

Key Messages for the Istanbul World Water Forum

2009-03-17

1 - The Federation strongly campaigns for the implementation of the Right to Water and Sanitation.

Right to water. The Federation and its members are used by governments to implement the Right to Water (more than 25 million people got access to water in the past 15 years, see below). They advocate for the Right to Water to be effective and implemented. They have stated in Mexico WWF5 that the rights and duties of public authorities as well as of individuals must be identified and that operators, public or private, must be mobilized by responsible authorities.

2 - The need to accelerate the pace of projects that deliver access to drinking water and sanitation for people is more important now than it was three years ago.

In April 2005, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development decided *to sustain and accelerate progress towards the water access goal [MDG] ...prioritising water in national development plans and facilitating access to water for all and ... towards the sanitation target of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation...*

In March 2007, echoing to the CSD13's decision AquaFed, the International Federation of Private Water Operators, launched a call to address the urgency of the situation by creating more water and sanitation projects worldwide¹.

In May 2008 there is no evidence of the acceleration decided by CSD13. It is now more urgent that action is taken than it was three years ago. New challenges have emerged that make people's access to drinking water and sanitation more difficult to prioritize in political agendas: impact of climate change on water resources; increasing water stress due to increasing water demands, increasing needs of water for growing food, etc. All these challenges must not divert governments from their duty to provide satisfactory access to drinking water/sanitation to their population. Shortage, indignity, sickness, drudgery – this is still many people's water world. Access to water and sanitation is key to their health, dignity, education, to the protection of the environment and to economic development.

2.1. More projects to provide a better access to drinking water

Viewed globally, the water MDG might be achieved in 2015 but in many parts of the world a serious shortfall will still exist. This may give some hope that the second half of the unserved people might be reached soon after 2015. This would be a very valuable achievement but will only mark an intermediate step towards satisfactory access of people to drinking water and sanitation. People expect a better level of access to water than the one that is currently measured to monitor the water MDG. They dream of not having to queue to fetch water and of not having to carry water to home every day. In developed countries almost everybody has piped water at home and accepts it as an essential service.

But in developing countries **nearly than 1 out of every 2 families (3 billion people) do not have tap water at home or even nearby.** Water sources are often far away, forcing people to suffer the daily burden of fetching all the water they need. It is urgent to extend drinking water and sanitation networks in all urbanized areas in order to turn the human right to water into a reality for all (at an affordable price). In rural areas, efforts must be stepped up to develop access to water and cut down the distances that people, often women or girls, have to carry water every day. The number of drinking water and sanitation projects worldwide is totally insufficient to meet the needs: a renewed effort is needed urgently.

¹ AquaFed press release on May 8, 2007, <http://www.aquafed.org/press.html>

2.2. More sanitation projects with more ambitious targets.

Unless there is a major step change in progress it is now certain that the sanitation target adopted in Johannesburg in 2002 will be missed by a very large margin. This failure is unacceptable. Knowing that the 2015 target is only to meet half of the need and that it aims at providing only one of the sanitation components that people need, more must be done.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation targets basic sanitation, i.e. access to private toilets and removal of domestic waste water from the household. In practice, only access to toilets is measured and monitored.

For this indicator alone the target will probably be missed by far. It is urgent to develop more sanitation projects with more ambitious targets. People need their solid and liquid waste to be removed from their homes; they also need to be protected from contamination by neighbours. Their waste waters need to be collected. In many parts of the world, pollution needs to be removed from these waste waters to protect the environment the people living downstream.

These challenges are not well monitored by the world community. *More ambitious goals are necessary to master all sanitation needs. Integrated Sanitation Management (ISM) is necessary to manage water after use, man-made pollution, waste water flows and water reuse in a context of growing water stress and increasing environmental challenges in many countries.*

2. Private Water operators contribute to developing access to water and sanitation under governmental control and are ready to do more.

In all parts of the world, local, national or international companies are increasingly used by governments as implementing tools for their water policies. Their experience is being used for solving technical, managerial, financial and even societal challenges through various schemes involving Public-Private Partnership contracts, Water Operators Partnerships and other models, sometimes misleadingly lumped under the heading privatisation. Private water operators are used to making the right to access to water and to sanitation a tangible reality for people. That is their job all over the globe. They have improved water access and sanitation to tens of millions of families in the developing world. They are willing to continue to contribute to ambitious water policies.

3. Preconditions for success in delivering water and sanitation services are mostly the same for public and private operators

To a very large extent public sector and private sector service operators suffer from exactly the same problems in implementing public water policies: unrealistic economics, unsustainable cost-recovery, inconsistent planning, absence of long-term targets, low levels of political support, etc. These are the problems that should be resolved. The formal discussions that take place in the development community about the conditions necessary to improve the levels of participation and investment by the private sector have the benefit of drawing attention to many of the institutional and governance issues that affect the whole water and sanitation sector. Overcoming these institutional hurdles benefits the whole sector.

Money is not the principal problem. What is required is political determination, focussed planning, human capacity and competence, supported with financial resources. Politicians at the appropriate level must take the lead in this. Where they do, experience has shown that individuals, communities, labour, the business and financial sectors are all ready and able to make a meaningful contribution. To do this they require **stable conditions that are predictable over the long term.**