

**PRESS RELEASE BY WATER WITNESS INTERNATIONAL AND THE UK WATER, SANITATION
AND HYGIENE NETWORK, 28/4/21, 1830 hrs**

**UK aid organisations and universities call on the UK government to reverse unethical 80%
aid cuts on water, sanitation and hygiene**

Over 50 leading aid organisations and UK universities have condemned news of the UK's planned 80% aid cuts to safe water, sanitation and hygiene provision for the world's poor as unethical and self-harming. Foreign Office documents leaked earlier today (28/4/21) reveal the cuts and advice to Ministers on how to avoid a backlash.

In an open letter to the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab who is responsible for overseeing cuts to the UK aid budget, the group of experts set out how these draconian cuts are incompatible with the need to protect hundreds of millions of people against Coronavirus, the UK's claimed leadership of the climate agenda, and the government's stated global priorities of improving girls education, ending unavoidable deaths, protecting climate and nature, economic growth and avoiding conflict. They assert that the proposed cuts are a dereliction of the UK's moral obligations to the world's poorest communities and represent a strategic misstep, which ends an era of bold UK leadership on the global water crisis.

They demand a reversal of this decision which will deny a staggering 10 million people from access safe water, sanitation and hygiene each year, and condemn millions of women and girls in Africa - where 200 million hours a day are spent collecting water - to a life of drudgery and lost opportunity.

The reported cuts will end all future spending on water, sanitation and hygiene by the UK in countries including Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi, which is ranked as the sixth poorest nation on earth. UNICEF's data shows that 9.9 million Malawians cannot basic sanitation and 5.6 million do not have access to safe water and that over 3000 children under 5 die of water related disease each year as a result. Walter Chinangwa, Programme Manager with Water Witness Malawi said:

It's no secret that governments in poor countries like ours do not have the funds to provide water and sanitation services to all our people – and this is partly due to tax avoidance by British companies working here. Ending UK Aid for WASH in Malawi will not only exacerbate poverty and stop girls going to school, but exposes us to WASH related pandemics like COVID-19.

Dorcas Pratt, Deputy Director of Water Witness:

The UK should be proud of its track record of getting water and sanitation to people who need it most in Africa and Asia. This decision to cut our aid on WASH will have a catastrophic and lasting effect on people's lives – particularly for girls and women – and frankly, it is shameful. It is a kick in the teeth for so many people living in desperate situations across the world.

Notes to editors

1. Original report on the leaked cuts...<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/leaked-memo-reveals-uk-bilateral-aid-clean-water-worlds-poorest/>

2. For comment, facts and figures please contact:

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3. Fast facts:

WASH Malawi

- Poor sanitation and hygiene are major contributors to the burden of disease and child survival, costing Malawi US\$57 million each year, or 1.1 per cent of national GDP, due to health costs and productivity losses. (UNICEF data)
- Malawi has seen an increase of droughts and floods in recent years. The high incidence of floods in the Lower Shire has displaced local populations. The interruption or degradation of WASH services in affected communities during times of crisis affects health, nutritional status and the safety and dignity of children and women. Access to WASH is affected in most emergencies. The delivery of WASH supplies and continuity of WASH services are often the highest priority at the onset of an emergency and remain important through all stages of a humanitarian crisis.

WASH Tanzania

- 24.6 million people in Tanzania live without clean water and 7 in 10 people don't have a decent toilet
- Poor access to WASH services continues to impact child survival and health. The incidence of preventable diarrhoea remains high and is responsible for 8 per cent of deaths in Tanzanian children under five years of age.
- Of 2,385 primary and secondary schools, only 55.3 per cent are providing basic drinking water services. Furthermore, 31.8 per cent of the schools that had no water services require urgent attention. Only 30.3 per cent were providing a basic sanitation services with respect to the WHO/UNICEF JMP ladder for sanitation. The recommended standard for Tanzanian schools is one toilet per 20 girls and one toilet per 25 boys. Only 27.5 per cent of schools surveyed met the national "minimum" standards, with huge regional variations. (2018 National School WASH Assessment).
- While 84.2 per cent of schools provided MHM education as a component of MHM services, only 16.7 per cent of schools had changing rooms with basic amenities (water, waste bin, soap and emergency supplies of sanitary pads).
- Women and girls are adversely affected in multiple ways ranging from loss of dignity caused by the lack of latrines to poor menstrual hygiene. The drudgery and time spent fetching water contribute to keeping them out of school and productive employment.

<https://www.unicef.org/tanzania/media/2356/file/National%20School%20WASH%20Report%202020.pdf>

GLOBAL WATER CRISIS:

