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**Abstract:**

**World Health Organization (WHO)**

**“Drinking Water for Sub-Saharan Africa: Reaching the  
Millenium Development Goal No. 7”**

## **Introduction**

The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations on the field of international public health. It was established on 7 April 1948, which became the first international world health day, and has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The core objective of the agency "is the attainment by all people of the highest possible level of health". Its main areas of action include the coordination of international efforts to control the proliferation and outbreak of infectious disease (HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis etc.), the sponsoring of programmes to prevent and treat such diseases, and the development and distribution of safe and effective drugs, pharmaceutical diagnostics, vaccines etc.

The biggest success of the WHO was the elimination of the smallpox in 1980. According to the WHO and its agencies the elimination of other diseases like polio shall have the same success soon. To guarantee the success of its activities, the WHO has developed certain tools, instruments, standards, and norms to support the member states. It has many publications like the Bulletin of the World Health Organization, the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal, the Human Resources for Health, the World Health Report (series of global health policy reports, including an expert assessment of a specific global health topic), the Pan American Journal of Public Health, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), the International Classification of Health Interventions (ICHI), and the International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD). One of its biggest responsibilities is to oversee the implementation of the international health regulations.

The WHO uses tools for monitoring the capacity of national health systems to fulfil and meet the primary health care goals. In addition, the agency supports and conducts health research in different areas of diseases, health policies and systems. Through the HINARI network, it also tries to increase access to literature, health research, and science in developing countries. Among the other important tasks of the WHO are the various health-related campaigns (e.g.: against tobacco use, or for the consumption of vegetables and fruits).

The WHO's governing body is the World Health Assembly, which is composed of 191 member states. It meets every year, and its decisions and policies are implemented by the Executive Board (composed of 32 government-appointed health experts, which meet twice a year). The WHO has Regional Offices in Brazzaville (Congo), which is temporarily based in Harare (Zimbabwe), in Washington D.C. (USA), Cairo (Egypt), Copenhagen (Denmark), New Delhi (India), and Manila (Philippines).

## **The Millennium Development Goals**

In 2000, 189 UN member states created and signed the Millennium Development Declaration in New York. This declaration included the so-called development goals, which were divided into eight different topics. These concrete goals, like providing water for all developing countries or reducing world poverty by 50%, should be reached by the states until 2015. The purpose of this declaration was to answer the emerging global problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The implementation and realisation of these eight goals (with 18 sub-goals and 48 indicators) are controlled by the United Nations.

### **The Millennium Development Goal No. 7**

The Millennium Development Goal number 7 is to "ensure environmental sustainability." The focus of this goal is not only to enforce a sustainable development through the protection of natural resources or by providing and improving the living conditions of at least 100 millions of slum inhabitants, but also to provide and secure the access to clean and healthy drinking water.

According to the WHO, the percentage of people worldwide with access to clean drinking water has increased in the past decades. Nonetheless, a greater effort to reduce the ever increasing gap between urban and rural areas is urgently needed. Based on a WHO statistic of 2008, 2,6 billion people still have no access to a hygienic toilet or safe latrine. Moreover, approximately 1.1 billion people are defecating in the open, resulting in high levels of environmental contamination and exposure to the risks of worm infestations (such as hookworm and ascariasis), and microbial infections (such as cholera, shigellosis, salmonellosis, and hepatitis). The situation is most severe in the African Region, where the percentage of people using improved sanitation facilities only rose from 30% in 1990 to 34% in 2008.

At VIMUN 2012, the WHO will try to find better measures and standards on how to increase the number of people with access to clean drinking water. The focus will be on Sub-Saharan Africa, where such standards are still very low. It will be absolutely crucial for the African region that further sustainable solutions are found and implemented.