

**Debate Pack**

10 October 2023

Number CDP 2023/0193

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# Debate on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Sustainable Development

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# 1

## Background

This is a Westminster Hall debate, proposed by Dr Michael Offord MP through the Backbench Business Committee. It is scheduled for 17 October 2023 from 9.30-11.30am.

### 1.1

## Access to water, sanitation and hygiene

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) refers to collective concerns around access to water and is commonly used by non-governmental organisations and aid agencies. It covers accessibility, water quality and water safety, and encompasses drinking water, sanitation (for example, access to toilets) and hygiene practices (for example, handwashing). In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly recognised the human right to water and sanitation.<sup>1</sup>

Worldwide 2.2 billion people lack access to drinking water, more than half the global population does not have access to safe sanitation and three billion people do not practice handwashing with soap<sup>2</sup>.

The UN expands on the outcomes of this lack of access to water, sanitation and hygiene; it states that “without better infrastructure and management, millions of people will continue to die every year from water-related diseases such as malaria and diarrhoea, and there will be further losses in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, undermining prosperity and efforts towards a more sustainable future”.<sup>3</sup>

Lack of action on WASH can contribute to supply chain disruption, food shortages, antimicrobial resistance, and future conflict<sup>4</sup>. The Global Commission on the Economics of Water’s report ‘[Turning the Tide](#)’ predicts that global freshwater demand will outstrip supply by 40% by 2030<sup>5</sup>, with increasing scarcity contributing to an “imminent risk of a global water crisis”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, [The human right to water and sanitation: Resolution 64/292](#), 28 July 2010, Accessed 5 October 2023

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 6](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 6](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 6](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

WaterAid, APPG on Antibiotics, APPG on WASH, British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy, [Prevention First: Why clean water and hygiene are the best medicine against the spread of drug-resistant infections](#), Water Aid, 21 February 2023, Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>5</sup> The Global Commission on the Economics of Water (part of the OECD Environment Directorate), [Turning the Tide](#), March 2023, Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, [World Water Development Report 2023](#), 2023, Accessed 3 October 2023.

[The UK recognises](#) a right to water and a right to sanitation as elements of the right to an adequate standard of living under [Article 11 of the United Nations' International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#).<sup>7</sup>

The UK has three main interests in promoting WASH:

- Direct commitments made through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular through [the sixth goal on clean water and sanitation](#)<sup>8</sup>, which sets out the UK's responsibility to promote sustainable development and access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene.
- The impact of UK consumption of water intensive consumer goods, and the security of supply of these goods should limited action on WASH result in scarcity (see the Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology's [POSTnote on water footprints](#)).<sup>9</sup>
- The global insecurity and conflict that could result from a lack of action on WASH, including supply chain risk, food shortages, and global health crises<sup>10</sup>.

## 1.2

## The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a plan of action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The SDGs were adopted by all UN Member States (including the UK), in 2015, as part of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

There are seventeen SDGs that underpin a “shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.”<sup>11</sup> There are 169 targets that sit underneath these goals. The goals encompass action for all countries.

At the September 2023 UN General Assembly in New York, an ‘[SDG Summit](#)’ was convened to mark the half-way point for achieving the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

Further information about the summit and progress on the SDGs can be found in the Library briefing [Halfway to 2030: The Sustainable Development Goals](#) (2023). Global statistics and targets relevant to each of the SDGs can be accessed on the [UN SDG website](#).

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<sup>7</sup> The UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entered into force on 3 January 1976, and the UK signed this on 16 September 1968 and ratified on 20 May 1976.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 6](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>9</sup> POST, [Water in Production and Products](#), POSTnote 385.

