

Clarifying Components of “Sanitation”

There are many causes that are holding back progress in providing adequate sanitation to nearly half of the world's population and protecting the world's aquatic environment from water pollution. One of these is the lack of clarity over the use of the term "sanitation" in the water sector. This term is used in different ways by different people and organisations when the sanitation challenge is discussed at international level. The two official concepts of "Improved Sanitation" and "Basic Sanitation" are not clearly identified by many.

Seeking to make a constructive contribution, AquaFed has prepared the table below that suggests an approach to potential goals of sanitation policies. The objective of this is to give clarity and to reconcile different approaches and interpretations. In particular it seeks to provide common ground in the different positions taken by politicians, public health, environment, and water practitioners. This should enable the International Year of Sanitation 2008, the sanitation MDGs, and the wider challenges of the full chain of sanitation components to be progressed more positively.

Sanitation		Measured Indicator	MDG
Technical definition	Policy goals		
<i>UN Millennium Project 2005 Task Force on Water and Sanitation¹</i>	<i>Draft proposal</i>	<i>Joint Monitoring Program UNICEF-WHO</i>	<i>Johannesburg Plan of Implementation</i>
Safe collection, storage, treatment, and disposal, reuse, or recycling of human excreta (feces and urine).	Provide access to toilets that permit defecation in dignified and salubrious conditions that protect public health and environment.	Improved sanitation ²	Basic sanitation ³
Drainage and disposal, re-use, or recycling of household wastewater (often referred to as sullage or grey water).	Remove used water, fecal matter and related waste from within households in safe and sustainable manner.		
Drainage of stormwater.	Collect and transport used water, related wastes and stormwater away from habitations and settlements in a safe and sustainable manner.		
Treatment and disposal, reuse, or recycling of sewage effluents.	Reclaim used and dirty water by removing pollution to protect ecosystems and subsequent uses.		

¹ *Health, Dignity, and Development: What will it take? Page 30, Box 3.1. This reference document lists 3 other components of sanitation in the solid waste sector (Management, reuse, and recycling of solid wastes (trash or rubbish), collection and management of industrial waste products, management of hazardous wastes including hospital wastes and chemical, radioactive, and other dangerous substances).*

² *Improved sanitation is defined by JMP as the use of not shared and not public “improved” sanitation facilities (flush or pour-flush to piped sewer system or septic tank or pit latrine, ventilated improved pit latrine, pit latrine with slab, composting toilet) which are more likely to prevent human contact with human excreta than “unimproved” facilities.*

³ *The Millennium Project task force defines basic sanitation as “the lowest-cost option for securing sustainable access to safe, hygienic, and convenient facilities and services for excreta and sullage disposal that provide privacy and dignity, while at the same time ensuring a clean and healthful living environment both at home and in the neighborhood of users.”*