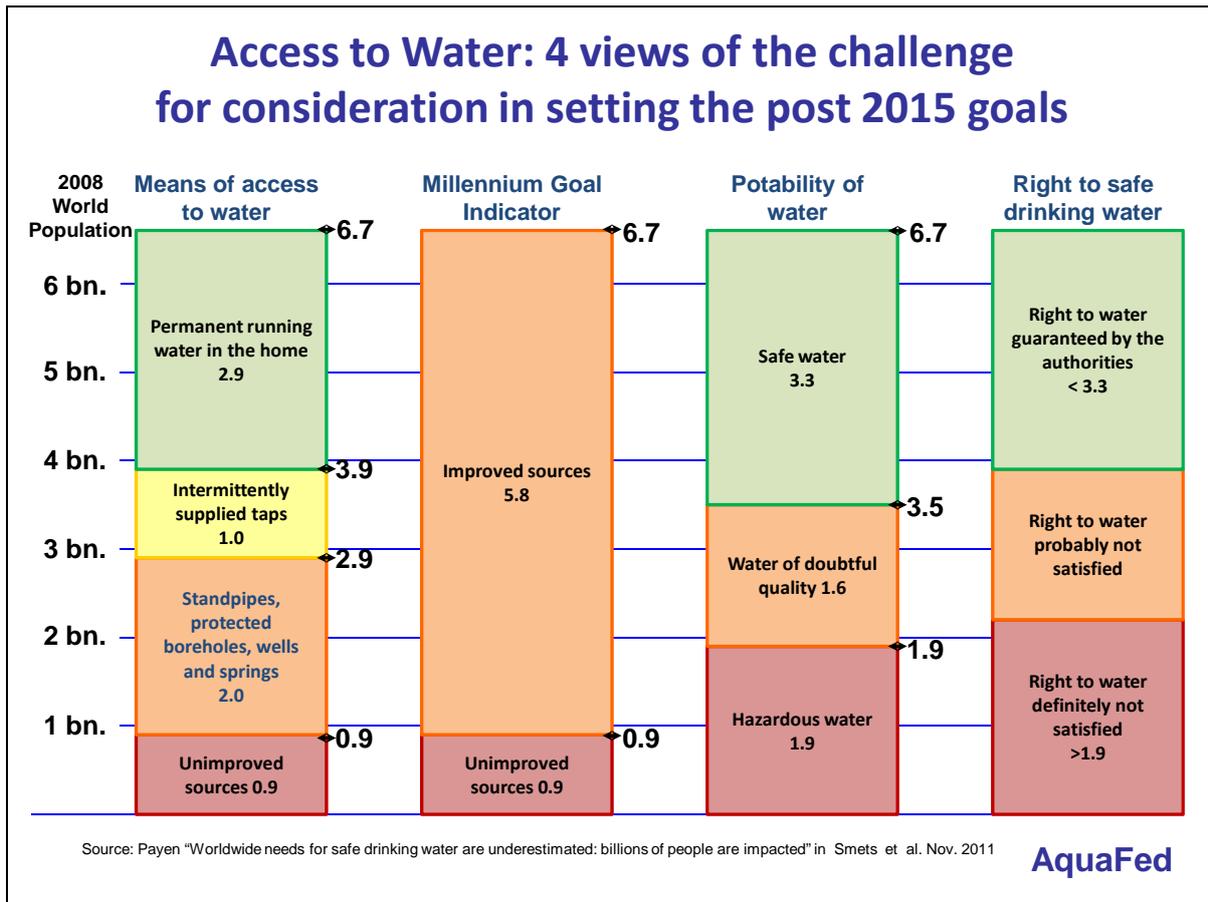
** published in November 2011 in an article titled “Worldwide needs for safe drinking water are underestimated: billions of people are impacted”, part of a book on [The implementation of the right to safe drinking water and sanitation in Europe](#)

To read the full article in [French](#) www.aquafed.org/pdf/Payen_SousEstimationBesoinsEauPotable_FR_2011-11-09.pdf

To read the full article in [English](#) www.aquafed.org/pdf/Payen_DrinkingWaterNeedsUnderEstimate_EN_2011-11-09.pdf



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AquaFed is the International Federation of Private Water Operators. Open to companies and associations of companies of all sizes and from all countries, it aims to contribute to solving water challenges by making Private Sector know-how and experience available to the international community. It brings together more than 300 water companies that serve hundreds of millions of people in 40 countries.

AquaFed is a member of Business Action for Water, which represents the major group Business and Industry for the political process of the World Water Forum.

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