



## The Republic of Zambia

# Realising the human right to water and sanitation

### Introduction

In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the human right to water and sanitation. This resolution is part of binding international human rights law, meaning that governments are required to progressively realise the right.

The government of the Republic of Zambia has recognised this right by signing on to key international treaties, as well as establishing a number of domestic level policies and programmes. All of these have assisted the government to work towards realising the right by improving access to safe, affordable, available and sufficient water and sanitation. **But not enough has been done.**

While access to water and sanitation has improved and efforts have been made, the government has not prioritised those most in need; vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women, children, the sick and the poor have been left behind. These groups still are drinking dirty water, walking very long distances to water sources, and are suffering due to continuing large-scale inequalities. The government needs to take further action to make effective change to improve people's lives by ensuring all citizens throughout the country are able to access affordable and safe water, and a better future.

This briefing highlights the problems evident in accessing improved water and sanitation in Zambia. It provides a set of clear demands from civil society who are calling for increased efforts and action from the government to meet its obligation to fully realise the right to water and sanitation.

### The human right to water and sanitation

The resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly 'recognises the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights'

The human right to **water** entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, affordable and physically accessible water for personal and domestic use.

The human right to **sanitation** entitles everyone to sanitation services that are physically accessible, affordable, safe, hygienic, secure, socially and culturally acceptable and which provide privacy and dignity.

## Positive progress

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### Recognition of the human right to water and sanitation

It is encouraging to see that the Zambian government has recognised the human right to water and sanitation. Over the past two decades, they have done so by becoming signatories of key international declarations and treaties – each of which have further interpreted and defined the right to water and sanitation.

They have also included a specific clause on the human right to water and sanitation in their national constitution. This was seen as an advanced step for the country, helping to ensure that people constitutionally have the right to sufficient, adequate and safe water and sanitation and have the ability to hold the government accountable to fulfilling this right.

# 1994

Zambia signed the United Nations' (UN) Programme of Action at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development.

# 2010

As a member of the Human Rights Council, adopted resolution 15/9 of September 2010, a legally binding commitment to the human right to water and sanitation.

# 1996

Signed the Habitat Agenda of the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II): *"Everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation"*.

Water and sanitation commitment included in the Zambian constitution: *10. aa) The Government shall strive to provide clean and safe water, adequate medical and health facilities and shelter for all persons and take measures to consistently improve such facilities and amenities; Article 74: 2) Every person has the right to water in adequate quantities and of satisfactory quality. 3) Every person has the right to reasonable standard of sanitation.*

