

The long wait for water



Napoga Gurigo lives in the village of Tambuoug in the Tongo hills of Ghana. She does not know her age but is probably about 12. She is betrothed and lives with her intended husband's family. There is no clean water supply in the village so every day Napoga has to get up at 5.30am and walk to this muddy hole to fetch water for the family. On average it takes six hours to collect water as she must sit and wait for it to seep through the earth and the mud to settle. Animals also drink from the same waterhole and the water is very dirty. Once she has filled her buckets she then has to carry the heavy load home. Napoga does not attend school; collecting water dominates her life.

Rainwater harvesting



WaterAid and local partner organisation CIDI have helped St Bernadette's school in Lower Nsooba in Uganda solve their water problems by installing a rainwater harvesting system. Rainwater falling on the school roof is filtered and channelled into a storage tank fitted with a tap.

The tank has really improved school life as headteacher Bernadette Nassiwa Bwoni described: "The children now have water readily available and can wash their hands before eating. They are very happy because they have free, clean water. The children have more time to study because they do not have to collect water and it is cheaper for the school because we do not have to buy water." WaterAid and CIDI also plan to help the school to improve the sanitation facilities for the 200 pupils by constructing composting latrines.

Now wash your hands!



Nine year olds Mera, Gangotri, Malta and Saroj are pupils at Premnega Primary School in Uttar Pradesh, India. As members of the school sanitation committee WaterAid and local partner organisation Gramonati Sansthan helped the children to form, they're responsible for promoting good hygiene and helping clean the toilets. "We check that children are washing their hands with soap after the toilet," said Gangotri. "We keep a brush in the toilet for cleaning, and make sure they are kept clean," added Malta.

They also promote good hygiene to their families, as Saroj described: "We tell our parents about the hygiene messages we learn at school. Our parents didn't know about these things before. We learned good hygiene at school, and we taught them. When people come to our house, I am always telling them to wash their hands."

# Children and WaterAid

Front cover photo: Vally, a pupil at Ankafotra school in Madagascar, washes her hands at the school's new water point.



In the developing world unsafe water, poor sanitation and bad hygiene spread diarrhoeal diseases that kill 5,000 children every day and keep millions more out of school. Diarrhoea also leads to malnutrition, and bad hygiene increases the spread of respiratory illnesses, another leading cause of child deaths.

The daily task of water collection and the search for privacy to go to the toilet dominate the lives of many children, especially girls, leaving them with little time to attend school, rest or play. WaterAid helps communities improve their hygiene and gain access to safe water and sanitation, leading to big improvements in health, education and prosperity. These vital services are essential for a good start in life.



WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.



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WaterAid/Suzanne Porter

Sa'a, 13, from Fikayi, Nigeria spends her day collecting water, finding firewood and grinding flour. She doesn't attend school.

# Life without water and loos

In many countries children, particularly girls, are responsible for the collection of water. Girls as young as ten may take the main responsibility for drawing and carrying the family's water. The size of water

container can vary according to the age of the child, but each litre of water weighs one kilogram and may need to be carried for up to three or four miles. Where there is no clean water source available, they have to collect water from contaminated sources such as muddy pools, which harbour harmful bacteria.

Where there are no toilet facilities people have to defecate in the open. Faeces left lying around pose a severe health risk, particularly when they are close to the house where small children play. The health risks are increased where children do not understand the importance of good hygiene and have not been taught to wash their hands after defecation and before eating.



WaterAid/Jon Spaul

Carrying heavy water containers can be an exhausting task for children.

## Impacts on health

Children are the most vulnerable to diarrhoeal diseases related to dirty water, poor sanitation and bad hygiene, such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery. They are more likely to catch them and less likely to survive. Regular bouts of diarrhoea can lead to malnutrition, which makes children less able to fight other diseases. Children who do not wash enough can suffer from skin diseases such as scabies, and eye infections such as trachoma, which can lead to blindness. Not washing hands increases the spread of potentially fatal respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia.

WaterAid's water, sanitation and hygiene programmes reduce children's incidence of disease and cut the time children spend carrying heavy water pots, which can damage their heads, necks and spines. Shorter water collection times lessen the risk of mothers leaving young children alone or in the care of older children, which in turn reduces the risks of accidents and poor nutrition.

## Impact on education

In communities without safe water and sanitation, many children are frequently absent from school due to water collection duties or water- and sanitation-related illness. Some do not enrol at all.

Once a community has safe water sources and sanitation facilities, children spend less time collecting water and are ill less often, and school attendance rises. The drop-out rates of teenage girls falls when private

latrines are built. Parents have more time to earn money and face reduced healthcare costs, so some families are able to pay for school fees, equipment and uniforms they could not previously afford.

As children become more healthy, they can concentrate better and their performance at school improves. It is also easier to recruit good teachers to work in schools with good facilities, and the quality of teaching improves when teachers themselves are freed from arduous water collection duties.

## Children and WaterAid

As children often suffer the most from a lack of safe water and sanitation, WaterAid works to ensure that our projects respond to their needs. Often new water sources are located in the centre of the community to minimise the distance everybody needs to carry water. In many cases this means that children are able to collect water for their families before and after school.



Alexandra Fenton

Poorly constructed latrines, like this one in Madagascar, are a big threat to children's health.

Facilities can also be tailored to make them appropriate for children. For example, in India we have developed open air, communal child-friendly toilets with narrow dropholes, sited in enclosures with brightly coloured murals. Children can help in some of the less strenuous tasks of well and latrine construction, such as collecting stones for building with. They are also taught to help maintain pumps or tapstands by using them

correctly and keeping the surrounding area clean.

WaterAid promotes good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing, in a variety of ways. Many are geared towards children, involving fun activities such as puppet shows, plays and school clubs that teach pupils hygiene messages through games and songs. Children are quick to learn and can act as ambassadors of good hygiene within their families.



WaterAid/Caroline Irbay

Eight year old Hilda collecting water from a WaterAid-funded pump in the Katakwi District of Uganda.

## Factfile:

- 1.8 million children die every year as a result of diseases caused by unclean water and poor sanitation. This amounts to around 5,000 deaths a day.
- If the Millennium Development Goal targets of halving the proportions of people without water and sanitation by 2015 were met, 270 million school days would be gained every year.
- Hand-washing with soap can reduce diarrhoeal diseases by up to 47%.