<sup>10</sup> World Health Organization, [Water, sanitation and hygiene \(WASH\)](#). Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals: Goals](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

## Sustainable Development Goal 6

The [sixth Sustainable Development Goal \(“SDG6”\) for clean water and sanitation](#) aims to “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”.<sup>12</sup>

It calls for ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. It also aims to end defecation in the open, improve water quality and water use efficiency, and encourage sustainable abstractions (removal of water from the environment) and supply of freshwater.<sup>13</sup>

SDG6 has eight targets and respective indicators that can be used to track progress, both nationally and internationally:

### 1 Targets for SDG6

- 6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- 6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.
- 6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.
- 6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity.
- 6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate.
- 6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes.
- 6.A By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies.

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations, [Sustainable Development Goals: Goal 6](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>13</sup> UK Government, [Goal 6- Clean Water and Sanitation](#), Accessed 3 October 2023.

6.B Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.

More information about these targets and their supporting indicators can be accessed on the [UN SDG website](#)

Some of the key worldwide water and sanitation statistics for SDG6, updated in 2023, include:

- 2.2 billion people lack safely managed drinking water,
- 3.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation,
- 2.2 billion people lack basic handwashing facilities.<sup>14</sup>

In 2020, 2.4 billion people lived in water stressed countries. Despite water use efficiency having risen globally by 9%, water stress and water scarcity remain prevalent and are further compounded by conflict and climate change.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.3

# Progress towards SDG6

## UK progress

The UK government publishes [data on progress](#) towards the targets and indicators for all the SDGs. On 16 July 2019, the UK published a [voluntary review of progress](#)<sup>16</sup>, and the Library produced a [debate briefing](#) in advance of a general debate on this review (June 2019).

UK work towards SDG6 is split between three government departments; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) works on improving the environment at home, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) works to promote international sustainable development, and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is responsible for

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<sup>14</sup> United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition](#), 10 July 2023, Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition](#), 10 July 2023, Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>16</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [UK Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: the Voluntary National Review](#), 16 July 2019, (HC 1732).

strengthening defence capabilities.<sup>17</sup> Work to date has focused on international targets, as many of the targets for water in the UK have already been achieved (including safe and affordable drinking water, access to sanitation).

Some examples of the UK’s progress:

- In January 2018, the government committed to achieving “clean and plentiful water by improving at least 75% of our waters to be close to their natural state as soon as is practicable” in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#).<sup>18</sup>
- In April 2023, an updated approach to sustainable water management was set out in the integrated [Plan for Water](#).<sup>19</sup>

In respect of SDG6, the UK reported the following progress in 2022:

Table 1. UK progress towards SDG6.		
Goal or indicator	Metric	UK Progress (2022)
6.1 Universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.	Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services.	99.8%
6.2 Access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation.	Proportion of population using (b) safely managed sanitation services and (b) a hand-washing facility with soap and water.	98.1%
6.3 Improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials ...	Proportion of domestic and industrial wastewater flows safely treated.	No data available.
	Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality.	35.7% (data for 2020).
6.4 Increase water use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals	Change in water use efficiency over time.	No data available.
		14.4% (data for 2020).

<sup>17</sup> Cabinet Office, Department for International Development, Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, [Corporate report: implementing the Sustainable Development Goals](#), 15 July 2021, Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [25 Year Environment Plan](#), 11 January 2019 (updated 17 February 2023), Accessed 4 October 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, [Plan for Water](#), 4 April 2023, Accessed 4 October 2023.

and supply of freshwater to address scarcity.	Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources.	
6.5 Implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation.	Degree of integrated water resources management. Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operation arrangement for water cooperation.	79% (data for 2020).  No operational agreements are currently in place.
6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems.	Change in extent of water-related ecosystems over time.	-3.89% change from baseline (data for 2017-2021).
6.a Expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries.	Amount of water – and sanitation – related overseas development assistance (ODA).	£45.6 million contributed in 2022 (data for 2022). <sup>20</sup>
6.b Support and strengthen participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management.	Proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management.	UK and devolved governments have put in place regulatory frameworks to govern the public supply of drinking water and sewerage systems, with more detail set out in the <a href="#">legislative response</a> .

