



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

Working with partners



WaterAid/Alex Macro

In every country where it funds water, sanitation and hygiene promotion projects WaterAid works with local partner organisations. These local partners, usually non governmental organisations or local government departments and sometimes private companies, undertake the direct day-to-day management and implementation of projects. They provide the support to communities, enabling them to operate and maintain their water and sanitation supplies in to the future.

In return WaterAid offers its partners financial support, training and technical advice as well as assistance with planning, budgeting and institutional development. In this way WaterAid helps to develop organisations which in turn help more poor people gain access to safe water and sanitation.

Why work with partners?

WaterAid's partners are recognised and respected locally. They have a wealth of essential skills and knowledge, ranging from speaking local languages and knowing local customs to understanding how the government functions. They have well established relationships with local leaders and strong links with the community, enabling them to quickly gain people's trust and confidence. By working through partner organisations WaterAid is able to operate more cost effectively than it could alone, reaching those most in need in the most effective way.

The process of working with partners takes time, building trust and developing strong working relationships. WaterAid supports its partners and encourages them to grow. In this way benefits become even more widespread as projects are replicated in other areas.



WaterAid/Abir Abdullah

As partners grow stronger they become less reliant on WaterAid's technical and financial support and can seek funds from other donors. For example several of WaterAid's longstanding partners now receive most of their funding from other donors with more resources than WaterAid has itself. This frees up WaterAid's money to start work with new, less well-established partners and so the cycle of training and development continues.

The long term aim is to develop strong independent organisations that work without support from WaterAid and act as catalysts, leaders and advocates for the interests of poor people within their countries. The aim is that they become centres of expertise in spreading and sustaining the provision of clean water, sanitation and hygiene as widely as possible. In time WaterAid's partners are able to exert influence on the policy and

practice of other organisations in the country and to influence local and national decision makers.

WaterAid sees strengthening its partner organisations as an important long term investment in the development of their country's policies and infrastructure. By working in this way WaterAid shares its knowledge and more poor people benefit from safe water and sanitation.

Who are the partners?

While WaterAid's partners can be non governmental organisations (NGOs), local government departments or private companies, all share similar characteristics. They are dedicated to empowering poor people and are staffed and managed by local people. All work with beneficiaries according to need and not on the basis of their religion, ethnic origins or political affiliation.

The government departments include national water supply ministries and local health, water and sanitation departments. The NGOs range from recently established groups working in one district to well established national organisations. Some specialise in water supply, hygiene or sanitation while others incorporate water, hygiene and sanitation with other projects including healthcare, rural education or work combating urban poverty. In all cases WaterAid will respect their identities, aspirations and innovative ability and look towards long term agreements with them to provide stability and certainty.

Flexibility is important to WaterAid's work and working with the right partner in the right place is extremely important in ensuring projects are acceptable to the benefiting community and that partnerships are strong and successful. For example in southern Ethiopia where the population is a mix of religions WaterAid works with the local government water department but in the north of the country the Orthodox Church is the main partner. In India, one of WaterAid's longest established programmes, WaterAid is developing to work with 100 different partner NGOs.

How does WaterAid assist its partners?

As well as financial support WaterAid offers its partners technical advice and training, procurement of equipment, vehicles and materials that are not available locally, and assistance with project planning, budgeting and evaluation. WaterAid shares its knowledge with its partners, so that organisations world-wide can learn from one another.

WaterAid also helps partners to develop their own capacity. This support varies to suit different partners' needs but can include strategic planning or training in management or fundraising. However some of the most useful inputs in capacity building come from working together on a regular basis.

Sharing Information

WaterAid and its partners help each other learn and develop in a mutually dependent situation. Feedback from partners enables WaterAid to improve the support it offers to other partners in the future. Partner organisations' extensive experience of implementing community projects helps WaterAid to refine its own policies and working practices. Through conferences, exchange visits and technical reports WaterAid encourages partners to share knowledge and ideas with each other. Lessons are shared across countries, helping further community projects. For example Green Hill, a Bangladeshi partner



WaterAid/Caroline Penn

from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, travelled to meet WaterAid's main Nepalese partner, NEWAH, to see how gravity-fed schemes were implemented in similar terrain in Nepal and learn about the options that could be used in Bangladesh.

WaterAid also facilitates and supports networks of organisations across different countries and within each country where it works.

Through these networks and its links with policy makers and organisations, WaterAid feeds into the wider policy agenda. WaterAid then aims to influence donors and governments to increase spending on water and sanitation and ensure that this funding is targeted effectively. This advocacy work is growing and in each country where it works WaterAid is gaining a more strategic presence.

