

Costs and benefits & limited financial resources

The sanitation projects deliver highly impressive economic returns. Taking into account lower healthcare costs, less disruption to schooling and work attendance, each \$1 of investment yields a \$9 return. This result reinforces the 2006 UN Human Development Report which estimated that failure to invest in water and sanitation was costing sub-Saharan Africa \$28.4 billion per annum, about 5% of GDP. This compares with the relatively modest estimate of \$10 billion per annum to achieve the sanitation MDG target for all developing countries. Although the share of total foreign aid dedicated to water and sanitation has risen in recent years, it amounted only to \$6.3 billion in 2006. This represented 6% of all development aid, with less than a quarter allocated to the Least Developed Countries. Campaigners attribute this lethargy to a lack of global coordination or encouragement of focused national plans. Distant or overcrowded access condemns women and children to spend hours in water collection; time that could instead be utilized for income generation and education. Schools without toilets for girls, as is the situation in 50% of all schools in India, discourage attendance. Critical MDG targets for child mortality, gender equity, enrolment in education, and extreme poverty may therefore be at risk without success in water and sanitation