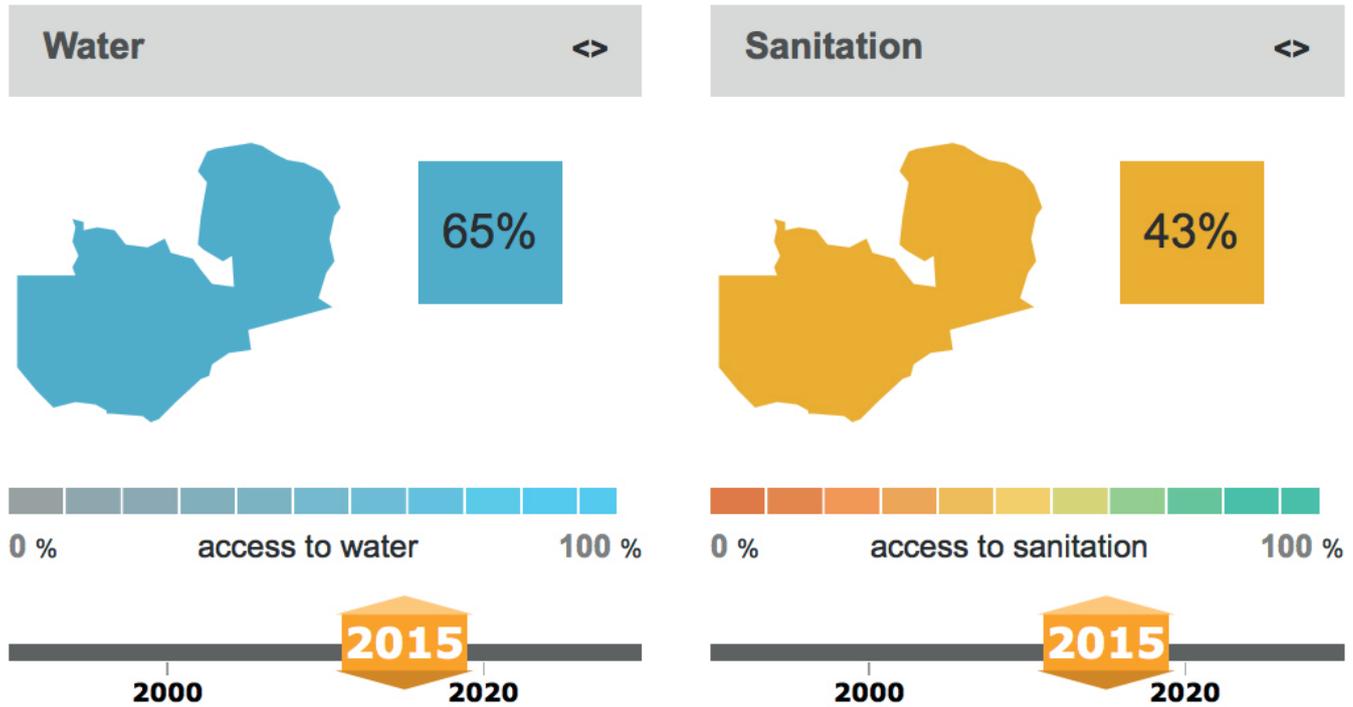
# 2011

Adopted resolution 16/2 of March 2011, reaffirming *"the right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living"*.

# 2013

Zambia co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 68/157, the first resolution where all UN Member States affirmed that the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation as legally binding in international law.

## Realisation of the human right to water and sanitation



Current percentage of Zambia's population with access to improved water and sanitation in 2015<sup>1</sup>

Zambia has made progressive steps to realise the human right to water and sanitation and ensure that this becomes a reality for its people. They have done this by developing two national level policies, namely the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (2007), and the National Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (2011). Through such programmes, the government has incrementally increased access for the population over time. In 2015, it is estimated that 65% of Zambians have access to improved water and 43% are able to access improved sanitation.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that these numbers underestimate the true scale of the problem, since crucial aspects such as drinking water quality, continuous availability and distance to facilities are currently not measured. Also, the numbers showing increased access over the years do not take into account the number of facilities that have deteriorated and are broken because of a lack of proper maintenance.

<sup>1</sup> All data, graphics and statistics sourced in April 2015 and are available from WASHwatch.org

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

# Assessment of delivery of targets

## Successes

The government is on track in delivering on a number of commitments for improving access to water and sanitation. The 'traffic light' system has been designed to track and monitor overall progress the government is making on the eThekweni commitments made in 2013.<sup>3</sup>

The colours indicate how much progress has been made



The government has made progressive steps to establish policies and programmes to improve access to water and sanitation. This includes creating national plans to help meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and related water and sanitation targets (target 3b and 4). They have also successfully established one principle institution to lead the national sanitation plan (target 5a).

3b. To establish one national plan for accelerating progress to meet national sanitation goals and the MDGs by 2015.	<b>0.9</b>
4. To increase the profile of sanitation and hygiene in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and other relevant strategy related processes.	<b>0.7</b>
5a. To ensure that one, principle, accountable institution takes clear leadership of the national sanitation portfolio.	<b>0.9</b>

## Missing gaps and problem areas

However, not enough has been done by the government to realise the right, or to address inequalities in access, particularly evident as marginalised and vulnerable groups are being neglected (target 9 and 10).

