

## Interview Clarissa Brocklehurst, Chief Water, Environment and Sanitation, UNICEF, New York, USA

Interviewer: Olivia McGrath, Deutsche Welle, Length: 3'28

Clarissa Brocklehurst is the Chief Water, Environment and Sanitation in UNICEF New York. Prior to this she has worked as a consultant in water and sanitation based in Ottawa, Canada. She has worked for a variety of clients and has extensive experience in the area of sanitation in Africa and Asia.

So Clarissa, why is sanitation important for children in particular?

**The reason that sanitation is so important for children is that a unsanitary environment, an environment that is faecally contaminated leads to diseases such as diarrhoeal diseases. And diarrhoeal diseases are killers of children. We know that diarrhoeal disease causes 17 percent of under-five mortality and we know that about 88 percent of diarrhoeal diseases can be attributed to poor water supply and particularly poor sanitation. So if we're going to combat diarrhoeal, if we're going to do something about child mortality we have to address sanitation.**

Why have the issues related to sanitation been neglected until now?

**I think the fact is that sanitation has always been less... less sexy than water supply, more difficult to take pretty pictures of. It's harder to tackle, it requires more integration, greater political will on behalf of government. Sanitation can also be quite expensive to tackle and in some cases there's been less obvious outward demand from households and communities. And all of those things have led development agencies and governments to basically push sanitation under the carpet and now we're beginning to see what happens if that's the case, we're starting to see the impact of years of neglect in the sanitation sector and now we're waking up to the fact that it doesn't matter if it's not very glamorous, it's something we've got to do something about.**

In many countries, sanitation remains a political and institutional "orphan" because several ministries hold responsibility for one or more aspects of sanitation. As a result there is no single body with overall authority to "push" a national sanitation agenda. What needs to change?

**We need to look at ways that the disparate ministries that are responsible for sanitation can come together. And this means that... usually it means bringing the health ministry and whatever ministry is responsible for water together and for them to recognise their mutual benefit in addressing sanitation.**

**So for the health ministry that would be recognising the enormous health impact that sanitation has. And then the water ministry needs to recognise the enormous impact that integrated approaches to water and sanitation can have and also the impact that improving sanitation can have on improving the quality of water resources.**

How do sanitation investments contribute to economic development?

**Until recently we haven't had very much data on this, we've known that it was important, but there was very little hard data to back it up. But just in the last year or so there's been some interesting work done to look at what the impact on economic development is. And what we see is that for developing countries there are huge impacts on the economy from water pollution, from days lost to sickness, from children not going to school and from damage done to things like the tourism industry. So the message is very clearly that developing countries cannot reach full economic potential unless they do something about sanitation.**

Clarissa Brocklehurst, thanks very much for your time.