



Client: UNICEF

Publication: *Atlanta Journal-
Constitution*

Date: March 21, 2007

Circulation: 350,157



Raising a Glass for the World's Poor

WEDNESDAY, March 21 (HealthDay News) -- On March 22, thirsty New York City diners will be helping poor children around the world with every gulp.

Diners at 225 restaurants around the city will be asked to pay \$1 for something that normally comes free: the water that arrives with their meal.

That dollar will then be turned over to UNICEF's "Tap Project," an initiative aimed at bringing fresh, safe water to the children of the developing world.

Coinciding with U.N. World Water Day on Thursday, the project -- which is set to expand to other U.S. cities in coming years -- will also help spread awareness of a global health issue "that affects a billion people every day," said Marcus Samuelsson, chef and owner of the upscale Aquavit and Riingo restaurants. "This project is a way to get involved, because I think everyone can afford a dollar and get familiarized with the problem," he said.

Henk Van Norden, senior adviser for water, environment and sanitation and officer-in-charge of UNICEF's Water Section in New York, agreed. "One and a half million children die every year" from unsafe drinking water, he said.

He added, "So, this effort can give people who are fortunate enough to be able to sit down in a restaurant where you can drink water straight from the tap -- those of us who belong to the privileged of this world -- a chance to share a little bit and help those millions who are not so fortunate."

Funds collected from the drive will go toward supporting UNICEF projects already under way to help the more than one billion children in developing countries who do not have access to clean water.

Samuelsson has served as a UNICEF ambassador since 2000. "I am from Ethiopia, from an orphanage, and I go back there every year," he said. "I can tell you my own extended family does not have clean drinking water. So, waking up at 4 a.m. in the morning to go miles and miles to get drinking water is something that's very real for me."

"It's something we take for granted here, safe water," he added. "But for many people all over the world, it's a very big issue. Every day, 6,000 children die of water-related diseases, like diarrhea. Always the youngest kids first."

While New York City's water system delivers 1.3 billion gallons of fresh, clean water daily to eight million city residents, UNICEF estimates that one out of five children in developing countries -- and 40 percent of the entire world's population -- currently live without reliable access to similarly safe water.

Lack of access means that many people in the developing world must walk three hours or more to find water. Even then, much of this water is either polluted due to crumbling or non-existent sanitation infrastructure, or becomes unsanitary during the long journey back home.

As a result, the World Health Organization (WHO) calculates that 80 percent of all illness and infant mortality is caused by waterborne disease, making the lack of clean water the second biggest cause of death for children under the age of five.

The WHO and UNICEF have set the goal of cutting the number of people without access to clean water in half by 2015. That will involve drilling and digging new wells or finding other sources of clean water, all within a one-kilometer range of people in need. Experts will also be educating people on simple interventions such as boiling water or chlorination.

Such interventions are working: According to WHO, between 1990 and 2002, almost one billion people worldwide gained new access to safe drinking water.

"The technology to prevent much of these diseases is quite straightforward," Van Norden said. In fact, a single U.S. dollar can provide 100 water purification tablets or 40 liters of safe drinking water -- enough for a single child for 40 days or 40 children for a single day, according to Van Norden.

"With our work, we keep trying to bring clean water closer and closer to the home and to help protect the water en route, so it's safe to drink," he said.

More information

There's more on global safe-water efforts at [UNICEF](#).