Source: UK Government, [Goal 6- Clean Water and Sanitation](#), Accessed 3 October 2023. Please note, these goals are for 2030 unless otherwise specified, and the data given are for 2022 unless specified.

## International progress

The UN produces annual reports on progress towards the SDGs, and on 10 July 2023 published a [special edition of the annual report to mark halfway to the 2030 sustainable development goals](#). The UN cautioned that progress on the goals has stalled, and, in some cases, went into reverse during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Commons Library also has an Insight covering [SDG progress ‘halfway to 2030’](#) (September 2023).

Some examples of the UK’s contribution towards international progress:

- In 2021 at the 26<sup>th</sup> United Nations climate change conference in Glasgow (‘Conference of the Parties’ or COP26), the UK and Mali launched the [Fair](#)

<sup>20</sup> Data for this indicator is taken from the FCDO’s [Statistics for International Development: final UK aid spend 2022](#), as shown in the table in section 1.5. This has not yet been updated on the UK Government webpage [Goal 6- Clean Water and Sanitation](#).

[Water Footprints initiative](#), raising the profile of commodity water use and resources crossing boundaries.

- In March 2023 at the [UN Water Conference](#), the [UK announced new funding support](#) for WASH schemes across Asia and Africa.<sup>21</sup> This includes £18.5 million in support over a five-year programme across South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. More detail of the UK's aid spending is outlined in section 1.5.

The UN's 2023 report highlighted progress in increasing global water use efficiency but noted major challenges of water stress and scarcity in many parts of the world. High level strategies suggested by the UN for achieving SDGs by 2030 include increasing sector-wide investment, promoting innovation and evidence-backed action, enhancing cooperation, and adopting a more integrated approach to water management.

The [UN 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Report](#)<sup>22</sup> provides a high level overview on progress, with more detailed information in the [supporting statistical annexes](#):

- Access to drinking water, sanitation and hygiene has improved in rural areas, but decreased in urban areas.
- Water quality is improving in countries with robust monitoring.
- Water use efficiency has improved, particularly in agriculture, but rising water stress prompts concern.
- Transboundary collaboration and better water management will be important in bolstering resilience to future water crises.
- Decline in official development assistance is of concern.
- Large scale protection and restoration of wetland ecosystems is required.<sup>23</sup>

UN-Water has produced an [interactive map](#) that allows users to look at different water and sanitation indicators. This can display information about the entire world or divided by regions or countries.

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<sup>21</sup> Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [UK announces new support for improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene in Asia and Africa](#), 22 March 2023, Accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition](#), 10 July 2023, Accessed 5 October 2023.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition](#), 10 July 2023, p. 25, Accessed 5 October 2023.

## 1.4

# UK aid policy

## International development strategy, 2022

In May 2022, the UK Government [launched a new ten-year international development strategy](#). It has four broad priorities: strengthening reliable investment, providing humanitarian assistance, addressing climate change, biodiversity and global health, and empowering women and girls<sup>24</sup>.

The strategy did not make specific reference to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes or SDG6.

However, [the Government has defended its approach](#) (PDF), stating it “remains committed to WASH” and that it makes an important contribution to achieving other goals in the strategy, such as [ending the preventable deaths of mothers, children and babies by 2030](#).<sup>25</sup>

The Minister for Development, Andrew Mitchell, says the government’s WASH aid programming is also moving away from direct delivery of WASH services to households and communities and towards supporting governments “establish inclusive, sustainable and climate resilient services.”<sup>26</sup>

This shift reflects questioning by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) in 2016 on whether UK investments in WASH were sustainable and the findings of a government review on UK WASH programmes in 2019. The 2019 review found just over half the UK’s water points constructed before 2018 were still working and a third demonstrated limited functionality.<sup>27</sup>

In November 2023, the Government is expected to [publish a white paper on international development](#). This will seek to put the SDGs “back on track.”<sup>28</sup>

## Commitments at UN water conference, 2023

The UN World Water conference was held in March 2023 in New York to accelerate work on SDG 6 (see above, section 1.3). This was the first UN conference on water since 1977.

