

House of Lords - January 28 2009

Your Royal Highness

Lords and Ladies

Distinguished guests

Good afternoon. First of all can I also express my thanks to Baroness Verma for hosting this lunch.

It is indeed a great honour to be invited to speak about the work of WaterAid.

- WaterAid was established as an NGO in 1981 by the Water Industry
- We work in some of the very poorest countries of Africa, Asia and the Pacific Region to help provide safe water, improved hygiene and basic toilets.
- We always work with local organisations and ensure the work is planned and managed by local people to help ensure ownership and self-help
- We also reach out to those that get missed– the poorest, disabled people, women, older people, people with HIV/Aids.

Crisis

While we are all understandably concerned with the global financial crisis there is another crisis that is happening as we speak.

- Every single day 5,000 children die from water-related diseases - the equivalent of 20 jumbo jets of children crashing daily - that cannot be right in 2009.
- the other unacceptable fact is that 4 in 10 people don't have a safe or hygienic place to go to the toilet. That means that women and children often have to wait until after dark to go out and find an open place to relieve themselves.
- Imagine what it is like to fear for your safety when you are looking for that place to go, or for an old or disabled person or a person suffering from an HIV related illness not having a toilet or clean water close by.

There are of course huge benefits to be gained by helping communities get access to safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation.

- The WHO estimates that for every \$1 invested in water and sanitation there is a \$8 return.
- Girls can stay at school – they don't have to carry water and they don't drop out at puberty if there are toilets available.
- Women do not have to walk for miles to get dirty water so they can spend time earning a living and their children can live healthy lives.

Achievements

So what has WaterAid achieved ?

- Last year 1m more people got safe water as a result of WaterAid's work with our local partners and 3 m more got sanitation.
- We also worked to help local governments develop better plans to attract the finances needed to deliver water to their people and we encouraged governments and donors to invest in water and sanitation as a way to achieve their health and education goals.

I was in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso last week and I saw and heard how safe water from wells, small dams and rainwater harvesting had transformed lives. Simple changes like hand washing before meals had cut down on the numbers of children getting sick.

Future:

WaterAid's vision is a world where *everyone* has access to safe water and sanitation and supporting our work is incredibly cost-effective – for as little as £15 you can give a person lasting access to safe water and sanitation.

During this period of economic downturn, we want to inspire support to ensure that the poorest people in the world aren't forgotten.

WaterAid knows we will have to be very careful with spending as our UKP is now only covering 75% of our planned work but we will continue to help those in need and inspire those who can do more to do so.

Supporting communities get safe water, improved sanitation and hygiene education can make a real difference by giving people back their time and dignity and allowing them to begin to make their way out of poverty towards a brighter future.

As we know water is life.

Thank you to you all for your time - we're very grateful to the **Prem Rawat** Foundation for giving us this opportunity to tell you about our work.

I do hope that you will want to find out more and consider supporting WaterAid in the future.