

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

Fighting poor sanitation



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NB: This is not an accurate word-for-word transcript

Dima: Hi, welcome to this edition of 6 Minute English with me, Dima Kostenko. In this programme:

With all the scientific and technological progress around the world, how come poor sanitation still remains a mass child killer?

And - how we can save lives by learning a few lessons from the past - for example, from the 19th century Britain - according to a new report.

In the studio with me is Jackie Dalton - thanks for joining me Jackie.

Jackie: *Responds*

Dima: Let's start with today's key word - 'sanitation'. What does 'sanitation' actually mean?

Jackie: Well, sanitation is a very broad term. We use it to mean systems for taking dirty water and other waste products away from buildings in order to protect people's health.

Dima: And 'diarrhoea'?

Jackie: That's not a very nice thing to have! It's when your body gets poisoned by unclean water or infected food, making your stomach upset so you need to go to the toilet really often, and it can be a very serious health problem.

Dima: On to the next word, the verb 'to outweigh'.

Jackie: This just means to be greater or more important than something else.

Dima: OK, sanitation, diarrhoea and to outweigh. Jackie, do interrupt me if you hear any other words you think might need explaining.

Well, as I said at the beginning, a new report has just been published - by the charity WaterAid. The report says that the lives of millions of children are being put at risk every year, because governments and aid agencies are making the wrong choices about health care priorities.

Jackie: Health care priorities - that's deciding which diseases or illnesses to fight first.

Dima: Exactly. Now, according to the report, diarrhoea caused by poor sanitation is killing many more children than HIV/Aids, TB and malaria combined. And here comes my question for this week. If the world spent 10.8 billion dollars in 2004-2006 on HIV/Aids, how much do you think was spent in the same period on improving sanitation? Was it

- a) 1.5 billion
- b) 15 billion or
- c) 50 billion?

Jackie: *Answers*

Dima: We'll check your answer later but first let's hear from Oliver Cumming, the author of the report. Oliver believes not enough is being done around the world to improve sanitation - possibly, because politicians find it neither fashionable, nor exciting. As you listen, see if you can catch some of today's other key words and expressions. Over to you Jackie:

Jackie: We're going to hear 'lack of political will' - that is to say that governments show no desire to act. Lack of political will 'is driving this neglect' - in other words, is the reason for not doing anything about the situation. And 'shocking', meaning extremely bad, very unpleasant.

Clip 1 **0'15''**

The only reason that we can see is this lack of political will which is driving this neglect. And it's all the more shocking when you consider the role that investments in sanitation played here in the developed world. If you take the example of the UK... *(fade)*

Jackie: Oliver says, there's only one reason for politicians to do very little about improving sanitation: they just don't want to get involved! And that is bad - in fact, so bad that the word Oliver uses is - 'shocking'. And something, he says, makes it even more shocking. What is it? See if you can catch the answer as you listen to Oliver again. Here is a clue for you: look out for a word that means 'putting money into something worthwhile'.

Clip 1 **0'15''**

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Jackie: The key word there was - 'investment'. Or, to put it in context, 'investments in sanitation in the developed world'. Sounds like time has come for a history lesson you promised at the beginning Dima?

Dima: That's right Jackie. In the next part of the interview Oliver Cumming says that sadly, the experience of history is sometimes forgotten even in places where sanitation should be a health care priority. Which country does he refer to as a historical example? Let's listen:

Clip 2 **0'21''**

And it's all the more shocking when you consider the role that investments in sanitation played here in the developed world. If you take the example of the UK - it was government led investments in sanitation which in fact brought about the most significant reductions in child mortality at the end of the 19th century. Far greater in fact that the advent of the National Health System for example.

Dima: Did you hear the answer? Which country made investments in sanitation at the end of the 19th century?

...

It was the United Kingdom.

Jackie: There was also some good language there. First, the phrasal verb 'to bring about', meaning to result in something, to be the impulse for something to happen. And second, the phrase 'significant reductions in child mortality'. This simply means that the number of child deaths became a lot smaller. Oliver says that improved sanitation 'brought about the most significant reductions in child mortality', much greater than when the National Health Service was introduced in the UK back in 1948.

Dima: And finally let's go back to the question I asked you earlier. I asked how much money was spent in the world in 2004-2006 on improving sanitation.

Jackie: *And I said...*

Dima: And you were correct/the correct answer was just 1.5 billion dollars.

Jackie: *Responds*

Dima: I'm afraid that's all we have time for today. Until next week.

Both: Goodbye!

See the online version and listen to the programme at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/sixminute/2009/05/090521_6min_sanitation.shtml