

Water For Everyone



Water - Every Child Has The Right

Article 24 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child states, "All children have the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health." It mentions governments shall work to make sure no child misses out on this right by providing among other things clean drinking water.

New Zealand's Water Supply

© Cathy Maslin



Invercargill Water Tower

New Zealanders used to rely on such methods as wells, springs, streams and rainfall to meet their water needs. There were problems with the water quality and the amount of water being supplied.

A Wellington member of the Water Supply Committee said in 1871 that "no water collected from within the crowded part of the city, either wells or house tops, is safe or proper for human consumption." As populations grew alternatives began to be developed. Invercargill used water from an underground bore and pumped it to a water tower where it was later piped to houses. In Wellington, dams were built. In the mid 1950's and 1960's regional councils moved to have water supplies treated with chlorine to kill germs. This reduced water-borne diseases. The water we use is also tested and monitored for bacteria, chemicals and natural minerals.

(Source: Wellington and Southland Regional Council websites)

Examples of water provision:

Water Tankers - Water Tanker, Indonesia



© UNICEF/HQ05-1675/
Josh Estey

Wells - Well, Liberia



© UNICEF/HQ07-0638/
Giacomo Pirozzi

River - River, Bangladesh



© UNICEF/HQ07-1893/
Shehzad Noorani

Rain Water Harvesting - School, India



© UNICEF/HQ06-2049/
Pablo Bartholomew

Dam's - Dam, Turkey



© UNICEF/HQ05-1193/
Roger LeMoyné

Testing the Waters

It is important that the water we drink is tested for several reasons.

Germs are often hard to detect in water yet diarrhoea caused by water-borne diseases can be fatal for children. Fortunately a simple solution called Oral Rehydration Salts has been developed which can save a child's life if given to them when they have diarrhoea. In New Zealand it is sold under the brand name of Gastrolyte.

Minerals in water, such as Arsenic which is colourless and odourless, have led to people getting lesions (see photo) and eventually cancer. It takes only 1/3 teaspoon of arsenic in the quantity of water in an Olympic sized swimming pool to cause terrible health affects. Arsenic has been a big problem in water supplies in Bangladesh and Laos.

(Source: www.epa.gov/ogwdw/arsenic/basicinformation.html)

© UNICEF/HQ98-0833/Shehzad Noorani



A woman in Bangladesh suffering from arsenic poisoning



Litmus paper used to test well water for the presence of arsenic

© UNICEF/HQ98-0833/Shehzad Noorani

Global Statistics:

- A child born in Europe is 520 times less likely to die from diarrhoeal disease than a child born in Sub-Saharan Africa
- On average girls in developing countries walk 6 km a day carrying 20 litres of water.
- Between 1990 and 2004, 1.2 billion people gained access to better drinking water sources, however, more than 1 billion people worldwide still do not have access to safe water.

© UNICEF New Zealand 2008



© UNICEF/HQ06-2187/Georgina Cranston

A small girl lifting a water container, Sudan

A Million Reasons to Have Water

(Extract taken from an article written by UNICEF New Zealand Ambassador Gareth Morgan on a trip to Tanzania)

“It's ironic that here, next to the second largest lake in the world there is water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink. Such is the dilemma of such low income communities, who cannot afford the investment in storage and reticulation facilities. Labour is far cheaper so it is labour – at least the women's that



© Gareth & Jo Morgan

Women with water containers on their heads, Tanzania

transports the water – 3 to 6 hours per day spent trudging to the well and back.

Prior to the last village visit of the day we call in on a solo mum and her three young ones. Her mud and straw hut is the common type and describing living conditions as “modest” would be an overstatement – really they are appalling. There is no water here for 6 months of the year and it is a 5 km hike each way to the nearest source, which is contaminated anyway.”

Activity 1

Giving suffering children lots of water to drink doesn't work because the water comes out of their bodies again too soon before the body can absorb it.



© UNICEF HQ97-1146Giacomo Pirozzi

A health worker mixes a solution of oral rehydration salts in Nigeria

Scientists working in Bangladesh and India found that adding sugar to water and salt in the right proportions allowed liquid to be absorbed by the body's intestinal wall. A person with diarrhoea could replace all the water they were losing by simply drinking this solution.

UNICEF uses this method to save the lives of children all over the world by making sachets of the solution available in developing countries.

You can make an Oral Rehydration Therapy solution yourself

(Warning: this is as an example only - use the commercial product if you are ill to make sure the quantities are exactly right).

1. Take one litre of water.
2. Measure one level teaspoon of salt and put it in the water.
3. Measure 4 heaped teaspoons of sugar into the water.
4. Stir.
5. Taste – it should taste like salty tears.

Activity 2

Where do you stand?

Draw a line, one end being “strongly agree” and the other end “strongly disagree” choose where you stand regarding the following statements. Once everybody has chosen a position for a question justify why you chose to stand where you did.

1. It took New Zealand a while to develop our water systems so eventually those in other countries will do the same, there is no need to help them.
2. That every child has the right to safe water is an ideal but it won't or can't ever be achieved.
3. If people in developing countries have more time than money they are better off walking to collect water than paying for piped water.
4. It all boils down to economics, water testing and treatment has to be cheaper than the amount spent on health care to treat people for water-borne diseases.

Activity 3

Word Puzzle

S □□-□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□
A □□□□□□ □□
F □□□
□□□□□ E □

W □□□□
A □□□□□□
T □□□□□□□
□□□ E □□□□□□□□
□□□ R □□□□□

1. A child in the USA is 520 times less likely to die from diarrhoeal disease than a child from where?
2. What part of the Convention on the Rights of The Child refers to water?
3. How many kilometres did the mother in Gareth Morgan's article have to walk to the nearest source of water?
4. We can buy water in these.
5. Who are most likely to collect water in developing countries?
6. This compound poisons water but you can't see it.
7. What country did Gareth Morgan visit?
8. Name a New Zealand city that has a water tower.
9. What is Oral Rehydration Therapy used to treat?



© UNICEF/HQ95-0080/Jonathan Shadid

A girl washes at a pump, Burkina Faso

Take Action

Decide on one action to take:

1. Make sure your home has adequate water supplies in the case of an emergency. You need to have 5 litres of water per person (this needs to be replaced once a year and boiled for an hour before use). Also check your hot water cylinder is tied down – this can be an important water source. Investigate what your local council's emergency plan is for water distribution during an emergency.
2. Take up the challenge! Drink only tap water for a day and donate \$1 to UNICEF's TAP project to support the provision of safe water to people in Tanzania. Explain the need for safe water around the world to your friends and challenge them to contribute. You can find out information on how to donate at www.tapproject.org.nz