

# Sharm El-Sheikh and WaterAid

## Turning commitment into action

The Sharm El-Sheikh commitments were agreed between African heads of state at the African Union Summit on Water and Sanitation held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from 30 June to 1 July 2008. The decisions made at that summit form a commitment to accelerate activity to reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets on water and sanitation across the whole African continent, in recognition that many countries are not on track to meet the MDG target of reducing by half the proportion of people with access to drinking water and sanitation by 2015.

From 1990 to 2006, 245 million Africans gained access to drinking water but the number of people in Africa without safe drinking water increased by 61 million to 341 million. In the same period, 153 million Africans gained access to improved sanitation but the population without sanitation also grew by 153 million to reach a total of 583 million. Twenty six of the 54 countries in Africa are on track to meet the MDG drinking water target but only six countries are on track to meet the sanitation target.

The African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW) convened a meeting in October 2008 to prepare a roadmap for the implementation of the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments. AMCOW has been instrumental in proposing strategic policy, legal and institutional changes for the equitable, efficient and sustainable use of water resources at all levels across Africa.

AMCOW's implementation strategy for the commitments focuses on three main areas:

- Continuing to put in place basic water and sanitation services through existing initiatives.
- Strengthening the operational mechanisms in areas where low implementation capacity is a bottleneck to progress.
- Refining strategies and policies where these are needed.



### WaterAid: contributing to the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments

Last year in Africa, WaterAid achieved the following:

- Provided over US \$30 million to fund water and sanitation programmes in Africa and supported 510,000 people to access safe water supplies and 415,000 people to access improved sanitation.
- Partnered with 229 organisations including civil society, local and national governments, and other non-governmental organisations.
- From 11 to 18 countries in Africa: seven new WaterAid country programmes in Africa were approved, and preliminary work has started in these countries.
- Work was started on a Pan-African strategy to take WaterAid's regional focus to the whole continent.

WaterAid is committed to supporting the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments on water and sanitation in Africa. WaterAid’s vision is a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. WaterAid’s work has a wide focus on water and sanitation issues, from providing service delivery with partners in 11 countries in Africa, to working with government to help promote water and sanitation policies.

The majority of WaterAid’s funded partnerships are with local Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) for service delivery, policy/advocacy, research, and capacity building. Supporting and participating in networks with civil society organisations and other sector stakeholders is important to increase the impact of WaterAid’s work through experience sharing, capacity building and strengthening civil society voices in the sector. Knowledge partnerships have also been established with specialist organisations focusing on research and capacity building initiatives.

WaterAid also engages with local government institutions to influence government programmes and delivery of WASH services. During 2008-09, WaterAid country programmes and partners in Africa were at the forefront of influencing change at the sectoral and national level. Across all countries, WaterAid worked closely with national governments, donors and other key stakeholders in policy formulation, policy review, sector performance monitoring, joint sector reviews and developing a number of strategic alliances at the national level.

The scale of the water and sanitation problem in Africa is immense, and organisations like AMCOW and WaterAid cannot work in isolation to reach the Millennium Development Goal targets.

This year, WaterAid is developing a Pan-Africa strategy which will promote continent-wide strengthening of the water and sanitation sector and work with regional and Pan-African institutions with a particular focus on the degree to which these institutions lead to, or at least have the potential to lead to, strengthening the sector at national and sub-national levels.

Success in achieving the 2015 MDG targets for water and sanitation will depend on the actions taken by national and local authorities with the support of the international community.

#### **Bai-Mass Taal**

Executive Secretary

African Ministers’ Council on Water (AMCOW)

#### **Idrissa Doucoure**

Head of New Initiatives

WaterAid

## **WaterAid’s expenditure in Africa 2008-09**

Country		Total expenditure (US \$000s)	
		2008-09	% of WaterAid’s total budget
<b>East Africa</b>	Ethiopia	4,490	10%
	Tanzania	3,234	7%
	Uganda	2,185	5%
	<b>Regional total</b>	<b>9,923</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Southern Africa</b>	Madagascar	2,607	6%
	Malawi	1,719	4%
	Mozambique	3,581	8%
	Zambia	2,155	5%
	<b>Regional total</b>	<b>10,062</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>West Africa</b>	Burkina Faso	3,055	6%
	Ghana	2,963	6%
	Mali	2,151	5%
	Nigeria	2,794	6%
	<b>Regional total</b>	<b>10,964</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>WaterAid Africa total</b>		<b>30,949</b>	<b>65%</b>
<b>WaterAid total budget (including Asia region)</b>		<b>47,172</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Sharm El-Sheikh: the commitments

