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133 Children Die a Day in Afghanistan

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According to available figures ^[2], about 73 percent of people in Afghanistan lack access to clean drinking water and 95 percent do not have access to sufficient sanitation. As a result, diarrhoeal diseases are responsible for the death of 48,545 children every year in the country.

Lack of access to clean drinking water and sanitation is a chronic problem not only in rural areas, but also in most of the Afghan cities which are developing — unplanned — at a rapid rate.

Even in the Afghan capital, Kabul, barely 25 percent of people, according to some reports, have direct access to potable water.

The overall majority of people in Afghanistan do not have access to running water, they fetch water from open sources such as rivers, springs, streams, ponds and wells.

The water taken from the open sources is usually contaminated and its use usually leads to wide-spread water-borne diseases.

Afghanistan has 2,775 cubic meters surface water per capita per year. Experts believe that 1,700 cubic meters of water per capita per year is sufficient to satisfy the water needs of the country for domestic use, food production, industrial use, and uses for energy and the environment.

However, Afghanistan lacks the capacity to properly utilize, manage and distribute the water to meet the water demands of its citizens.

It's not just the water

There is only one health worker per 7,000 Afghans, according to the United National Consolidated Appeal 2012, and one female health worker per 23,000 Afghan females.

The Consolidated Appeal also reports that the number of teachers in schools remains well below international standards, with one teacher per 101 students, and one female teacher for every 344 female students.

The results of the Afghanistan Mortality Survey Report 2010 ^[2] indicate that nearly 57.4 percent of the population in Afghanistan live within one hour's walking distance from a public health facility.

Therefore, limited access to medical facilities and the absence of knowledge, skills and the ability to effectively manage diarrhoeal diseases usually leads to the death of 133 children per day.

The government of Afghanistan has reaffirmed its commitment to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), including increasing access to safe drinking water from 27 to 50 percent and to proper sanitation from five to 50 percent by 2014.

By 2020, they aim to increase access to both by 100 percent.

However, experts believe that the informal development of cities, lack of central sewage systems, large levels of migration from rural to urban areas, political and social instabilities, natural disasters, continuous droughts in most parts of the country, and lack of an effective coordination between government institutions and national and international organisations will

make it impossible for the government of Afghanistan to reach the MDG in safe drinking water and sanitation by 2020.

Consumer Rights and Services Organization (CRSO), which is an independent non-governmental organization and promotes consumers rights protection in Afghanistan, calls on the government of Afghanistan and international organisations to seriously work for the development and implementation of an integrated health policy, intersectoral collaboration and communities' inclusion to effectively address and overcome health problems, including diarrhoeal diseases, and ensure access to clean drinking water and enough sanitation.

Access to clean drinking water and enough sanitation is the basic right of every Afghan citizen; therefore, the government of Afghanistan should take the lead in ensuring that the rights of its citizens are met.