3a. To establish, review, update and adopt national sanitation and hygiene policies within 12 months of AfricaSan 2008.	<b>0.5</b>
3c. To take the necessary steps to ensure national sanitation programmes are on track to meet these goals.	<b>0.5</b>

<sup>3</sup> All graphics and data sourced from WASHwatch.org

8b. To work with global and regional bodies to produce a regular report on Africa's sanitation status, the first of which to be published by mid-2010.	0.6
9. To recognise the gender and youth aspects of sanitation and hygiene, and involve women in all decision making levels so that policy, strategy and practice reflect gender sensitive approaches to sanitation and hygiene.	0.5
10. To build and strengthen capacity for sanitation and hygiene implementation, including research and development, and support knowledge exchange and partnership development.	0.7

The most worrying evidence is that the government has failed to meet the commitment to use approaches that prioritise women, children, youth and the unserved (target 7b). **This clearly shows that marginalised and vulnerable groups are being left behind.**

7b. To use approaches which make a specific impact on the poor, women, children, youth and the unserved.	0.2
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There is also no conclusive data on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) spend within the country, and the country has not established specific public spending allocations for sanitation and hygiene programmes (target 5b and 6a). Currently the government are not meeting their commitment to supporting the right to water and sanitation; much more needs to be done.

5b. To establish one coordinating body with specific responsibility for sanitation and hygiene, involving all stakeholders, including but not limited to those responsible for finance, health, water, education, gender and local government.	0.4
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6a. To establish specific public sector budget allocations for sanitation and hygiene programmes.	0
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6b. To have budget allocations represent a minimum of 0.5% of Gross National Product for sanitation and hygiene.	No Data
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To support the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.	0
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## Unequal access

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While 65% of Zambians have access to improved water, this leaves over 500,000 people (35% of the population) in the country without access to improved water. Only 43% of people are able to access improved sanitation, which is a very low percentage of the overall national population, resulting in over 800,000 people without access. This particularly affects women and children, and other vulnerable groups such as the poor, elderly and the sick, negatively impacting their lives, as outlined below.<sup>4</sup>

### Marginalised groups

- Poor, marginalised and rural communities have consistently been excluded from water and sanitation services. Commercialisation of water and sanitation in urban areas has created affordability challenges for the urban poor and affected their ability to access such services.<sup>5</sup> While in rural areas, a lack of access to safe water and sanitation is a major contributing factor to increased poverty.<sup>6</sup>
- Women have also been excluded from WASH services and experience a lack of access to resources and participation in decision-making structures. These inequalities are inherent in the system, as gender is often isolated as a specific issue, rather than a cross-cutting concern throughout society.<sup>7</sup>
- Women and children also spend a disproportionate amount of time and effort in undertaking the daily chores of water collection, as well as in caring for those suffering from water and sanitation-related diseases. This decreases their opportunities for engaging in other more productive activities to improve their socio-economic welfare, and in activities such as school enrolment and progression, which ultimately affects their socio-economic advancement, marginalising them even further.<sup>8</sup>
- People living with HIV/AIDS are also stigmatised and become unable to enjoy their rights to WASH as a consequence. The increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS has profoundly affected productivity and the availability of labour for further development efforts. These factors are contributing to perpetuating poverty in already impoverished areas.<sup>9</sup> The disabled also suffer challenges of accessing household and public water and sanitation facilities that do not respond to their needs.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> WASHwatch.org

<sup>5</sup> WaterAid Zambia Country Strategy 2011- 2015, December 2010. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1IIYfzl>

<sup>6</sup> African Development Fund, Zambia National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program Appraisal Report, Water and Sanitation Department, OWAS, July 2006. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1dhgdfq>

<sup>7</sup> WaterAid Zambia Country Strategy 2011- 2015, December 2010. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1IIYfzl>

