

# Water, sanitation and hygiene: the foundation for development



WaterAid believes that access to clean water, improved hygiene and sanitation are the first essential steps in reducing poverty. But, despite water being consistently cited as a top priority by poor communities and sanitation being vital for health, they both have been overlooked in the global development agenda.

Targets to halve the proportion of people living without safe water and sanitation are included in the UN Millennium Development Goals.

These poverty reduction goals, agreed by world leaders at the start of the millennium, are meant to be met by 2015. But progress on the water and sanitation targets is way off track in the world's poorest countries.

In the case of sanitation, in Sub-Saharan Africa at current rates of progress 700 million people will still be living without anywhere safe to go to the toilet

in 2015. That means that the target to halve the proportion of people living without sanitation will not be met until the 22nd century, condemning millions of people in future generations to a life of disease and indignity.

Yet, contrary to what this political neglect would suggest, sanitation brings the greatest return of any development intervention. For every £1 invested you can expect to see a £9 return through improvements in health, education and productivity. WaterAid is working to push sanitation up the political agenda and stop it being

neglected in development plans. However, water and sanitation cannot be viewed alone. Without these basic services many of the other Millennium Development Goals will fail too. Targets set for maternal and child health, primary education, gender equality and economic growth are all dependent on people gaining access to the most basic of human needs: safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation.

WaterAid is calling for water, sanitation and hygiene to be recognised alongside health and education so that these essential services get the priority and investment they so badly need.

To find out how you can get involved with our campaigns visit [www.wateraid.org/campaigns](http://www.wateraid.org/campaigns).

# Advocating for change



Women in Kathmandu demonstrating on behalf of the 18 million people in Nepal who don't have a toilet.

Access to water and sanitation are basic human rights that everyone in the world should have access to. Yet today one in eight people live without safe water and two in five are without basic sanitation. Every day 4,000 children die as a result. WaterAid and its partner organisations cannot address this crisis alone, so we advocate to influence governments and decision-makers to prioritise these basic services.

We believe that governments have a responsibility to ensure that water and sanitation are provided for their citizens; and that they need to make changes in both policy and practice in order to give these services the financial and political attention they desperately need. To do this we advocate for change, calling for action so that more people access their right to safe water and sanitation.



WaterAid transforms lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities.



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# Advocacy across the world

A global effort is needed to put an end to the water and sanitation crisis, and WaterAid works in many different ways to push for these essential services to be prioritised.

