

Sanitation and water for poor urban communities:

a manifesto

WaterAid



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Introduction:
why urban, why now?

For the first time in human history, the majority of the world's population lives in cities or towns. Across both middle- and low-income countries the population flow is doubling the size of cities every 15 years or less[i] and will see two thirds of the estimated global human population of eight billion living in urban areas by 2030. Cities and towns are national engines of growth, yet inadequate provision of sanitation and clean water in rapidly growing, unplanned urban areas has huge consequences for public health and countries' development prospects. In addition, 136 thriving port towns and cities, with over one million inhabitants, are directly in the paths of coastal flooding from climate change.[ii]

WaterAid calls on governments and development agencies across the world to put the highest political priority on the provision of water and sanitation services to poor urban communities. These services are fundamental to human health and development, nowhere more so than in densely populated urban areas. With no indication that the pace of urbanisation, and subsequently the growth in poor urban areas, will slow, the international community must act collaboratively to ensure these basic human rights are afforded to poor urban communities – and it must act now. Here, WaterAid sets out the examples and objectives for successful delivery of sanitation and water to poor urban communities.[1]



Charlie Bibby/Financial Times

1 WaterAid takes the broader view that poor urban communities include concentrated/ pockets of slum conditions but also include other groups of urban poor people – small vendors in market places, pavement-dwellers/ street children, informal settlements, blighted planned areas, etc – without access to public facilities so the term poor urban communities is not restricted to those living in the slums.



WaterAid/Caroline Irby

WASH in cities:
fundamental to health and development

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) poverty was the biggest killer in European and American cities before the advent of the safe separation and treatment of human sewage and the provision of safe water. However, what is now part of the history of urban development in these countries remains the day-to-day reality for much of the developing world. Globally, diarrhoeal diseases caused by unsafe sanitation and water are responsible for more deaths in children under five than AIDS, malaria and measles combined.

Infrastructure to provide clean water, sanitation and hygiene is the most basic and essential investment that governments must make in cities. Unfortunately, donor support for urban sanitation and water services is declining and governments are failing to rise to the challenges posed by urbanisation. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has downgraded its support to poor urban communities and, alongside USAID, uses urban strategies that are over a decade old. Between 1997 and 2008, international aid for sanitation and drinking water fell from 8% to 5% of total allocations, while aid for health increased from 7% to 12% of Official Development Assistance (ODA).[iii] From 2000-2005 only 6% of World Bank sanitation-related commitments went to slums, while formal urban areas received 65%.[iv]

The consequence of inadequate and poorly targeted investment in urban WASH services is an increase in the numbers of people practising open defecation and living without access to safe drinking water sources or improved sanitation in urban areas since records began for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 1990.[v] In many urban environments, ashamed of having to defecate in public in daylight hours, women and girls can suffer stomach problems and run the risk of assault or rape as a consequence of night time excursions to a latrine.[vi]

The UN reports that 34 out of 36 countries surveyed indicated that financial flows are insufficient to achieve the urban MDG targets for halving the numbers of people without access to water supply and sanitation.[vii] About 10% of all countries have seen their urban drinking-water coverage decline by two percentage points or more since 1990.[viii] Over the period 1990 to 2008, sanitation coverage[ix] for all developing countries increased by 43% in rural areas – but only 5% in urban areas.[x]



Charlie Bibby/Financial Times

Urban investment:
a missed opportunity

Evidence suggests that investment in cities plays a vital role in the transformation of national economies and individual wealth.[xi] In several emerging economies, provision of WASH infrastructure has promoted economic development and facilitated slum reduction.[xii] Successes have been built on long-term, reliable funding from the international community and national governments.

The recent development experiences of the 'Asian Tigers' – Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan – show that grappling with the health, sanitation and water infrastructure for all residents of urban centres facilitates national development. In these countries, massive long-term investments were seen as a part of the government's strategic plans to boost economic productivity and attract foreign interest and investment.



