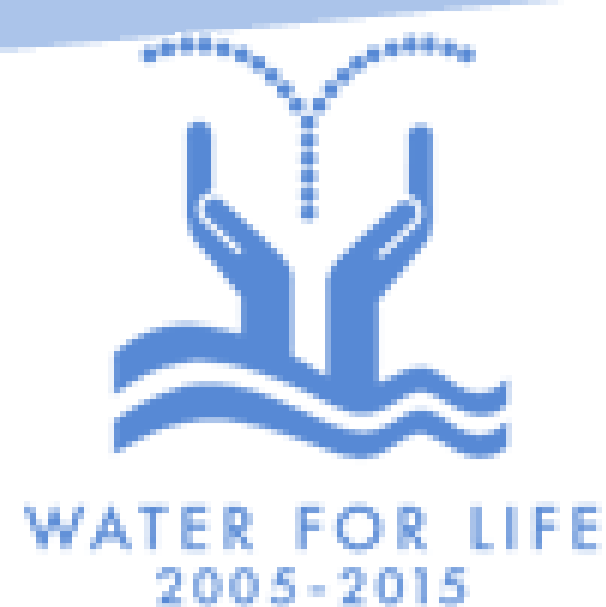


# International Decade for Action 'WATER FOR LIFE' 2005-2015

United Nations  
Department of Economic  
and Social Affairs  
(UNDESA)



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## About the Decade

### WHY a 'Water for Life' Decade?

Water is essential for life. No living being on planet Earth can survive without it. It is a prerequisite for human health and well-being as well as for the preservation of the environment. However, four of every ten people in the world do not have access to even a simple pit latrine; and nearly two in ten have no source of safe drinking water. Every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. According to the World Health Organization, each and every day some 3,900 children die because of dirty water or poor hygiene; diseases transmitted through water or human excrement are the second-leading cause of death among children worldwide, after respiratory diseases. Water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices, and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Water-related natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and tsunamis exert a heavy toll in human life and suffering. And all too regularly, drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition.

Beyond meeting basic human needs, water supply and sanitation services, as well as water as a resource, are critical to sustainable development. It is a major source of energy in some parts of the world, while in others its potential as an energy source remains largely untapped. Water is also necessary for agriculture and for many industrial processes. And in more than a few countries, it makes up an integral part of transport systems. With improved scientific understanding, the international community has also come to appreciate more fully the valuable services provided by water-related ecosystems, from flood control to storm protection and water purification.

Water challenges will increase significantly in the coming years. Continuing population growth and rising incomes will lead to greater water consumption, as well as more waste. The urban population in developing countries will grow dramatically, generating demand well beyond the capacity of already inadequate water supply and sanitation infrastructure and services. According to the UN World Water Development Report, by 2050, at least one in four people is likely to live in a country affected by chronic or recurring shortages of freshwater.

It seems there are more than a few reasons to put water and sanitation at the top of the world's agenda...

### WHEN the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015 started?

The world is waking up to the water and sanitation crisis. At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders adopted the Millennium Declaration; from the Declaration emerged the **Millennium Development Goals**, an integrated set of time-bound targets for extending the benefits of globalization to the world's poorest citizens. Among them was target 10, to cut in half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. At the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development, in 2002, this target was expanded to include basic sanitation, and water as a resource was recognized as a critical factor for meeting all the Goals. This sanitation objective is now an integral part of target 10.

Since Johannesburg, further international deliberations on water and sanitation have helped advance cooperation and action in this area. Significant progress has been made since then in providing people with access to clean drinking water and basic sanitation. But a major effort is still required to extend these essential services to those still unserved, the vast majority of whom are poor people.

Given the magnitude of the task, in December 2003, the United Nations General Assembly, in [resolution A/RES/58/217](#), proclaimed the period 2005-2015 International Decade for Action 'Water for Life'. The decade officially started on World Water Day, March 22, 2005.

### WHAT is the purpose of the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015?

The primary goal of the 'Water for Life' Decade is to promote efforts to fulfill international commitments made on water and water-related issues by 2015. Focus is on furthering cooperation at all levels, so that the water-related goals of the Millennium Declaration, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, and Agenda 21 can be achieved.

The challenge of the Decade is to focus attention on action-oriented activities and policies that ensure the long-term sustainable management of water resources, in terms of both quantity and quality, and include measures to improve sanitation. Achieving the goals of the 'Water for Life' Decade requires sustained commitment, cooperation and investment on the part of all stakeholders from 2005 to 2015 and far beyond.

### WHERE does the 'Water for Life' Decade take place?

It is vital to make 2005 and leading up to 2015 remarkable years in ensuring that everyone is aware of the urgency of the goals to be achieved. Every event and every voice on every occasion are vital in ensuring new energy and commitment to turning the tide on a situation we can no longer abide.

The 'Water for Life' Decade provides an opportunity to everyone to get involved. The Decade takes place everywhere around the world. Your ideas and initiatives, as an individual or organization, are always welcomed. Whatever kind of events you decide to organize, we hope this will help you leverage the maximum impact, however modest your budget. All efforts will contribute to making the 'Water for Life' Decade a landmark event!

