

New global partnership offers new hope of action to end international sanitation and water crisis

But lack of donor promises leaves glass half-empty



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The global End Water Poverty campaign today welcomed the launch of a new international partnership to accelerate efforts to bring clean water and safe sanitation to millions more people across the globe.

They warned, however, that unless rich countries did more to honour their promises they would be betraying the hopes of 2.6 billion people who currently lack access to safe sanitation.

At the first ever *High-Level Meeting on Sanitation and Water* held today in Washington DC, Ministers and policy makers from 30 countries agreed a joint statement that included commitments to:

- Work through the new Sanitation and Water for All partnership to increase political prioritisation, resource mobilisation and aid effectiveness.
- Work together to improve targeting of resources to ensure more gets to low-income countries and the poorest communities.
- Set up a new funding mechanism to better support the poorest countries with the weakest capacities to develop national plans.

In addition, some countries made additional individual pledges. Bangladesh committed to spending an extra \$200m over the next 5 years, Senegal an extra \$24m per year. Many others, such as Ghana, Liberia and Ethiopia, committed to raising domestic budgets to meet regional commitments, such as those in Africa to spend 0.5% of GNI on sanitation.

Yakub Hossain, Convener of Freshwater Action Network Bangladesh said: *"We needed countries to get together and raise the bar of ambition, so this is an important first step in providing services that have the potential to prevent 2.2 million child deaths every year."*

Yet in contrast to the commitments made by a number of developing countries, there were few specific targets from donors to increase resources to the poorest countries, despite a strong appeal from African and Asian Water ministers.

Edward Kairu, Chairman of the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEWS) added: *"People cannot drink promises, so the real test is whether today's announcements will be translated into action on the ground. We need to put the meat on the bones of this agreement with clear plans and new money. Only then we will really begin to see progress in the form of fewer children dying, more girls in school, and communities able to work themselves out of poverty."*

Earlier in the week a new UN Report showed that only 42% of aid for water and sanitation was going to low-income countries, and that the share of aid to this issue had been in decline, despite it killing more children than HIV/AIDS, malaria and measles combined.

With announcements on child and maternal health due at this June's G8, and a major UN Summit on the Millennium Development Goals in September, WaterAid's Head of Policy, Henry Northover, said it was time to make access on sanitation and water a global priority: *"The launch of the Sanitation and Water for All initiative is a chance to move away from worthy expressions of concern to action. We need to see this renewed commitment flow through to services for the poorest of the poor."*

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Notes to editors:

- The 'High-Level Meeting on Sanitation and Water' was hosted by UNICEF, and is part of a broader initiative being launched called 'Sanitation and Water for All: A Global Framework for Action' (SWA). See more at http://www.unwater.org/activities_san4all.html
- End Water Poverty produced a short series of recommendations for ministers attending the High-Level Meeting, signed by 120 organisations worldwide. See www.endwaterpoverty.org/hlmmanifesto
- End Water Poverty has been campaigning across the world, mobilising over one million people, to call for a global deal to ensure sanitation and water for all.
- One month ago, on World Water Day, tens of thousands of people in 80 countries joined up to form the *World's Longest Toilet Queue* – the first ever coordinated mass campaign on sanitation and water. You can see a video at <http://bit.ly/cVvosV>, photos at <http://tinyurl.com/y5lkvyg>, and request hi-res versions, by emailing serenaosullivan@endwaterpoverty.org.

Some key statistics relating to water and sanitation include:

- 2.2 million child deaths per year could be prevented with to safe sanitation and water.
- Half the hospital beds in Sub-Saharan Africa are taken up with diahrroel diseases.
- Poor sanitation is given as the reason for half the girls dropping out of school in Africa.
- Every \$1 invested in sanitation gives a \$9 economic return
- 5% of African GDP is lost because of sanitation and water illnesses every year