The Sharm El-Sheikh commitments are based on the understanding that water is and must remain a key to sustainable development in Africa, and water resources are under-utilised and shared unevenly across the continent. The challenges in each country are context specific—while some countries can easily increase service delivery because the operating environment is already in place, others need to strengthen their operational mechanisms and require external support to do this. The main challenges identified are:

- Water and sanitation infrastructure financing
- Water conservation and equitable distribution
- Closing the sanitation gap
- Breaking the silence on sanitation and hygiene
- Adapting to climate change
- Integrated management of national and trans-boundary surface and ground water
- Investing in information, knowledge and monitoring
- Institutional development and capacity building
- Weaknesses in information and data consistency and availability
- Mobilising political will, creating awareness and securing commitment from all stakeholders

The Sharm El-Sheikh commitments provide a framework which includes all existing commitments and declarations adopted by the African Ministers' Council on Water (AMCOW), including the 2008 eThekweni Ministerial Declaration on sanitation in Africa.

The eThekweni Declaration was signed by AMCOW members in February 2008 with the signatories agreeing to create separate budget lines for sanitation and hygiene in their countries, to commit at least 0.5 percent of GDP to the

funding of water and sanitation infrastructure, and to establish, review, update and adopt national sanitation and hygiene policies.

The overall aim of the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments is to develop water and sanitation infrastructure and institutions in order to provide sufficient and sustainable quantity and quality for all types of services and to provide acceptable levels of protection from the risk of water related disasters and the impact of climate change.

As there are now six years to 2015, the Sharm El-Sheikh action plan has been divided into two phases of three years each. Action will be undertaken at national, sub regional and regional level by government and civil society, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UN Water Africa, AMCOW, the African Union Commission (AUC) and development partners such as WaterAid.

## Implementation

For action at the regional level, the 2008 AU Summit Commitments included the following three actions for follow-up action and implementation in 2009 by the AU Assembly:

- Convene in 2009 a joint meeting of African Ministers of Water and of Finance to develop appropriate financing policies in collaboration with the African Development Bank and development cooperation partners.
- Adopt new measures for strengthening AMCOW as a key regional mechanism and other regional stakeholders and initiatives for promoting cooperation on water and sanitation, such as the AMCOW initiative on sustainable management of water resources and the roadmap for the African Groundwater Commission.
- Review progress made on strengthening partnership at all levels in our countries and between Regional Economic Communities, as well as with international development agencies, and promoting public-private partnerships for fast-tracking actions for achieving the 2015 MDG targets for water and sanitation.

## Pan-Africa: taking the new initiative forward

In December 2008, WaterAid, the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW) and AMCOW facilitated a Pan-Africa validation workshop which brought together participants from different institutions and all sub-regions of the continent, representing both civil society and Pan-African institutions. Among the participants were representatives of ANEW, Freshwater Action Network (FAN), the African Development Bank, African Water Facility, ECOWAS, and senior WaterAid staff. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and validate the findings of the first scoping study report mentioned above, with a view to developing a Pan-African advocacy strategy.

### Workshop findings

Although many countries have signed up to regional treaties and declarations, a gap still exists in actually implementing regional commitments at the national level. WaterAid's Pan-Africa strategy will attempt to address the structural bottlenecks that interfere with implementation of signed-into regional plans. WaterAid would facilitate civil society engagement with regional institutions and governments to ensure implementation of plans at community and national levels. To do this, WaterAid partners need capacity building in terms of research and policy but also technical aspects of water supply and sanitation.

### Future of Pan-Africa

A second study is being conducted to examine sector practice and capacity. Thus Pan-Africa has both advocacy and influencing components and potential service delivery components. In 2009-10, WaterAid will develop a comprehensive Pan-Africa strategy from the scoping studies, workshops, and numerous stakeholder discussions and dialogues. This will form a focused plan to move past WaterAid's regional focus to a wider continental level.

