

Interview Guy Hutton, Senior Economist Water and Sanitation Program (WSP), World Bank, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Interviewer: Olivia McGrath, Deutsche Welle, Length: 4'59

Guy Hutton is a Senior Economist, for the Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank. He is based in Cambodia, but also works in regional areas across the East Asian and Pacific regions. So Guy, could you explain what the Millennium Development Goals are in relation to sanitation?

There's one single MDG target which is to reduce by half those without improved water supply and sanitation in 2015 with a baseline 1990. So sanitation is part of a combined target for water supply and sanitation.

The issue of sanitation has been described as being a "silent crisis". Can you explain why this is?

I think first, sanitation is not very politically visible. And that's for various reasons but sanitation is seen as a private matter, there may be taboos on the subject. People find it hard to talk about and express their preferences related to sanitation – to toilet going. Also I think silent crisis might also refer to the fact that those suffering tend to be the poorer and more vulnerable groups. There's a very strong income gradient in terms of the poorer are much less likely to have access to improved sanitation and therefore more likely to suffer the negative consequences of poor sanitation. And that would include also certain population groups such as children, women and senior people, who generally have a weaker political voice and so find it harder to raise their concerns in any decision making in any government or non government environment.

What type of problems are you talking about, in regards to problems that arise from lack of sanitation?

So sanitation is closely related to many of the Millennium Development Goals, for example, the impacts or poor sanitation on health are well known, are well understood, and more than 2 million deaths are caused every year by poor sanitation and poor hygiene, and the majority of these deaths are in the under-five age-group. And one of the MDG targets is focusing on child disease and under-five mortality.

According to current statistics and reports, the Millennium Development Goals for sanitation aren't looking like they are going to be met. How much money would it cost to reach this goal?

The estimates made are fairly crude, in terms of the costing data they draw on, but the global studies have shown that in order to increase coverage from current levels to the levels required to meet the Millennium

Development Goal target for sanitation roughly 140 billion dollars is required between 2005 and 2014, so about 14 billion per year.

Can you break down this figure sort of into general terms, or how much per capita or per family it would entail?

Improved sanitation can cost anything from around 10 dollars for a very simple pit latrine using locally available materials or materials provided in kind by the family, such as labour costs and some of the materials required for the structure. So 10 dollars is really the lower limit.

Who pays for improved sanitation standards and how is the World Bank involved in this?

Throughout the developing world, it's mainly households who are paying for improved sanitation, if you look at the overall picture. There are pockets or communities and district which receive external support, or support from nongovernmental organisations, however, the majority of sanitation financing is coming from private households. The World Bank is currently spending around 400 million to 1 billion dollars of investment money and that's divided between loans and grants to developing countries.

In your opinion what needs to be done to give all people access to sanitation and achieve the Millennium Goal?

Well, there are many approaches to improving sanitation. Some have been tried and tested and proven to be not sustainable, such as providing households with high levels of subsidy for hardware. This approach isn't very demanded and often households receive sanitation facilities which do not meet their expectations. And so the approaches being used now to scale up services at the moment are more demand-led. One of these is Community Led Total Sanitation which stimulates the community interest in improving sanitation and looks for local solutions which are more affordable and sustainable for improving sanitation. Obviously in order to get this moving, a lot more financing is needed at the national as well as the local government level to promote improved sanitation, and to strengthen the supply chain. So that, when communities have a demand for a certain type of sanitation solution, that there is a local market available that can supply the needs and demands of the local populations.

Guy Hutton, thank you very much for your time.