

A vision for WASH post-2015

WaterAid's vision for post-2015 is an ambitious new development framework unifying poverty eradication and sustainable development objectives, supported by a renewed global partnership ensuring effective resource mobilisation and mutual accountability for progress achieved. To ensure that everyone, everywhere has access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), the framework should:

- 1** Include a dedicated goal on water and sanitation and set ambitious targets to achieve universal access to WASH by 2030 that prioritise the following¹:
 - No-one practises open defecation.
 - Everyone has safe water, sanitation and hygiene at home.
 - All schools and health facilities have safe water, sanitation and hygiene.
 - Water, sanitation and hygiene are sustainable and inequalities in access have been progressively eliminated.
- 2** Recognise that universal access to WASH is an essential component of an integrated approach to tackling poverty, hunger, ill-health and inequality.
- 3** Recognise that achieving and sustaining universal access to WASH depends on establishing accountable systems for equitable and sustainable management of water resources.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) aimed to halve the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation between 1990 and 2015. Although the water target has now been met², one in ten of the world's people still do not have access to improved drinking water sources³, and existing indicators do not address the safety or reliability of supplies. In particular waste management was overlooked in the goals as was provision for hygiene. Sanitation is the most off-track of all the targets, with 2.5 billion people, nearly 40% of the world's population, currently lacking access to improved sanitation⁴. If present trends continue, the MDG target for sanitation will not be met until 2025⁵. Therefore, the first priority is to address the unfinished business of the existing MDGs.

A key strength of the MDG framework is that it provides a clear and far-reaching agenda that has established consistent practices and standards for international development cooperation. However, it has been criticised for being overly focused on poverty (and social development) at the expense of economic, environmental and governance issues within a broader sustainability framework. Additionally, the lack of integration

between targets and indicators of progress has discouraged collaboration across sectors, which is necessary to tackle inter-related development challenges of

poverty, hunger, ill-health and inequality, particularly those that have an impact on girls and women. Evidence now shows that progress towards global aggregate targets has masked huge and growing inequalities between countries, communities and sections of society⁶. The MDGs' neglect of sanitation shows that the existing international architecture for tracking progress, identifying lagging areas and mobilising domestic and external resources to address them remains weak in this area.

The post-2015 framework must therefore build on the strengths of the MDGs while applying the lessons learned from their limitations. Like the MDGs, the post-2015 goals need to be limited in number, clear, specific, easy to communicate, measurable, time-bound and achievable. WaterAid is calling for an ambitious new framework with a clear focus on eradicating poverty and supporting goals to promote sustainable development. The framework must be backed by a renewed global partnership that ensures effective resource mobilisation and mutual accountability for progress achieved. Specifically, the framework should:

1 Include a dedicated goal on water and sanitation and set ambitious targets to achieve universal access to WASH by 2030

The post-2015 framework should be people-centred, focused on outcomes and guided by established principles of human rights, equity, gender equality, sustainability and accountability.

The framework should focus on a small number of issues that are universally important for poverty eradication and sustainable development. It should recognise that universal access to water and sanitation is a human right that underpins all other aspects of development. The MDG water and sanitation targets were given low priority under a broad environmental goal and isolated from efforts to achieve goals on poverty, health, nutrition, education and gender equality. The new framework must much better reflect the central importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in social and economic development.

The Human Right to Water and Sanitation, reaffirmed by resolutions of the UN General Assembly⁷ and UN Human Rights Council in 2010⁸ and in the Rio+20 outcome document⁹, places legally binding obligations on all states to make provision for progressive realisation of universal access. In recent global and national consultations, citizens routinely ranked water and sanitation among the top ten priorities for poverty eradication and sustainable development¹⁰. WaterAid is calling on international leaders to respond by establishing a dedicated goal with supporting targets focused on extending access to water, sanitation and hygiene to everyone

everywhere, progressively improving existing service levels and ensuring equitable and sustainable management of water resources for livelihoods, economic growth and ecosystem maintenance.

We welcome the ambition of ‘ending extreme poverty in all its forms’ by 2030¹¹ and believe the post-2015 framework should ensure coherence across the universal or zero goals and targets that contribute towards this objective. Specifically, it should recognise that universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene is an essential

prerequisite for tackling poverty, hunger, ill-health, inequality and improving the lives of women and children. The framework should set an equally ambitious target date of 2030 for achieving universal access to WASH.