The key objectives to be met as part of the action plan are:

- Sustainable access to safe and adequate water supply and sanitation to meet the basic needs of 33 million people each year.
- Sustainable access to safe and adequate sanitation to meet the basic needs of 45 million people each year.
- Sufficient water for food and energy security.
- Water for sustaining ecosystems and biodiversity is adequate in quantity and quality.
- Institutions dealing with water resources reformed to enable effective and integrated management of water resources in national and trans-boundary basins, including management at lowest appropriate level.
- Water basins to serve as the basis for regional cooperation and development and treated as natural assets for all within the basins.
- There is an adequate number of motivated and highly skilled water professionals.
- There is an effective and financially sustainable system for data collection, assessment and dissemination for national and trans-boundary water basins.
- There are effective and sustainable strategies for addressing natural and man-made water resource problems, including climate variability and change.
- Water is financed and priced to promote equity, efficiency and sustainability.
- There is political will, public awareness and commitment among all for sustainable water resources management, including the mainstreaming of gender issues and youth concerns and the use of participatory approaches.
- Effective partnerships are established between governments, local authorities, women's groups, community organisations and civil society for service delivery, advocacy, awareness raising and monitoring.

## WaterAid: meeting the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments

This section showcases a selection of the work WaterAid does in Africa towards meeting the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments.

### Providing access to water and sanitation

**Sharm El-Sheikh clause A: We commit ourselves to increase our efforts to implement our past declarations related to water and sanitation.**

#### Water

Providing access to clean and safe drinking water in developing countries is not as simple as turning on a tap—it requires WaterAid and our partners to collaborate with other organisations and innovate to provide the most appropriate technology. This year WaterAid country programmes have continued to invest in tackling the issues of water security for marginalised and vulnerable communities, incorporating water conservation, water quality and water resources management (WRM) approaches into our working practices.

**Water point mapping** has taken on new forms this year with Google, WHO and WSP. Members of our team worked closely with these external stakeholders, as well as WaterAid staff from the **Southern and East Africa regions**, to explore effective data handling, and a paper was released about converting GIS data for display in Google Earth for internal use. In Tanzania, a major breakthrough came late in the year with the national level Water Sector Working Group formally adopting a WaterAid proposal to develop water point mapping into a National Rural Water Supply Infrastructure Monitoring System. Mapping will continue to be supported this year in particular exploring new methods of data handling, as WaterAid in Tanzania trials new methods.

#### Water lifting technologies

In the East Africa region, deep well handpumps have been installed in **Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda** as part of a pilot test of the performance and practical aspects of the pumps. The project will be evaluated after a year's field operation during which regular inspections will be carried out by local WaterAid technical staff. The design and initial testing of the pumps was performed in the UK by Poldaw Designs, and they were then transported to WaterAid offices in the relevant counties. Feedback from project sites proved invaluable, demonstrating the need for thorough field testing and providing those in the field with the opportunity to input into the design and development of an optimum pump. The next phase will be to improve the product further and test the feasibility of local firms to manufacture the handpump in Tanzania.



**Anit Chamugisha sits next to an open drainage channel, Upper Nsooba, Kampala, Uganda. In this area a lack of toilets means sewage is thrown directly into channels that run through the area. The channels become blocked by plastic bags and household waste, creating stagnant pools.**

Hydraulic ram pump technology has been successfully adapted and trialled by WaterAid in **Madagascar**. The ram pump will be used in gravity flow systems where communities live uphill from the source. Its relative cost effectiveness, adaptability to domestic water use and self-reliance (it needs no external energy source) makes it a viable technical option. The pump has already been recognised by the Malagasy authorities and will be further tested at two sites in 2010. The recognition of the hydraulic ram pump by the government is a

significant step in the scaling up and application of this important technology which can serve the needs of isolated hill communities.