<sup>8</sup> African Development Fund, Zambia National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Program Appraisal Report, Water and Sanitation Department, OWAS, July 2006. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1dhgdfq>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> WaterAid Zambia Country Strategy 2011- 2015, December 2010. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1IIYfzl>

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## Urban access <sup>11</sup>

- There has been **no progress** evident over time in urban access to improved water supplies, with access actually declining from 88% in 1990, to 85% in 2012. This is a great concern as urban populations have dramatically increased in the same period, resulting in even fewer people able to access the water and sanitation resources they need.
- It is also very worrying that **no progress** is evident in access to sanitation over the past decades. Rather than improving access over time, the country has seen access declining from 60.8% in 1990, to 56.4% in 2012 in urban areas. The ability to access sufficient, acceptable sanitation is worsening.

## Rural access <sup>12</sup>

- In rural settings, improvements in access to improved water are evident, with a welcome and vitally necessary increase from 23.1% having access in 1990, to 49.2% in 2012. However, this is still too limited as it neglects over half the population and is not securing equal access to safe, affordable, and available drinking water for all. Rural populations already face a number of challenges and disadvantages, especially over access to basic services, therefore limited access to water is a dramatic, negative impact on their livelihoods.
- The situation in rural contexts in terms of access to sanitation has only marginally improved, with a very slight increase in the level of access citizens have to sanitation; rising from 28.6% of the population having access in 1990 to a low 33.9% in 2012.

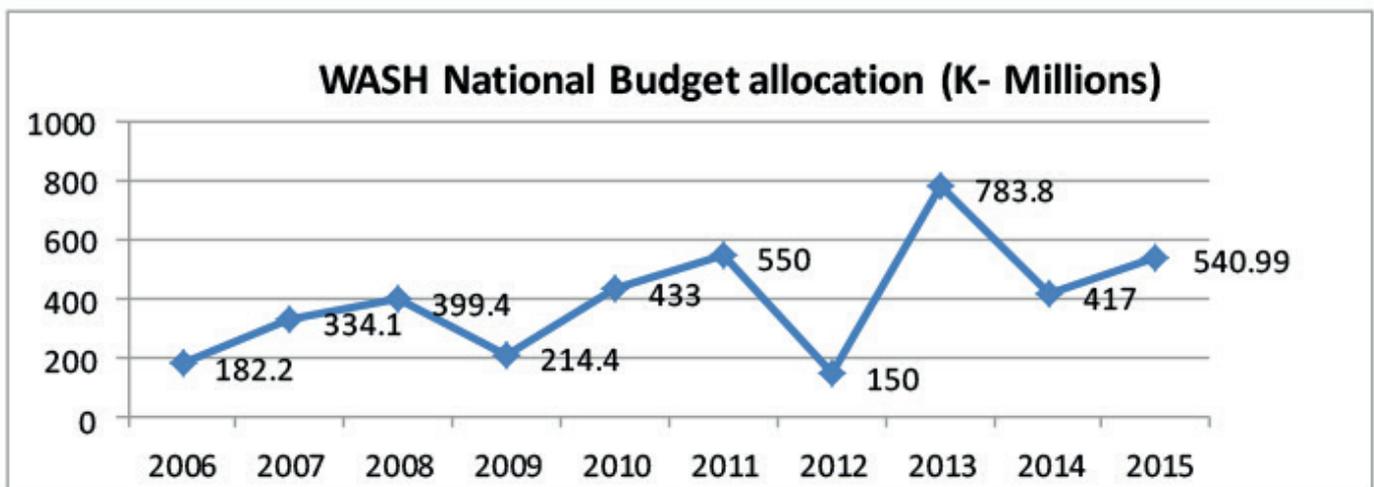
These points highlight inherent problems in the delivery of the government's obligation to realise the human right to water and sanitation. Despite small gains and commitment on paper, there are very problematic and persistent inequalities in the country, which are most evident in people's access to water and sanitation services. Most importantly, marginalised and vulnerable groups are being left behind. There is a clear need to address these inequalities, address the large gaps in access, and increase government's capacity and commitment to the progressive realisation of the human right to water and sanitation.