WaterAid actively supported the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) technical consultations to develop proposals for enhanced monitoring of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene post-2015. The consolidated technical proposals endorsed during the 2nd International Consultation on Global Monitoring of Water Supply and Sanitation¹² outline targets and indicators for monitoring progressive realisation of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation in all countries, by extending access to those currently unserved and progressively improving existing service levels. They also include explicit recommendations for monitoring the progressive elimination of inequalities between rich and poor, urban and rural, formal and informal urban settlements, and disadvantaged groups and the general population.

We support the emerging consensus among sector professionals that universal access targets for WASH in the post-2015 framework should apply to all countries and reflect key principles and obligations derived from existing treaties relating to human rights. WaterAid recommends the following:

Post-2015 goal and targets for WASH

Goal: Universal access to water and sanitation

Target: Universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030

WaterAid is calling for an ambitious target to achieve universal access to WASH by 2030 and supports the following priorities recommended by WHO/UNICEF JMP¹³:

- 1 No-one practises open defecation.
- 2 Everyone has water, sanitation and hygiene at home.
- 3 All school and health centres have water, sanitation and hygiene.
- 4 Water, sanitation and hygiene are sustainable and inequalities in access have been progressively eliminated.

2 Recognise that water, sanitation and hygiene are an essential component of an integrated approach to tackling poverty, hunger, health and inequality

‘Ending extreme poverty in all its forms’ should be the primary focus of the post-2015 framework and it should encourage an integrated approach to tackling poverty, hunger, ill-health and inequality, which recognises the interdependent nature of outcomes in each area.

32 years of experience of working in WASH have shown us that problems associated with inadequate access to these vital services have an impact on all other aspects of human development:

- Improving access to WASH is critical to increasing the income of individuals and households living in **poverty**.
- Diarrhoea associated with inadequate WASH is a leading cause of preventable death in children under-five globally, and together with other WASH-related infections contributes significantly to under-nutrition and stunting. Better WASH significantly reduces the burden of disease, thereby improving **health** at all stages of life and enabling people to be more productive.
- Safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene also play a crucial role in enabling good **nutrition**.
- Improving WASH in schools is vital to improving school attendance and **education** outcomes, particularly among adolescent girls.
- Reducing the time spent collecting water improves the health, wellbeing and economic status of poor women and girls and is an essential first step towards **gender equality**.
- The multi-dimensional nature of poverty means that inequalities in access to WASH and other forms of **inequality** and discrimination against poor and marginalised groups must be tackled together.

For more information on these areas, see the relevant briefings in this toolkit.

The post-2015 framework should seek to promote better collaboration across sectors by strengthening the linkages between sub-goals and targets that contribute towards ending poverty. Specifically, it should recognise that access to water, sanitation and hygiene is a key determinant of health and nutrition. It should ensure that the targets aimed at improving health, eliminating preventable child and maternal deaths, and reducing the burden of stunting and major diseases are supported by universal access targets for WASH at home and in schools and health facilities. A truly effective and integrated approach will require the adoption of appropriate progress indicators on WASH access within other development goal targets and programmes, as well as financial incentives for sector ministries and agencies to work together. It should also have an explicit focus on progressively reducing inequalities between individuals and groups while moving towards universal or zero goals and targets. This will require

significant improvements to existing systems for monitoring and reporting progress globally.

To ensure effective linkages, WASH targets should be integrated under other relevant goals.

Examples of targets supporting an integrated approach to tackling poverty, nutrition, health and inequality

- **Health** targets focused on ‘universal health coverage’ should go beyond healthcare services and include indicators addressing promotion, prevention, treatments and rehabilitation. Explicit links should be made between goals on accelerating progress on disease prevention and mortality reduction and WASH access targets.
- **Nutrition** targets focused on tackling under-nutrition and stunting should combine food-based measures with indicators of access to safe drinking water and sanitation and hygiene behaviour.
- **Education** targets focused on improving educational outcomes should be supported by indicators relating to the quality of education settings, including the provision of menstrual hygiene management facilities for adolescent girls.
- **Gender** equality targets focused on reducing violence against girls and women and empowering them politically and economically should be supported by universal access targets for WASH. For example, menstrual hygiene management in schools would be a powerful proxy indicator for girls’ empowerment.