### **Water quality monitoring committees**

have been established in Ekiti, Enugu, Benue, Bauchi, Plateau and Jigawa states in **Nigeria** and water quality monitoring plans have been developed. The training conducted has led to the establishment of water quality laboratories in these states. Water quality equipment was supported by WaterAid in Nigeria and UNICEF in some of these states. The Local Government Authorities (LGA) and State Water Agencies have developed checklists for monitoring water quality in communities. The State Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agencies have passed on the training they received to LGAs and communities. This has resulted in communities and LGA officers being engaged in water quality surveillance. Water quality was conducted in all the communities where partners constructed boreholes. Arup, our corporate partner, also trained the Benue state water quality monitoring committee on analysis and mitigation action on arsenic.

## **Sanitation**

2008 was declared the UN International Year of Sanitation, adding further impetus to WaterAid's work on sanitation during the year. 'Sanitation' means more than just having access to a latrine. Sanitation encompasses elements of behaviour change, excreta disposal, solid waste and waste water management.

The **adoption of CLTS-like approaches** by WaterAid country programmes has continued this year with most countries reporting that elements of CLTS are integrated within some of their programme areas. In **Nigeria**, capacity building activities for 106 people from 24 countries in West and Central Africa was carried out in collaboration with UNICEF. It provided the opportunity to learn from other countries and organisations and for sharing best practices through regular exchange among practitioners. A major three country study on CLTS has also been carried out this year by WaterAid consultants, with the findings shared at a number of significant conferences.

In the area of urban sanitation, WaterAid in **Uganda** has scaled up its sanitation social marketing approach through Sustainable Sanitation and Water Renewal Systems (SSWARS). With WaterAid in Uganda's support, SSWARS organised community members in Kawempe Division to form sanitation saving schemes, and to date, more than 1,000 community members have benefited from the scheme.

### **Solid waste and waste water management**

The innovative latrine emptying 'Gulper', profiled in last year's Annual Report, is going from strength to strength and WaterAid in **Tanzania** has worked with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to develop another version the 'Nibbler'. The Nibbler can empty pit latrines deeper than the Gulper, is faster and the pumping requires less effort.

## **Hygiene**

In the WASH sector, hygiene is probably the most neglected area and this is a significant contributing factor to the high rates of child mortality in developing countries. WaterAid country programmes have identified five main categories (or clusters) of hygiene behaviour which significantly impact on the transmission of water and sanitation related diseases. These are:

- Safe disposal of human excreta (including that of children and infants).
- Personal hygiene (washing of hands, body, face and clothes).
- Preparation and storage of food (including washing raw fruit and vegetables; reheating of cooked food).
- Water source protection and use (including its transport and storage).
- Domestic and environmental hygiene (disposal of household refuse, waste water and animal excreta; cleanliness of house and its surroundings).
- Recognising the special needs of particular vulnerable groups namely, children, people with illnesses etc).

WaterAid country programmes and partner organisations continue to reach out to communities through hygiene education programmes. To address the gap in effective hygiene education and software activities, country programmes have developed guidelines and manuals with partner organisations for use in their projects and as resources for other stakeholders. Across the organisation, WaterAid has also participated in large campaigns such as Global Handwashing Day.

**Hygiene education** is being promoted in schools by WaterAid in **Nigeria** where 15 health clubs have been established to promote behavioural change and good hygiene practices among pupils in primary schools. A total number of 36,175 pupils have received hygiene messages and practices in keeping their environment clean as well as personal and food hygiene. These messages have raised consciousness among the public and created awareness for better hygiene practices for improved living standards.

## Strengthening operational mechanisms and capacity in the sector

**Sharm El Sheikh clause G: We commit ourselves to build institutional and human resources capacity at all levels including the decentralised local government level for programme implementation, to enhance information and knowledge management as well as strengthen monitoring and evaluation.**

**Developing and supporting networks** is important to increase the impact of our work. This year, new civil society networks were established in Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania with significant support from WaterAid. The new sector network in **Tanzania**, TAWASANET (which WaterAid helped set up), was officially launched in Maji Week (World Water Week) in March 2008. The constitution was signed in May and TAWASANET was formally registered in October 2008. The network's activities this year included preparation of four key position papers



**Nirina Martine Fidel watches her daughter and another woman fish in a rice field, Ampasika, Madagascar. Fourteen families live here on a small ridge, with no sanitation facilities. The area floods during the rainy season and the whole community moves into temporary shelter on the road above. The community either collect water from the river — which is polluted with factory effluent — or from the ponds outside their houses.**

for the Joint Water Sector Review; one on Sector Performance Monitoring and a report on equity monitoring, which were all supported by WaterAid. These enabled TAWASANET to get many of its proposals adopted by various sector stakeholders, thus giving the civil society organisations a strong and effective presence and establishing TAWASANET as a recognised sector player.

