



WaterAid joins global call for governments to keep their promises on sanitation and water

Today, 19 November, is World Toilet Day and on this day WaterAid in Nigeria is joining hundreds of thousands of people across the globe in calling for Governments to fulfil the promises made to provide access to safe sanitation and clean water.

On this year's World Toilet Day and as part of the End Water Poverty coalition, WaterAid is joining a global coalition of over 200 organisations across the world to launch the **Keep Your Promises** campaign and advocate for an end to the water and sanitation crisis. The campaign will see supporters across the globe taking action throughout the year and calling on their politicians to keep the promises they have made on sanitation and water.

While we welcome the commitments made by our Government, too many of these remain unfulfilled or off-track. Children are still missing school and still dying needlessly from disease caused by unsafe sanitation and contaminated water. To solve the sanitation and water crisis, our politicians and our leaders need to honour the commitments they have made.

World Toilet Day gives us the opportunity to reflect again on the sheer number of people who still do not have access to adequate sanitation around the world – a staggering 2.5 billion people across the world are still without access to adequate sanitation. In sub-Saharan Africa, 223m people practice Open Defecation and 193m do not have adequate sanitary facilities. Consequently, 2,000 African children die every day from entirely preventable diarrhoeal diseases.

With the largest population in Africa, a huge proportion of these numbers are found right here in Nigeria where 103m people still defecate in the open. Current estimates show that only 32% of Nigeria's population has access to improved sanitation facilities, with 36% coverage in urban areas as compared to 28% in rural areas. An estimated 86,000 deaths mainly among children under five occur annually due to diseases predominantly caused by poor sanitation and hygiene practices.

From a moral and humanitarian perspective, indeed from any perspective, this is unacceptable.

Nearly seven in ten women in Nigeria have no access to a safe toilet, threatening their health and exposing them to shame, fear and even violence. This means that on this year's World Toilet Day, 54 million Nigerian women and girls lack safe and adequate sanitation and 17 million of those don't have a toilet at all.

A survey commissioned by WaterAid of women living across five slums in Lagos (Ajegunle, Ijora, Badia, Oko Agbon and Otto-Oyingbo), Nigeria, showed that one in five had first or second hand experience of verbal harassment and intimidation, or had been threatened or physically assaulted in the last year when going to the toilet.

The poll also showed that:

- 67% of women feel unsafe using a shared or community toilet in a public place.
- 40% of women are forced to defecate in a public place. A quarter of these have experienced either harassment, threat of violence or actual assault.
- 61% of women find the toilets they regularly use to be unhygienic.
- 56% of women avoid using toilets at certain times of the day to avoid putting themselves at risk.
- 98% saw it is important for Nigerian Government to prioritise sanitation, in comparison to education and transport.

“When women don’t have a safe, secure and private place to go to the toilet they are exposed and put in a vulnerable position and when they relieve themselves in the open they risk harassment. Women are reluctant to talk about it or complain, but the world cannot continue to ignore this.” The lack of such essential services creates a massive crisis for developing countries – undermining health systems, education, economic development, and progress on gender equality. Poor water, sanitation and hygiene is costing Nigeria around N455 billion – 1.3% of its GDP each year. There is no doubt; access to sanitation is a major challenge in the country.

But this crisis can be solved – as long as there is political will. Overcoming the crisis requires national, state and local governments to stick to their word and to implement the commitments they have made on sanitation and water.

It is time we all realise that there are very real benefits to improved access to adequate sanitation and hygiene. Sanitation not only saves lives, but also makes lives better. There are financial gains to be realised through ending open defecation and ensuring adequate sanitation, at the individual, community and national level.

Decision makers have made promises locally, nationally, regionally and globally to get safe drinking water and sanitation to the world’s poorest countries and communities. Now is the time to turn these words into action and make real progress towards providing sanitation and water for all, including the poorest and marginalised communities. These promises must be kept to bring an end to the global sanitation and water crisis.