WaterAid/Eva-Lotta Jannson

In contrast, lack of safe water and sanitation costs Sub-Saharan Africa around 5% of its GDP each year[xiii] while inadequate sanitation costs India the equivalent of 6.4% of its GDP or US$53.8 billion.[xiv]

In a recent report, the UN warned that rapid urbanisation in Africa has given rise to "disjointed, dysfunctional and unsustainable urban geographies of inequality and human suffering, with oceans of poverty containing islands of wealth. Socio-economic conditions in African cities are now the most unequal in the world. This situation threatens systemic stability, affecting not only the continuity of cities as socio-political human eco-systems but also entire nations."[xv]



WaterAid/Juthika Howlader

Success in the urban environment:
targeted commitment

The urban challenge is much less an issue of scarcity of water than political prioritisation of a more equitable distribution of WASH services. Investments in urban WASH must be appropriate, valued and above all, targeted to overcome the issues that affect slum-dwellers' rights to water and sanitation.

Viewing slum-dwellers as a legitimate market segment for WASH has proved successful in several developing countries. Many poor communities are forced to pay exorbitant prices to middle-men and water 'mafias' for poor quality water services. In Uganda, the National Water and Sewerage Corporation connects users for a minimal connection fee and has introduced pre-paid meters and stand-pipe 'pay-as-you-fetch' tokens to ensure that middle-men cannot raise the price of water. Providing poor people with the opportunity to pay a fair price for equitable services has resulted in both the successful provision of water and sanitation in poor urban communities, and the opportunity for water companies to reach a new market. In Manila, the water company has worked closely with community groups and has instituted a community-based payment system which has resulted in a 100% revenue collection rate.

The issue of land ownership in slums and informal urban areas has presented a stumbling block for WASH provision, but this can be overcome. Most slums and shanty towns are the result of informal (and in many cases illegal) occupation, and as a result are often missed from official city investment plans, including those for WASH provision. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, NGOs pioneered the provision of water to urban slums and won a change in the law stating that the installation of water points by the Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority for slum-dwellers did not constitute de facto recognition of informal or illegal land settlement.

Careful monitoring and community participation in urban WASH has also provided successes. In Zambia, the Government has opted for tough regulation and community monitoring of water supply, guaranteeing autonomy to service providers and establishing a framework for regulation and arbitration. The National Water and Sanitation Council (NWASCO) ensures that extending service delivery into low-income areas is an integral part of the investment plan for providers. NWASCO promotes customer involvement through Water Watch Groups which are able to hold service providers to account.

Rising to the urban challenge

These examples show that urban water and sanitation coverage can be achieved with will and innovative action. A guiding vision statement and clear programme of action by city authorities, national governments and development agencies around the world is needed to reverse decades of neglect of slum-dwellers' rights to sanitation and water supply. With sufficient resources and political will, a global 15 year programme could provide the water and sanitation needed to guarantee health and human dignity for poor urban communities, and kick-start economic growth.

The investment required is high: in 2005, the UN Millennium Task Force estimated US$293.5 billion would be needed globally to fund a 15 year plan to transform urban centres. But the levels of national and international investments in urban water and sanitation need to match the scale of the challenge. Without sufficient, well-targeted investment in WASH, poor urban communities will be denied the opportunity to free themselves from poverty.

Refocus on urban needs

Objective 1

Champion the cause of poor urban communities

The international community must refocus on and reassess their responses to urban needs, prioritising investment in water and sanitation and using their influence to champion the cause of poor urban communities.
WaterAid puts forth the following objectives to achieve this goal.

1. Champion the cause of poor urban communities

International donors and national governments must prioritise and raise awareness of the rights of poor urban communities to water and sanitation by establishing urban policies, strategies and investment programmes that reflect their needs, improving the targeting of urban investments to slums and informal settlements and supporting development and investment plans that aid the provision of urban WASH.

