

'One World Conservatism'

WaterAid's response to the Conservative Green Paper on international development

WaterAid
October 2009

1. Time to move water and sanitation up the development agenda

WaterAid welcomes the Conservative Party's commitment to push water, sanitation and hygiene up the development agenda. Access to water and sanitation underpin the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet 884 million people do not have access to clean water and 2.5 billion do not have adequate sanitation. This crisis has an impact on economic growth and human development.¹ It is a crisis that will not be solved without a step-change in political will and financial resources.

WaterAid commends the Conservative Party's strong commitment to:

- **Reduce global poverty and strengthen efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.**
- **Focus on aid effectiveness and delivering results for the poorest people.**
- **Honour the commitment to allocating 0.7% of GNI for international development.**
- **Retain a separate government department and cabinet minister with an exclusive focus on poverty reduction.**

WaterAid shares the desire to find practical and sustainable solutions which meet the needs of the poorest people. Poor people consistently prioritise safe water.² Yet donors, including the UK Government, have failed to give sufficient priority to either water or sanitation.³

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party:

- **Recognise water and sanitation alongside health and education as essential services, critical to human development and wealth creation.**

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

Poor people gain directly from improved access to basic water and sanitation services through improved health, averted medical costs and time saved. Good management of water resources brings increased productivity across economic sectors and contributes to sustainable development. The economic benefits far outweigh the investment costs.⁴

- 1 In Sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 5% of GDP is lost to illnesses caused by dirty water, the absence of sanitation and an unhygienic environment. The World Health Organization estimates that 28% of under-five deaths are attributable to poor sanitation and unsafe water.
- 2 Between 1999-2001 the National Participatory Poverty Assessments conducted for the first generation of PRSPs in Zambia, Uganda, Cameroon and Uganda and in 2008 in Nigeria, highlighted access to safe and affordable drinking water as the highest preference for the majority of respondents.
- 3 The Parliamentary Select Committee on International Development noted that DFID has not invested sufficiently to provide access to these essential services at the level needed to dramatically accelerate progress. www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmintdev/126/12602.htm
- 4 According to the World Bank, sanitation and hygiene promotion are the most cost effective of any health intervention, costing \$11 and \$3 respectively per DALY averted, nearly 100 times more cost effective than oral rehydration therapy. World Bank (2006) *Disease control priorities in developing countries* (second edition)
- 5 WaterAid (2009) *Fatal neglect: how health systems are failing to comprehensively address child mortality*

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party:

- **Make improved access to water and sanitation a central pillar of their approach to poverty reduction and wealth creation.**

2. System failures in international development

WaterAid agrees with the Conservative Party that the international aid system needs to be made more effective. The Green Paper rightly recognised that there are MDG sectors, like sanitation, which are “permanently neglected”. As a result, we have seen insufficient investment at the global level, which in turn has an impact at the national level. In Zambia, for example, over 80% of health conditions are diseases related to poor sanitation, and yet environmental health struggles to attract donor or government finance.⁵ In Sub-Saharan Africa the MDG target for sanitation will not be met until 2108,⁶ almost 100 years too late.

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party:

- **Calls for a rebalance of resources across the essential services: water and sanitation, health and education.**

The share of aid going to water and sanitation has, since the mid-1990s, been in decline. The aid that does go to water and sanitation is, for the most part, not reaching the countries most in need, or the poorest people in those countries. Only 27% of global aid goes to Least Developed Countries. Over 2002-2006, Malaysia received on average over \$500 in aid for every person without access to water, while Madagascar received less than \$2. The share of finance going towards basic water and sanitation infrastructure and targeting the poorest has contracted from 24% to 16% over the same period.⁷ Unlike the health and education sectors, there is currently no global process that is capable of addressing the key obstacles blocking progress in the water and sanitation sector.

