Among the recommendations to solve the water and sanitation crisis, the following can be found:

1. **Priority Commitment.** National governments and other stakeholders must commit to move the sanitation crisis to the top of their agendas. Therefore, the wording used to describe the crisis should transmit "the plain, ugly truth about what really happens—namely, open defecation," as stated by the authors of the report.

2. **Investment in Sanitation.** Investment, especially in sanitation, should be increased. In the case of countries most afflicted by poverty, this will require a significant increase in development aid. The reform of utilities is decisive, and cannot be undertaken without an increase in funding. Investment and reforms must be pursued simultaneously.

3. **Sustainability.** Investment in water and sanitation must focus on sustainable service delivery, rather than construction of facilities alone. Consequently, operations and maintenance play a predominant role.

4. **Adequate Resources.** Governments and donor agencies must empower local authorities and communities with the authority, resources, and professional capacity required to manage water supply and sanitation service delivery.

5. **Solidarity.** When establishing a payment system for water and sanitation services, such services should be paid by those users who can pay, but it must be foreseen that the costs are covered for those poor households that are unable to meet them.

6. **Poverty Reduction.** Within the context of national poverty reduction strategies, countries must elaborate coherent water resources development and management plans that will support the achievement of the Goals.

7. **Innovation.** Innovation should be promoted to accelerate progress towards achieving several development goals simultaneously. For example, establishing new ways to reuse wastewater in agriculture could increase crop yields and reduce hunger while improving sanitation.

**Conclusion:**

The PAHO/WHO Sustainable Development and Environmental Health Management Area (SDE) will be carrying out a Symposium on Ethics and Social Responsibility in the Societies of the Americas: Which is the Road Towards Sustainable Development? prior to the XXX AIDS Congress in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in late November 2006, when a Declaration on "Ethics, Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development in Basic Sanitation and Environment" will be sought.

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The Inter American Water Day (IAWD) is a regional initiative, carried out jointly with the Inter American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS), Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association (CWPA), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Organization of American States (OAS), Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROCLAC) of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).
This lack of wastewater treatment contributes to a danger to health, as most water borne related diseases are caused by the use of polluted water. Poor management of water resources including wastewater discharges, together with limitations affecting the infrastructure for treating water for human consumption, reduce the quality of the water distributed to users.

In order to achieve efficient water management, a new socio-environmental sustainability paradigm is set forth, entailing the promotion of profound changes in our scales of values and in our model of life towards a new water culture.

"The lack of access to water and sanitation makes poverty-reducing activities in developing countries difficult. Sanitation is important, but treating hygiene issues and service delivery is also critical to success..."

Water has commonly been considered a renewable resource, and its use was not regarded as limited or in danger of exhaustion as is the case, for example, of mining deposits.

In fact, in school textbooks we find the "water cycle" which, through rain and evaporation, causes water to return to its original state going to rivers, lakes and underground aquifers... and so the cycle repeats itself. And this is how it has been as a balance long as we kept the mass of water used was not larger than that of the water replaced in the cycle. But the population has risen: on a planetary scale, the consumption of drinking water has recently doubled every 20 years, due to a combination of excessive consumption in developed countries and demographic growth with its consequent need for food.

As stated in the United Nations First Report on World Water Development: "All the social and natural resources crises we humans face, the water crisis is the one that lies at the heart of our survival and that of our planet Earth." In this regard, we need to remember that, even when water is the most widely occurring substance on Earth, only 2.53% is freshwater; while the remainder is salt water.

In addition to this explosive growth in water consumption there is a problem due to the lack of infrastructure and the lack of services for the treatment of domestic and industrial wastewater and stormwater discharges in cities.

In the process of overcoming these limitations, JMP is trying a methodology for rapid assessments of water quality in seven countries in different regions, including Nicaragua in Latin America. On the other hand, 137 million people lack access to improved sanitation facilities, and a little more than half of these people are concentrated in rural populations.

Of the urban populations with access to sanitation facilities, only 14% treat their effluents. The other 86% discharges around 516 m3 of untreated wastewater to bodies of surface water, polluting potential water sources for water consumption and degrading the aquatic ecosystems.

Water is a priority issue, and will be even more critical in the coming years as related problems become more critical: shortage, pollution, delivery cost, etc. Addressing these problems will require multiple strategies regarding technical, economic, political, and educational aspects, and especially the sensitization of the different stakeholders of society on the water issue, through sound communication strategies.

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In Latin America and the Caribbean, three in ten people lack improved sanitation services, and just one in ten lack access to improved drinking water sources. The mortality rate for children under 5 years of age is between 7 and 101 deaths per 1000 live birth infants, with an average of around 38 per 1000 live births children (Health Situation in the Americas Basic Indicators - 2002). Diarrheal diseases account for more than 8% of deaths (37,000 children), with diarrhea as the main cause.

The United Nations Millennium Project’s Task Force on Water and Sanitation1 has formulated ample recommendations for improving basic services, which are fundamental in order to achieve economic progress in impoverished regions and as a way to achieve the Millennium Declaration Target 10 of Goal 7 of the Millennium Declaration.


1 WHO/UNICEF. 2006. Mid-Term Evaluation of the Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation of the WHO and UNICEF. www.who.int/whosis/whad/86/86.htm

1 Access the WEB: www.un Millenniumproject.org/documents/WaterComplet e_report.pdf