

How to reach everyone with safe water and sanitation by 2030

We won't end extreme poverty by 2030 unless everyone, everywhere has clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene. Together, these form an essential platform for progress in health, education, nutrition, work and economic development, without which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will fail. Inadequate progress in the early years of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has put us in danger of letting them slip away.

But this is a solvable issue. As the first review of SDG 6 begins, we urge governments and donors to fight water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) inequality with urgent action on **finance, integration and sustainability.**



Finance

Close financing gaps in national WASH plans through taxes, tariffs and transfers, ensuring a vibrant private sector. Increase official development assistance to WASH, and support climate-vulnerable countries to access climate finance for WASH.



Integration

Build cross-ministerial and multi-stakeholder processes between WASH and intersecting thematic areas. Ensure integration across policies and programmes and embed WASH in plans.

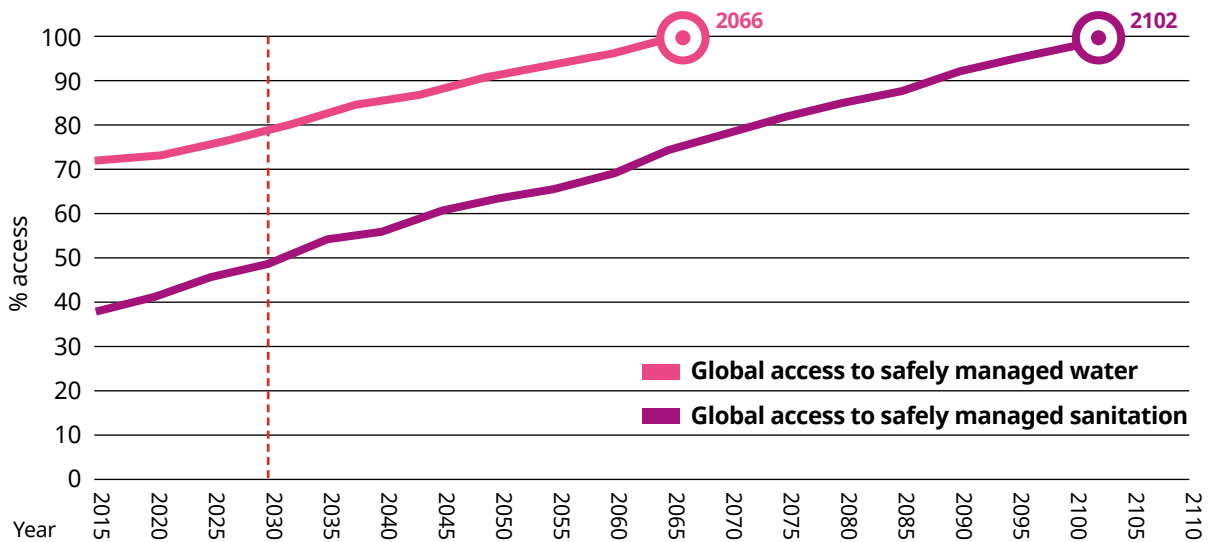


Sustainability

Deliver sustainable, climate-resilient services with a focus on creating lasting behaviour change. Improve planning, monitoring, accountability and adaptive management, involving rights-holders throughout.

Lahai, 7, carries a basin of dirty water home from a natural spring in the village of Tombohuaun, Sierra Leone. Everyone in the village has experienced persistent problems with worms, diarrhoea and vomiting as a result of drinking this water.

Projected global access to water and sanitation, at current average rate of progress



The problem

Access to safe water and toilets are human rights denied to billions of people. This violation leads to growing inequalities that are holding back lives, nations and the entire development agenda. And the global community is doing too little, too slowly, to fix it. We need to act now.

31% of people still don't have access to even basic sanitation, and more than three in ten people lack safe water.^{1, i} 35% of healthcare centres in low- and middle-income countries have no water and soap for handwashing.²

We know the effects – deadly diseases, hours wasted collecting unclean water, girls and women assaulted while forced to defecate outside, sick children missing school. People's health, livelihoods and potential are suffering, and the effects are crippling sustainable development.

