

Barbara introductory speech

Good afternoon and welcome.

As always it is wonderful to see so many of WaterAid's supporters gathered together and to thank you for everything you have done to help us in our work this year.

All here because of our shared commitment to seeing lives transformed through the provision of safe water, improved hygiene and sanitation in the world's poorest communities.

There is no doubt it has been a challenging year - as you would expect in these financially difficult times - however despite this we have still managed to achieve a huge amount - thanks to your ongoing support.



Last year the lives of nearly a million people have been transformed through the provision of safe water and over 1.2 million people through improved sanitation - as a direct result of WaterAid's investment in local organisations. This means women have been freed from the burden of carrying water and caring for sick children and able to earn a decent living and children able to attend school.

So since our foundation, almost 30 years ago, we have reached over 14 million people directly with safe water and over 9 million people with sanitation and have influenced policy and practice to include the needs of poor and marginalised communities.

Despite the challenging economic environment our income did grow by 4% - unfortunately not the 7% hoped for - however we believe we have to keep setting our targets high as the needs are so huge with 40% of the world still not having a decent toilet.

You will recall that last year we launched our global strategy that included plans for significant expansion into new countries in Sub Saharan Africa where the need is greatest and the UN Millennium Development Goals most off track.

Last year we further developed our work in our 15 established country programmes and in addition piloted small programmes of work in nine new countries - you will hear more about this from Girish Menon, our Director of International Programmes shortly.

This year our influencing work really took off on the national and global stage and our supporters played an enormous part in this. Last year several of you said you would like to hear more about this from me so I will be giving you some of the highlights.

It is just so important that we do use our practical experience and research to influence and encourage others to increase their investment in sustainable safe water and sanitation so many more millions of people's lives can be changed.

We have been working hard to ensure our support reaches those most in need – the poorest and most marginalised people who are often overlooked – disabled and older people, people who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Not having private toilet facilities in schools means adolescent girls miss or drop out of school and we have been working hard to ensure schools do have decent facilities and that girls get information about good hygiene.

And of course we support those affected by climate change - flooding or droughts - in the areas where we work. You all know about the devastating floods in Pakistan. Your generous response to our appeal allowed us to reach some of the worst affected areas with safe water, water purification tablets, oral rehydration sachets and to provide attention to good hygiene and toilets. The £165,000 donated assisted in the immediate response to the floods and is now being used for the rehabilitation of community facilities.

While we are not an emergency response agency when a disaster hits in an area where we have been working we do whatever we can to support our local partners in supplying drinking water and toilets.

We know that our ambitious global strategy requires our staff and our partners to demonstrate influential leadership and therefore this year we have invested in leadership development. The team of CEs from around the world – from America, Australia and Sweden - and myself with the UK team of Directors - met in Ghana in July to make sure we really understand the issues facing the country programmes and communities where we work as part of developing our collaborative leadership and the delivery of our global plans.

In Ghana we met several truly influential leaders - people like Jane Amerly - a shining example of a terrific local community leader committed to helping her community realise their true potential. This is Jane talking to Adam our CE from Australia.



Jeremy and I first met Jane two years ago when the area she lived in had no sewage system and piles of rotting rubbish were everywhere. She told us of her plans to mobilise her community to clean up the area and to get decent toilets and safe water. We knew then that if anybody could do it, Jane could. Her rallying call was “women, wake up”.

As we arrived at her community this July people were rushing out to empty their rubbish into the back of a garbage truck and the open drain had gone. A sewage pipe had been laid and new water points put in place from which clean water flowed.

Jane told us that with the support from WaterAid she has seen the health and welfare of her community improve tremendously – children healthy and going to school, women having more time available to dedicate to earning money.

This year we have also made some terrific progress towards our strategic aim of reaching 100 million more people by influencing government policy at local, national and international level.

On World Water Day in March, over 100,000 people across 80 countries joined the World's Longest Toilet Queue, which was organised by End Water Poverty - the coalition that WaterAid founded - to demand action for those without adequate sanitation.

This picture shows UK supporters and you will get to hear more about the queues around the world later in the afternoon.



Also on World Water Day Jan Eliasson, our Chair of WaterAid in Sweden, was instrumental in arranging a UN General Assembly debate on water and the Millennium Development Goals in New York. Before his recent retirement Jan was the President of the UN General Assembly and therefore has considerable influence.

He and I spoke urging member states to do more in investing in water and sanitation as a means to overcome poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

On the same day, our US office took part in an event hosted by the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC to launch their edition on Water - Hillary Clinton spoke at this and highlighted the need for increased action to tackle the global water crisis.

