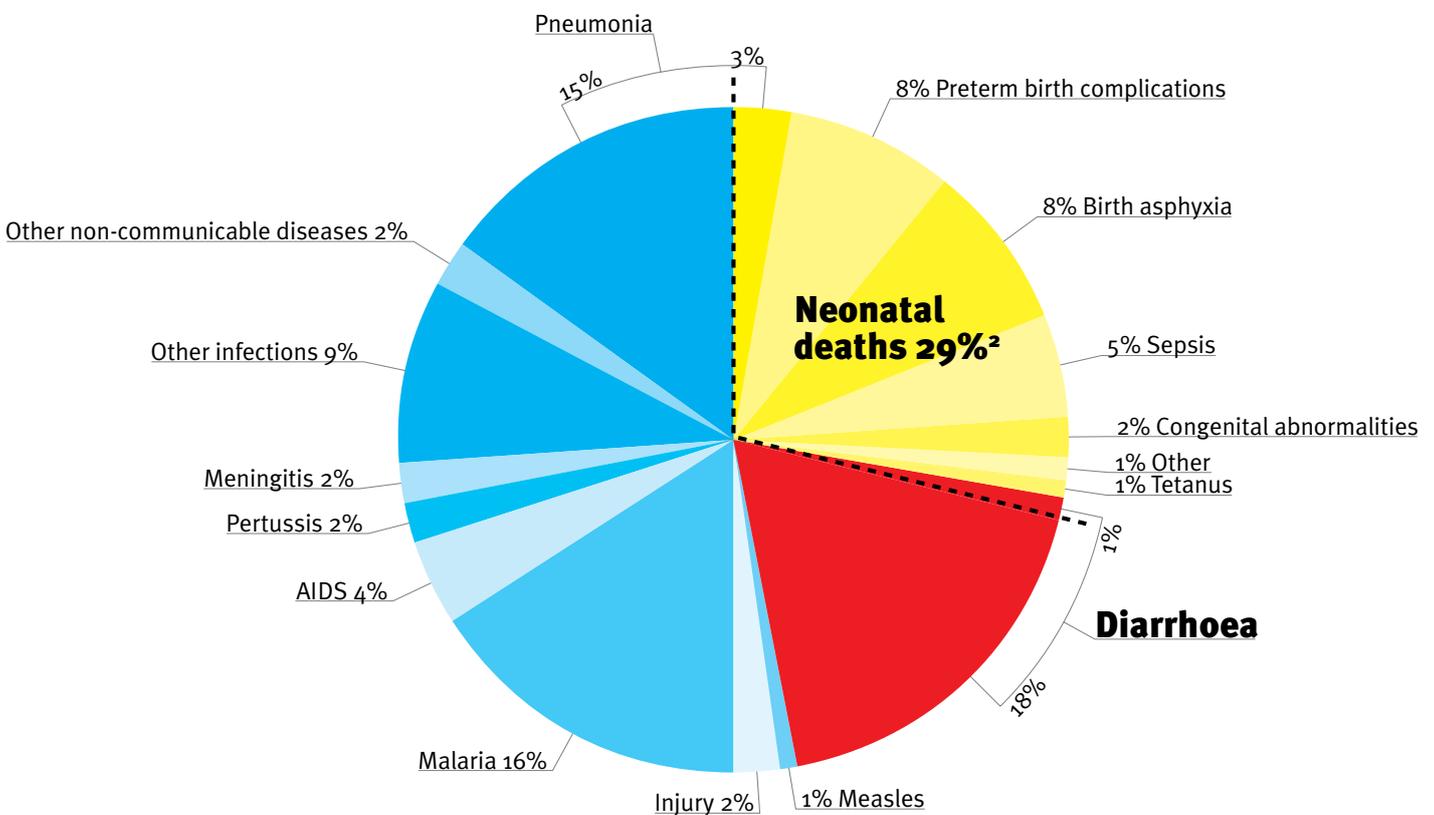


Biggest killer of children in Africa cannot be addressed without sanitation and water

Diarrhoea is now the biggest killer of children in Africa.¹ Every day, 2,000 African children die from diarrhoea – deaths that are entirely preventable. Nine out of ten cases of diarrhoea can be prevented by safe water and sanitation – proven cost-effective interventions. Despite this, today only four in ten Africans have access to a basic toilet. This failure will undermine efforts to accelerate progress on the MDG for child mortality.

