



WATER FOR PEOPLE SELECTED INITIATIVES

Water For People works with people and partners to develop long-lasting solutions to the water, sanitation, and hygiene problems in the developing world. With programs in India, Africa, and Latin America, Water For People strives to continually improve approaches, experiment with promising new ideas, and leverage local resources to multiply the impact of our work. By innovating, measuring results, and sharing methodologies, Water For People believes it can help spread sustainable access to safe water and toilets well beyond the regions where we work.

SWASH+

(School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion plus Community Impact)

Water For People is rethinking the way conventional school programming is implemented. Traditionally, school programs have not involved the surrounding communities, despite the rhetoric to the contrary. Schools are often implemented in complete isolation of the community. This is challenging as schools are frequently the weakest part of communities: teachers are often underpaid and overloaded with multiple activities; school administrations are weak and have a limited or nonexistent funding base; and teachers who have received hygiene education training often leave for better schools. As a result, programs focused only on schools tend to have the greatest sustainability challenges and often become graveyards for broken pumps and dirty, unused latrines.

In Guatemala and Honduras the SWASH+ program treats schools as a part of the wider community. We engage parent associations, school administrators, local governments, and local development organizations to build hand-washing stations and toilets in schools. What makes the program strong is that each school program is combined with water and sanitation solutions and hygiene education in the associated community. Responsibility for the finance and maintenance of the school water and sanitation system is placed on the community



Above: At a SWASH+ school in Honduras in 2010, students have a ready supply of water for hand washing.

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and local government, thus taking the burden off the schools. This approach also ensures that good hygiene practices learned in schools can be reinforced at home. While our Central American staff are leading this initiative, our programs throughout the world are beginning to integrate community and school programming.

Sanitation as a Business

International development organizations do not have the money or human capacity to build toilets for 2.6 billion people. This is why Water For People is working to transform the sanitation sector by demonstrating alternative models that place entrepreneurship at the forefront of our programs. Sanitation as a Business is truly groundbreaking because it shifts away from the traditional, subsidy-driven sanitation approach to a more business-driven model. Conventional approaches all suffer because they focus on the toilet. We focus on the service.

Water For People is supporting the establishment of sanitation businesses that provide pit-emptying services to households with pit latrines. The removal of waste from the pit allows a household to use the same toilet for years, rather than dig a new pit every time one fills up. This service saves the household money and provides the business with a steady source of income, as a pit will eventually need to be emptied. Sanitation businesses grow and increase this income by establishing more and more contracts with households. Recognizing that more households with toilets mean more contracts and greater profit, sanitation businesses are incentivized to reinvest their earnings in the con-

struction of toilets for new customers. This profit incentive motivates the sanitation businesses to spread sustainable sanitation coverage in communities, without Water For People's or any other organization's direct support. In some scenarios, like ecological sanitation (composting toilets), both the household and the business can make money from their toilets.

In Malawi, we are promoting Sanitation as a Business in both rural and peri-urban areas. In rural areas, a family buys a composting toilet with a loan from a sanitation entrepreneur. The entrepreneur returns regularly to purchase and remove the compost, and through this exchange the family pays off the cost of the toilet. The entrepreneur can then sell the compost to local farmers and is incentivized to get others to use a composting toilet to increase profits. In peri-urban Blantyre, households take a loan from a microfinance institution and use this loan to purchase a toilet. The sanitation entrepreneur not only provides the household with a toilet, but also establishes an ongoing contract for pit-emptying services. This service contract generates profit for the entrepreneur and the household benefits by selling the compost as well as a toilet that will never be too full to use.

This innovative approach has garnered the attention of key investors like the European Investment Bank and the World Bank to expand services (not just toilets) in peri-urban Blantyre, Malawi. Water For People also received the AfricaSan Award from the African Ministers Council on Water for this approach.



Left: In the peri-urban area of Blantyre, Malawi, testing compost from latrines on crops. Above: Wezi Mkandawire is the epitome of a Social Entrepreneur, running a latrine pit-emptying business so that latrines can be reused over time.

