

Sign-on letter for signatures: CALL FOR A GLOBAL-LEVEL HYGIENE INDICATOR IN THE SDGs

The issue: The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals are the successors to the Millennium Development Goals; a [draft](#) was published, and the details of the SDGs are being negotiated now. Hygiene is essential for achieving global development, and is therefore included as a target as part of Goal 6. Countries will commit to demonstrating progress on achieving the targets by reporting on indicators. However, in the recent list of global-level indicators being considered by the UN Statistical Commission, **hygiene has been deleted**. This is likely because the decision makers want a shorter list of indicators. However, demoting hygiene to a huge, secondary list of 'optional' indicators will not give hygiene the priority needed for the SDGs to have real impact on both hygiene and the areas that it influences—such as health, education, and equity.

Objective: The [JMP Communications and Advocacy Group](#) is coordinating delivery of a persuasive message about the importance of hygiene to encourage decision makers and stakeholders to act and recommend the reinstatement of a hygiene indicator in the list of global-level indicators for the SDGs.

Audience: This letter will be sent to members of the UN Statistical Commission and others who may have the opportunity to influence discussions and decisions around the SDG Indicators process.

Action by YOU: If your organization agrees with the content of the letter, and is able to sign on, please e-mail Hanna Woodburn (hwoodburn@fhi360.org) with the [Global Public-Private Partnership for Handwashing](#) to:

- (1) Advise us that your organization would like to sign on to this letter, and
- (2) Attach your logo for us to insert underneath the text to represent your organization's signature to this sign-on letter.

Deadline for signature: 12th July 2015. The letter will be sent soon thereafter to have maximum impact on the indicator decision-making process.

The letter is below:

Dear Ambassador/Member of the....,

As organizations working to advance access to water, sanitation, and hygiene globally, we welcome the creation of the Inter-Agency Expert Group and the work underway to agree measures of progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We acknowledge the importance of a streamlined framework, but respectfully express our concern that in the midst of this complex process, the **intention to measure hygiene, expressed in draft target 6.2, has been put at risk.**

The agreement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 later this year is significant opportunity to catalyze global action on the water, sanitation, and hygiene crisis, which costs thousands of lives every day, in addition to considerable resources of families and economies. However, achieving this Goal depends on a global-level commitment to monitoring the different components of the Goal. Goal 6 cannot be achieved if hygiene, a key component, were to be omitted from the list of indicators. We are concerned to hear that the proposals issued to the IAEG on Monday, 1st June 2015 for the water, sanitation, and hygiene goal included indicators for water and sanitation but not hygiene. Absence of a hygiene indicator would result in omission of hygiene in implementation and monitoring strategies for Goal 6.

Hygiene is one of the most important interventions for human health and development and it is a truly universal necessity. Hygiene is fundamental to fighting undernutrition, reducing child mortality, overcoming antibiotic resistance, and advancing access to education. Ultimately, hygiene advances gender equity, dignity, and human rights. It underpins the delivery of several other Sustainable Development Goals. Every high income country has made hygiene a priority in workplaces and health care facilities. Despite this, hygiene has received inadequate prioritization at a global level. Omitting hygiene from global measurement would inhibit the potential of the international community to achieve the full impact of Goal 6.

If hygiene is neglected in the Sustainable Development Goals at the indicator level this will be to the detriment of those populations who have the most to gain through global development— the poor and vulnerable. We recognize the imperative to establish a limited number of indicators; however, we also echo the recently issued zero draft call for **the ambition of the targets to be maintained** through this process. Excluding hygiene from systematic global-level measurement will impede our ability to fully realize the development potential associated with improving water and sanitation, as well as the delivery of cross-sector strategies. In the spirit of 'leave no one behind', excluding hygiene from the list of indicators is planning for failure.

Since 2009, indicators for handwashing with soap in the household - a key element of domestic hygiene - have been developed and refined. The major international household surveys which inform global monitoring now include a standard module in which survey teams check for the presence of soap and water at a handwashing station. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation in its 2015 report highlights the resulting data from 54 countries, and shows that current levels of handwashing with soap are low in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Since the handwashing module is now standard in household surveys, monitoring of handwashing at regional and global levels will pose no additional burden on countries.

The omission of hygiene was a great loss to the Millennium Development Goals. We now have the opportunity to remedy this oversight, but instead we risk compounding it. We must ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated in the Post-2015 era. This means ensuring accurate measurement of progress towards both components of proposed Target 6.2, sanitation and hygiene.

We, the undersigned, sincerely believe that a global-level hygiene indicator is essential in pursuit of the bold mission set out in Target 6.2. **We call upon you to speak up for hygiene and actively support reinstatement of a global-level hygiene indicator in the Sustainable Development Goal global-level indicator list.**

Yours sincerely,