Chart 1: Causes of under-five deaths in Africa¹

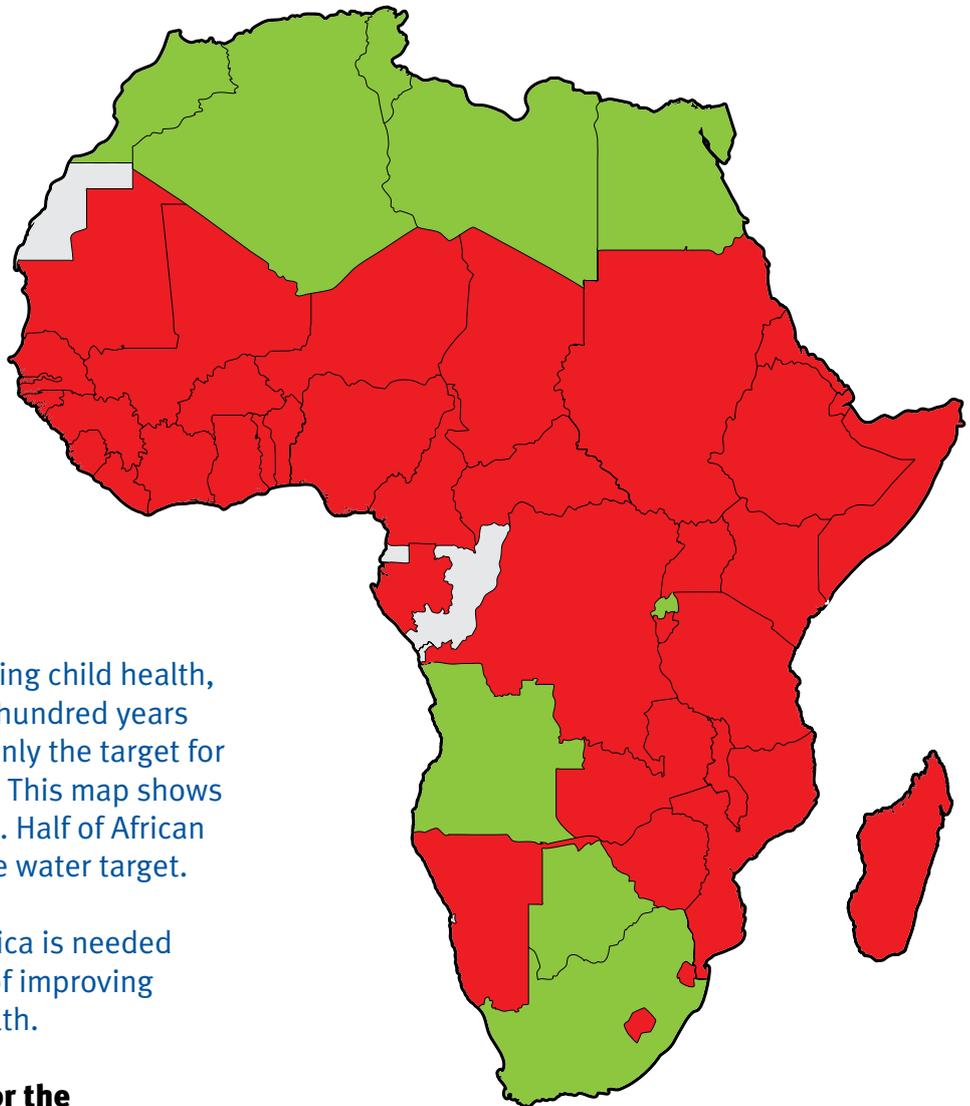


The African Union (AU) Summit in July 2010 addresses maternal, newborn and child health. Tackling this crisis demands integrated approaches that go beyond clinical interventions. WHO estimates that poor sanitation and water cause 28% of child deaths, and safe sanitation and water are proven and cost-effective interventions.

Chart 1 shows that diarrhoea is the leading cause of under-five deaths in Africa. Safe sanitation and water could prevent nine out of ten cases of diarrhoea, and simply using a safe toilet can reduce the incidence of diarrhoea by nearly 40%. Safe sanitation also significantly reduces other leading causes of child deaths, such as under-nutrition and pneumonia. Addressing access to sanitation is key to securing progress on MDG 4 (reducing child mortality by two-thirds).

1. Black R et al. (2010) "Global, regional, and national causes of child mortality in 2008: a systematic analysis", *Lancet* 2010; 375: 1969–87.
 2. 29% of under-five deaths in Africa occur in the first 28 days of life, known as the neonatal period. As depicted, 1% of under-five deaths are caused by diarrhoea in the neonatal period, in addition to the 18% outside it. For pneumonia, these figures are 3% and 15% respectively.

Chart 2: 80% of African countries are off-track for the sanitation MDG target³



Despite its critical role in addressing child health, the sanitation MDG target is two hundred years off-track in Sub-Saharan Africa. Only the target for maternal health is more off-track. This map shows the current poor level of progress. Half of African countries are also off-track for the water target.

Urgent action on sanitation in Africa is needed if we are to tackle the challenge of improving maternal, newborn and child health.

WaterAid's recommendations for the 2010 AU summit:

- 1. African Heads of State** should ensure that sanitation and water are an integral part of national health strategies and are adequately resourced.
- 2. African Heads of State** should ensure that at least 0.5% of their respective GDPs are allocated to sanitation, as committed to in the eThekweni Declaration on Sanitation (2008).⁴
- 3. African Ministers** should ensure that monitoring of progress on maternal, newborn and child health includes the MDG 7 targets on sanitation and water, alongside MDGs 4 and 5 on child and maternal mortality.
- 4. The AU summit declaration** should appoint a Special Rapporteur on sanitation and water to report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), building on the work of the UN Independent Expert on human rights obligations related to access to sanitation and water.

Towards the MDG+10 meeting

The AU summit is a key moment leading up to the MDG+10 meeting in September 2010, which will form the stage for the launch of the Secretary General's Joint Action Plan for Women's and Children's Health. In order to inform decisions made at the MDG+10 meeting, the AU summit declaration should clearly prioritise sanitation and water as key interventions for addressing maternal, newborn and child health.

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3. WHO/UNICEF (2010) *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-water: 2010 update*
4. www.wateraid.org/ethekweni



WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.