National governments must:

- **put safe sanitation and water for poor communities at the centre of integrated city-wide plans for urban basic services.**
- **develop and implement pre-emptive actions for small towns and cities, with adequate urban climate change preparedness plans and resilient WASH infrastructure.**
- **provide the human and administrative infrastructure to receive and use technical and material assistance for developing and implementing pro-poor plans.**

International donors must:

- **develop or support organisational structures capable of meeting the needs of sub-national and national governments and institutions responsible for urban services.**

Develop city-wide plans for urban basic services

National governments and donors have to give the highest political priority to embedding water and sanitation into the development plans for cities and towns. The international community must commit to support improved planning if we are to tackle urban poverty on a global scale.

However, this focus cannot rest solely upon existing slums within large urban settlements. It is estimated that for every large town there are ten small towns, and these towns are expected to double both in size and number within 15 years, and then double again within 30 years.[xvi] If these towns are to avoid becoming mass slums, sustainable and safe sanitation and water supply are some of the most fundamental services they will need.

Evidence suggests that slums and informal settlements can be transformed by meaningful participatory planning processes. In order to achieve success in implementing urban WASH infrastructure, each urban centre must be supported in their planning processes, and provided with access to expert technical and social advice to develop solutions most fitting to their needs.

Prioritise poor urban communities within urban WASH investments

Poor urban residents must be recognised as viable customers of WASH services, with the right to pay a fair price for water and sanitation. National regulations restrict poor and landless people's access to services, denying their basic human rights.

Equity in urban WASH must be ensured to allow for both the provision of basic services, and the chance for economic development. In Cambodia, the Philippines and Bangladesh, for example, the development of inclusive, participatory mechanisms for service delivery has led to win-win outcomes for all residents and for service providers who have opened access to this viable market segment.

Representatives from slum communities should be encouraged to participate in the design and implementation of sanitation and water policies.



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National service providers and regulators must:

- put the targeting of sanitation and water services to informal settlements/slums as an explicit policy commitment.
- ensure that slum-dwellers and squatter communities are not denied the right to WASH services because of a lack of legal landholding entitlements.
- ensure that the representatives of slum communities participate in the design and implementation of sanitation and water policies.

Refocus on urban needs

Objective 2

Increase understanding and awareness of the needs of poor urban communities

2. Increase understanding and awareness of the needs of poor urban communities

Improve data collection and disaggregation in relation to poor urban communities

National figures presented to global monitoring platforms, such as the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, must reflect the presence of slum-dwellers. Indonesia reports a 90% national urban water coverage figure. However, when informal settlements are counted, only 25% of Jakarta's 12 million residents have access to a safe water supply.[xvii]

This kind of lack of understanding of the nature of urban poverty stops available resources from being allocated effectively and distorts the reporting of sector performance. The outcome is that existing information and data on urban poverty does not adequately influence donors' and national governments' policies or investments.

Building a clear distinction between urban and rural areas into MDG performance and monitoring frameworks, as well as the OECD-DAC Official Development Assistance Creditor Reporting System, will require a better definition of what constitutes 'the urban community.' This will ensure all urban residents are counted in national and global data and statistics, and will enhance the development of appropriate indicators to improve pro-poor targeting of interventions within urban plans.



WaterAid/Jon Spaull

National regulators and policy makers must:

- establish an accurate urban baseline and improve indicators to enhance pro-poor targeting of interventions.
- ensure coordination of existing monitoring frameworks and collaboration between departments responsible for lands, housing, urban development and water supply and sanitation services.

International donors must:

- establish urban policies, strategies and investment programmes that promote disaggregated data reporting, to improve the targeting of urban investments to slums and informal settlements and support municipal authorities' development plans.

Ensure development aid for urban investments is targeted at people living in poverty

Urban investments must explicitly target poor urban communities. The international community has responsibility for prioritising poverty reduction and social objectives alongside issues of cost recovery and universal coverage. Urban projects' pro-poor objectives must be developed on the basis of strong social analyses, and key performance indicators must be designed to monitor and report on the effectiveness of aid targeting. As a result, official reports of donors' overseas aid must clearly report on how aid is disaggregated and targeted to reach different social, community and settlement groups, giving a fuller, fairer picture of the situation.