<sup>11</sup> Data sourced from WHO/ UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation, 2012

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

## Decreased resourcing for water and sanitation

End Water Poverty member, Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN), has been working in collaboration with the Zambia WASH Forum and other WASH stakeholders to track the national WASH budget. Despite the importance of water and sanitation, the sector has continued to receive low budget allocation and prioritisation, including major recent budget cuts. The 2014 WASH budgetary allocation **decreased** by 46.8% from 2013; significantly impacting on service delivery and access. In addition to budget cuts, for the past two years, the government has released less than 40% of WASH resources to the related agencies.



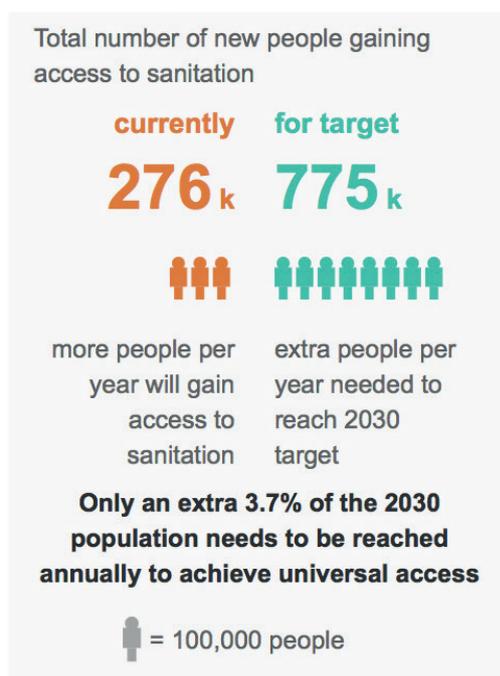
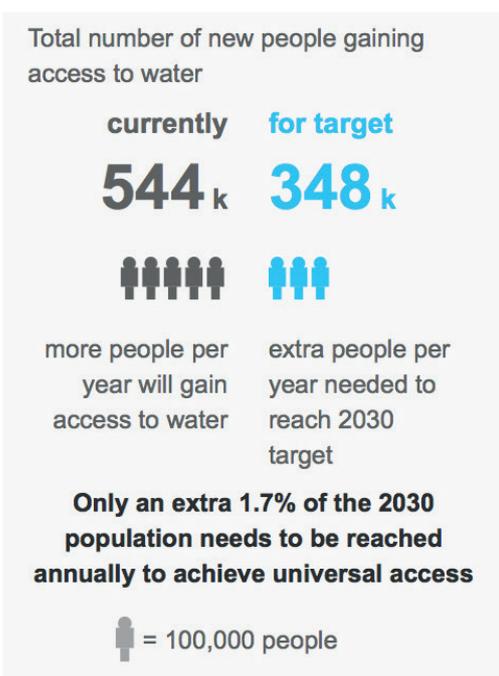
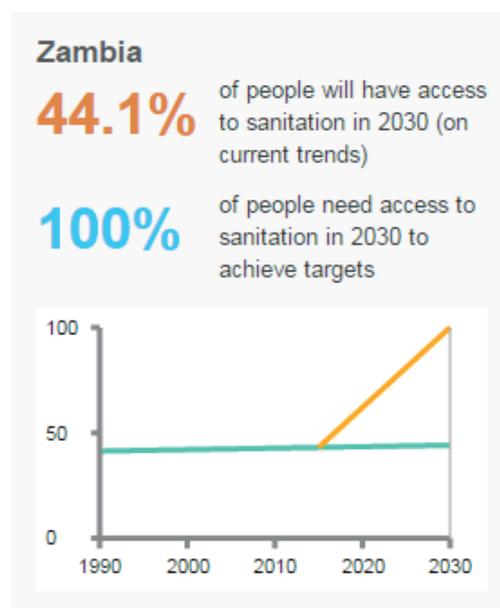
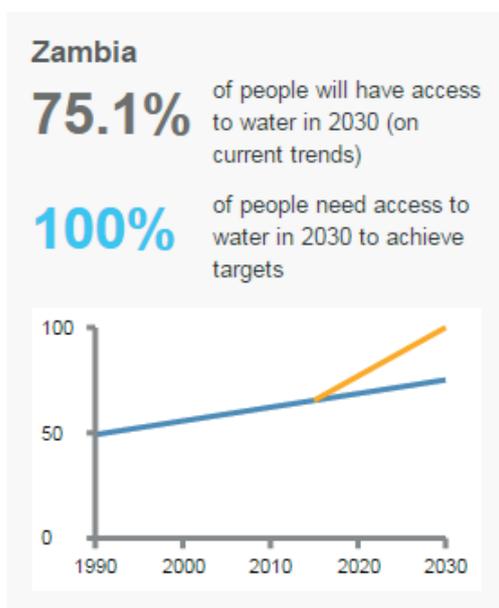
Zambia's WASH budget allocations from 2006 – 2015<sup>15</sup>