At the conference, [the UK announced an £18.5 million, five-year programme](#) to improve access to safe, reliable and affordable water in up to five countries in

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<sup>24</sup> Commons Library research briefing, [The UK’s 2022 aid strategy](#), June 2022 and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), [The UK government’s strategy for international development](#), updated 29 August 2022

<sup>25</sup> [Minister for Development and Africa to the Chair of the International Development Committee](#) (PDF), 8 April 2023, pp1-2

<sup>26</sup> As above and FCDO, [Ending preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children by 2030: Approach paper](#), 14 December 2021

<sup>27</sup> ICAI, [Information note: The UK’s changing approach to water, sanitation and hygiene](#), 7 April 2022, ‘A new strategic direction’

<sup>28</sup> HCWS969 [[International development white paper](#)], 18 July 2023; HC Deb, [18 July 2023](#), c763

Asia and Africa<sup>29</sup>, and “[seed funding](#)” for a £38 million water security programme.<sup>30</sup>

The United States also announced [up to US\\$49 billion in commitments](#) to support climate-resilient water and sanitation infrastructure and services, while the [European Commission announced a target](#) to support 70 million people have access to an improved drinking water source or sanitation facility by 2030.<sup>31</sup>

## 1.5 UK aid spending

### Trends in aid for WASH

Between 2009 and 2022, the UK government spent a total of £1.8 billion in aid under the “water supply and sanitation” sector. The yearly amount increased to a peak of £206.5 million in 2018, before falling rapidly to £45.6 million in 2022, the lowest amount across the entire period and a 41% decrease compared to the previous year. The chart below breaks aid spending on this area since 2015 down into sub-sectors.

#### UK aid spending on water supply and sanitation, by sub-sector

£ millions, not adjusted for inflation

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Basic drinking water supply and basic sanitation	41.9	25.8	22.5	39.6	52.3	26.4	9.0	6.1
Basic drinking water supply	46.9	67.5	48.3	39.1	27.2	11.3	14.4	4.0
Water sector policy and administrative management	21.0	23.3	22.9	25.9	16.6	13.7	8.8	12.1
Basic sanitation	54.1	24.7	36.7	36.5	23.5	11.0	10.3	-0.0
Water supply and sanitation - large systems	2.4	17.4	19.8	35.0	28.4	25.1	17.3	4.0
Water supply - large systems	9.4	7.4	6.9	6.0	10.6	6.9	3.9	6.8
Water resources conservation (including data collection)	1.6	0.0	3.5	6.1	2.5	2.4	2.2	3.5
Education and training in water supply and sanitation	0.8	0.9	10.2	8.9	5.3	3.7	1.7	0.4
River basins development	3.1	1.2	2.5	3.6	5.1	3.4	1.8	1.5
Waste management/disposal	1.3	1.9	3.4	5.6	4.2	3.0	2.2	0.5
Sanitation - large systems	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.3	-	2.8	6.2	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>182.6</b>	<b>170.0</b>	<b>177.0</b>	<b>206.5</b>	<b>175.7</b>	<b>109.9</b>	<b>77.8</b>	<b>45.6</b>

<sup>29</sup> FCDO, [UK announces new support for improving access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene in Asia and Africa](#), 22 March 2023 and PQ 181598 [[Water: Sustainable Development](#)], 25 April 2023

<sup>30</sup> HL Deb, [28 March 2023](#), c127.

<sup>31</sup> US Mission to the UN, [US announces \\$49 billion in commitments to global water security and sanitation](#), 22 March 2023 and European Commission, [Access to water and sanitation](#), Accessed 20 September 2023.

Source: FCDO, [Statistics on International Development](#), data underlying SID, multiple editions.

“Basic drinking water supply and basic sanitation” has accounted for 34% of the total between 2009 and 2022, followed by the more specific sub-sector “Basic drinking water supply” (16%). “Water sector policy and administrative management” and “Basic sanitation” each account for a further 15%, with no other sub-sector accounting for more than 9%.