Without clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene, people can't live dignified, healthy lives. With all three, women and children in particular can break out of extreme poverty.

SDG 6 is not just a goal in itself – other goals will fail without it. Failure to act quickly will undermine progress on nutrition, education, health, gender, inequality, peace, stability and more, with knock-on effects.

Until these human rights are met for everyone, everywhere, billions will remain left behind in poverty, and the 2030 Agenda will come to nothing.

We have made important initial steps. The global community has recognised that water and sanitation are essential for a dignified life, adopting legally binding UN resolutions placing human rights at the heart of development.

But progress has been much too slow, and the delay is costing lives and reversing hard-won gains. Billions of the most marginalised people living in deepest poverty are being left behind. Unless we drastically accelerate progress now, 90 countries will miss Goal 6's targets – some by centuries.

That's centuries more of people dying from preventable diseases. Centuries of children's development irreversibly damaged as parasites and repeated diarrhoea leave them undernourished. Centuries of mothers dying because midwives aren't able to wash their hands.

Urgent global and national-level action on finance, integration and sustainability will change all this.

¹ WHO and UNICEF. *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG baselines*. Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2017. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO. Available at www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp-2017/en/ (accessed 19 January 2018).

ⁱ This statistic was updated in this brief in March 2018.

² WHO (2015). *Water, sanitation and hygiene in healthcare facilities. Status in low and middle-income countries and way forward*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/wash-hcf-10things.pdf (accessed 2 Nov 2017).

Three solutions

With everyone, everywhere able to access clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene, we can end extreme poverty and create a sustainable future. But we have to act now to make this reality, by increasing and improving finance, integration and sustainability.

Boosting each of these will make a difference; tackling all three will change everything.



1. Finance

It is estimated that for every US\$1 spent on water and sanitation, on average \$4 is returned in economic benefits. Water, sanitation and hygiene are a great investment. Yet the WASH sector is chronically underfunded in many developing countries.

Despite the status of safe water and sanitation as human rights, more than 80% of countries report insufficient financing to meet their national targets, let alone the higher levels of service required for SDG 6.³ Targets 6.1 and 6.2 require a tripling of capital financing to \$114 billion a year, with operating and maintenance costs in addition.⁴

Tariffs, taxes and transfers are the principal sources for funding the sector, and central to attracting new resources. Households – through tariffs, user fees and self-supply – are the largest finance resource.



Neneng with her son in front of their new bathroom, Indonesia.

Better finance requires addressing financial absorption constraints where available funds are not spent. To improve absorption, we need to address the availability of skilled human resources, the balance between recurrent and capital funding for local government, and complex donor procurement procedures.

Better finance also requires governments to increase data availability and transparency, to improve policy-making, use of resources and accountability to their people.

³ UN-Water (2017). *UN-Water global analysis and assessment of sanitation and drinking-water (GLAAS) 2017 report: financing universal water, sanitation and hygiene under the sustainable development goals*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/glaas-report-2017/en/ (accessed 2 Nov 2017).

⁴ Hutton G and Varughese M (2016). *The Costs of Meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Targets on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene*. World Bank and Water and Sanitation Program. Available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/415441467988938343/pdf/1031711-PUB-Box394556B-PUBLIC-EPI-K8543-ADD-SERIES.pdf> (accessed 2 Nov 2017).

Actions to improve finance:

- All governments must prioritise WASH through increased domestic resource mobilisation (DRM), and donors through increased official development assistance (ODA) flows. These flows are needed to provide capital investments to address infrastructure deficits, and to support sustainable services; to establish a credible SDG 6 trajectory they must be raised substantially. In many countries, financial sustainability requires greater emphasis on ODA grants rather than on loans.
- Governments must ensure that tariffs are affordable for all, with adequate safeguards in place to protect people living in poverty.
- For effective DRM, governments must nurture a healthy private sector, and enable small WASH-related businesses and entrepreneurs to work effectively.
- Governments need to strengthen regulation where unscrupulous operators exploit people living in poverty, or where pollution threatens critical water sources.
- The international community must support at-risk low-income countries to access climate finance for WASH. Climate change threatens to reverse much of the progress in getting WASH services to the poorest and to climate-vulnerable communities.

A WaterCredit borrower near Jakarta, Indonesia, making use of her new water connection.

Case study: Improving utility capacity and catalysing private financing in rural and urban Indonesia

The Indonesian Government established water and sanitation supply community-based organisations (CBOs) in rural areas, assigning them responsibility for services. But, in 2015, 73% were not yet operating sustainably and few had accessed commercial financing. Banks' unfamiliarity with water and sanitation, coupled with CBOs struggling to meet lending requirements, was limiting the flow of funds.

In late 2016, Water.org launched a programme to strengthen CBOs and help them to access financing. The three-pronged programme maps CBOs, strengthening the most promising ones' capacity to secure financing and making them more attractive to financiers. Water.org then helps CBOs prepare and present loan applications, while encouraging financial institutions to consider CBO investment opportunities.

As of April 2017, 137 CBOs had completed the capacity-strengthening phase. Of these, 17 had completed the whole process and received loans from local microfinance institutions. The loans had resulted in about 564 households being connected to water services for the first time, improved service delivery for about 5,988 households and network expansion.^{5, ii}



⁵ Fonseca C, Pories L (2017). *Financing WASH: how to increase funds for the sector while reducing inequalities: position paper for the Sanitation and Water for All Finance Ministers Meeting*. The Hague, Netherlands: IRC, water.org, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Simavi. Available at www.ircwash.org/resources/financing-wash-how-increase-funds-sector-while-reducing-inequalities-position-paper (accessed 2 Nov 2017).

ⁱⁱ With thanks to Water.org for permission to include the case study 'Improving utility capacity and catalysing private financing in rural and urban Indonesia'.



2. Integration

Effective integration between ministries, sectors and stakeholders is crucial to achieving SDG 6, and the whole 2030 Agenda; success of many other SDGs relies on the achievement of WASH targets. For example, achieving Goal 6 is fundamental to ending malnutrition (Goal 2), and to ending preventable newborn and child deaths (Goal 3).⁶ And without universal access to WASH, Goal 10 on reducing inequalities has no hope.

Similarly, we will not achieve Goal 6 by focusing only on WASH – we must ensure plans and actions on interconnected issues are integrated. Collaboration between sectors from the ministry level to the ground will enable stakeholders to connect strategies and coordinate actions, maximising opportunities and producing results that are more than the sum of their parts.

For example, inadequate WASH disproportionately affects girls and women. Biological, cultural and social reasons affect their specific WASH needs and often prevent them from accessing clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene. But both WASH and gender policies and programmes often overlook the vital interlinkages between barriers, for example those relating to WASH and menstrual hygiene or maternal health. SDG 6 will only be achieved through a gendered and human rights-based approach to WASH, and SDG 5 on gender equality will only be achieved by integrating actions on the specific WASH needs of women and girls.

Three girls stand outside their brightly coloured toilet block at their school in Pallisa district, Uganda.



⁶WaterAid (2016). *Healthy Start: the first month of life*. London, UK: WaterAid. Available at www.wateraid.org/what-we-do/our-approach/research-and-publications/view-publication?id=02c3b5d6-4ffd-4844-8d5a-0083e8e522ff (accessed 2 Nov 2017).

Actions to improve integration:

- Governments must build effective cross-ministerial and multi-stakeholder processes between intersecting areas, such as WASH and health, education, nutrition and gender (see case study).
- Policy-makers must embed WASH in plans and budgets with interconnected objectives, such as health, nutrition and education. Cross-referencing between sectors will ensure all are better placed to reach their goals.
- Donors must ensure integration across their policies and programmes, and in their work through multilateral agencies, civil society and the private sector.

Nam, 7, and Vuth, 9, wash their hands with clean water from their village's new water well, Prek Bei, Phnom Kravanh District, Cambodia.



Case study: Integrated policy and action on nutrition and WASH in Cambodia

Despite steady economic growth and poverty reduction, malnutrition remains a public health threat in Cambodia, and one in three children are stunted.⁷ Led by Cambodia's Council of Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (2014–2018) advocates the integration of WASH into child and maternal nutrition programmes.ⁱⁱⁱ It outlines institutional mechanisms to coordinate food security and nutrition, and commits to strengthening government capacity to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate multi-sectoral programmes.

CARD unified the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Health, core donors and development partners to establish a WASH and Nutrition Sub-Working Group that drives integrated actions. The group invested in the development of the

theory of change for integrated nutrition programming, and commissioned a study into barriers and possible solutions, identifying priorities for action. To further raise the profile of the need for joint action, and secure high-level political buy-in, CARD, with core members of the sub-working group, organised a national workshop: 'Improved hygiene and nutrition make children grow: from evidence to impact'.

Development partners and all levels of government have embraced the integrated, multi-sectoral strategy, which is evidence-driven and Government-endorsed. Sub-national health, rural development and agriculture representatives are discussing integration, and government and development partners are taking it to villages, districts and provinces. More donor agencies are building on the early successes.

⁷ National Institute of Statistics, Directorate General for Health and ICF International (2015). *Cambodia Demographic and Health survey 2014*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Rockville, Maryland, USA. Available at <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr312/fr312.pdf> (accessed 2 Nov 2017).

ⁱⁱⁱ This case study is adapted from Development Initiatives (2017). *Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs*. Bristol, UK: Development Initiatives. Available at: www.globalnutritionreport.org/files/2017/11/Report_2017.pdf (accessed 2 Nov 2017).



3. Sustainability

Sustainability is about making sure the benefits of clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene last. Without a focus on ensuring the sustainability of services and practices, access to WASH slips back, making universal access by 2030 impossible, and wasting costly efforts.

Ensuring sustainable services goes beyond making sure hand pumps and toilets keep working. Threats to services include insufficient financing, limited capacities, poor governance, climate variability, climate change, ecosystem degradation, behaviour change

challenges and growing demand for water resources. Ensuring these complex, shifting and multi-dimensional issues do not compromise WASH services requires integration and a holistic, system-wide approach that involves local communities at every stage.

With the effects of climate change growing increasingly extreme and threatening to reverse WASH progress for some of the poorest and most climate-vulnerable communities, services must be adapted and made resilient.



A female health volunteer conducting a hygiene session at District Hospital Khalanga, Jajarkot, Nepal.

WaterAid/ Mami Karmacharya

Actions to improve sustainability:

- Governments, donors and implementing partners must use approaches and systems that deliver sustainable and climate-resilient WASH services.
- Governments, donors and implementing partners must involve rights-holders, especially the most marginalised, throughout planning and implementation (see case study), and facilitate rights-holders to demand these services.
- Governments, donors and implementing partners must focus on behaviour change to improve the use of facilities and to improve the hygiene habits that will maximise the benefits and sustainability of WASH services.
- Governments, donors and implementing partners must focus on strengthening and building sustainable services through better planning, monitoring, accountability and adaptive management of services.



Case study: Ensuring community-led sustainable change through endogenous development in Ghana

For decades, WASH development practitioners have focused on the delivery of hardware infrastructure, largely ignoring cultural factors that affect WASH behaviours and practices, and the acceptance of externally introduced solutions. WaterAid recognised that by using communities' existing cultural resources it was possible to help people drive their own development faster and more successfully.

Based on the Endogenous Development Approach, which addresses the social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing of local people, WaterAid developed the Endogenous Development Community Hygiene and Sanitation Promotion Process (ED-CHaSP). This enables communities to develop culturally appropriate behaviour change communication, and actively lead its dissemination, resulting in lasting behaviour change and improved sustainability of services.

Through the ED-CHaSP, WaterAid Ghana is changing the way it works in partnership with communities and their institutions. By strengthening local government capacity, it is aiming to influence a more participatory approach to governance. WaterAid Ghana worked closely with the ABIGAIL women's group in the Okyerekrom community, and five other communities replicated the positive changes in sanitation and hygiene driven by the group. This 'multiplier effect' extended beyond WASH, with communities reporting strengthened women's leadership and the revitalisation of positive cultural aspects.

Members of the ABIGAIL group dancing at the commissioning of a limited water facility.

With action and accountability, we will reach Goal 6

Achieving Goal 6 is possible – with strong leadership from national governments that prioritise WASH and are committed to realising people's human rights to safe water and sanitation.

Progress so far has fallen short. **If we want to ensure safer, healthier lives for everyone, everywhere, we must do much more.** Governments have made legally binding commitments to meet these human rights for all – now they must fulfil their promises.

Governments are duty-bound to report on how they are turning their pledges into real change. This demands effective monitoring mechanisms – of access to services, institutions, policies and legislation – and opportunities for an enabled civil society to hold them to account, at national, regional and global levels.

Member states must strengthen mechanisms around the High Level Political Forum to make it fit for purpose, bringing together accountability for SDG commitments and the associated human rights obligations. States must also strengthen national monitoring through regular multi-sector planning and review cycles.

Creating an enabling environment in which governments can fulfil their legal obligations requires urgent actions on WASH financing, integration and sustainability.

Faster progress on each will save lives and boost development; immediate, effective action on all three will end the WASH crisis, and change everything for billions of people. With more resources allocated to strengthening the sector, and integrated action between plans and practices focused on ensuring long-term change, we can reach everyone, everywhere, and achieve the targets for SDG 6.

The urgency of the need for drastic improvements cannot be stressed enough. Slow and inadequate progress is costing lives every day, and crippling hope. We must act now, and act well, to bring about a sustainable, equitable future for all.

**Act now to
get water and
sanitation to
everyone,
everywhere
by 2030.**



Cover image:
Mandari Bitalu
washing her hands
at the tapstand, in
Dhime, Jajarkot,
Nepal.

**Ramsha, 13,
washing her hands
at the WASH facility
in her school in
Muzaffargarh,
Punjab, Pakistan.**

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[www.washmatters.wateraid.org/
sdg-6-review](http://www.washmatters.wateraid.org/sdg-6-review)

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What are you doing to make WASH a priority?

Act now to get WASH to everyone, everywhere by 2030:

Finance

- Governments must close major financing gaps in national WASH plans, through taxes, tariffs and transfers.
- Governments must strengthen domestic resource mobilisation, significantly increasing expenditure and effective and affordable tariffs, and ensuring a vibrant, well-regulated private sector.
- Donors must substantially increase official development assistance to WASH.
- The global community must support countries vulnerable to climate change in accessing climate finance for WASH to build their resilience.

Integration

- Governments must build effective cross-ministerial and multi-stakeholder processes between WASH and intersecting thematic areas, to multiply the benefits to all areas.
- Policy-makers must embed WASH in plans with interconnected objectives.
- Donors must ensure integration across their policies and programmes, and in their work through multilateral agencies, civil society and the private sector.

Sustainability

- Governments, donors and implementing partners must deliver sustainable and climate-resilient services.
- Governments, donors and implementing partners must involve rights-holders throughout planning, monitoring and implementation.
- Governments, donors and implementing partners must focus on behaviour change, to maximise the benefits and sustainability of services.
- Service-providers must ensure better planning, monitoring, accountability and adaptive management.



WaterAid is an international not-for-profit, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Only by tackling these three essentials in ways that last can people change their lives for good.