3 Recognise that universal access to WASH depends on accountable systems for equitable and sustainable management of water resources

Access to safe water and sanitation is widely recognised as a basic human right, and improvements in WASH bring multiple social and economic benefits. Water is also critical for livelihoods – to grow crops, raise livestock, produce goods and provide services – and for industry, for producing food and for generating energy. Rainfall can therefore have a direct impact on livelihoods and growth where economies are dependent on sectors exposed to climatic variability. Water plays a key role in maintaining freshwater ecosystems upon which human societies depend and is also a major source of social and economic risk. Therefore, the post-2015 framework needs to recognise that achieving and sustaining universal access to WASH depends in turn on establishing accountable systems for equitable allocation and management of water resources on a sustainable basis.

The sustainability of improvements in WASH is closely linked to the effective management of upstream water resources issues and downstream wastewater and pollution issues. The MDGs include a target focused on the development of integrated

water resources management plans (IWRM). While the IWRM concept is based on sound principles, it requires functional institutions with clear roles and responsibilities, which are lacking in many low and middle income countries, especially at local level. Consequently, water resources continue to go unmanaged and services are exposed to a higher risk of failure.

Management of wastewater has been neglected under the MDGs. The vast majority of wastewater (90%) in developing countries is discharged untreated, leading to the contamination of water resources, increased prevalence of disease and the destruction of ecosystems¹⁴. Inadequate management of faecal sludge from on-site sanitation facilities is becoming a critical problem in densely populated urban areas, which are growing around the world. The post-2015 framework should encourage an integrated approach to managing wastewater and maintaining water quality, and include explicit targets and indicators focused on ensuring safe management of faecal sludge.

In WaterAid's experience, the challenges of water resources and wastewater management are highly context specific. The post-2015 framework should therefore focus on why water matters (focusing on the ends rather than means). Specifically, targets and indicators for managing water resources should focus on:

- Including everyone (prioritising universal access to water, sanitation and hygiene as a human right).
- Sharing the benefits fairly (for society, for the economy and for the planet).
- Living within our means (protecting society and the economy from water-related risks by respecting planetary boundaries and better managing water-related risk).

We recommend including the following supporting targets within the water, sanitation and hygiene goal to ensure equitable and sustainable management of water resources

- Treat or reuse all municipal and industrial waste prior to discharge.
- Bring freshwater withdrawals in line with renewable supply, and increase efficiency in all key sectors by x%.
- Raise the quality of all freshwater bodies to meet human and ecosystem needs.
- Reduce the human cost of water and sanitation-related disaster losses by x% and the economic cost by y%.

Endnotes

¹ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme shared vision for progressive realisation of the human right to water and sanitation. See www.wssinfo.org/post-2015-monitoring/overview for full technical proposals for post-2015 WASH targets and indicators.

² WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2010) *Progress on sanitation and drinking-water, 2010 update*

³ 768 million people in the world do not have access to an improved drinking water source. This is roughly one in ten of the world's people. WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2013) *Progress on drinking-water and sanitation, 2013 update*

⁴ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2013) *Progress on drinking-water and sanitation, 2013 update*

⁵ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2013) *Progress on sanitation and drinking-water, 2013 update*

⁶ For example, in South Asia, the poorest 20% saw barely any improvement in their access to sanitation between 1995 and 2008. See WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (2013) *Progress on sanitation and drinking-water, 2012 update*, p30

⁷ *Resolution 64/292*, adopted by the UN General Assembly, 28 July 2010

⁸ *Resolution 15/9 Human rights and access to safe drinking water and sanitation*, adopted by the UN Human Rights Council, 30 September 2010

⁹ *Resolution 66/288 The future we want*, adopted by the UN General Assembly, 27 July 2012

¹⁰ Taken from results of *My world* survey. Available at: www.myworld2015.org/?page=results [last accessed: 8 July 2013]

¹¹The High Level Panel of Eminent Persons (2013) *A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development. The report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda*. Available at: www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/HLP_P2015_Report.pdf

¹² WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, (2012) *Report of the second consultation on post-2015 monitoring of drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene*. Available at: www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/WHO_UNICEF_IMP_Hague_Consultation_Dec2013.pdf

¹³ For full details of WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme technical proposals for post-2015 WASH targets, definitions and indicators see: www.wssinfo.org/post-2015-monitoring/overview

¹⁴ UN HABITAT (2012) *Sick water: The central role of wastewater management in sustainable development*