

1,000 Schools and Beyond

A ONE-YEAR UPDATE OF THE U.S. WASH-IN-SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

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1,000 Schools...and Beyond

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)-in-Schools

The U.S. WASH-in-Schools Initiative completed its first year after a successful launch at the National Geographic Society in March 2008.

The Initiative focused a spotlight on the fact that half the world's schools lack access to water and basic sanitation.

It was designed to build on existing work by local governments, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) while recognizing that schools could become centers for not only education but also improved health.

One of the key goals of Water Advocates and other participants was to see drinking water, sanitation and hygiene education (WASH) extended to 1,000 additional schools within the first year.

We are pleased to announce that the target has been reached through the hard work and perseverance of NGOs, U.S. donors and school communities. For a list of the specific schools where a WASH program was implemented, please see (www.wateradvocates.org/media/pdfs/WASH-in-Schools%20School%20List.pdf).

Water Advocates thanks all the organizations—NGOs, foundations, corporations, U.S. schools, civic groups, USAID, U.S. State Department, UNICEF—that made the U.S. WASH-in-Schools Initiative an integral part of supplying water, sanitation and hygiene education to over 650,000 students in 30 developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia this past year.

Several particularly innovative funding groups emerged to support WASH-in-Schools. For example, H2O for Life (www.h2oforlifeschools.org) matches U.S. schools with overseas schools in need of WASH, while charity: water (www.charitywater.org) carries out remarkable marketing for WASH-in-Schools programs. The Global Water Challenge (www.globalwaterchallenge.org) significantly expanded its program through the Clean Start Fund.

The momentum for WASH-in-Schools continues. An expanding number of participants and supporters ensures that the Initiative will carry on well beyond these 1,000 schools.

Thank you.
Water Advocates



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Quenching a School's Thirst in Nicaragua

Imagine being a child sitting in a sweltering classroom in Nicaragua and being thirsty. The only way to get a drink of water is to dig a small hole in a nearby riverbed and dip your glass into the seeping pool of tepid, dirty water. During the rainy season you wouldn't be much better off finding a safe drink of water either—the river does return then but the water is contaminated with animal and human feces.

This had been the reality for students of the Rafael Herrera School in San Lorenzo, Nicaragua—a remote rural region. This two-room school, the only one in the community, accommodates 54 students from preschool to the sixth grade.

A teacher recalled that “children got diarrhea and were vomiting because the water was contaminated.” Some of the children were so sick they had to go to the hospital; several students missed up to two weeks of school.

To address this situation, the water NGO El Porvenir (www.elporvenir.org) rehabilitated an unusable well at the school, added a rope pump and constructed a protective slab to protect the well water from contamination. The school pays an affordable monthly fee for the project's maintenance.

Quenching the students' thirst had not been the only water-related problem for this Nicaraguan school. To address this intersection between water and health, El Porvenir conducts hygiene training with students and teachers to emphasize the need to wash hands and properly store water to avoid water-borne illnesses.

The teacher reflected on the project's effect, “We have seen changes in the community and the school.... Now the students can go to class everyday.” No longer do they have to go the river or the neighbors' homes to get a drink of water. Nine-year-old Francisca agreed, “We feel very grateful because now we don't get sick.”

While access to safe drinking water and hygiene education has improved students' health, only part of the problem has been solved. For this reason, this year El Porvenir and the community are replacing the outdated and unsafe latrines—the other key component to improving health and hygiene for students and teachers.



ROB BELL, EL PORVENIR

H2O For Life – U.S. Schools Making a Difference

“Wonderful Watery World” is the title of a song written and sung by students from Summit School in North Carolina. These students not only sang about water, but they also successfully raised \$6,300—almost \$1,000 over their goal—for a school without water and sanitation in Kenya. Summit School, along with 110 other U.S. schools, joined H2O for Life, a nonprofit organization committed to helping U.S. schools extend clean drinking water and sanitation to schools overseas through service learning projects (<http://tinyurl.com/summitnchool-water>).

A valuable part of the H2O for Life program (www.h2oforlifeschools.org) is simply learning about the hardships that students in developing countries endure because of the lack of safe drinking water, latrines and handwashing. How this need relates to poverty around the world particularly resonated with students at Washington, D.C.'s Oyster Adams Bilingual School. “I learned there was no clean water in many parts of the world, not just Africa,” explained Margueritte Harris, a student at Oyster-Adams School which has committed to raise \$2,565 for a school in Bolivia.



IMAGE COURTESY OF WEDC.
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KATHY FLETCHER

Exchanging pen pal letters and sharing photos helped U.S. students grasp that there are real children and stories behind the abstract and daunting statistics. This galvanized students into action, empowering rather than discouraging them. Seventh grader David McGough of White Bear Lake, Minnesota's Centennial Middle School said, "I didn't worry and no one else cared about the problem before, but now it seems super important to get the kids water."

