

IFRC WASH

Stockholm World Water Week 2016

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International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

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‘Water – the driver of sustainable growth’

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This week in Stockholm, Sweden, more than 3,000 people from across the globe, representing governments, civil society, international organizations and the private sector, will come together to reinforce the importance of water and sanitation services for sustainable growth.

A key aspect of the discourse will be to look forward – building on what has proven successful and addressing the challenges that remain to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), contributing to the promotion of sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (SDG8), which also includes universal access to water and sanitation (SDG6).

As part of this discussion, we must look at how we may redouble our efforts and best meet the challenges of sustainable development. From its collection to its return to the environment, through numerous essential uses, water is without a doubt a key driver of growth and creation of jobs. About half of the world's workers - 1.5 billion people - work in water-related employment. Moreover, nearly all work, regardless of the sector, depends directly on water.

However, an estimated 660 million people worldwide still lack access to safe water and a staggering 2.4 billion people still have no access to basic sanitation – many of whom still practice open defecation. Illnesses caused by poor sanitation and hygiene place a heavy economic burden upon individuals, families and governments due to the cost of healthcare and the loss of productivity. Good, equitable and affordable access to safe water and sanitation promotes an educated and healthy workforce, which constitutes an essential factor for sustained economic growth. Contaminated water, lack of adequate sanitation and poor hygiene practices are the greatest contributors to recurrent diseases and deaths worldwide especially among children under five.

Over the past ten years, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its member National Societies around the world have significantly scaled-up the delivery of long-term water and sanitation programmes, providing equitable, affordable and sustainable solutions to help improve the health and quality of life of vulnerable communities. Between 2005 and 2015, we have delivered water and sanitation services to more than 15 million people worldwide. We have also reached more than 6.5 million people with hygiene promotion activities and campaigns. However, we recognize that we need to continue and sustain these efforts if universal coverage is to be achieved.

Our aim is to reach at least 30 million people by 2025. To achieve this, communities in rural areas and urban settlements must be actively involved in efforts to improve sanitation, access to clean water and effective hygiene promotion, ensuring sustainability and ownership by local communities



and authorities. This will also require building partnerships at all levels, getting the balance right between action on water and sanitation and ensuring that sanitation activities are at least as well funded as water supply.

This is the vision of the One Billion Coalition for Resilience, a global initiative to build new partnerships to support stronger, more resilient communities. The One Billion Coalition for Resilience recognizes that no one organization or system can deliver what is needed. But by working together with individuals and community groups, governments, businesses, and research institutes, we have the expertise and resources to help people better respond to crises, prepare and mitigate risks and hazards.

Innovation and technology are crucial factors in the effective provision of sanitation and water by the Red Cross and Red Crescent worldwide. Part of this work is finding new solutions to provide sanitation in emergencies, especially in urban contexts. The IFRC is entering the second phase of this research which will test new equipment during real emergencies to ensure they are relevant and have a measurable impact.

Our activities include infrastructure (hardware) in combination with a community approach (software), and this encourages community participation from the project's inception, and builds in relevant health education programmes that recognize the special needs of women, children and the socially marginalized and excluded.

IFRC and member National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies worldwide have generated employment opportunities in the sector, with more than 28,500 full and part-time staff working on water, sanitation and hygiene related activities in the last 10 years. We have the capacity to do more and expect to at least double this figure in the next 10 years, while striving towards doubling the number of people who will have access to safe and affordable water and sanitation infrastructure and services.

With this backdrop in mind, the 2016 World Water Week is an opportunity for all relevant partners – governments, investors, international organizations, civil society and the private sector – to commit to a shared responsibility of scaling-up our efforts in ensuring universal access to safe water, adequate sanitation services and hygiene practices. No one government, donor or community can do this alone.