In 2022, unspecified developing countries were the largest recipients of aid (this designation is often used for aid contributions that went to multilateral institutions such as UN agencies or the World Bank). The largest contribution to a single country was £5.4 million to Sierra Leone, with other countries and regions in Africa making up the rest of the top ten. Between 2009 and 2022, the single country receiving the most aid was Ethiopia, accounting for 12% of the total.

## Impact of spending reductions

### International Development Committee evidence

The Commons International Development Committee held [an oral evidence session on UK WASH programmes](#) in 2023, which included consideration of the effects of spending reductions.

The committee heard evidence from Oxfam in Nepal, who said spending reductions had meant marginalised communities such as women and girls were unable to be reached by their programmes. ActionAid Bangladesh also reported funding gaps in the WASH sector for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, affecting infant health<sup>32</sup>.

### ICAI information note

In its [2022 information note on UK WASH spending](#), the ICAI said in 2020 and 2021 that some aid programmes “were brought to an early end”. It reported that the budget reductions “may have undermined the sustainability of past assistance” with the cancellation of activities intended to improve this<sup>33</sup>.

While there were 21 fewer WASH programmes in 2021 compared to 2020 (a fall from 151 to 130), the Government is unable to confirm whether the reductions were a result of aid budget reductions or because of the government’s changing approach to the WASH sector<sup>34</sup>.

### APPG report

The All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on Antibiotics, and on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene jointly published a report on WASH, [Prevention first](#), in February 2023. This argued the decline in spending had “put our national health security at risk,” as it increases the risks of infectious diseases

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<sup>32</sup> International Development Committee, [Oral evidence: WASH](#), HC 1174, 28 February 2023, Qs17, 19, 23, 24.

<sup>33</sup> ICAI, [Information note: The UK’s changing approach to water, sanitation and hygiene](#), 7 April 2022, ‘A declining WASH budget since 2018’.

<sup>34</sup> As above, p3.

worldwide and the growth of antibiotic resistance. Investing in WASH reduces antibiotic resistance as it decreases the demand for antibiotics.<sup>35</sup>

The APPGs cited Water Aid analysis which estimated US\$960 million (around £760 million) in new funding is needed annually to meet the global goal to achieve universal access to WASH by 2030. Water Aid said the UK’s “fair share” of funding is an additional US\$34.5 million (around £27 million) each year.<sup>36</sup>

### Government response

In April 2023, the Minister for Development, Andrew Mitchell, in correspondence with the International Development Committee, acknowledged that annual UK aid spending on WASH peaked in 2018.

He said this was linked to the government’s decision not to introduce a new target once it met its 2015 commitment to provide safe water and sanitation for 60 million people by 2020, as well as the changing focus of UK WASH work (set out above).<sup>37</sup>

## Evaluations of UK aid work

In April 2022, the ICAI [published an information note on the UK’s WASH programmes](#), noting that UK bilateral aid for WASH “has fallen steeply” since 2018 and that this raised “questions about the UK’s commitment to the sector”.<sup>38</sup>

However, it said the launch of the Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition (HBCC) in response to the Covid-19 pandemic was “praised” by stakeholders for the speed of its establishment. The HBCC received initial UK funding of £50 million and mobilised support from Unilever, who provided aid-in-kind and used its global network to help partners access hygiene products.<sup>39</sup>

Looking forward, the ICAI argued that the shift towards “system-building” in UK WASH programmes require “even greater resources and commitment.”<sup>40</sup>

In December 2022, the International Development Committee said the 2022 UK aid strategy’s focus on trade and investment, and the rising cost of need in Afghanistan and Ukraine, [must “not lead to further decreases” in WASH](#)

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<sup>35</sup> All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on Antibiotics, and on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, [Prevention first: Why clean water and hygiene are the best medicine against the spread of drug-resistant infections](#), February 2023, pp7, 22, 29.

