



# UN-HABITAT

MEETING DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN SMALL URBAN CENTRES



## Facts and Figures about Water and Sanitation in Small Urban Centres

1. The need for improving water and sanitation in small urban centres and large villages becomes more urgent when one considers the population inhabiting them. These centres hosts a quarter of the world's total population and between 20 and 50 percent of the population in most low and middle-income countries.
2. In India, there are over 600 urban centres with between 50,000 and 200,000 inhabitants and thousands of urban centres with less than 50,000 inhabitants. In Brazil, there are 300 or so centres with 50,000 to 200,000 inhabitants.
3. The scale of water and sanitation needs in small urban centres is extremely large. Where as a large proportion of the global population lacking adequate provision of water live in these centres, most official statistics greatly overstate the quality and extent of provision. The Report estimates that at least 1 billion of the inhabitants in small urban centres lack adequate provision for water in small urban centres.
4. For purposes of minimizing the transmission of water-related diseases, the amount of water needed is between 25 and 30 litres per person per day or 120 to 400 litres per household. The World Health Organisation recommends at least 50 litres per person per day. Although the provision of adequate water is very necessary for hygiene maintenance, it is however not the only requirement; hygiene education is required so that the users can maximize health benefits.
5. Globally, water provision in small urban centres falls into five different categories;
  - a. Unimproved water sources (e.g. unprotected shallow wells and untreated surface water from lakes or rivers);
  - b. Public stand pipes;
  - c. Cooperative stand pipes which serve between 5 and 25 households;
  - d. Yard taps which are mainly one tap per household;
  - e. In-house taps.
6. Most official development assistance (ODA) for water and sanitation comes from bilateral aid agencies or through multi-lateral organisations and development banks. Apart from this, there are non-concessional loans to water and sanitation programmes which have no grant element, much of which comes from the World Bank. Between 1999 and 2003 (the last year for which statistics were available), total ODA for the water sector averaged between US\$2.5 billion and US\$3 billion. Japan was the largest ODA donor as it contributed a third of the total aid in water.
7. In addition, while total ODA in 2003 reached an all-time high of US\$68.5 billion, (the highest level ever), the proportion allocated to water and sanitation dropped from 7 percent in 1999 to under 5 percent in 2003. The Report says that donors are committing less and less money to water and sanitation compared to their contributions in the 1990s and in comparison to what they commit to other sectors. This drop is more significant in the ODA flowing to sub-Saharan Africa's water and sanitation sectors. The Report says that this dropped from US\$603 million (or 5 percent of total ODA) in 1999 to US\$583 million in 2003 (or 3 percent of total ODA). This was also true for Latin America and the Caribbean where the proportion of ODA to the two sector fell



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from 8 percent in 1999 to 5 percent in 2003. However, the percentage commitment to Asia's water and sanitation sector relative to total ODA was more stable in the relevant period.

8. Although it is difficult to evaluate the proportion of donor support to urban water and sanitation that goes to small urban centres, there is evidence that these centres have been receiving increased attention. For instance, the World Bank's Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Board now considers the water and sanitation issues particularly acute in small and medium-sized urban centres. In practice however, too little aid is allocated to addressing water and sanitation needs in urban areas while the division between large and small centres remains unclear as there is no reliable data on it. The Report says that the proportion of funding going to urban projects from bilateral agencies is usually between 2 and 12 percent. Nevertheless, multi-lateral development banks give urban projects a higher priority.
9. Much donor funding for urban water and sanitation over the last 15 years has been to support greater private sector involvement in the building or management of water utilities. At the same time, national governments have been reducing investments in water supply and sanitation in the hope that private sector investments would fill the gap.
10. Over the last decade, official development assistance agencies have shown a lot of interest in good governance partly because of their dissatisfaction with the way national governments handled such aid. This interest was also fueled in the 1990s by a rise in discussions on how poverty should be reconceptualised from the exclusive focus on 'income' or consumption to include concern for improving provision of water and sanitation, civil and political rights and voice, which are termed in the Report as issues of "governance."
11. The Report defines governance as "power that also exists outside the formal authorities and institutions of government. The major characteristics of good and effective pro-poor water governance include open and transparent decision making; inclusive strategies which are ethical and equitable.

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