- The links between clean water, safe sanitation and hygiene and achievement of the SDGs are well documented. The **cost of inadequate WASH is high**, causing up to **1.4 million premature deaths** annually and global economic losses of **USD 260 billion each year**¹. **2.1 billion people** have no safely managed water at home and **2.3 billion** are without safely managed sanitation at home.² **Millions of women and girls** stay out of work and school with no menstrual hygiene management options, resulting in gender inequality both in the workplace and in education³. Investment in WASH leads not only to better health and wellbeing, but for **every US \$1 invested in water and sanitation, US \$4.30 is generated** in economic returns through increased productivity⁴.
- **Food production and food security** are inextricable from water security. Agriculture is responsible for 70% of total freshwater used globally and over 90% in most Least Developed Countries (LDCs)^{5,6}. Feeding 9 billion people by 2050 will require a 60% increase in agricultural production and an estimated 15% increase in water withdrawals⁷. Potential global welfare gains of **securing water for existing irrigators exceeds US\$ 100 billion year**, and would half the risk of wheat shortage and significantly stabilise food prices⁸.
- **78% of jobs globally are water-dependent**, being in heavily and moderately water-dependent economic sectors⁹. **42% of global jobs are heavily water-dependent**, in agriculture, forestry, inland fisheries and aquaculture, mining and resource extraction, water supply and sanitation and energy sectors. Women's ability to join the workforce, is restricted due to the time doing 'unpaid work' to make water available for the household¹⁰.
- **Water security for cities is a challenging economic imperative**. Rapid growth and rural-urban migration mean that 55% (3.9 billion people) of the world's population now live in towns and cities, increasing to 68% by 2050. 90% of this growth is in Asia and Africa where planning and infrastructure for water and sanitation are failing to keep pace¹¹. **700 million urban dwellers live without improved sanitation**, contributing to poor health conditions and heavy pollution loads. 156 million live without improved water sources. Droughts (e.g. Cape Town, South Africa) or floods (e.g. Dhaka, Bangladesh) are a key challenge with significant effects on urban economies and wellbeing¹².

¹ University of Oxford, 2015. Securing Water, Sustaining Growth: GWP/OECD Task force Report.

² WHO/ UNICEF. (2017). 'Progress on Sanitation and Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – 2017 Update and SDG Baseline' Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/resources/progress-drinking-water-sanitation-hygiene-2017-update-sdg-baselines/>

³ Cavill, S., House, S. and Mahon, T. (2012). 'Menstrual Hygiene Matters: a resource for improving menstrual hygiene around the world.' The Free Library. 2013 Elsevier Science Publishers 03 Sep. Available at: 2019 <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Menstrual+Hygiene+Matters%3a+a+resource+for+improving+menstrual+hygiene.-a0362966213>

⁴ Hutton, G. (2012). 'Global costs and benefits of drinking-water supply and sanitation interventions to reach the MDG target and universal coverage'. Geneva, Switzerland, World Health Organization (WHO). Available at: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/global_costs/en/

⁵ FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). (2011). 'The State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture: Managing Systems of Risk'. London/Rome, Earthscan/FAO. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/nr/solaw/solaw-home/en/>

⁶ UN Water 'Water Facts: Water, Food and Energy' Available at: <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-food-and-energy/>

⁷ World Bank. (2017). 'Water Resource Management'. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/waterresourcesmanagement>

⁸ Aerts, C. J. H. et al. (2015). Securing Water, Sustaining Growth: Report of the GWP/OECD Task Force on Water Security and Sustainable Growth.

⁹ WWAP (United Nations World Water Assessment Programme) (2016). 'The United Nations World Water Development Report 2016: Water and Jobs'. Paris, UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243938>

¹⁰ UNICEF/WHO (United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization). (2012). 'Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation: Special Focus on Sanitation'. New York/Geneva, UNICEF/WHO. Available at: https://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/jmp_report-2012/en/

¹¹ UN DESA, 2018

¹² UN Water – Water and Urbanization, 2018

- Most **natural disasters** are water related. Typically, **170 million people are severely affected by droughts and floods each year**¹³. Climate change is likely to increase the frequency and severity of water related disasters, posing major threats to prosperity and stability. The population at risk from flooding is projected to rise from 1.2 billion today to 1.6 billion in 2050 (nearly 20% of the world's population). The **economic value of assets at flood risk is expected to be US\$45 trillion by 2050, a growth of over 340% from 2010**¹⁴.
- Water is to climate adaptation what energy is to mitigation. The challenge of delivering water security under current emission trajectories will be exceedingly challenging. By 2050, an **additional 500 million are likely to face water stress in Africa because of climate change**¹⁵. Recent research shows that even if we limit mean global temperature rise to a 1.5 degrees, one third of Himalayan glaciers will be lost, threatening the **water security of 2 billion people across Asia** who rely on their meltwater rivers for their wellbeing¹⁶. This is likely to have global ramifications in terms of migration and instability.
- **Water insecurity drives migration** within countries, regionally and externally¹⁷. Some estimates suggest that **climate and water will displace as many as 200 million people by 2050**¹⁸, though there is need for deeper analysis of the complex relationships between conflict, water scarcity, climate change, droughts and migration.
- Over the past 60 years, 40 percent of civil wars have been associated with natural resources, with water often a root cause, a weapon or a casualty of **conflict**¹⁹. Water related conflict occurred in Africa in 2018 in Northern Kenya, Central Nigeria and Mali in situations of severe drought. Situations of **insecurity and instability** driven by water issues are set to rise²⁰.

4. Copy of letter attached

Ends

¹³ WHO (World Health Organization). (2007). 'The World Health Report 2007 - A safer future: global public health security in the 21st century'. Available at: https://www.who.int/whr/2007/whr07_en.pdf?ua=1

¹⁴ OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2012). 'OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: The Consequences of Inaction'. Paris, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264122246-en>

¹⁵ USEPA/NASA 2015.

¹⁶ Wester et al. (2019). The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment: Mountains, Climate Change, Sustainability and People. 10.1007/978-3-319-92288-1.

¹⁷ ESC (Economic and Social Council). (2018) 'Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals'. Report of the Secretary-General. Available at: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2019/secretary-general-sdg-report-2019--EN.pdf>

¹⁸ Weiss, K. R. (2015). "The Making of a Climate Refugee", Foreign Policy, 28 January, 2015

¹⁹ UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). (2013). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/40-conflicts-linked-use-natural-resources>

²⁰ WFP (World Food Programme). (2018). 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI): Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition'. Available at: <https://www.wfp.org/publications/2018-state-food-security-and-nutrition-world-sofi-report>