

# India



WaterAid/Marco Betti

India is a huge country with a population of more than one billion people and an incredible diversity of wealth, religion, language, customs, art, cuisine and landscape. In the world's most populous democracy there are enormous divides between rich and poor, with over 26% of the population living in poverty. People from the lowest Hindu caste, known as dalits, women, the elderly and disabled make up the largest proportion of poor people. Population growth is rapid, particularly in urban areas due to migration from rural villages.

There are vast numbers of people in India living without sanitation and water. For every 1000 children, 90 die before their fifth birthday, mostly from preventable diseases like diarrhoea. Just 15% of the rural population has access to a toilet – meaning that some 29 million people need to gain access to basic sanitation every year if the Millennium Development Goal of just halving the proportion of people without sanitation by 2015 is to be met.

# WaterAid in India



WaterAid/Libby Clarke

Since 1986, when WaterAid began working in India, it has developed practical techniques to help ensure the country's poor gain access to safe, sustainable and affordable water, sanitation and hygiene education through project work, research and advocacy.

Since 2003 WaterAid has expanded its work from Southern India to the poorer states in the north to target some of India's most vulnerable communities. As a result we have now become national in scope, working in ten states. The main office is now based in New Delhi, bringing WaterAid closer to policy makers in the sector, and three further regional offices have opened in Bhopal, Bhubaneswar and Bangalore to coordinate work in the new states WaterAid is now operating in. A fourth regional office is due to open by 2007 in the north of the country to focus on the poverty-stricken states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with a combined population of 249 million.

WaterAid has both rural and urban projects to help increase access to water and sanitation. As sanitation coverage is very low, projects focus on promoting sanitation among the rural poor by creating a demand for latrines. When members of the community learn that poor hygiene fuels

disease and work out the costs in medicine and lost productivity, their raised awareness will inspire them to develop their own solutions. WaterAid's partner organisations then support them to build sanitation facilities. A series of well received training manuals and materials developed by WaterAid have also given hygiene education a boost. These materials have been used by major agencies, including the Government, throughout the country.

By demonstrating cost effective, practical examples using appropriate technologies that involve communities through self-help groups, WaterAid is able to influence the Government's choice of methods. Success has already been had in persuading the Government to change its sanitation subsidies to incorporate low-cost latrines. WaterAid works with 50 partner organisations in India, all of which carry out day to day project work with WaterAid support and technical advice.

In rural projects WaterAid and its partners help people to gain access to water and sanitation from the Government or service providers. They then train villagers to maintain the new infrastructure and set up village water and sanitation committees to manage the projects in a way that involves all the community and promotes good hygiene. WaterAid also helps the rural poor to put forward their views in village governing bodies such as the Gram Sabha (a village-level forum for decision making) and Panchayats (local government) so that their concerns over water and sanitation are raised.

The problems in urban areas are more complex. As cities and towns become more developed the slum and squatter settlements where the poor live are being pushed further to the periphery. Increasing numbers of people live in these settlements on the edges of towns and cities without any legal right to their land and therefore no legal rights to water and sanitation services. Furthermore, with the Indian Government increasingly delegating responsibility for utility provision to the Panchayats, whose structures vary greatly from state to state, WaterAid is required to adapt its approach to each context. Urban governance, management of utilities, bankrupt municipalities in small towns, costly infrastructure and the lack of waste management are all major challenges that need to be faced.

## Plans: 2005-2010

A strategy running from 2005 to 2010 sets out the future plans and activities for WaterAid in India. During this time WaterAid will continue to focus on water, sanitation and hygiene education working with local partners on community-managed projects.

### The key aims are to:

- Ensure at least 245,000 people gain access to safe water and at least 200,000 people gain access to improved sanitation every year by 2010, contributing to reaching the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of halving the proportion of people without access to safe water and sanitation by 2015
- Deliver hygiene education to 80% of these people to ensure sustainable good hygiene practices and a consequent 80% reduction in incidences of diarrhoea among children under five

WaterAid is making urban programmes a priority and is currently developing strategic alliances for promoting urban work and increasing resources in those areas. In its urban work WaterAid's partner organisations among other things act as intermediaries

between the communities and the city water authorities to negotiate connections to the city's supplies. Communities are helped to establish communal, self managed water points and sanitation blocks which offer separate latrines and washing facilities for men, women and children. The blocks are run on a cost recovery basis; users pay a fee to the community management committee and the money collected covers the initial capital cost, water bills, attendants' wages and maintenance.

WaterAid India will continue to seek innovative ways to enable communities to work together to improve their water and sanitation situation. In 2004 a cash prize scheme was initiated to provide prizes and certificates of appreciation to those villages or schools which become free from open defecation, maintain a functional and reliable water supply system and adopt safe hygiene practices. Three villages and three schools were short-listed for the award in the first year.

The Indian Government's commitment to the MDGs entails a huge task and major gaps exist between the goals and the resources available. It is estimated that to reach the water and sanitation targets 29 million people need to be reached each year until 2015, for which there is a shortfall of around US\$34 billion. In addition, incomplete

decentralisation has meant that local government, which is meant to be responsible for water and sanitation provision, often lack the finance and capacity to carry out their work fully.