This decrease is contrary to the eThekweni Declaration of 2008 on water and sanitation, in which the Zambian government agreed to commit a minimum of 0.5% of the country's gross domestic product to the sanitation budget, increasing the profile of sanitation and hygiene in poverty strategies, and implementing improved sanitation monitoring systems.

# The road ahead

Based on current trends and evidence, 75% of Zambians will have access to improved water in 2030, and only 44% will have access to improved sanitation. These predictions mean that, at the current rate of progress, **in 15 years time marginalised and vulnerable groups will still be without safe and sustainable water and sanitation** – this is not acceptable and demonstrates that there is a water crisis in Zambia. The water crisis is a crisis of governance, and transformation is critical.

This briefing clearly shows that the government needs to step up its commitment to realising the human right to water and sanitation. This will be done by prioritising the scaling up of delivery and access of safe, affordable, available water and sanitation for all, particularly placing a priority focus on the marginalised and vulnerable groups that are being neglected and reversing inequalities. Otherwise it will fail to provide the necessary access to improve the lives of its citizens, and fail to deliver on its obligation.<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> All graphics and data are sourced from WASHwatch.org

## Key demands

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To ensure that poor and marginalised communities across Zambia have their right to water and sanitation realised, civil society, led by VAREN, are calling on the government of the Republic of Zambia to change the current situation.

### National level actions needed:

- Water and sanitation programmes and policies must prioritise improving the lives of the poor and vulnerable.
- Prioritise the local implementation of the human right to water and sanitation, and make this a reality for all citizens.
- Allocate more resources to effective sanitation and hygiene education in communities and schools.
- Prioritise the prevention of water and sanitation related diseases in a systemic and sustainable way, rather than investing in short-term emergency responses.
- Ensure even and fair distribution of WASH resources to guarantee available and sustained WASH services throughout the country.
- Increased budget allocation and priority focus to the WASH sector and ensure that the budgeted allocation is released timely and is managed effectively and efficiently.



## In conclusion

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The Zambian government must fulfil their obligation to progressively realise the human right to water and sanitation. Working together in partnerships, we can achieve the right for all citizens in Zambia to have access to safe, affordable, available, accessible, acceptable and good quality water and sanitation.



Civil society representatives gather for World Water Day, March 2015

This briefing has been developed by Vision Africa Regional Network (VAREN), in collaboration with End Water Poverty in May 2015. It is part of a series for the Keep Your Promises campaign, offering critical advocacy opportunities for civil society to hold their governments accountable to the realisation of the human right to water and sanitation.

End Water Poverty is a global civil society coalition, campaigning to end the water and sanitation crisis. End Water Poverty is funded by WaterAid and the Dutch WASH Alliance.

We are thankful to WASHwatch.org for the data and research.

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