The physical burden that children bear when they walk far distances to access water has been a major learning moment for students at Centennial Middle School. Seventh grader Tasha Erding commented, "It was amazing how far they had to walk, and they didn't have the opportunity to go to school or get fresh water." To experience this burden firsthand, hundreds of students participated in a "water walk" fundraising event where they carried heavy buckets of water. Centennial Middle School has committed to raise \$9,565 for its partner schools in Bangladesh, Bolivia and Nicaragua.

A "water walk" was one of many creative fundraisers that over a hundred schools across the U.S. undertook to raise money for partner schools in developing countries. Students worked hard to create fun and engaging activities, including hat days, art shows, wishing wells and t-shirt sales.

The momentum is building and many of these schools are going beyond H2O for Life Clubs and are including the whole school body in their water education and fundraising activities. For the 2009 -10 school year, H2O for Life plans to match 250 U.S. schools with schools overseas. If there's one thing demonstrated by these students, it perhaps can be summed up by the remarks of Seamus Lynch at Oyster-Adams School, "You can help kids your own age."

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Companies Answer the Call to Help Schools Get WASH

Funding for WASH-in-Schools has become a key part of annual giving by several large U.S. corporations. The Coca-Cola Company and ITT, for example, are partnering with NGOs to expand the reach of WASH-in-Schools in developing countries.

The Coca-Cola Company, through The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, is working throughout the African continent on WASH projects in schools in support of local government policies and community-identified needs. According to the Company's latest Community Water Partnerships Report, since 2005 over 230 African schools in at least six countries are recipients of a WASH package. The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation plans to expand its efforts to more schools and will be actively cultivating new relationships with governments and NGOs to make this happen. More about The Coca-Cola Company's work in community water projects can be found at (http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/citizenship/community_initiatives.html).



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ITT, through its philanthropic arm Watermark (www.ittwatermark.com), partnered with Water For People (WFP) (www.waterforpeople.org) to expand WFP's WASH-in-Schools program in India, Guatemala and Honduras. The program reached 35,000 students in 52 schools in 2008 and is projected to more than double that number of students and schools in 2009. The positive impacts have already been experienced by Pampa Sarkar and her fellow students at Balia High School in West Bengal, India. Water For People installed a filter to remove arsenic from the drinking water, a motorized pump to deliver water faster, drinking fountains and new bathrooms and implemented hygiene education.

Without clean water Pampa Sarkar, like many of her friends and family members, had experienced constant

digestive pains and other health problems. "Gastrointestinal problems were rampant for us," she says. As a result, she was missing school regularly. Because of these upgrades in the school facilities and hygiene education, the health of students has improved.

Pampa Sarkar and other students are part of a water and sanitation awareness group that takes the safe water and sanitation message to the community and to nearby schools where students are still drinking contaminated water.

"Access to clean water is vital for my daughter," says Pampa's mother, Parbati Sarkar. "She is going to have a career and be a future mother, and her good health is the most important thing in making this happen. I feel our family has now been blessed with safe water."

Where We Go From Here:

Pursuing the Goal —All Schools With Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

A Note from Water Advocates' WASH-in-Schools Program Director

For the last year, I have watched the U.S. WASH-in-Schools Initiative move ahead and I know that the next year and a half of Water Advocates' existence will lead to further progress in this sector. While I expected NGOs to answer the call to action for WASH-in-Schools, I was thoroughly impressed as I watched U.S. students from across the nation rally behind the WASH-in-Schools cause by learning about the global water and sanitation crisis as well as by raising funds for schools in developing countries in need of a WASH program. The students, along with the energy and guidance from H2O for Life, have shown me (and more importantly others) what a difference dedicated youth and teachers can make on this issue.



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Because of the increased NGO involvement in the WASH-in-Schools sector, the Global Water Challenge convened a group of NGOs and donors to discuss the lessons learned and best practices from the WASH-in-Schools sector at the Inter-American Development Bank in October 2008. Groups beyond the U.S. worked on getting more schools in the developing world a WASH program; in Dubai, for example, the Dubai Cares Foundation is beginning to make WASH-in-Schools a primary focus of their 2009 campaign.

While the water sector has eagerly adopted the WASH-in-Schools Initiative, I believe the impact of this Initiative will be limited until the education sector also embraces this approach. Educators are not engineers, health officials or water managers, but they do understand the educational impacts of a WASH-in-Schools program—especially for girls. But education experts focus on what they know. So we need to take added effort to connect the water and sanitation sector with the education sector. Once this partnership is accomplished, the two sectors will be able to more effectively scale-up the WASH-in-Schools' effort.

I ask that you pass the word of WASH-in-Schools to education colleagues you know in your own organizations and outside of work. A concerted effort to bring the two sectors together will lead to healthier and better educated students, which leads toyou know the story.

For those of you who don't know, I am leaving Water Advocates to move to Istanbul with my husband and children. I am sad to be leaving Water Advocates and all the important work that is done on behalf of the water and sanitation sector but I am hopeful that new water and sanitation opportunities are around the corner.

Andra Tamburro