We’ve all heard of these commitments and promises. They include:

[The Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#)

The MDGs contain a commitment to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Although the global water target has been achieved, 783 million people still lack access to safe water. Meanwhile, the sanitation target is hugely off-track, and at the current rate of progress it will be **over two hundred years** until the MDG target is reached in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Nigeria's MDG target is to supply 75% of the population with safe water by 2015 and 65% of the population with adequate sanitation. Yet only 58% have water and 31% have sanitation. 2012 JMP figures estimate that 42% of the population of Nigeria still lacks safe water while 69% lacks sanitation.

[The eThekweni declaration and AFRICASAN action plan](#)

32 countries signed the eThekweni Declaration in 2008. They made a number of commitments including pledging to create a separate budget for, and to commit at least 0.5% of GDP to sanitation and hygiene.

A WaterAid report (*Off-track, off-target*) shows Nigeria Government is only spending 0.18% of gross domestic product (GDP) on water and sanitation and is far from meeting the 2008 eThekweni and Sharm el Sheikh commitments to allocate 0.5% of GDP to sanitation. The report states that to get the sanitation and water MDGs back on track, countries in sub-Saharan Africa need to spend at least 3.5% of GDP on these services.

[The Sanitation & Water For All \(SWA\) High Level Meeting 2012](#)

Developing countries, donor countries and development banks participated in a historic High Level Meeting in April 2012. Each published a statement which set out the actions they would take on water and sanitation in the next two years.

The Nigeria Government committed to increasing national access to improved sanitation from the current level of 31% to 65% and potable water supply from 58% to 75% by 2015. This means that an additional population of 70 million and 45 million will have access to adequate sanitation and potable water supply at the close of the millennium declaration.

The Keep Your Promises campaign will culminate at the MDG Summit in New York in September 2013, when the Keep Your Promises global petition will be presented to decision makers calling on them to take action to ensure sanitation and water for all.

WaterAid is joining the End Water Poverty coalition to call for a step change from all governments to keep all of their promises to improve access to sanitation and water. Furthermore, we're calling on governments to go beyond these commitments and to work towards achieving universal access to basic sanitation and safe drinking water.

The Keep Your Promises campaign is local, national, regional and global. Promises have been made at all levels and we all want to see these promises kept. The 4 main demands of the campaign are these:

MORE MONEY: more funding is needed to reach more people with safe sanitation and water services. Decision makers have pledged to increase funding to reach more people with these services and we need to ensure that they keep these promises! The rewards are huge – for every \$1 invested in water and sanitation, an average of \$9 is returned in increased productivity.

BETTER USE OF MONEY: funding for sanitation and water needs to be better targeted to ensure that the poorest countries and most vulnerable communities are reached. This means making sure that Government spends money more effectively and prioritises hard-to-reach areas.

IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY: Government needs to be open about how much money they are spending on sanitation and water. They also need to make it easier to track the progress being made so that advancements against targets can be assessed.

MAKE SANITATION AND WATER A PRIORITY BEYOND 2015: The Millennium Development Goals 'expire' in 2015, and at the moment the development plans which will follow them have not been decided. Keep Your Promises calls for sanitation and water to be prioritised nationally, regionally, and globally beyond 2015.

Notes to Editors

WaterAid is an international NGO working in 27 countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific region to improve communities' quality of life through lasting improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene education using local skills and practical, sustainable technologies.

We have been working in Nigeria for 17 years (since 1995) and currently work in over 100 communities and about 30 LGAs in six States in the Federation. We champion a number of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) approaches, methodologies and low cost WASH technologies geared towards increasing access to WASH in small towns, rural communities and schools across the nation.

Information on Keep Your Promises:

- The Keep Your Promises petition calls on decision makers everywhere to stick to their commitments to tackle the sanitation and water crisis. Sign the petition at www.keepyourpromises.org.
- End Water Poverty is a global coalition of over 200 organisations campaigning to end the water and sanitation crisis.

For more information, contact

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