JMP for Water Supply and Sanitation

Introduction

The Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (JMP) was established to monitor progress towards achieving the MDGs for water supply and sanitation.

This note explains how the JMP collects data and measures progress. It also evaluates the accuracy of its statistics and its ultimate worth.

The JMP is a programme co-funded by WHO and UNICEF.

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Goals

The goals of the JMP are:

> "to report on the status of water supply and sanitation, and to support countries in their efforts to monitor this sector, which will enable better planning and management."

The data collected through the programme are used by the United Nations to monitor the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal target to halve the proportion of the population in developing countries without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The data are also used by the World Bank and the WHO's Statistical Information System (WHOSIS).

Measuring access

Access to drinking-water and to basic sanitation is measured by the **MDG indicators**:

- Proportion of population using an improved drinking-water source;
- Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility.

In fulfilling this mandate, the JMP publishes updated estimates every two years on the use of various types of drinking-water sources and sanitation facilities at the national, regional and global levels. The JMP is also collaborating with international organizations and with individual countries to further develop national and global monitoring.

In 2008:
2.6 billion people did not have access to improved sanitation – the number has **INCREASED** since 2006.
884 million people did not use improved water supplies – the number has **DECREASED** since 2006.

Data collection

The JMP does not collect primary data itself, but its data are exclusively from primary sources such as censuses and national household surveys that are conducted by national statistical authorities every few years.

One of the challenges faced by the JMP is that the definitions used by individual countries for an improved water source or sanitation are not the same as those used by the JMP.

Another challenge is that censuses and surveys are only conducted every few years.

The JMP thus uses linear regressions to estimate data for a given year in a particular country even if no survey or census was carried out in that year, in order to be able to compare data across countries for a given year.

What are improved sanitation and water supply?

An improved sanitation facility is one that hygenically separates human excreta from human contact.

An improved drinking water source is one that by nature of its construction adequately protects the source from outside contamination, in particular with faecal matter.

Examples of improved sanitation include: flush or pour-flush to piped sewer systems, septic tanks or pit latrines; ventilated, improved pit latrines; pit latrines with slabs; composting toilets.

Examples of improved drinking water sources include: piped water into a dwelling or yard; public taps or standposts; protected tubewells, boreholes, dug wells and springs; rainwater collection.

Progress so far

Sanitation

The situation is mixed. In the 2010 progress report (data from 2008) it was estimated that the world was not on track to meet its MDG for improved sanitation, with 2.6 billion people still without access – about one third of the world's population.

Water supply

Access to improved water supply is much improved, with around 884 million people without access. If current trends in water supply delivery continue, the world should meet its MDG.

Great regional disparities

The headline figures mask significant regional disparities as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Among the 2.6 billion people in the world who do not use improved sanitation facilities, by far the greatest number

are in Southern Asia, but there are also large numbers in Eastern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for over a third of the number of people without access to safe water. The region is lagging behind in progress towards the MDG target, with only 60% of the population using improved sources.

Are the results fair?

One of the main complaints with the statistics has been the rather simplistic definitions of 'improved' water supply and sanitation.

In practice, many people have improved their sanitation facilities by either sharing facilities with others or making small improvements to existing poor latrines.

In both cases these are not considered 'improved' by JMP. To reflect this, the

JMP now maps the 'Sanitation Ladder', a tool for estimating the numbers who have improved their facilities but don't yet meet the JMP definition of 'improved'.

A similar 'ladder' also exists for water supply although it is less of an issue.

Can we trust the data?

Like all large scale statistics, the problems lie in the detail.

In most cases the data are a combination of information from statistical surveys and data from relevant Government Ministries, many of whom have very weak data-gathering services. Interpretations of the term 'improved' vary widely from country to country, particularly for sanitation.

This leads to different departments and individuals to interpret similar data in very different ways. The data are not

good at measuring sustainability. To a large extent, the statistics measure what people are using on a particular day which tells you nothing about sustainability. There is also the political element. Countries do not like being tagged as poor contributors to meeting the targets and this leads some to over-emphasize their progress.

Are the data useful?

The short answer is yes! Despite its many shortcomings, the JMP process of monitoring world progress has undoubtedly helped to promote the need for improved water supply and sanitation coverage. It has also applied pressure to world governments to improve services for the very poorest people in the world.

Figure 1. Worldwide use of improved sanitation facilities in 2015

Figure 2. Worldwide use of improved drinking-water sources in 2015

Further information

For general information on the JMP visit:
https://www.wssinfo.org/

To review progress towards the MDGs including the 2010 and 2008 updates visit:
https://www.wssinfo.org/service/sitemap/

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