

PRESS RELEASE



Climate change threatens water access for world's poorest, says WaterAid

'Turn the tide: The state of the world's water 2021'
WaterAid's media report



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The impact of climate change on people's water supplies is being overlooked – threatening to put progress on bringing clean water to all back decades unless urgent action is taken to help the world's poorest communities adjust to changing weather patterns.

WaterAid's latest report: "*Turn the tide: The state of the world's water 2021*" shows how people are losing access to clean water as longer droughts dry up springs, seawater infiltrates groundwater supplies and landslides take out water pumps. The international development organisation shows that investing in water systems that provide a reliable supply whatever the weather, is a frontline defence against the impact of climate change.

In the crucial battle to reduce current and future global emissions, the situation faced now by those most impacted by climate change has been given little focus or investment. WaterAid is calling on governments to prioritise water in their climate plans.

Without easy access to clean water, people's lives are blighted by sickness, poverty and the endless drudgery of collecting water. **Women and girls around the world already collectively already spend an estimated 200 million hours a year – or around 23,000 years – walking to fetch water.**ⁱ For the 60 million people in Nigeria that do not have clean water close to home, the hours spent collecting water or the time needed to recover from waterborne illnesses caused by dirty water, robs entire communities of an opportunity to build a better future. For the girls and women tasked with fetching water, having to walk further to find a clean water source takes time away from their education and disproportionately impacts on their lives.

Climate change acts as a threat multiplier for water, exacerbating problems caused by poor management of water resources, lack of political will and inadequate investment. With the current climate scenario, it is predicted that water scarcity will displace between 24 million and 700 million people, by 2030.ⁱⁱ

Currently, only 5% of total global climate funding is spent on helping countries adapt to their changing climate, and that money is not targeted at the communities most vulnerable to climate change. The investment in ensuring that everyone no matter where they live has a reliable and safe water source to help make communities become more resilient to climate change, is completely inadequate to the growing crisis.

With less than a decade to deliver on Sustainable Development Goal 6 – clean water and sanitation for all, WaterAid is calling on governments at sub-national and national levels to address current and future threats to water access as part of climate actions plans – including the National Action Plan for the Revitalisation of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene sector (NAP), and national budgets. We are also urging the government to ensure the voices of local communities and marginalised groups are heard in planning decisions around adaptation.

Evelyn Mere, Country Director, WaterAid Nigeria, said:

“Climate change is making it more difficult for vulnerable people to be able to rely on having clean water when they need it and it’s a great injustice that the world’s poorest people, who’ve contributed the least to the crisis, are living with its most destructive impacts.

“Unless communities have access to a reliable source of water, people’s health will suffer, and they’ll be burdened with spending more and more time searching for water, taking away the opportunity to create a better life and escape poverty.

“The government needs to step up now, commit to reductions and recognise the critical role clean water has in helping communities cope with climate change and recovering quickly from related extreme weather events.”

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

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WaterAid is working to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. The international not-for-profit organisation works in 28 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalised people. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 27 million people with clean water and 27 million people with decent toilets. For more information, visit www.wateraid.org, follow @WaterAidUK or @WaterAidPress on Twitter, or find WaterAid UK on Facebook at www.facebook.com/wateraid.

- 785 million people in the world – one in ten – do not have clean water close to home.¹
- 2 billion people in the world – almost one in four – do not have a decent toilet of their own.²

¹ WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baselines*

² WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) *Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baselines*

- Around 310,000 children under five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases caused by poor water and sanitation. That's around 800 children a day, or one child every two minutes.³
- Every £1 invested in water and toilets returns an average of £4 in increased productivity.⁴
- Just £15 can provide one person with clean water.⁵

In Nigeria⁶:

- Only 9% of the population have access to combined water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- 60 million people (30% of the population) lack access to clean water.
- 112 million people (56% of the population) lack decent toilets.
- 46 million people (23% of the population) practice open defecation.
- 167 million people (84% of the population) lack basic handwashing facilities.
- Only 14% of schools have combined water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- Only 7% of healthcare facilities have combined water, sanitation and hygiene services.
- Only 14% of parks and markets have combined water, sanitation and hygiene services.

ⁱ UNICEF (2016). *UNICEF: Collecting water is often a colossal waste of time for women and girls*. Available at: [unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls)

ⁱⁱ UN/UN Water (2020). *Water Scarcity*. Available at: unwater.org/water-facts/scarcity/

³ Prüss-Ustün et al. (2014) and The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (2018)

⁴ World Health organization (2012) Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage

⁵ www.wateraid.org

⁶ 2019 WASH National Outcome Routine Mapping (WASH NORM)