### WHO is responsible for the 'Water for Life' Decade?

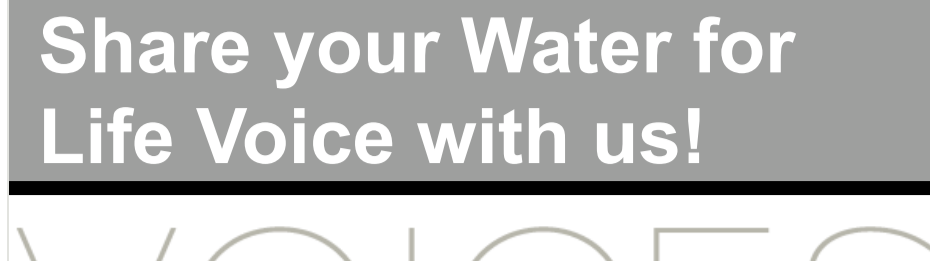
The United Nations, through its inter-agency coordination mechanism, **UN-Water**, is responsible for coordinating the 'Water for Life' Decade.

UN-Water is the inter-agency mechanism for the implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation water-related provisions and the Millennium Development Goals concerning freshwater. The terms of reference and modalities of work of UN-Water cover the elements of a detailed inter-agency plan for addressing water as well as sanitation issues, and include mechanisms for interacting with non-United Nations system stakeholders.

Two initiatives have been launched by UN-Water to support the 'Water for Life' Decade:

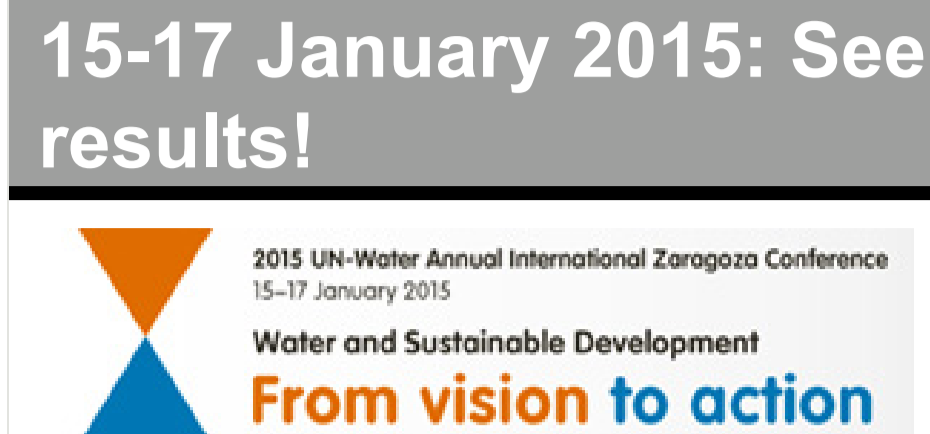
- [The UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development \(UNW-DPC\)](#). Hosted by the United Nations University in Bonn, Germany, the UNW-DPC strengthens the coherence and effectiveness of capacity development activities in the framework of the Decade.
- [The United Nations Office to Support the International Decade for Action 'Water for Life' 2005-2015/UN-Water Decade Programme on Advocacy and Communication \(UNO-IDA/UNW-DPAC\)](#). Located in Zaragoza, Spain, and led by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), UNO-IDA/UNW-DPAC facilitates information, implements communication activities and raises awareness in the framework of the Decade.

Share your Water for Life Voice with us!



>> [Water for Life Voices campaign](#)  
>> [Submit your voice!](#)  
>> [Your #WaterForLifeVoices on Flickr](#)

15-17 January 2015: See results!



'Water for Life' UN-Water Best Practices Award



Get inspired! Good Practices



Tools for Action



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	<a href="#">Slideshare</a>
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	<a href="#">YouTube</a>

What next after 2015?

## #POST2015

- >> [Outcome Document from OWG on Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- >> [A Post-2015 Global Goal for Water: Synthesis of key findings and recommendations from UN-Water](#)
- >> [Post 2015 Water Thematic Consultation Report](#)
- >> [Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)
- >> [UN-Water section on water in the post-2015 process](#)
- >> [UN post-2015 agenda](#)
- >> [DESA section on Post-2015](#)
- >> [JMP Post-2015 global monitoring](#)
- >> [Sustainable Development Goals e-Inventory](#)
- >> [Summary of Stock taking meeting of Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)
- >> [Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda](#)

Get informed!

>> [Decade's weekly](#)  
**The Decade's weekly brings you every week the latest news from the Decade.**

UN Documentation Centre on Water and Sanitation



>> [UN Documentation Centre on Water and Sanitation](#)

Water publications from the UN

>> [Bimonthly Publications Review 25, 26 and 27](#) [PDF] - 546 Kb)  
**UNW-DPAC. May 2015**  
>> [Previous issues](#)

A Date with...

**Sustainable Development**  
15-17 January 2015:  
[UN-Water International Zaragoza Conference 'Water and Sustainable Development: From vision to action'](#)

22 March 2015: [World Water Day on Water and Sustainable Development](#)

**Biodiversity**  
2011-2020: [UN Decade on Biodiversity](#)

**Deserts and Desertification**  
2010-2020: [UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification](#)

**Energy**  
2014-2024: [Decade on Sustainable Energy for All](#)  
22 March 2014: [World Water Day on 'Water and Energy'](#)

**Sanitation**  
2011-2015: [Sustainable sanitation: The Five-Year-Drive to 2015](#)  
19 November 2014: [World Toilet Day](#)