

## World Water Day: Providing universal access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene is a huge challenge

Written by Margaret Batty on 21 March 2016 in Opinion Plus  
Opinion Plus

But with the European Union's support of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, clean water can become a reality that transforms our world, writes WaterAid's Margaret Batty.



This World Water Day is perhaps a good time to take a moment to celebrate the fact that since 1990 more than two and a half billion people have been freed from the daily threat of drinking dirty water.

However, on reflection, it's also worth asking why, 150 years after Europe's cities installed sewers and water supply networks, 1.8 billion people around the world still have no choice but to drink water from sources contaminated by faeces.

Why is it that 42 per cent of healthcare facilities in sub-Saharan Africa still do not have access to safe water? What difference could universal access to clean water and adequate sanitation have had during the recent Ebola outbreak?

---

## RELATED CONTENT

- [Neven Mimica: New EU approaches to improving access to safe drinking water in developing countries are starting to bear fruit](#) [1]
  - [Cristian Dan Preda: Universal access to clean water 'far from being a reality'](#) [2]
  - [PM+: Right to water and sanitation still an 'unrealised dream'](#) [3]
  - [José Inácio Faria: Right2Water 'landmark moment' for citizens' participation in decision making](#) [4]
  - [Benedito Brag: Water and sanitation a political opportunity, not just a problem](#) [5]
- 

When clean water arrives in a community the impact ripples through every aspect of daily life; children, particularly girls, are relieved of the time consuming task of walking vast distances to collect water, allowing them to return to school.

Freed from the persistent diarrhoea that results from dirty water and poor sanitation, they grow up stronger and with better cognitive functions. Their future becomes brighter as does the economic prospects of their communities and countries.

Women no longer have to spend hours every day fetching water that they know could well make their children sick. Instead they can spend more time helping their families, perhaps with time to boost the family income.

Last September the world pledged through the Sustainable Development Goals that everyone, everywhere would have access to clean water by 2030. But to achieve that historical promise will require everyone to up their game.

So 2016 must be the turning point, when we start to do things differently. It is encouraging to see change already happening. The European Parliament has been a strong advocate for this basic need and human right through its support for the European Citizens' Initiative on the Right2Water.

We need MEPs to continue to ask the hard questions: is there sufficient prioritisation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and is aid targeted to where needs are greatest?

Over the next four years, water will be a focus sector for EU development cooperation in just 13 out of approximately 150 partner countries. Of the 13, only seven feature in the list of countries identified by WaterAid as priorities for external support - due their low access rates and limited capacity for domestic resource mobilisation - meaning that aid isn't reaching those most in need.

Increased, better targeted investment makes strategic sense as WASH is crucial to sustainable and inclusive growth. It is estimated that for every €1 invested in water and sanitation, an average of at least €4 is returned in increased productivity.

EU aid has a crucial role to play in building the capacity of governments to deliver equitable and sustainable water and sanitation services. Strengthening national systems and institutions are the most effective ways we can ensure that everyone everywhere has access forever. These kinds of lasting results are the true meaning of good value for money for European taxpayers.

The past has shown that, as a global development leader, when the EU moves the world follows. Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the ideal opportunity for the

EU to demonstrate its leadership once more by prioritising WASH in its development cooperation.

Reaching the goal of universal access by 2030 is a huge challenge but with the focus and determination of the EU it is achievable and will transform our world.

### **About the author**

Margaret Batty is Director of Global Policy and Campaigns at WaterAid

*WaterAid is an international organisation whose mission is to transform the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people by improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).*

### **Tags**

[Development](#) [6]

[Environment](#) [7]

### **Categories**

[Agriculture and rural affairs](#) [8]

[Environment](#) [9]

[International Relations](#) [10]



### **Site Sections**

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

### **Services**

[Dods PeopleDods](#)

[MonitoringDods](#)

[ResearchDods](#)

[EventsDods](#)

[Training](#)

## **Media & publishing titles**

[Politics Home](#)  
[The House](#)  
[The Parliament](#)  
[Magazine](#)  
[Holyrood](#)  
[Total Politics](#)  
[Public Affairs](#)  
[News](#)  
[Civil Service](#)  
[World](#)  
[Public](#)  
[Technology](#)  
[Training](#)  
[Journal](#)  
[Dods](#)  
[Parliamentary](#)  
[Companion](#)  
[Vacher's](#)  
[Quarterly](#)  
[The European Union and](#)  
[Public Affairs](#)  
[Directory](#)

## **Dods events**

[Westminster](#)  
[Briefing](#)  
[Digital Health & Care](#)  
[Scotland](#)  
[MEP Awards](#)  
[The Skills Summit](#)  
[Scottish Public Service](#)  
[Awards](#)  
[Public Sector Procurement](#)  
[Summit](#)  
[Public Sector ICT](#)  
[Summit](#)  
[Cyber Security](#)  
[Summit](#)  
[Cyber Security 2017](#)  
[Training](#)  
[Journal Awards](#)

## **Partnership events**

[The Health and Care Innovation](#)  
[Expo](#)  
[Civil Service Live](#)  
[Civil Service Awards](#)  
[Chief Nursing Officer for](#)  
[England's Summit](#)  
[Women into](#)

[LeadershipThe  
Youth Justice  
ConventionSocitm  
Spring  
ConferenceNHSCC  
Annual Members'  
EventDods at Party  
Conference](#)

---

[Privacy PolicyTerms & ConditionsAdvertisingSponsorship Subscriptions](#)

---

**Source URL:** [https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner\\_article/wateraid/world-water-day-providing-universal-access-safe-drinking-water](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner_article/wateraid/world-water-day-providing-universal-access-safe-drinking-water)

#### **Links**

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/world-water-day-two-thirds-world-population-could-face-water-shortages>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/universal-access-clean-water-far-being-reality>
- [3] [https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner\\_article/pm-right-water-and-sanitation-still-unrealised-dream](https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/partner_article/pm-right-water-and-sanitation-still-unrealised-dream)
- [4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/right2water-landmark-moment-citizens-participation-decision-making>
- [5] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/water-and-sanitation-political-opportunity-not-just-problem>
- [6] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/development>
- [7] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/environment>
- [8] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/agriculture-and-rural-affairs>
- [9] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/environment>
- [10] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/international-relations>