

Clean water at the heart of health resilience:

A photo exhibition by WaterAid

Presented as part of EU Green Week, which this year focuses on water resilience, this photo exhibit from WaterAid hopes to raise awareness of the global water crisis and demonstrate the importance of affordable access to water and sanitation.

Throughout the world's healthcare facilities, clean water, decent sanitation and good hygiene are the first line of defence against infection. But it is a stark fact that half of these healthcare facilities do not have basic hand hygiene services – a figure that rises to two thirds in the 46 least developed countries. When hospitals and clinics do not have these essential services, infections can rapidly spread - putting all patients at risk and often leaving healthcare workers with no choice but to prescribe antibiotics.

This means that infections acquired in healthcare facilities – such as sepsis and pneumonia - are costing **Sub-Saharan Africa \$8.4 billion each year** and leading to thousands of preventable deaths. These infections are increasing resistant to antibiotics – contributing to the global health challenge of antimicrobial resistance.

According to [research recently published by WaterAid and the World Bank](#), at least half of these infections could be prevented by improved water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). If this were to happen, then a staggering 138,000 lives could be saved in seven countries across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The exhibition tells this story through the words of patients and healthcare workers across the countries where this research took place: Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia.

WaterAid is calling for increased investment in health care facilities, which is essential to break the chain of infection, decrease the demand for antibiotics, and reduce the opportunity for a resistant infection to become dominant - an investment that would pay for itself.