Gender-Sensitive School Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion

Water For People is empowering the next generation of women in India by making girl students the designers of new water and sanitation facilities in secondary schools. In 2008, monitoring and feedback from girl students prompted Water For People and partners to reassess their school water, sanitation, and hygiene promotion program. Feedback showed that girls felt strong discomfort when they had to use toilets close to the boys' toilets or located in front of the school, where they could be seen going in and out of the toilets, which led to them being taunted by fellow students.

Water For People is addressing these concerns by putting girls in charge because they are the people who really know what water and sanitation facilities students will like and use. Girl students are now active participants in the design of the new facilities and work closely with Water For People and partners to construct water and sanitation systems that meet the needs of students and teachers. The new structures include girl-friendly features such as separate hand-washing and sanitation facilities for girls, out of view of the school; wider bathroom stalls with mirrors, so that girls can check their saris for stains when menstruating; and simple incinerators, for girls to dispose of used menstrual cloths/pads. The school hygiene education program now also tackles myths and misconceptions about menstruation. This program, though challenging, is embraced by the local government and is being replicated by other agencies in India, as well as by Water For People–Rwanda.

Mobile Mechanics

Communities throughout the developing world are plagued with broken hand pumps and water taps because those who install them don't plan for their future operation and maintenance. In Africa alone, it is estimated that 50,000 rural water points are broken and unused¹. Water For People is working to solve this problem and create long-lasting water solutions by focusing our efforts on operation and maintenance services and developing alternatives to water committees being solely responsible for their water point maintenance. Through these alternatives, Water For People believes communities will no longer be forced to return to unsafe water sources or rely on external organizations for assistance in repairing or replacing their water systems.

For decades, development organizations have promoted the establishment of water committees within communities to manage, operate, and maintain water systems. The difficulty of relying only on water committees to provide maintenance is that these volunteer groups are fragile and deteriorate over time because of families moving in and out, local politics, illness, and the lack of skills transmission and reinforcement. Water For People partners are training local mechanics to provide regular maintenance and timely repair of water systems. The mechanics are paid by the community water committees for their services. This private-sector approach has the potential to provide better service, less downtime, and greater efficiency. It provides new economic opportunities for mechanics, while giving local communities alternatives for system maintenance.



Mobile Mechanics (Jalabhandu) training on Sagar Island, West Bengal, India in 2009. More than 20 potential mobile mechanics were in training here, using a pump at a school as a hands-on training experience. Mobile mechanics in India were instrumental in repairing water points following Cyclone Alia. Families who lost all their belongings and security were able to start rebuilding their lives without worrying about a clean supply of water.

In India, 30 trained mechanics work in South 24 Parganas, and an additional 20 mechanics will complete their training this year. The mechanics visit communities once a month for regular maintenance checks of the water points; communities can also contact them if major, more urgent, repairs are needed. They are currently paid by both the community and Water For People, but eventually will be independent businesses, earning their income solely from communities.

In 2010, Water For People also started a mobile mechanics program in the rural districts of Chikhwawa and Rumphu, Malawi. Each mobile mechanic will be responsible for maintaining between 18 to 50 water points, depending on his or her own initiative and capacity.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Sustainability is at the heart of Water For People's endeavor to ensure investments in water and sanitation last well beyond the first day that communities access clean water and toilets. As such, Water For People began formally monitoring its programs in 2006 and monitoring now takes place in each of our established country programs once a year. By monitoring our work, we are able to modify programming according to lessons learned and measure whether we are making a lasting difference in the lives of the people we serve. Monitoring of our water and sanitation work is showing positive results. Of the 692 water sources monitored in country programs since 2006, 663 had water available on the day of the visit—96% were still functioning and providing water to the communities and schools accessing the source.

The World Water Corps® is a volunteer effort through Water For People which monitors, assesses and gathers critical information in all program countries. Below, in Peru, 2009 World Water Corps members evaluated regional water and sanitation coverage.



¹ International Institute for Environment and Development, PDF, March 2009, www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/17055IIED.pdf.

Photography: Karine Aigner and Peter Mason

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