WaterAid/Caroline Irby



WaterAid/Caroline Irby

Multilateral and bilateral donors must guarantee that development aid targets poor people and that:

- tariff and payment (cost recovery) policies are structured around making services accessible for poor people.
- key performance indicators are designed to target socially and economically excluded and marginalised people.
- development finance funnelled through multilateral banks incentivises pro-poor outcomes through the provision of ringfenced grants that are used to subsidise connections for poor urban communities.
- official reports of donors' overseas aid clearly report on aid targeted at reaching rural, formal urban, informal urban and small towns.

Refocus on urban needs

Objective 3
Commit to long-term action

3. Commit to long-term action

Provide global strategic leadership for urban issues

WaterAid urges the UN-HABITAT General Council to use the opportunity provided by the appointment of a new Executive Director to refocus and strengthen the agency, by prioritising delivering its core function of providing strategic leadership for improving the lives of people living in urban slums. We also encourage the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG) to improve engagement with UN-HABITAT's governance structures and weight the balance of funding towards its core functions.

Agree an ambitious post-MDG target for improving the lives of urban slum-dwellers

The international development community must agree an ambitious post-MDG target for improving the lives of people living in urban poverty, commensurate to the rapidly growing challenge of urbanisation. The Rio+20 discussions provide a perfect opportunity to review the unambitious 2020 MDG urban target.

National governments and donors must focus UN-HABITAT's attention on delivering its core function of:

- knowledge development on pro-poor urban development and planning.
- leveraging and mobilising public investments and private capital for slum upgrading, shelter development and the delivery of basic services.

We urge the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG) to take up the vacant seats on UN-HABITAT's Governing Council.

National governments and donors must:

- develop a tangible agenda, including sources of funds, for addressing the water and sanitation needs of the slum, peri-urban and small town dweller as a first step out of poverty.



WaterAid/Brent Stirton



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ii Nicholls R , et al (2007) *Ranking of the World's cities most exposed to coastal flooding today and in the future – Executive Summary*, p 7

iii World Health Organisation (2010) *GLAAS 2010 – UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water – Targeting resources for better results*, p 15 http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241599351_eng.pdf

iv Kolsky P et al (2005) *Sanitation and hygiene at the World Bank: an analysis of current activities, Water Supply Working Notes*, p 12, No 6

v World Health Organisation/UNICEF (2010) *Progress on sanitation and drinking water: 2010 Update*, p 16-18

vi Amnesty International (2010) *Risking rape to reach a toilet: Women's experiences in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya*, p 2

vii World Health Organisation (2010) *GLAAS-2010 UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water – Targeting resources for better results*, p 41 http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2010/9789241599351_eng.pdf

viii WHO/UNICEF (2006) *Meeting the MDG drinking water and sanitation target: The urban and rural challenge of the decade*, p 15

ix Defined as the percentage of households with access to adequate sanitation facilities

x United Nations (2010) *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010* p 61

xi UN-HABITAT (2006) *State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7*

xii UN-HABITAT (2006) *State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7* reports that Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand and Tunisia share long-term political commitment to improving and preventing slum settlements; progressive pro-poor land and housing reforms to secure the tenure of slum dwellers or to improve their access to basic services; investing domestic resources to boost slum improvements and prevent future slum growth; and introduction of policies to promote equity.

xiii UN-HABITAT (2011) *The State of Asian Cities 2010/2011*; press release. http://www.unhabitat.org/documents/WHD10/EN/Asia_Press_kits/PressRelease2.pdf

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xv UN Habitat-UNEP, *The State of African Cities 2010*; Executive Summary, p 2

xvi Pilgrim N R (2007) *Water working notes: principles of town water supply and sanitation, Part 1: water supply*. Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Board of the Infrastructure Network, World Bank Group.

xvii World Vision Australia and WaterAid Australia (2007) *Getting the Basics Right: Water and Sanitation in South East Asia and the Pacific.*

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