

WaterAid's commitments in support of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition

WaterAid is delighted to support the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-25. It is an outrage that today, nearly one in three people globally suffers from at least one form of malnutrition.¹ 155 million children under five are stunted, their cognitive and physical development damaged irreversibly.²

While this number is horrific, it is sadly not surprising when 663 million people in our world live without clean water, while nearly 2 billion drink water with faecal contamination, and 2.4 billion people don't have access to adequate sanitation.³ The WHO estimates that 50% of undernutrition is associated with repeated diarrhoea, intestinal worms and environmental enteric dysfunction directly resulting from inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).⁴ Recent estimates suggest that poor sanitation is the second leading cause of stunting worldwide.⁵ Meanwhile frontline health workers struggle to provide quality healthcare for mothers, newborns and children in facilities lacking the basics - in sub-Saharan Africa, the WHO estimate that 42% of health facilities do not have access to a basic water source.

We firmly believe that the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved through siloed sector-specific approaches. For example, SDG 2 cannot be met without urgent, coordinated action towards the achievement of SDG 6. As just one example, evidence shows that scaling up ten high-impact nutrition-specific interventions, such as micronutrient supplementation and promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, to 90% coverage in the highest burden countries would only reduce stunting by 20% globally.⁶ Action across multiple sectors is therefore critical to address the underlying determinants of undernutrition, such as poor WASH. We therefore welcome the Decade of Action's strong focus on 'Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages' (Action Area 5) and acknowledge the contribution of FAO, WHO and others for emphasising that "*access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation are essential for health and prevention of diarrhoeal disease, therefore improving nutrition status*".⁷

WaterAid stands ready to work in partnership with national governments to contribute towards the success of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, and in support of country-led action plans. We urge governments to make specific commitments in law and policy that are backed by sufficient budgetary allocations to achieve national and global nutrition and WASH goals.

WaterAid works to transform lives and improve health and wellbeing of the marginalised and those living in poverty by increasing access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene. We have teams working in 38 countries across the world, working with our partners to transform millions of lives every year.

Our advocacy on the need for integration of WASH and Nutrition in policies and practice – part of our '[Healthy Start](#)' global advocacy priority - will be key. We have already established relationships and initiatives with the aim of enhancing coordination and integration, working closely with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement, Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) Partnership, the Global Nutrition

Report team, Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) and WHO, among others. Together with these partners and many others, we are working at national, regional and international levels to contribute towards the in-depth sharing of experience and knowledge necessary to enhance effective multi-sectoral action.

In support of the Nutrition Decade's Action Area 5 on Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages, WaterAid commits to:

- 1. Support country-led action** in 27 countries to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene for those communities and groups who are most vulnerable to and suffer most from undernutrition. In line with our Global Strategy 2015-2020, we will work with partners and communities to support and hold to account country-led approaches towards achieving universal access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene by 2030.
- 2. Strengthen the evidence base** for effective integrated actions through research and analysis of national nutrition and WASH policies, plans and programmes in at least 23 countries; and through collaboration with SUN and SWA, documenting and promoting case studies of promising practice from 12 priority countries.
- 3. Work in partnership with national governments** in at least 10 countries to strengthen institutional mechanisms for coordinated policy, planning and delivery between Ministries responsible for nutrition and WASH.
- 4. Increase the nutrition-sensitivity of our own WASH programming** by improving targeting to areas of high undernutrition, and prioritising women and children; by improving WASH in healthcare facilities serving vulnerable communities; and by developing integrated behaviour change campaigns including key hygiene and nutrition-relevant behaviours.

We look forward to working with all partners to contribute to the success of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, and to accelerate implementation of ICN2 commitments 51 and 52, progress towards the WHA Global Nutrition targets by 2025 and towards the realisation of the SDGs by 2030.

¹ Global Nutrition Report (2016) From Promise to Impact: Ending Malnutrition by 2030. <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utills/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/130354/filename/130565.pdf>

² UNICEF, WHO & World Bank Group (2017) Levels and trends in child malnutrition. http://www.who.int/nutgrowthdb/jme_brochure2017.pdf?ua=1

³ UNICEF and WHO (2015) Progress on sanitation and drinking water – 2015 update and MDG assessment. https://www.wssinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/resources/JMP-Update-report-2015_English.pdf

⁴ WHO (2008) Safer water, better health: Costs, benefits and sustainability of interventions to protect and promote health. Available online at: http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241596435_eng.pdf

⁵ Danaei G et al. (2016). *Risk Factors for Childhood Stunting in 137 Developing Countries: A Comparative Risk Assessment Analysis at Global, Regional & Country Levels*. PLoS Medicine 13(11): e1002164.doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1002164

⁶ Bhutta Z A et al. (2013). *Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: what can be done and at what cost?* The Lancet 382(9890): 452–477.

⁷ FAO & WHO (2017) UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-25 Work Programme.

https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/Work-Programme_UN-Decade-of-Action-on-Nutrition-20170517.pdf