

Message 1 – Sanitation is Vital for Health

Human feces are the primary source of diarrheal pathogens. Without sanitation facilities to safely contain and dispose of human feces, the health of everyone living nearby is put at risk. Diarrheal disease is a leading cause of under five child mortality and can be reduced by improved sanitation. Additionally, worm infections impair children's health, nutrition and cognitive development. Children weakened by diarrhea are more susceptible to other infections, namely respiratory infections, which are another leading cause of child mortality. *Sanitation affects children's development and futures.*



Photo credit: UNICEF/HQ99-0812/Roger eMoyné

Key Points:

- Reducing diarrheal disease
- Reducing child mortality
- Improving Health
- Improving nutrition
- Improving cognitive development

Supporting facts and figures:

- Daily child deaths under age five from diarrhoeal diseases in 2004: 5000 (Progress for Children (PFC) 6, UNICEF 2006).
- % of diarrhoeal deaths related to lack of water and sanitation: 88% (PFC 6).
- % of total under five child mortality due to diarrhoea : 17%, not including neonatal diarrhoea (WHO 2005, CHERG).
- Diarrhoeal related deaths per year of children under 5: 1.5 million (PFC 6).
- Children under 18 without access to improved sanitation: 980 million, 280 million of which are children under five. (UNICEF, 2006).
- Ratio by which improved sanitation and hygiene reduces diarrhea-related deaths: 2/3 (PFC 5).
- Diarrhoea as proportionate cause of child mortality: 2nd highest single cause after pneumonia (WHO 2005, CHERG).

Contextualize this message in your country using local data such as:

- The percentage of child deaths attributable to diarrhoea caused by poor sanitation, inadequate water supply and poor personal hygiene (see WHO Country Profiles of Environmental Burden of Disease (2007));
- Rates of worm infection in children;
- Rates of respiratory illnesses in children.