



Chris Heaton-Harris
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October 2023

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in developing countries, and the report by UNICEF titled 'Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: How the UK Government can tackle the water crisis'.

Safe water and adequate sanitation are basic human needs. It is a regrettable fact that for so many on our planet these needs remain unmet, particularly in developing and conflict-affected states. Indeed, as UNICEF reports, three billion people do not have a hand-washing facility with water and soap at home, in addition to almost half of all schools lacking such facilities, affecting some 818 million school-age children.

I am sure you will welcome, therefore, that improving access to WASH services, including in healthcare facilities, is a global health priority for the FCDO. It forms a core part of the UK's Ending Preventable Deaths of mothers, babies and children strategy, published in December 2021, and is critical to the FCDO's wider global health objectives.

I am proud of the UK's action on promoting safe water, sanitation and hygiene - or UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. Indeed, the UK to provide 60 million people with improved water and sanitation between 2015 and 2020, and exceeded this target in August 2020, helping 62.6 million people access clean water and sanitation, of which 26.2 million were based in fragile states.

To deliver on such an ambitious target, the UK developed substantial bilateral WASH programmes and entered into a £57.3 million partnership with UNICEF to provide sustainable WASH services to 3.8 million people in ten countries, through the Sanitation, Water and Hygiene for the Rural Poor programme (2017-2022). The UK is now strengthening the climate resilience of WASH services, and reinforcing accountability for the delivery of WASH services.

I am encouraged by the leadership role the UK demonstrated in the first UN High-Level Conference on Water in 40 years, held in March 2023. Speaking at the conference, then Climate and Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith announced £18.5 million of funding to improve the quality of water supply, and sanitation and hygiene services in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.



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I know that Lord Goldsmith also met with international partners and members of the private sector to discuss progress on ensuring water is a safe, sustainable and accessible resources globally. However, there is no doubt that urgent global action is needed to support Governments to strengthen and improve their water sanitation and hygiene services, and I can assure you that the UK is not complacent.

The UK Government is in regular contact with the Government of Sri Lanka on a range of environmental issues, including the challenges around water management and quality faced by communities in Northern Sri Lanka. For example, I know the then Minister responsible for Sri Lanka, Lord Ahmad, raised this issue with the Sri Lankan High Commissioner to the UK in December 2020. He also made the pollution and environment protection a key theme of his visit to Sri Lanka in January 2022.

I am glad to hear a number of public bodies in Sri Lanka have conducted tests and compensation has been offered to those affected by water pollution caused by the Chunnakam Power plant. Rest assured that the FCDO continues to monitor this.

The UK is also continuing to promote the importance of WASH through our membership of the "WASH In Healthcare Facilities" international taskforce, through bilateral programming such as our innovative hand hygiene partnership with Unilever, and through core multilateral funding, including to the World Bank and the World Health Organisation. This includes funding to the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, which tracks progress against water and sanitation global targets and supporting the Global Water Partnership to promote climate resilient WASH.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY