

Annual Supporters' Meeting 2009

Good afternoon everyone and welcome.

Once again it is wonderful to be here among such a terrific group of WaterAid's supporters – to see old friends and to welcome new faces - all of you contributing so much to WaterAid's work of getting safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation to some of the world's poorest people.

In my 10 minutes I am going to talk about

- Some of the amazing things you have done to support our work
- What we achieved last year as a result of all your support
- Our new global strategy for 2009-2015 and what we plan to do in the future

Your support

This year has been a challenging but incredibly exciting year for WaterAid and around the world we have achieved a huge amount - it is the leadership, drive and positivity of yourselves and all the people that work for us and that we work with that inspires us all.

So many of you in this room willingly give up your precious time to volunteer and do wonderful work to raise awareness, to campaign and to raise funds to support our work.

Last year you helped us get safe water to another million people and sanitation to over 2 million and together we campaigned with considerable success to raise the importance of increased attention and investment to safe water and sanitation as essential ingredients for human development and an end to poverty.

Despite the economic downturn your commitment and inspiration saw us raising a fantastic £44 million last year, up 9% on the previous year.

While of course we have felt the impact of the recession here, it is the poorest people in the countries where we work that are always most affected and with your help we are committed to do even more this year.

There are so many ways you have supported us and I have selected just a few

Some of you have taken to the empty plinth in Trafalgar square to call for the right to water and sanitation for all

And to remind us that 2.5 billion of the world's people don't have a toilet - in fact the giant toilet is with us today and you too can have your picture taken with it as part of our current awareness campaign.

Others have joined us in our 'flash squat' as part of the End Water Poverty coalition calling for sanitation and water for all and an end to the needless loss of children's lives through poor hygiene.

Together we called on governments to help reduce poverty by investing in these basic services.

Others of you have gone to the music festival at Glastonbury to raise awareness, get our petitions signed and of course to clean toilets.

You supported the 'It should be child's play' campaign – health, education AND water and sanitation – the building blocks of development.

And of course many of you wore Hunter wellies in the mud and we are delighted that Hunters are supporting our work.

We also launched the report 'Fatal neglect' to highlight the importance of decent hygiene on the health and mortality of children - and of course we kept emphasising the importance of good sanitation for girls in schools as essential to their staying in education past puberty.

We also have a long standing and excellent relationship with the Swedish company H&M - as many of you might know from buying branded swimwear such as this bikini - and of course we launched WaterAid in Sweden in June and you will be hearing more about that later.

And others took to the water in a sinking raft...
Or to swim with sharks.

We were also delighted to be chosen as the official charity for the Mazda London Triathlon, both this year and for next. We entered a team of 150 people and next year we are aiming for an even bigger group.

So if you want to swim, cycle and run for WaterAid please do see the events team in the break.

In the same month nearly 2,000 intrepid supporters took to the hills as part of Trail 100 and completed the challenge for the first ever time with a team on all 100 mountains! Their efforts raised £200,000

We were also delighted to be chosen by Girlguiding UK who sang for change and raised over £112,000 for our work in Nepal. I attended one of their events in a village in Somerset near my home and the performance bought

tears to my eyes as they sang about children dying from unsafe water.

And many adult choirs also sang out for water

And of course all of you in the Water industry have continued to be wonderful supporters in building constituency through the mailings, volunteering and of course holding spectacular corporate events. I cannot emphasise enough how much we value this unique partnership. Together the water industry, their contractors and unions raised nearly £3m through events and lotteries - in addition to that raised by the customer appeal.

The Thames Water 'Love Water' Ball earlier this year raised a staggering £630,000 for our work – the most ever raised for WaterAid from a single event.

Last year we also saw a significant increase in legacy gifts - £2 million pounds - and I would like to thank all those who consider this very special and lasting support for our work.

And of course we got considerable support from the Department for International Development, the EU along with trusts and foundations.

Some of you may have read my interview with the Secretary of State for International Development Douglas Alexander in our Oasis magazine who said “It was partly the campaigning of organisations like WaterAid which moved me to first double and then double again the amount of money that we are spending on water and sanitation”.

It is good to see our taxes are being used well!

So thank-you for such a wonderful effort to transform lives of the people we work with.

What we achieved

Earlier this year Jeremy Pelczer, our chair of Trustees and I along with others visited Bangladesh to see the final stages of the five year, £17.5 million programme of work funded by the Dept for International Development. 1.8 million people gained access to clean water and 5.7 million sanitation through the community lead total sanitation approach.

We heard from this group of women how at the beginning of the work they mapped out the latrines in their area and where people defecated in the open. We then saw the recent maps that showed that there was no more open defecation and each household had access to a latrine. The woman took me aside and talked about menstrual hygiene and ensuring girls were provided somewhere to wash their rags.

There had also been good work in ensuring that the toilets were accessible to older and disabled people as we aim to reach not only poor people but also those who miss out and are marginalised.

An independent evaluation of the five year programme showed that an estimated £6 million has been saved in medical costs for households.

The figures speak for themselves and really show that one of the big issues that we have been seeking to address in our policy work this year: that water and sanitation really are the foundation for human development.

Without these essential services countries cannot expect to see improvements in health, education or livelihoods and making these links will be one of our new aims in our new Global Strategy.

Global Strategy

As Jeremy mentioned, we are really proud to be launching our Global Strategy for 2009 to 2015 that sets out some very ambitious targets for the years ahead.

To develop this strategy we talked to a lot of people – colleagues in our country programmes, in Sweden, Australia and America and our partners as well as calling on your ideas and asking advice from development and water and sanitation professionals and their organisations.

We all know there will be big challenges ahead with rapid urbanisation, climate change, unstable economies, lack of voice of the poor and marginalised people and poor governance.

But we know the people and partner organisations we work with are incredibly resourceful and resilient in the face of the most difficult situations and will find ways to tackle these issues so that the world's poorest people can realise their right to access safe water and improved sanitation and enjoy improved hygiene.

The new strategy builds on the past – it is evolutionary rather than revolutionary - and re - affirms our values and our approach and looks at making the absolute most of our investments.

So what will success look like - by 2015 we expect to have increased our work from 17 to 30 of the poorest developing countries and to have opened more WaterAid

offices to raise funds and influence change. Through our investment in our partners – local governments, community based organisations, NGOs and local businesses – we aim to reach 25 million people directly and four times this number indirectly through our advocacy and influence work.

This year we are already piloting new work in 8 new countries in Sub Saharan Africa; WaterAid in Australia is extending into Laos and WaterAid in America is considering work in Central America.

We are committed to investing in our staff and our partners to develop capabilities and in influential leadership - critical to our achieving success.

Don't forget; if you want to help us achieve our plans and get more involved in our campaigns or fundraising then do take this opportunity to talk to us. You can of course join or form a local group and lots of new groups have been established in the last few years – but we are always looking for more!

And lastly, before I pass back to Jeremy I have some excellent news.

For the next two years we're delighted to have the support of Whitbread Hotels and Restaurants who are engaging their staff and customers to raise £1 million for India. Thank you to Whitbread for this fantastic commitment.

We are so grateful to the ongoing commitment and support of all of you who campaign and raise funds for us and together I am sure we will meet the big challenges ahead.

And finally I would like to thank our wonderful staff and partners – many of whom are not with us today - for your incredible work. And also to those who volunteer their time to be trustees to guide and encourage us forward.

You are a terrific can-do and inspired team.

I am looking forward to working with everyone to deliver on our very ambitious and exciting global strategy.