

For Immediate Release -- 19 May 2016

Clean water, rigorous hygiene key to coping with anti-microbial resistance WaterAid at Women Deliver 2016

A new report warning that superbugs will kill someone every three seconds by 2050 has highlighted the important role that clean water, good sanitation and rigorous hygiene must play in healthcare around the world, WaterAid said today.

The [Review on Antimicrobial Resistance](#) has warned that more than one million people have died since mid-2014 of such infections, and that up to 10 million people may die every year from resistant infections by 2050.

The problem has been exacerbated by widespread use of antibiotics, particularly in places where hospital patients frequently contract infections spread by poor sanitation and hygiene practices and are given antibiotics in prevention.

Some 38% of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries, and 42% in Sub-Saharan Africa, do not have access to water, making good hygiene almost impossible.

WaterAid America Director of Policy and Advocacy Lisa Schechtman said:

“This frightening scenario of a world where we could be thrown back into the Victorian era of death from simple infection highlights the incredible importance of having clean water, good sanitation and rigorous hygiene practices in health centres around the world. Preventing infection is the best way of saving lives. And the best way to prevent infection is to ensure that healthcare centres have continuous access to clean water, to good functioning sanitation including toilets that are not backed up spreading disease, and to ensure medical personnel, from clinic directors to cleaners, have both the knowledge and ability to practice proper handwashing with soap and cleaning techniques.”

High rates of infection and sepsis are deadly to new mothers and newborns. [One in five newborn deaths](#) is from infection or sepsis, which can often be prevented with good hygiene and clean water.

The [2015 World Health Organization landscape survey](#) of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries also found that 35% don't have handwashing facilities and 19% don't have any functioning toilets. Many facilities with some access to water also face disruptions in supply and issues of quality. A WHO- Unicef [Global Action Plan](#) aims to address this situation; however it will

need to be made a political priority by national governments and donors to achieve access to water, sanitation and good hygiene in all healthcare facilities.

WaterAid's four-year campaign [Healthy Start](#) is designed to highlight the critical importance of these basic services for maternal, newborn and child health.

WaterAid America director of policy and advocacy Lisa Schechtman will be appearing at the Women Deliver speakers' corner at 14.10 on Thursday 19 May to talk about the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in healthcare, especially for pregnant women, new mothers and their newborns.

For more materials please see:

- **The Antimicrobial Resistance Review:** <http://amr-review.org/Publications>
- **WaterAid briefing on newborn health and water, sanitation and hygiene, *Healthy Start – the first month of life*:** www.wateraid.org/healthystart
- **WHO landscape survey of WASH in healthcare facilities:**
http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/wash-health-care-facilities/en/
- **WHO-Unicef Global Action Plan:**
http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/healthcare_waste/wash-in-healthcare-facilities-action-plan.pdf
- **Photo gallery – Maternal health in Sierra Leone post-Ebola** – a WaterAid/VSO study found a 30% increase in maternal death and 24% increase in newborn deaths in Sierra Leone between May 2014 and April 2015, in part because women were afraid to face poor sanitation and hygiene in hospitals during the Ebola crisis and delivered babies skilled care in unhygienic conditions at home. Some 87% of homes in Sierra Leone do not have toilets and 37% do not have access to clean water. <http://assetbank.wateraid.org/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/215f276b-5965-4ef0-a4ba-b3dd8daca22c/assetbox.html>
- **Photo gallery – Maternity bags** -- what women bring to the hospital when giving birth looks very different, depending on what they find on arrival:
<http://assetbank.wateraid.org/assetbank-wateraid/images/assetbox/3f55c031-7fae-440f-9512-f15d367934d6/assetbox.html>
- **Film – The Ultimate Pregnancy Test** – what if a test could predict whether you'll have water during the birth of your child? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jH26uimQ8eA>
- **Film – Parallel Lives** – For midwives in rural Tanzania and in Liverpool, UK, many parts of the day look very much the same – and yet so much is so different:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pz84KiKAKPs>

For more information or to arrange interviews please contact:

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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, follow @WaterAidUK on Twitter, or visit us on Facebook at 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.