WaterAid believes local government and service providers should be accountable to the communities they serve. WaterAid will be supporting civil society organisations to mobilise communities to demand improved water and sanitation services from their local government agencies. In Bangalore and in rural districts in Jharkand and Uttar Pradesh WaterAid's Citizens' Action project is working to support communities to hold local authorities and service providers to account. People themselves gather evidence of their circumstances through methods such as waterpoint mapping and build partnerships and alliances with other communities or organisations. This experience of mobilising themselves, raising money, developing a water user group and so on gives them experience of the process they would need to go through to demand other services such as health and education improvements. In this way communities become active agents of change.

**Sheela Singh** is a handpump mechanic in the Mahoba region, Uttar Pradesh state.



WaterAid/Marco Betti

"Women face big problems with no property rights, no housing and lower literacy rates. After the 8th grade of school girls aren't encouraged to study but the boys are told to carry on. If a woman gets to 20 and isn't married she is sometimes asked to leave the village. There is also dowry debt and harassment. By becoming a mechanic and working in a group we have more control and this helps change people's attitudes."

Another woman in the group, Uma Devi adds: "We became mechanics because we wanted to break an age-old tradition of this work only being done by men. By becoming mechanics we have broken the tradition and shown that women can also do this kind of work."



**Key to states where WaterAid is currently working**

- 1 Madhya Pradesh 2 Uttar Pradesh 3 Chattisgarh 4 Jharkhand 5 Orissa 6 Bihar 7 Tamil Nadu  
8 Andhra Pradesh 9 Karnataka 10 Maharashtra

**India**

Area: 3,287,590 km<sup>2</sup>

Capital: New Delhi

Other main cities: Bhopal, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Mumbai, Trichipalli

Population **1.1 billion**

Infant mortality **87/1000**

Life expectancy **63 yrs**

Water supply coverage **86%**

Sanitation coverage **30%**

Below poverty line **28.6%**

Human development index **127**

Adult literacy **61%**

Sources: World Development Report 2005 and the Human Development Report 2005.

NB. Official statistics tend to understate the extent of water and sanitation problems, sometimes by a large factor. There are not sufficient resources available for accurate monitoring of either population or coverage. Varying definitions of water and sanitation coverage are used and national figures mask large regional differences in coverage.

### Achievements to date

- In 2004/05, through projects supported by WaterAid and our partners, almost 325,000 people gained access to safe water
- Khajapattai slum is now the seventh slum to be declared 100% sanitised since the WaterAid project in Kalmandhai, Tiruchirapalli city was officially declared the country's first in 2002
- In 1999, WaterAid helped changed Government policy to incorporate WaterAid's low-cost latrines in their subsidies. This has led to the Government now encouraging more appropriate and affordable toilet models

**£65** pays for 1000 health education leaflets

**£95** can train 10 community leaders as hygiene educators

**£385** pays for a school sanitation block for 150 boys and girls

**£1150** can train 200 handpump caretakers

**£9600** can train 1000 staff of Mother and Child Care centres to influence 50,000 young mothers and children to adopt good hygiene practices

## WaterAid

### WaterAid – water for life

The UK's only major charity dedicated exclusively to the provision of safe domestic water, sanitation and hygiene education to the world's poorest people.

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Charity registration number 288701 April 2006



WaterAid/Marco Betti

**Pinki** learns about good hygiene while at the Premnega Primary School, in Panchat Nathupura, Uttar Pradesh state



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"We learn that you need to wash your hands before eating food and after going to the toilet and after games and after cleaning the house and before serving meals," says Pinki. Her teacher, Sushmadwivebi, adds: "WaterAid's partner Gramonti Sansthan come twice monthly and they teach the children about hygiene. They hold competitions about hygiene and give the children prizes like pens or notebooks. They have quiz competitions and drawing competitions. They also built the latrine which the children all use.

It is important as people in the villages should live hygienically. If there is sanitation and hygiene in schools then the families can save lots of money and save themselves from diseases."

**Breaking caste barriers**



Martin Argles

The caste system still holds considerable effect in India. Hindu's are born into one of four castes: Brahmin (priests), Kshatriya (warriors), Vaishya (merchants) and Shudra (peasants). Beneath these are the dalits – formerly called the untouchables – who still invariably perform the most menial tasks in the country and make up a large proportion of the country's poor.

Durga Rao, 23, a lower caste dalit, was trained by WaterAid's partner SVDS as the handpump mechanic in Seetanagaram village, Andhra Pradesh. SVDS helps solve communities' water and sanitation problems in a caste-sensitive way, raising the status of dalits by giving them essential skills. "Before we had the pump we used to get frequent diarrhoea. Sometimes we threw up," Durga says. "I used to feel very inferior. I was afraid."

When SVDS helped Durga access a government grant of 2600 rupees for a bicycle and toolkit things changed. "After learning mechanical skills I started talking to the upper-caste villagers", he continues. "When they installed a borewell I offered to help them. Some of them didn't want me to touch the well. But in the end they agreed."