

Foreword

Water is an essential life-sustaining element. It pervades our lives and is deeply embedded in our cultural backgrounds. The basic human needs of a secure food supply and freedom from disease depend on it. Social development – endeavours such as the smooth functioning of hospitals – likewise relies on the availability of clean water. Economic development requires energy resources and industrial activities, and both are in turn water-dependent. The provision of sanitation for girls in schools offers yet another example of water's broader links – it has positive effects on hygiene and health, keeps girls in school, and helps to safeguard the natural environment. For these reasons and many more, access to safe drinking water and sanitation is both a development target in its own right and integrally linked to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations *World Water Development Report* is the flagship publication of UN-Water, the inter-agency mechanism established to coordinate the activities of all United Nations agencies and entities working in the area of freshwater resources. First published in 2003 as a contribution to the International Year of Freshwater, the Report is produced by UN-Water's World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP). Working closely with governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society groups and the private sector, WWAP monitors water problems, provides recommendations for meeting future demand, and develops case studies in order to promote informed discussion of freshwater issues.

This second edition of the *World Water Development Report – Water, A Shared Responsibility* – shows that collective responsibility is essential for assessing and monitoring progress and for meeting internationally-agreed targets and goals. As we move further into the International Decade for Action, 'Water for Life' (2005–2015), I urge all partners to work more closely together to promote respect for the natural ecosystems on which we depend, and to ensure that all people enjoy access to safe water and the benefits it makes possible.



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