

water advocates

1506 21st street, nw suite 200 washington, dc 20036 | telephone 202 293 4002 | fax 202 293 4001 | www.wateradvocates.org

Bringing Safe Drinking Water to Schools *Saving Lives and Keeping Kids in School*

Children bear the brunt of the global safe drinking water and sanitation crisis, the world's largest public health threat and the cause of 80% of all sicknesses in developing countries. Each day 4,500 children die from diarrhoeal diseases related to inadequate water and sanitation— five times as many as die from HIV/AIDS and twice as many as from malaria.

Schools are key to responding to this dire public health crisis. In the developing world, there are 600 million children of primary school age and roughly 50% of these children's schools lack safe drinking water and 75% lack basic sanitation. The lack of water and sanitation in schools perpetuates the cycle of water-related illnesses and has debilitating effects on school attendance and children's potential to learn in school.

The links between Water & Sanitation and School Attendance

- Many children miss school because they must collect and haul water for their families; those who do enroll are frequently absent due to water-related illness.
- Schools without water fail to attract new teachers; current teachers are not able to spend their time teaching, but must join their students in water collection.
- Girls suffer the most: typically, girls are responsible for hauling water, and the lack of private sanitation facilities discourages them from attending school once they reach puberty.

WASH in Schools Initiative

To meet this need Water Advocates has joined the efforts of UNICEF, CARE, the Global Water Challenge through the Clean Start Fund and others to launch a *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH) in Schools* initiative to provide 1,000 primary and secondary schools in the developing world with water, sanitation and hygiene promotion by World Water Day, March 22, 2008. These 1,000 schools are only the beginning – the larger purpose of this initiative is to catalyze a greater, on-going effort scaled up to meet the global need.

School-based programs can be effectively implemented and are cost efficient in serving hundreds of students in a central location. The quality of education improves, girls tend to stay in school longer, and the benefits of school water programs radiate out to the larger community. Overall, investing in water and sanitation projects has a strong multiplier effect – the economic benefits range from \$3 to \$34 for each dollar spent depending on the location.

WASH in Schools will include:

- a complete package of water, sanitation and hygiene promotion;
- a commitment by the implementing organization and local community or host government to raise 50% of the funds; and
- monitoring and evaluation for at least three years.

The goal of *WASH in Schools* is for implementing organizations that meet these criteria to receive a funding match of 50% of the costs from either the private or public sector. Any individual, corporation, foundation, school, civic organization or faith group can help bring water and sanitation to one or many schools; this initiative can reach 1,000 schools by next World Water Day and ultimately many more. To learn how you can get involved, contact Andra Tamburro, Water Advocates at (202) 293-4047 and atamburro@wateradvocates.org.

Water Advocates is a US-based nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing American support for worldwide access to safe, affordable, and sustainable drinking water and adequate sanitation.