

Water and Sanitation and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's)

MDG No. 2

Water and sanitation facilities are needed at schools worldwide. Both in the disaster scenario when International Federation supports rehabilitation or reconstruction of schools, we ensure there is a safe water supply and that sanitation facilities are established. During or post-disaster, wet feeding programmes at schools are often undertaken for which a safe water supply is crucial.

In the developmental context, in many countries, schools will be closed by authorities if water and sanitation is not provided and for example in Zimbabwe, working with Red Cross volunteers and community members, we have re-opened or kept schools open by building latrines or establishing water points near to schools.

To further encourage school attendance, particularly for female students, adequate sanitation is a factor which can adversely affect attendance. Young girls can feel uncomfortable during menstruation if private facilities are not available or are not suitable for their needs. In some countries with particular cultural sensitivities, improved female attendance has been achieved by ensuring suitable facilities are available.

MDG No. 3

Women and children often bear the task of water collection, often from great distances. By ensuring that women are properly represented and engaged in community water and sanitation committees, they can influence the positioning of water supplies to reduce to a minimum the distances they have to walk. It is now standard practice when International Federation water projects are implemented that women are properly represented in community structures, are given the same training opportunities as men, and are given every opportunity towards increased empowerment.

MDG No. 4

A recognised primary cause of under five mortality is poor water and sanitation linked to unsafe hygiene practices. Not only can this be significantly reduced by establishing safe water and sanitation facilities, but the window that water and sanitation can give to encouraging better hygiene can and will have an even greater impact. Hand and body washing, cleanliness in the home and surrounding environment, safe water and food storage, washing hands after using the toilet are all potential means to reduce mortality significantly. Water and sanitation combined with better nutrition, immunisation and disease control delivered in an integrated manner has the potential to make the biggest impact.

MDG No. 7

Community empowerment and engagement linked to the Federations global network of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and volunteers can increase the coverage of sustainable safe water and sanitation among the worlds poor. It is by engaging communities and National Societies at grass roots that encourage sustainability, the International Federation role being that of catalyst and mentor to the process. The International Federation, already contributing in this fashion, intends to scale-up further. In addition to this approach, the use of low-technology options (for example spring development, non-fossil fuel water pumping systems, water catchment's protection) that do no threaten the environment is a key element in International Federation water and sanitation policy and strategy.

