Why is water, sanitation and hygiene so important for the poor?

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are essential for improving health and reducing poverty. Access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education helps to improve health and hygiene, but this can be alleviated by allowing them greater autonomy over service provision. The poor receive the least adequate access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education, but this can be alleviated by allowing them greater autonomy over service provision.

The Millennium Development Goals

1. The Poverty Millennium Development Goal: What water, sanitation and hygiene can do

- Improve health and productivity.
- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve access to education.
- Reduce inequality.
- Increase food security and nutrition.
- Improve maternal health.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Promote gender equality.

2. The Education Millennium Development Goal: What water, sanitation and hygiene can do

- Improve learning outcomes.
- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve health and nutrition.
- Reduce inequalities.
- Promote gender equality.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Promote economic growth.

3. The Child Health Millennium Development Goal: What water, sanitation and hygiene can do

- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve nutrition and education.
- Reduce inequalities.
- Promote gender equality.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.
- Promote economic growth.

4. The Gender Millennium Development Goal: What water, sanitation and hygiene can do

- Promote gender equality.
- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve health and nutrition.
- Reduce inequalities.
- Promote economic growth.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.

5. The HIV/AIDS Millennium Development Goal: What water, sanitation and hygiene can do

- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve health and nutrition.
- Reduce inequalities.
- Promote economic growth.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.

6. The Environmental Sustainability Millennium Development Goal: What water, sanitation and hygiene can do

- Reduce child mortality.
- Improve health and nutrition.
- Reduce inequalities.
- Promote economic growth.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.

Why is water, sanitation and hygiene so important for the poor?

- Access to safe water and appropriate sanitation and hygiene education leads to significant health benefits for the poor.
- Access to safe water and appropriate sanitation and hygiene education, but this can be alleviated by allowing them greater autonomy over service provision.
- Setting differential tariffs and willingness to pay can lead to income.
- Reducing health care costs can assist poor households.
- Reducing health care costs can lead to income.
- Reducing health care costs can lead to income.

The means of achieving improved hygiene are less affordable to poor households. Poor families have worse health conditions than those with higher incomes. Improving hygiene can greatly improve health, provided poor families also have access to affordable water and sanitation.

Millennium Development Goal 1: To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.

Millennium Development Goal 2: To achieve universal primary education.

Millennium Development Goal 3: To promote gender equality and empower women.

Millennium Development Goal 4: To reduce child mortality.

Millennium Development Goal 5: To improve maternal health.

Millennium Development Goal 6: To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Millennium Development Goal 7: To ensure environmental sustainability.

Millennium Development Goal 8: To develop a global partnership for development.

Reducing health care costs can assist poor households.

Key references

Satterthwaite, David (2003). The for the impact of water supply, sanitation and improved hygiene on poverty reduction. The  Briefing Note presents evidence of the facts and figures that support the need for water, sanitation and hygiene services.
Why water sanitation and hygiene?

The following are examples of income generation due to the provision of safe water, appropriate sanitation and hygiene education.

**The facts**

- The water and sanitation sector can provide work and income for poor people.
- In African cities, small scale independent providers are an important alternative to utilities when it comes to supplying the poor with water and sanitation.
- Improved sanitation provides income opportunities, particularly for poor women.
- Poor families can benefit considerably when water projects are also planned and managed for small scale productive uses by poor people.

Willingness to Pay

**Income Generation**

- Many poor households already pay more for water than middle and upper class households. In Mexico, poor households paid 25 times more for water than wealthier households.
- Poor households are willing to pay substantially more for improved water supplies and sanitation.
- If long distances need to be travelled in order to make a payment, the level of cooperation is reduced.
- In Ceará, Brazil, the poorest farmers are not charged for water, including women who use it for domestic consumption and small-scale production. In the cities, the tariff increases with use, with smaller amounts used by low-income households being heavily subsidised.

- Weighted tariffs based on indicators of poverty, such as type and size of house, avoid the need for costly metering systems. These indicators are most effective when set locally using participatory methods of welfare ranking and social mapping.

- The impact of water, sanitation and hygiene provision on micro-entrepreneurs in Uganda is reduced costs and increased demand for the firm's goods or services and the possibility of introducing new water-related goods or services.
- A working water supply allowed women entrepreneurs in Gujarat to earn Rs. 750 to Rs. 5500 per year by part-time work. The enterprises developed were dairying, crafts, tree nurseries, and salt and gum production.
- Water vendors are an example of small scale providers. The advantages are that they generate income, payment is on delivery, the fixed costs of water systems can be avoided, urban distribution systems can be avoided, and the problems are the high variations in tap water in cost per litre, soaring prices during drought and poor water quality.
- In Lesotho, local latrine builders who worked full time in improving sanitation earned the equivalent of the mean monthly household income. County residents paid 30% more than local residents. 45% worked part-time for an additional income. The programme also boosted local industries such as brick and block production.

- Setting differential tariffs and establishing pro-poor payment systems allow poorer households to manage metered connections more easily.
- Pro-poor payment systems adjust payment frequency, form and location according to income. In the Philippines, Kerala and Sri Lanka, the 20% highest income households pay more than 40% of their income bill compared to the 20% lowest income households who pay less than 20% of their income bill. The 20% lowest income households pay more than 30% of their income bill compared to the 20% highest income households who pay less than 15% of their income bill. In the Philippines, the 20% highest income households pay more than 40% of their income bill compared to the 20% lowest income households who pay less than 20% of their income bill.
- In Santiago de Chile, women pay at a mobile van which visits the slums at fixed days and times. In peri-urban settlements in Malawi, users may pay to the local treasurer of the water users group.
- In the urban slums of Bangalore, the Water Supply and Sewerage Board provides several households with a single yard tap.
- In Honduras, the utility established a separate section to serve the urban poor. Local committees distribute the water within their neighbourhoods and take care of the local administration, operation and management, greatly improving access.

**The urban and rural poor**

- The urban poor are most likely to be unserved. Urban households using unprotected water sources in Tanzania are twice to six times as likely to be below the poverty line.
- Many poor urban households are unserved because of unclear and invalid definitions of 'access' and 'poverty' and lack of performance monitoring and accountability.
- Within rural communities, not all households are equally served, with only 40% having reliable access in one community-managed programme.

Approaches have been developed that help alleviate the hardships related to inadequate water sanitation and hygiene provision, especially those experienced by the urban poor.

Utilities can give poor neighbourhoods more autonomy over their services or can make special provisions for them.