<sup>36</sup> As above, pp23-4.

<sup>37</sup> [Minister for Development and Africa to the Chair of the International Development Committee](#) (PDF), 8 April 2023, p3.

<sup>38</sup> ICAI, [Information note: The UK’s changing approach to water, sanitation and hygiene](#), 7 April 2022, ‘Introduction’.

<sup>39</sup> As above, WASH in the UK’s pandemic response.

<sup>40</sup> As above, ‘A new strategic direction.’

[programmes](#). It argues this would undermine priorities such as empowering women and girls and access to education.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> International Development Committee, [Extreme poverty and the sustainable development goals](#), HC 147, 13 December 2022, paras 5, 35, 96.

## 2

# Parliamentary material

### 2.1

## PQs

### [Development Aid: Water](#)

Asked by: Offord, Dr Matthew

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in which countries the UK is playing an active role in promoting water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure as part of a functional healthcare system.

Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | **Department:** Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO recognises the importance of ensuring that all healthcare facilities have reliable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. We support this goal through our membership of the WASH In Healthcare Facilities International Taskforce, and we push forward this agenda through our programmes including a hand-hygiene partnership with Unilever. We also support WASH in health facilities in Malawi through the 'Our Health' programme and in Nepal through the Resilient WASH and Emergency Preparedness Programme.

HC Deb 04 May 2023 | PQ 182544

### [Development Aid: Water](#)

Asked by: Offord, Dr Matthew

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the report Prevention First by the APPGs on Antibiotics and on Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, published in February 2023, if he will ring-fence a portion of the annual overseas aid budget for investment in water, sanitation, and hygiene in healthcare facilities.

Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Department: Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO welcomes the recent 'Prevention First' report on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and antibiotic resistance. We have ensured that action on WASH is included in the UK's action plan for antimicrobial resistance. We do not plan to add a ring-fence specifically for WASH in healthcare facilities but we are taking action. For example, through UK funding to the Hygiene and Behaviour Change Coalition 14,800 health care facilities were supported with critical WASH supplies and services, and 460,000 health workers were trained on hygiene practices. Also, as a founding member of the WASH in

Healthcare Facilities international taskforce, the FCDO works with partners to promote better hygiene, infection prevention and reducing the risks of antimicrobial resistance.

HC Deb 04 May 2023 | PQ 182543

### [United Nations World Water Development Report](#)

Asked by: The Lord Bishop of St Albans

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the United Nations World Water Development Report, published on 15 March.

Answered by: The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park)

My Lords, the UK supports the findings of the UN World Water Development Report 2023. We agree that partnership and co-operation are key to achieving sustainable development goal 6: equitable access to water and sanitation for all. However, delivery is far off track, particularly on accountability, political leadership and finance. At last week's UN water conference

I called for increased action in these areas and announced a new £18.5 million water sanitation and hygiene—WASH—system for health programme, as well as seed funding for a new £38 million water programme.

HL Deb 28 March 2023 | Vol 829 c126

### [WASH: Women and girls](#)

Asked by: Paulette Hamilton

What recent steps his Department has taken to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene for women and girls across the world.

Answered by: The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Andrew Mitchell)

Britain is working to improve access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene in 37 developing countries.

Mrs Hamilton:

I refer the House to my declaration in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. A third of women around the world do not have access to clean water. In December, I visited Ghana and saw how water, sanitation and hygiene projects funded by UK aid can be life-changing for women and girls. The Government's international development strategy commits to "empowering women and girls" around the world, but it does not go far

enough. Can the Minister assure me that his Department will prioritise funding for WASH projects for women and girls?

Mr Mitchell:

I thank the hon. Lady, my constituency neighbour, for flagging up an extremely important area of development policy. Over the last three years, Britain has trained 460,000 health and other key workers in the science of hygiene, and has supported 14,800 healthcare facilities. As she will have seen from her visit to Ghana, that is highly prioritised by the British Government.