**Knowledge and research partnerships** continue to be significant. In the **West Africa** region, strategic partnerships for wider regional impact have been entered into with UNICEF, CREPA (a regional NGO resource centre on water and sanitation) and ziE (a technical/engineering training institute). The collaboration with UNICEF is around two broad areas: capacity building around CLTS in the region, and advancing major sector areas such as national plans and budgets for WASH. West Africa also signed a partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with CREPA, focusing mainly on sanitation development, capacity building in advocacy and fundraising. A MoU has been signed with ziE focusing on research, technology support, student placement and capacity building. All of these will enable the West Africa team to further develop its regional influence for stronger effectiveness.

## **Establishing linkages between community-based organisations and local government institutions**

has been a key focus for WaterAid in **Mozambique** which worked systematically to foster stronger and healthier relationships between the association of small private operators and FIPAG, the local company that is the asset holder of the water and sanitation infrastructure. Through persistent dialogue with these private operators, the government registered and issued operating licenses to the associations to operate as legal entities. As a result, the small private operators have been recognised by other multi-sector players led by FIPAG such as CRA (the regulator), ARA-SUL, Agua de Mozambique (the water and sanitation utility) and the Ministry of Health.

## **Sustainability of water supply schemes**

in rural communities has been a key issue for WaterAid in **Ghana** and its partners. An innovative scheme by the Afram Plains Development Organisation has seen the ‘Pump Parts Banking Concept’ introduced to communities, enabling them to fix their water facilities promptly when they break. The initiative assists communities in buying pump parts and storing them locally for use in event of a break down of their water facility.

WaterAid in **Mozambique** has been working with communities, learning from their knowledge to develop and protect springs in Namarroi (Zambezia province). The springs represent a traditional water source, reliable even in the driest months. However, they are prone to becoming unhygienic and a breeding ground for waterborne diseases such as malaria and dysentery if not well maintained. Geological conditions in the district render drilling of boreholes extremely expensive but WaterAid has supported protection measures to enhance sustainable and safe use of the spring water.

## **Strengthening political will through advocacy**

**Sharm El-Sheikh clause D: We commit ourselves to develop and/or update national water management policies, regulatory frameworks, and programmes, and prepare national**

**strategies and action plans for achieving the MDG targets for water and sanitation over the next seven years.**

Successful policy and advocacy work involves many different aspects, some of which are outlined below with examples of WaterAid’s work in these areas this year. It is always important to remember that a respected and effective service delivery record combined with robust evidence from the ground opens the doors for policy and advocacy as it builds legitimacy and credibility and provides opportunities to influence policy and practice in the sector at various levels.

**Burkina Faso’s first national sanitation forum** took place in 2009, organised by WaterAid in **Burkina Faso**. This provided a space for all sector stakeholders to meet and discuss sanitation issues. The success of the forum is reflected by the fact that the Government decided to make it an annual event. The forum will provide a platform for dialogue and will be used to discuss the sanitation sub sector progress, challenges and plans for the coming years, and will also serve as a budget advocacy platform for sanitation.

**Sector Wide Approaches** are continuing to be lobbied for and supported by country programmes as another method to address sector blockages through proactive engagement in such processes, examples of this are given here. WaterAid in **Malawi** has been playing a crucial role in supporting the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) process through attachment of one staff member to the Planning Department of the Ministry of Water Development which will lead to a more harmonised and co-ordinated approach in the sector. This person was responsible for supporting the coordination of the various SWAp processes whilst the Ministry awaits recruitment of a dedicated SWAp Co-ordinator. In July, three WaterAid in Malawi staff participated in the development of SWAp pillars on Institutional Capacity and Development – focusing on policy and reforms, urban water supply and the water resources management. The degree of success of WaterAid in Malawi’s work in addressing such blockages is shown by their appointment as a member of the steering committee of the National Sanitation Policy and



**Maklena Bukowa collects water from the well in Choobana village, Monze district, Zambia. Drought has lowered the water table, and one of the two wells in the village is running dry so the community is being assisted to rehabilitate the old one.**

by October 2008 the cabinet had approved a National Sanitation Policy in Malawi for the first time.

