The Sustainable Development Goals and WaterAid

There is increasing global awareness of the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) to alleviate poverty. Investing in WASH requires an integrated approach with first steps required at the household, community, district and country level.

Given the number of intersections between business and WASH, and the diversity of business activities and models globally, the business case for engaging on WASH is multi-faceted. The most obvious alignment and in fact, greatest need, is in providing WASH access and education for working people, both in their places of employment and wider communities.

Access to water and other services such as toilets are basic human rights. With improved access we are able to stop the spread of deadly diseases and improve people’s health and living conditions. Businesses that are already engaging on WASH make a clear link between business value, and the societal benefit or development impact generated by investing in WASH.

A global vision to end extreme poverty by 2030 beginning with water and sanitation.
Access to water and sanitation has far-reaching impacts, it creates fairer, more productive and healthier communities. Therefore, water, sanitation and hygiene extends far beyond Goal 6. WASH is an essential component of an integrated approach to tackling poverty, hunger, health and inequality. Successful realisation of goal 6 will underpin progress across many other goals, including:

On 25 September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, redefining how the global community will work together to address poverty and improve living standards, while ensuring development is sustainable. The 17 goals cover a range of issues from water and sanitation to poverty, gender equality, health and climate change.

Other Global Goals that have links to WASH

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

The SDGs call for worldwide collective action among governments, business and civil society to end poverty and create a life of dignity and opportunity for all, within the boundaries of the planet.
The Opportunities and challenges

Today, more than 650 million people live without safe, clean water and 2.3 billion live without sanitation. However, there is real hope for the future, with countries across the world strongly supporting the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals.

Rapid Urbanisation, population growth and economic development present increasing and competing demands for water. Based on current trends, the population in Asia is expected to reach 4.9 Billion by 2030. Meeting domestic needs as well as those of agriculture, energy and industry presents complex and competing challenges for water resource management, environmental protection and the treatment of waste.

Climate change is likely to lead to more frequent, unpredictable and extreme weather episodes, with poor people disproportionately affected by floods, droughts and contaminated water. It will be increasingly important that communities can access climate resilient water and sanitation facilities and that action is taken to mitigate the impact.

Public Health depends on safe water, sanitation and good hygiene. Without these services deadly outbreaks of diseases such as cholera and Ebola are likely to be more prevalent and the impact of infectious diseases will be exacerbated.

Financing universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene will require a significant increase in public and private funding. It will be essential to target investment where it is most needed and improve coordination with programs in health, education and the environment.

Sustaining water and sanitation services and hygiene is a significant challenge in many developing countries. More attention needs to be paid by governments and other service providers to ensure the maintenance of facilities that are appropriate affordable and accessible.

Against this backdrop, WaterAid’s strategy is to bring strong partnerships and coalitions together as we work towards our goal of water, sanitation and hygiene for everyone by 2030. Through four interconnected aims we will influence change: address inequality to access; strengthen sustainable services; integrate WASH with other essential areas of development; and improve hygiene behavior.