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New UN report stresses benefits of greater funding for water and sanitation projects



21 April 2010 – Funding commitments for water and sanitation declined as a share of overall development aid over the past decade despite strong evidence that making the two services available to communities could lower health-care costs, raise school attendance and improve productivity, according to a new United Nations report released today.

“Neglecting sanitation and drinking water is a strike against progress,” said Maria Neira, UN World Health Organization’s ([WHO](#)) director of public health and environment, at the launch of the UN-Water Global Annual Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) report in Washington. “Without it, communities and countries will lose the battle against poverty and ill-health,” said.

The report noted that health, education, transport, energy and agriculture received greater donor funding than water and sanitation between 1997 and 2008. It stressed that improved access to sanitation and water produces economic benefits that range from \$3 to \$34 per dollar invested, increasing a country’s gross domestic product (GDP) by an estimated two to seven per cent.

“Unsafe water, inadequate sanitation and the lack of hygiene claim the lives of an estimated 2.2 million children under the age of five every year. Of these deaths, 1.5 million are due to diarrhoea, the second leading contributor to the global burden of disease,” said Dr. Neira. “The impact of diarrhoeal disease in children under 15 is greater than the combined impact of HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis,” she added.

The findings of the report will be presented at the first annual High Level Meeting of Sanitation and Water for All, which will be hosted by the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) in Washington on Friday.

The meeting will provide a forum for finance ministers from developing countries and their counterparts in water and sanitation ministries, and representatives from donor countries to gain greater understanding of the linkages between water, sanitation and economic growth to commit appropriate resources and promote mutual accountability, partnership and shared responsibility.

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