We also attended the UN MDG Summit in September this year and once again Jan Eliasson opened doors. Progress in sanitation is way off track and in particular in Sub Saharan Africa and we were there to promote investment in improved sanitation as a cost effective means to achieve all the MDGs. To make this point, brave colleagues walked the streets – a poo on the loose.

In fact many of the World leaders gathered in NY pledged their commitment to doing more. As I said our influencing work is taking off and the big challenge now is holding those who make these commitments to account.

We will be campaigning hard for tangible results.

Ahead of the general election here, WaterAid successfully encouraged all three major UK political parties to include the water and sanitation crisis in their manifestos – a first. We were also very encouraged that the commitment to overseas aid spending has been maintained by the Government which is quite something in these difficult times of spending cuts.

And to mark the UK Government's 100th day in power we handed in a petition to Downing Street of over 9,000 signatures calling for an end to people dying for lack of a toilet.

All of this work to champion the rights of people to get safe water and sanitation – through provision of services and influencing - would not be possible without your support

Every year I am humbled by the time and energy that so many people from all walks of life have offered - from individuals working so hard to support us through monthly giving and personal challenges - companies allowing staff time to fundraise for WaterAid - and of course all the work of community organisations.

As always it is incredibly difficult knowing who to feature and for all of those who have done wonderful things we are so indebted. So just a few mentions...

First of all many congratulations to Pat Spry and the volunteer group in Frampton Cotterell near Bristol which celebrates 25 years of supporting WaterAid. Not only have you raised almost £100,000 – an amazing achievement – but Pat is also a great campaigner for our work. She can be seen here with Juanita During, Head of Advocacy in WaterAid in Nigeria who came over to meet with our Deputy PM Nick Clegg and our Secretary of State for International Development Andrew Mitchell in advance of their going to the MDG Summit.



I just wanted to quote from what Pat said to them

“I’m sure that future generations will look back with disbelief and shame that we, for so long, we have tolerated the intolerable. I am aware of how lucky I am. In my lifetime I have been fortunate enough to have been well fed, had access to clean, safe water and a hygienic toilet, had the ability to attend school and benefitted from free health care. Yet my story is one that is not shared by those people living in some of the poorest parts of the world. That is why I am calling upon you and other leaders to deliver a funded and timetabled breakthrough plan to meet the MDGs.”

And you’re never too young to fundraise or to influence political leaders either, as nine-year-old Hemi Poulton tells us in a short film later on. Hemi is already lined up as my successor!

WaterAid’s President, HRH The Prince of Wales surprised our 160 volunteers this year at the Glastonbury Festival by stopping by the WaterAid and Hunter welly shy to hear how we have benefited from our partnership with the festival – and to have a go knocking a welly off its perch!

He heard how our volunteers helped to keep the site litter-free, maintain the composting toilets and inspire revellers to add their voices to our Don’t let it drop campaign – which asked politicians to remember their Millennium Development Goal promises. We collected a staggering 34,000 signatures.

With encouragement from his oldest son our former Prime Minister Gordon Brown not only donated the proceeds of Number 10’s Xmas card to WaterAid but also took part in our walking event Coast along for WaterAid. This highly successful event started off in the south west of England now covers coastlines around the UK.

Gordon and family and I joined a team of sponsored walkers in his constituency of Fife at the invitation of Scottish Water.

He told us the boys had had a practice walk the previous weekend to make sure they could do the distance – the fact that it had rained the night before the actual walk meant that jumping in puddles added to the fun but we got there in the end.

We are also so grateful to the partnerships we enjoy with so many companies. For instance Ecover has supported WaterAid's work over the last three years bringing safe water to 15,000 people in Ethiopia.

And Decanter Magazine has supported WaterAid for over five years through the sale of left-over wine from their annual wine awards.

As ever, we are indebted for the ongoing support from the UK water industry and staff who together raised an outstanding £3.9 million last year. More than 1,800 participants took part in the incredible Munro Challenge reaching the summits of our highest mountains.

And finally while we are talking mountains I'd also like to make a special mention to Mark Nankivell and the top two fundraising teams from Barclays Capital who raised more than £72,000 during the superhuman 6 Peaks Challenge.

To enable us to attract new support and to be effective influencers we have been built up our media coverage - hopefully you will have seen articles and TV coverage of our work this year. In fact for the early risers amongst you do tune into Radio 4 this Sunday at 7:55am to hear an appeal for WaterAid recorded by Jonathan Dimbleby.



By maintaining your valuable support you have helped us achieve much this year and I would like to thank you again as you are WaterAid's life blood.

I know that we are all committed to doing even more to scale up our work and by using our collective will, influence, skills and talents to fundraise and raise awareness of the ongoing need I am sure we can achieve this.

I do hope you enjoy the rest of the day.