



What you need to know about the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development



Between 9-18 July decision makers will meet at the UN in New York to review progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 – ‘Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030’.

This is an opportunity to hold governments to account for their progress so far, or the lack of it. Currently, many countries are off-track to meet their promises – some by centuries.

844 million people around the world still do not have clean water close to home. And 2.3 billion people don’t have a decent toilet.¹ As a result, a child under five years old dies every two minutes from diarrhoea.²

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 global goals world leaders have promised to achieve by 2030. Each SDG has associated targets and indicators so that progress can be measured, and governments held to account. The SDGs aim to eliminate poverty, protect the planet and tackle inequality. This level of ambition needs coordination.

What is the high-level political forum on sustainable development?

The UN high-level political forum (HLPF) on sustainable development meets every year to review progress towards the SDGs. Each time, the forum focuses on a small number of goals. And this year SDG6 – the water and sanitation goal – is included. This is an opportunity to call for urgent action to increase progress towards clean water and decent toilets for everyone, everywhere by 2030.

About SDG6 – the water and sanitation goal

Among the SDGs is Goal 6 which aims for universal access to ‘safely managed’ water and sanitation for everyone, everywhere. This means safe drinking water at home, work and in public places, available whenever needed. And a private toilet, where faecal waste is safely disposed of, with soap and water for handwashing.



Why do water, sanitation and hygiene matter?

Without these human rights, people are locked in a cycle of ill health and poverty.

- **Mothers can't give birth safely.**

Every minute, a new-born baby dies from infection caused by a lack of clean water and a dirty environment.³

- **Children die from preventable diseases.**

289,000 children under five years old die every year from diarrhoea caused by dirty water, a lack of sanitation and poor hygiene – a child every two minutes.⁴

- **Children are stunted and can't achieve their potential.**

155 million children under five are stunted, with malnutrition from dirty water and a lack of sanitation a major contributor.⁵

- **Children (and teachers) miss school because they are too sick to attend.**

Around the world, up to 443 million school days are lost every year because of water-related illnesses.⁶

- **Girls drop out of education because they can't have their period in privacy.**

More than a third of girls in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan report missing school days every month during their periods because of inadequate toilets. (www.WASHmatters.wateraid.org)

- **Economic development is held back.**

Poor sanitation cost the world US\$222.9 billion in 2015, a rise of over US\$40 billion in five years and 0.9% of the GDP of countries without sanitation for all. (World Bank)

Water, sanitation and hygiene are the foundation on which development is built. Faster progress towards SDG6 would save lives, keep children in school and unlock the potential of billions of people living in extreme poverty.



Current progress towards SDG6

Clean water and a decent toilet for everyone, everywhere might not sound like so much of a big ask but achieving this goal by 2030 will take unprecedented political will and investment globally.

Today, one in nine people don't even have 'basic' water – access to clean water within a half an hour round trip. This is a lower level of service than the SDG target of safely managed water and sanitation but still inaccessible for millions. One in three people don't have 'basic' sanitation – a toilet that keeps excreta away from human contact. Nearly 900 million of them don't use any toilet at all and defecate in the open.⁷

With 1.2 billion people now living in an area of water scarcity, where demand cannot or will not continue to meet supply, this situation risks getting worse before it gets better.

Countries that on current progress will wait longest for universal access to basic water and sanitation

Ranking	Country	Water for all by	2017 basic water access (%)	Sanitation for all by	2017 basic sanitation access (%)
1	Djibouti	2182	77	3828	51
2	Vanuatu	2032	91	3469	53
3	Bulgaria	decreasing	100	3383	86
4	Equatorial Guinea	3119	50	Decreasing	75
5	Congo	2057	68	2567	15
6	Romania	reached	88	2535	85
7	Eritrea	2507	19	2374	11
8	Gabon	2037	88	2478	41
9	Togo	2047	63	2449	14
10	Ghana	2040	78	2428	40

Progress based on JMP statistics showing increase in access between 2000 to 2015. Progress shown for countries that currently have less than 95% coverage. Progress data taken from www.WASHwatch.org

There are many countries, including Chad, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, in which access to water and sanitation is going backwards. There are various reasons for this. In some regions, climate change is making water sources increasingly unreliable and causing sea levels to rise contaminating previously drinkable water with salt. Population growth and movement are adding to the challenge. It is estimated that the rapid urbanisation taking place in Nigeria since 2000 has meant that for every person provided with a toilet in an urban area two more have joined the queue. Based on United Nations statistics showing progress made between 2000 and 2015, 80 countries will not have universal access to even a basic water supply by 2030 and 106 will not have universal basic sanitation. There is also good news. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) resulted in over two billion people getting clean

water and around the same number getting a decent toilet for the first time, between 2000 and 2015.

Over that period, in Laos the percentage of people with clean water rose from under half (45.8%) to 80%; in Afghanistan it increased from 27% to 63%; and in China nine million more people had a toilet to use. Progress has been made, but it has been patchy and in many places not nearly fast enough.

How much will it cost to achieve universal 'basic' level access?

WaterAid supports the ambition of SDG6 in providing safely managed services to everyone, everywhere by 2030. We also recognise that providing basic services is an important stepping stone.

Reaching the people currently without basic water and sanitation would cost an estimated \$28.4 billion (£21.3 billion) a year, from 2015 to 2030.⁸ This sounds like

an enormous amount. But to put it in context, it is 0.1% of the GDP of the 140 countries where there is not currently universal access. \$28.4 billion is Microsoft's revenue in 2018 alone. And The Sunday Times Rich List 2018 put the overall wealth of the richest 1,000 people in Britain at £724 billion – 25 times the annual amount needed for universal basic coverage and nearly double the total amount needed to give everyone, everywhere clean water and a decent toilet.

This should come from Governments raising money from a mixture of taxes, affordable tariffs for using water and sanitation services and transfers. The cost does not need to be, and should not be, met by aid alone. It is an investment in sustainable development.

- For every £1 invested in water and sanitation at least £4 is returned in increased productivity, mostly from people having better health and more time to work.⁹
- The World Bank estimated that: 'The total economic benefits of meeting the MDG target amount to US\$60 billion annually. The benefits are dominated by sanitation, accounting for US\$54 billion.'

What does WaterAid want from the 2018 HLPF?

To achieve SDG6 urgent action is needed to finance water and sanitation; integrate it with health, nutrition, education and other areas of development; and make progress sustainable.

While national governments are responsible for providing their people with clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene, the SDGs are an international commitment. All governments in both developed and developing countries are responsible for achieving them. SDG6 will only be met if governments, non-governmental organisations, grassroots movements, the private sector and others work together.

The following are essential:

- Every government needs to have financial and multi-sectoral plans of how they will deliver SDG6.
- Investments in water and sanitation must be targeted to support the most vulnerable and where the need is greatest.
- No school or healthcare facility should be built without adequate water and sanitation services – and plans must be made to improve existing inadequate facilities.

Recently, the world has witnessed the impact of drought on access to water in South Africa and India. Developed countries are mostly responsible for the emissions causing climate change and making access to water and sanitation more difficult. So these governments have a moral duty not only to reduce emissions but to ensure that the affected countries can put in place adaptation measures to cope with the impacts on water and sanitation. The current inaction is costing lives and livelihoods.

We are calling for a strategic shift in water and sanitation financing – not just in the amount of money invested, but in how it's used. For too long money has been spent on building new taps and toilets without enough thought about what happens next. We need to invest in building countries' systems – in policies, institutions, regulations and people – to improve and sustain services. Only then will countries be able to meet SDG6 and continue to develop without aid.