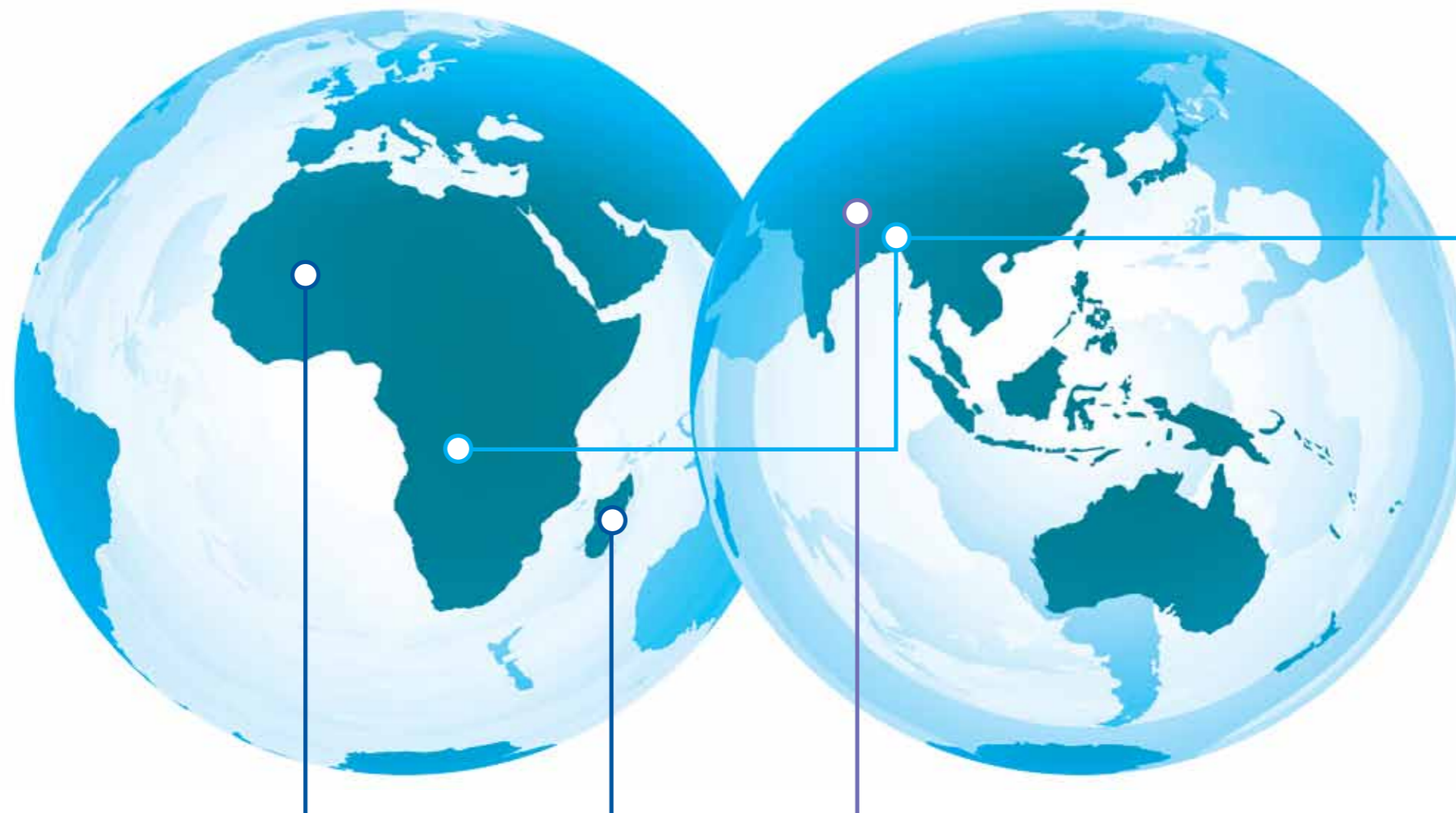
## International change

WaterAid campaigns for change globally through networks such as End Water Poverty, a campaign demanding that governments fulfil their responsibilities and provide sanitation and water for all. Working in this way helps give us a stronger voice, allowing us to generate waves of change beyond the boundaries of our work.



Campaigners came together globally to collect over 900,000 End Water Poverty actions demanding water and sanitation for all which were then delivered in the UK (pictured) ahead of the 2008 G8 Summit.

For the first time in 2008, sanitation was included on the G8 communiqué committing the G8 governments to direct more money to the water and sanitation crisis.



The President of Mali signs the End Water Poverty petition.



WaterAid's efforts in Mali have been recognised at the highest levels with President Amadou Toumani Touré prioritising sanitation and water nationally. "Water is life, and sanitation and a clean environment are the basis of human development," he says. "A poor man who is clean can become rich. But a rich man who is sick can easily become poor."

## National engagement

In the countries where we work, WaterAid collaborates with a wide range of organisations to improve water and sanitation. By combining our experience, research and good practice, we are able to feed into wider development policies and influence district and national governments to develop effective and coordinated plans.

In Madagascar, WaterAid used its local knowledge, technical experience and years of research to help the government finalise their national sanitation strategy. Their policy now takes into account the needs of the country's poorest and most vulnerable people.

## Regional coordination

Together with our partners we also work regionally to effect change. For example in November 2008 WaterAid joined grassroots organisations from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan in a silent candlelit vigil in Delhi, India, to commemorate the deaths of one million children killed by diarrhoeal diseases in South Asia in the previous two years.

Regional media covered the demonstration which coincided with the South Asian Conference on Sanitation which was being held in the Indian capital.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh opened the conference by saying, "Good sanitation should be the birthright of every citizen in South Asia." This recognition of sanitation as a human right became part of the official declaration and sanitation was made a national priority in each of the eight countries represented at the conference – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

## Community action

In Africa and South Asia WaterAid and its partner organisations help poor people understand their entitlements to water and sanitation services and who is responsible for providing them. We help communities to use this information to improve access to water and sanitation.



"When we used to try and speak to our local government they never paid us any attention. Now we have links with the Commissioner and we can demand things from him directly. Now we can start all sorts of development. We can fight for our rights."

Mamona, head of the women's self help group in Awapura slum, Madhya Pradesh, India.

In Washington DC, WaterAid helped lobby for the Water for the Poor Act, requiring US foreign aid to make water and sanitation service provisions in their interventions.

### You can get involved too!

You can advocate for change through WaterAid's campaigns in your local area. Find out more at [www.wateraid.org/campaigns](http://www.wateraid.org/campaigns).