Theresa Villiers:

Research by Open Doors for its world watch list indicates that there is a worrying tendency for Christian communities to be deprived of access to vital aid programmes. Will the Minister ensure that all UK-funded aid programmes are open to Christians, where needed, and other ethnic minorities?

Mr Mitchell:

My right hon. Friend makes an extremely good point, and the answer is yes.

Preet Kaur Gill:

We have now passed the halfway mark to the 2030 deadline for meeting the sustainable development goals that we and 192 UN countries signed up to. On our current trajectory, however, we are set to miss every single one. Does the Minister agree that WASH is a cornerstone of the global goals and, to meet his targets on girls' education and ending preventable deaths, schools and hospitals need clean water and sanitation? Will he restore the official development assistance for WASH, which has dropped by two thirds, as part of the women and girls strategy?

Mr Mitchell:

The hon. Lady makes an extremely important point. Since the programmes were renewed in 2015, 63 million people in the poorest countries now have access to clean water and a lavatory, thanks to the UK taxpayer. Specifically, support for the Sanitation and Water for All partnership, which promotes access to sustainable water resources, is a high priority for the Government.

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## 2.2

## Debate

[Strategy for International Development](#)

## 2.3 Committee Inquiry submission

WaterAid, [Submission to the International Development Committee's inquiry into FCDO's approach to sexual and reproductive health](#), 2 May 2023.

## 2.4 Other recent Parliamentary business

There is another Westminster Hall debate on the UN Sustainable Development Goals scheduled for 19 October 2023 from 1.30pm, proposed by Vicky Ford MP. The debate pack can be accessed on the [Library website](#).

On 28 February 2023, [oral evidence was given to the House of Commons International Development Committee](#)<sup>42</sup> on the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene for healthcare, access to education, agriculture and national security. This discussion touched on current progress across the sustainable development goals and how the UK's water footprint (a measure of water used to produce a specific commodity)<sup>43</sup> lies outside its borders.

On 21 February 2023, WaterAid published a [report on antimicrobial resistance](#) that was co-produced with the British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy and the UK's All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene and on Antibiotics.<sup>44</sup> This report highlighted that investment in WASH services in healthcare reduces the demand for antibiotics, breaks the chain of infection and lowers the opportunity for resistant infections to become dominant.

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<sup>42</sup> House of Commons International Development Committee, [Oral Evidence: Water, Hygiene and Sustainable Development HC 1174](#), 28 February 2023, HC 1174.

<sup>43</sup> Water footprint commonly refers to the amount of water consumed or polluted in production of a specific commodity.

<sup>44</sup> WaterAid, APPG on Antibiotics, APPG on WASH, British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy, [Prevention First: Why clean water and hygiene are the best medicine against the spread of drug-resistant infections](#), 21 February 2023, (Accessed 2 October 2023).

## 3

# Further reading

International Institute for Sustainable Development SDG Knowledge Hub

23 August 2023

[UN Report Proposes Holistic Approach to Water Use, Water Conservation](#)

Stockholm Environment Institute

14 August 2023

[Identifying effective forms of stakeholder engagement in WASH interventions](#)

Health Policy Watch

6 July 2023

[Water and Sanitation Crises Hit Women and Girls Harder than Men](#)

International Institute for Sustainable Development SDG Knowledge Hub

5 July 2023

[UN-Water Offers Blueprint for Accelerated Action on Water and Sanitation](#)

Imperial College London

22 March 2023

[Ensuring access to clean drinking water: Imperial and SDG 6](#)

UN press release

24 March 2023

[Historic UN conference marks watershed moment to tackle global water crisis and ensure water-secure future](#)

BMJ

22 March 2023

[Governments must speed up action to enable access to clean water for all, say UN bodies](#)

All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) on Antibiotics, and on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

21 February 2023

[Prevention first: Why clean water and hygiene are the best medicine against the spread of drug-resistant infections](#)

FCDO

13 October 2020

[Learning briefs on WASH programmes](#)