

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Pregnant? Congratulations! But will your hospital have water?**

**Imagine if a pregnancy test could tell you not only if you were pregnant, but also whether your nearest health centre had clean water, a toilet and somewhere to wash.**

WaterAid's new short film, 'The Ultimate Pregnancy Test,' highlights this very real anxiety for millions of women in the developing world.

**TO WATCH THE FILM PLEASE [CLICK HERE](#).**

The film has been unveiled ahead of the Women Deliver conference on the rights, health and well-being of girls and women in Copenhagen this week.

Learning of a pregnancy should be an exciting moment – but for millions of women around the world, it is a time of fear and uncertainty over how and where they will deliver their baby. Some 38% of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries, and 42% in Sub-Saharan Africa, do not have access to water.

This lack of water means nothing safe to drink, no water to wash with or to sterilise surgical tools with, and filthy toilets – if there are any at all. Some 19% of health centres in the developing world do not have basic sanitation and 35% do not have handwashing facilities.

Both mothers and babies are at risk of infection if they deliver in unhygienic conditions. A newborn baby dies every minute from infection, which can often be prevented with safe clean water, good sanitation and good hygiene, including soap for doctors, nurses and midwives to wash their hands. Some 800 women die each day around the world of preventable causes associated with pregnancy and childbirth; 99% of these deaths are in developing countries and around 10% are caused by sepsis.

WaterAid's new mock advert comes as thousands of delegates gather in Copenhagen at the biannual Women Deliver conference. Water, sanitation and hygiene are of particular concern for women and girls, since they are most often given the arduous task of collecting water, and since having to search for a safe, private place to relieve themselves means women and girls are made more vulnerable to infection, harassment or assault.

**WaterAid's Director of Global Policy and Campaigns, Margaret Batty, said:**

"A newborn baby dies every single minute from infection. This is completely unacceptable and for the most part, preventable. These needless deaths can often be avoided with safe water and good hygiene – including the midwife's ability to wash her hands with soap.

“The real test for the world today is bringing water and sanitation to everyone, everywhere, by 2030 – Goal 6 of the UN’s Global Goals.”

The UN’s Global Goals on sustainable development include Goal 6, to reach everyone, everywhere with access to clean water and basic toilets by 2030. However clean water, safe private toilets and good hygiene are also essential elements in making progress on education, maternal, newborn and child health, ending hunger and malnutrition and reducing inequalities.

For more information about WaterAid at Women Deliver, please see [www.wateraid.org/womendeliver](http://www.wateraid.org/womendeliver).

For more information about WaterAid’s Healthy Start campaign on the benefits of safe water, good sanitation and good hygiene for health, please see [www.wateraid.org/healthystart](http://www.wateraid.org/healthystart).

## ENDS

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## Critical facts on women and girls and water and sanitation:

- **1.2 billion women and girls are without a safe, private place to go to the toilet**, and at any given time some 800 million women and girls are forced to manage periods without this basic necessity;
- **330 million women and girls are without access to clean water;**
- **A newborn dies every minute** from infection or sepsis, deaths which can often be prevented with safe water and rigorous hygiene, including the midwife’s ability to wash hands with soap.
- **315,000 children under five die each year** from diarrhoeal illnesses linked to dirty water and poor sanitation
- **Some 42% of the healthcare facilities in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 38% of facilities in low- and middle-income countries around the world, do not have access to water.**
- **Nearly half of schools in low- and middle-income countries do not have basic toilets** – meaning children who are ill from diarrhoea or girls who are menstruating are unlikely to attend school during this time.

## About WaterAid

WaterAid's vision is of a world where everyone has access to safe water and sanitation. The international organisation works in 37 countries across Africa, Asia, Central America and the Pacific Region to transform lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in some of the world's poorest communities. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 23 million people with safe water and, since 2004, 21 million people with sanitation. For more information, visit [www.wateraid.org](http://www.wateraid.org), follow @WaterAidUK on Twitter, or visit us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/wateraid](http://www.facebook.com/wateraid).

- Around 315,000 children die each year from diarrhoeal diseases caused by dirty water and poor sanitation. That's nearly 900 children each day, or one child every two minutes.
- Over 650 million people (around one in ten) are without safe water
- Over 2.3 billion people (around one in three) live without improved sanitation
- For every £1 invested in water and sanitation, an average of £4 is returned in increased productivity.
- Just £15 can help provide one person with access to safe water.