At a district level WaterAid in **Nigeria** has achieved similar success this year in Bauchi State with the government approving the establishment of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWASSA). This agency will facilitate the smooth coordination of the water and sanitation sector in the state and increase the number of rural communities that have access to water. WaterAid in Nigeria's advocacy and lobbying interventions to address and raise awareness of sector blockages have been triumphant; the Agency has been directed to submit a draft bill to the State House of Assembly for passage into law.

Participation in decision-making programmes and committees is a key feature of successful advocacy initiatives to address gaps and blockages in the sector.

A good example for this is how WaterAid in **Uganda** has been able to continue with its active participation in the Joint Water and Sanitation

Sector Programme Support (JWSSPS) which is now focused on shaping the budget support framework and the development of a sector investment plan for the sector. Through key processes like sector working groups, WaterAid in Uganda has sustained its lobby work to have budget lines for sanitation especially at local levels. As a mark of success for their Citizens' Action work, beyond the decision-making level, community members have shown interest in being involved in the local (parish) budget development processes so that they can direct local government interventions.

**The generation of credible evidence through research** is a key method of identifying sector blockages and using the evidence to empower citizens to lobby for their rights and demand accountability. With the objective of stimulating debate on pro-poor approaches to service delivery in Dar es Salaam, WaterAid in **Tanzania** produced a research report on City Water's involvement in Dar es Salaam: *Why did City Water fail?* Alongside this evidence, in a bid to raise the profile of sanitation and hygiene, WaterAid in Tanzania worked closely with UNICEF and WSP to exert pressure on the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to develop the policy, and significant progress was made towards the development of a National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy.

As well as documentation of evidence, the innovative **capturing of audio-visual evidence** by WaterAid in **Madagascar** is another successful method of holding decision-makers accountable and triggering important dialogues and debates. Since May 2008, seven regions of Madagascar have been under the scrutiny of WaterAid in Madagascar's 'roving camera' (camera en ballade) – an initiative designed to influence local governments to take action. After capturing audio-visual evidence of local realities in water and sanitation practices, regional workshops were organised to showcase the footage and create debate and dialogue among civil society, local authorities and state actors. WASH Regional Committees were helped to organise the participation of top-level government representatives, fokotany presidents and local media professionals.

## The way ahead

As part of WaterAid's planned expansion into seven new countries in Africa, opportunities for working in Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Niger, Swaziland, Lesotho, and Angola were investigated. Scoping studies were successfully carried out in all of these, and since receiving the board's approval for pilot projects, a variety of processes have been initiated, including: assessing management and capacity issues for the pilot phase, identifying potential staff, partners, and consultants, consultation with stakeholders on implementation plans, and agreeing operational plans to support new interventions. With the new country programmes starting, WaterAid has a presence in 19 of the 53 African countries.

## Call to action

WaterAid currently works in 11 African countries, and is expanding its work into eight more. In the last year, WaterAid country programmes in Africa, along with partners, enabled over half a million people to gain access to safe drinking water and supported another 410,000 people to access improved sanitation. Partnerships, in all their forms, are a major part of the strategy to achieve WaterAid's aims and objectives. The new Pan-African strategy will also continue to inform WaterAid's work across the continent.

However, even with this evidence of success, it is obvious WaterAid and other organisations like it cannot act alone to work towards reaching the water and sanitation targets outlined in the Sharm El-Sheikh commitments.

If the MDG targets on water and sanitation are to be reached by 2015, organisations and governments across Africa must work more effectively and form stronger, more effective partnerships. Commitment must be transformed into action. The Sharm El-Sheikh commitments are an excellent opportunity to transform political will into action—an opportunity Africa and the millions of people without water and sanitation cannot afford to miss.



Women standing with their water buckets on parched ground on their way to the river to fetch water, Sonjera village, Machinga District, Malawi. While this region is served by a gravity-fed water supply system, it is in a state of disrepair due to vandalism, so the Shire River is the main water source. A WaterAid project was started in 2007 in this region and will reach 70,000 people by 2011.

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