

**United Nations**

**Nations Unies**

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**United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**  
**Fifty-**

## **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Access to water and sanitation for all is central to achieving global justice for poor women and men. Even though water and sanitation have been the focus of international development at least since the 1970s,

Even though the Millennium Declaration, adopted by 189 countries, was committed to issues based on social justice and human rights, in reality, the process that has unfolded as a result of the MDGs has been largely focused on tracking goals, targets and abstract numbers.<sup>7</sup> This is also the case in regards to water and sanitation, where it is increasingly clear that global declarations and targets often do not match with the on-the-ground realities of poor women and girls. Numbers can also be politically manipulated by local politicians and leaders to suit local agendas.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, despite the global ‘high politics’ of water and sanitation, a politics of power and control often shape the outcomes for poor people at the local level, especially poor women and girls. Critical issues concerning equity, discrimination, sustainability, politics and local knowledge continue to be neglected.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that there is no gender-disaggregated data for WASH achievements so far, thus it has been difficult for policy makers and planners to analyse the gendered dimensions of WASH services.

***Progress on Water:***

- The water decade of the 1990s failed to achieve universal access to safe water by 2000.<sup>10</sup>

drop in diarrheal disease incidence worldwide. While cases of children under 5 with diarrheal disease resulting in death have decreased due to improvements in treatment, overall incidence has remained unchanged.<sup>13</sup>

***Progress on Sanitation***

- From 1990-2010 global access to sanitation increased in from 49% to 63%. Although 1.3



beyond mere domestic supplies to also cover livelihood issues, which are crucial for the family's survival, where women often play a significant role – e.g. in providing water for productive purposes in women's home gardens.<sup>22</sup>

separate out health, water, sanitation and livelihoods concerns. She also knows that school sanitation and an accessible water source will help keep her teenage daughter in school. But policy makers still cling onto the