WaterAid's donors

WaterAid's donors are also partners, essential to WaterAid's survival and success. Their active support and interest not only provides the money for projects but also constantly challenges WaterAid to ensure that its work is as effective as possible.

Factfile:

The keys to partnerships with WaterAid

WaterAid believes that local solutions can be best found and sustained by local organisations that have knowledge of local conditions, have local legitimacy and are champions of the interests of the poor and their families

WaterAid will assist in building partners' capacities and capabilities so that in the long-term, without WaterAid's support they will be in a position to act as catalysts, leaders and advocates for the interests of poor people and centres of expertise in spreading and sustaining the provision of clean water, sanitation and hygiene as widely as possible

WaterAid will respect the identity, aspirations and innovative ability of its partners and look to the development of long term agreements with them to provide stability and certainty

WaterAid works with NGO partners which:

- Have a shared or compatible vision with WaterAid's
- Work in similar ways to WaterAid, through community focused projects
- Are ideally part of a larger group or network of organisations with similar aims
- Are located in an area that WaterAid has identified in its aims
- Have potential to, or are already, working in water, sanitation and hygiene

Levered income

A key element in the development of partners is enabling them to secure independent funding. WaterAid is now working to secure more 'levered income' for its partners; money that is paid directly to partners from non-WaterAid sources which WaterAid still retains a significant influence over

Case studies:



WaterAid/Jon Spaul

An equal partnership

Feliciao dos Santos Calisto is the director of ESTAMOS, one of WaterAid's partners in Mozambique. "We started working with WaterAid on small projects, then put in a proposal and now have a contract", he explains. "Our partnership with WaterAid is good. It works both ways on equal levels. WaterAid helps us with our institutional development and helps fund our projects."

"We have water, sanitation, hygiene, HIV, AIDS and food security projects. We link the issues – as the communities feel that they are all linked – they are all problems that they need to overcome. We are looking at sustainable and long term behavioural change. We spend a long time talking with and training staff and activists who then do the same with communities."

"We want to grow as an organisation and show people that we are capable of carrying out work ourselves. Just because we're a local NGO doesn't mean we aren't capable of doing anything ourselves. We are a serious organisation and we are capable. We want to expand our fundraising to link directly to our donors. We are doing this step by step – it is a long process but we already have four partners."



WaterAid/Jim Holmes

Developing strengths

In Zambia WaterAid develops the skills and capacity of district committees that implement the government's WASHE (water, sanitation, hygiene and education) policy. The committees are made up of district departments including health, water and community development, NGOs and donor agencies.

Patrick Malala is an environmental health technician for the Monze Ministry of Health, part of the district WASHE committee. He undertakes hygiene and health education and helps communities with water and sanitation projects. WaterAid supports the committee by providing training, workshops, tools, funds and transport.

Patrick explains how the partnership works "Our government and the Ministry of Health, who are the custodians of water and sanitation, were really trying to help but just could not manage due to lack of material support, funds, expertise and manpower."

"It was a blessing to see WaterAid assisting us because it meant we had tools and the good knowledge required to assist communities in building better toilets and hand-dug wells. We have everything we need now to do our best for the communities. This was just not happening before."

"We work hand-in-hand with WaterAid, we plan together. WaterAid is working within the Ministry of Health policy not outside it."



WaterAid/Somesh

The flow of knowledge

REEDS, a WaterAid partner operating in the underdeveloped Mahabubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh, India, was founded in 1992. With WaterAid's support REEDS helps communities with water and sanitation projects. As water tables in the area are dropping REEDS is developing ways to help raise the water table. One of these methods is rainwater harvesting.

Mr V Satya Bhupal Reddy, the Executive Director of REEDS, became passionate about rainwater harvesting after his family borewell became contaminated with fluoride and his two daughters, then aged six and eight, had to travel two kilometres by bike to collect safe drinking water.

He attended a WaterAid conference on rainwater harvesting and was so excited that when he returned he started constructing a roof rainwater harvesting structure at his home. He designed the structure to collect enough water for his family's annual needs and also developed a sand and charcoal filter to purify the water (pictured).

Realising the potential rainwater harvesting had for helping villages whose borewells had dried up it is now used in many projects throughout Mahabubnagar with great success. Following a visit by a Government minister to Mr Reddy's home, a new law was passed in Andhra Pradesh granting a 5000 Rupee subsidy and a 10% reduction in house tax to any household constructing a rainwater harvesting structure.



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