

## **G8 leaders risk derailing progress in developing countries**



**Failure to tackle water and sanitation crisis will undermine progress on food, health and education, warns global campaigning group.**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Ahead of Wednesday's G8 summit, international campaigning coalition End Water Poverty has issued a stark warning to G8 leaders that failing to meet last year's promises to tackle the global water and sanitation crisis will undermine any other development initiatives made this week.

Any progress on the issues set to dominate the G8 – the food crisis, health and education – could be derailed by a lack of attention to clean water and sanitation.

“Water and sanitation underpin all development efforts,” said coalition member, WaterAid's Oliver Cumming. “Without access to safe water and sanitation other decisions that the G8 make will be severely threatened.”

“President Obama and Gordon Brown have both announced substantial rescue packages to boost agriculture and alleviate chronic hunger. However food shortage is not the only cause of malnutrition - over 50% of child malnutrition is caused by repeated bouts of diarrhoea. Real, lasting improvements in malnutrition – and in other crucial sectors such as health, education and economic prosperity - cannot be delivered without addressing water and sanitation.”

“Put simply if these basic human rights aren't addressed, resources poured into other sectors could well go down the drain.”

The impact of unsafe water and inadequate sanitation on people living in poverty is far-reaching:

- Diarrhoea (90% of which is caused by poor water and sanitation) is the second biggest killer of under-fives around the world, killing 1.4 million children every year
- As well as diarrhoea, water and sanitation are linked to other major causes of child death, including pneumonia and malnutrition
- 443 million school days are lost each year due to water-related diseases.
- 40 billion working hours are spent carrying water each year in Africa alone.
- Unsafe drinking water and sanitation can cost developing world economies as much as 9% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Access to clean water and sanitation and adoption of improved hygiene practices is essential for safe delivery of newborn babies.

Despite the critical importance of water and sanitation, End Water Poverty warns that there is real danger that G8 leaders will fail to meet their promises to address this global crisis when they meet tomorrow in L'Aquila. At last year's Hokkaido Summit, the G8 agreed to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goal targets on water and sanitation. However, it now seems likely that the G8 leaders will not deliver.

End Water Poverty is calling on the G8 leaders to recognise the importance of water and sanitation and support a Global Framework for Action that will bring the same level of concerted international action as seen in health and education.

"For the G8 to fail to act this year when they have specifically committed to do so is nothing less than scandalous," said End Water Poverty's Steve Cockburn. "

"This is the day that the G8 can take real action to save millions of lives. These steps will not only address the water and sanitation crisis, but will also contribute to child and maternal health, food security, education, and economic prosperity in the developing world."

"If the G8 are serious about helping the world's poorest people, then they must seize this opportunity."

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#### **Notes to editors**

- Key facts and case studies illustrating the impact that water and sanitation has on development efforts are available
- End Water Poverty is a global campaign working to bring an end to the global water and sanitation crisis. The coalition is formed of over 150 organisations from around the world who are demanding urgent action and leadership from donors and governments alike to address the crisis.

#### **Media enquiries**

- Oliver Cumming, Steve Cockburn and South African activist Khumbuzile Zuma are available for interview and will be in L'Aquila from Tuesday 7 July.
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