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party:

- **Assume a leading international role in the development of the Global Framework for Action for Water and Sanitation.**

The Global Framework for Action is an international partnership of national governments, donors, civil society organisations and other development partners working to galvanise political commitment to increase global access to sanitation and water. The Global Framework will ensure that off-track countries develop national plans and attract financing. Where progress has been made, it will ensure this is sustained to achieve the 2015 MDG targets and go beyond them. Most importantly, it will coordinate development efforts and direct resources where they are most needed. It needs the active participation of the UK Secretary of State for International Development, including at the annual High Level Meeting for Sanitation and Water and in the regular progress-chasing of the Global Framework’s initiatives.

6 Based on projections using data from WHO/ UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation (2008) *Progress in drinking-water and sanitation: special focus on sanitation*.

7 OECD DAC database at <http://stats.oecd.org>

3. Value for money – sustainable aid delivery mechanisms

WaterAid supports the Conservative Party’s desire to demonstrate impact to the UK taxpayer. However, we strongly believe that aid should be delivered in a way that strengthens the social contract between developing country governments and their citizens. While there needs to be more attention given to development outputs and outcomes, the longer term aim is to ensure that UK aid supports and does not undermine the goal of making states responsive and accountable to their citizens, in particular poor people. Aid delivered through budget support, for example, can help put developing country governments firmly in charge of national planning and policy, which in turn generates increased scrutiny of policy formulation and implementation from parliaments and civil society.

We are concerned that some of the policies proposed to deliver value for money may lead to aid being shifted away from Least Developed Countries. The three policy proposals which raise this risk are those to focus aid on the Commonwealth countries (which may not be the least developed), to focus on outputs and punish poor performance by withdrawing aid (because it will be harder to generate positive results in Least Developed Countries), and the role of public voting in aid allocation.

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party:

- **Ensure aid delivery mechanisms strengthen the social contract between recipient governments and their citizens.**

4. Transparency and accountability – critical to performance management

WaterAid applauds the Conservative Party’s commitment to improving transparency and accountability. Donor governments need to demonstrably adhere to the same principles of responsiveness and accountability that they advocate to recipient governments. This means publishing the terms of lending or grants, the details of the programmes donors are supporting, the purpose of their engagement and the process for determining the level and type of engagement. The donor-recipient relationship needs to go beyond a narrow group of officials in DFID and the recipient country’s Ministry of Finance and instead also engage civil society, parliaments and citizens. Investment in national audit offices, national statistics bureaux, and in the regulatory environment has been low but is critical to strengthening accountability in developing countries.

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party:

- **Encourage recipient governments to communicate widely about aid agreements; and to support parliamentary groups and civil society networks in developing countries to scrutinise the way aid money is spent and hold their government to account.**

5. Tackling climate change

WaterAid supports the Conservative Party's commitment to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change. Climate change is likely to exacerbate existing social and environmental stresses and compound many of the existing challenges faced by poor countries in extending access to water and sanitation on a sustainable basis. Household access to water supply should be protected and prioritised in situations of increasing water stress.

Strengthening the capacity of developing countries to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change will require investing in their own data gathering alongside developing technical and institutional response capacities. But these investments should be additional to the UK's commitment to meet the internationally agreed target of spending 0.7% GNI on aid.

WaterAid recommends that the Conservative Party's international climate change and aid policies:

- **Support developing country governments' capacity to develop the approaches and new technologies that support communities to cope and adapt to climatic variability.**
- **Ensure additional financing requirements to meet the development challenges posed by climate change do not come at the expense of the UK's existing obligations to spend 0.7% of its GNI on development.**

Come and hear about how you can take action to end the global water and sanitation crisis at our fringe event at the Conservative Party conference:

Spend a penny, save millions: international development policy in the downturn on Monday 5 October, 17.30 to 18.30.

You can also arrange to meet a member of the WaterAid team on 5 or 6 October in Manchester, or anytime in Westminster at your convenience.

Contact: Call Rhian Lewis on **020 7793 4985** or email **campaigns@wateraid.org**



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