



## Water for the World Act: Making the Case

Worldwide, **nearly 900 million people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.6 billion live without improved sanitation.**<sup>1</sup> This crisis impedes U.S. foreign policy goals and requires strong U.S. leadership. Underlying child health, nutrition, conservation, disaster response, women's empowerment, economic growth, and education, WASH is one of the most effective and efficient investments we can make. **For every \$1 invested in WASH, \$8 is returned in saved health care costs and increased economic productivity.**<sup>2</sup> In tight financial times, investments in WASH have broad-reaching benefits.

The *Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act (S. 641 & H.R. 3658)* is bipartisan legislation introduced in the Senate (Durbin, D-IL/Corker, R-TN) and House (Blumenauer, D-OR/Poe, R-TX) that will make **better use of existing WASH funds**, improve international development efforts, and enhance other foreign policy objectives.

### What does *Water for the World* do?

*Water for the World* strengthens water, sanitation and hygiene work currently underway at USAID and the Department of State. By amending the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005* (P.L. 109-121), *Water for the World* establishes accountability for WASH programs that will have the greatest impact on individual lives and communities worldwide **without spending new money or creating new bureaucracy.** It will:

- **Institutionalize existing capacity in the U.S. government** to ensure WASH remains a political priority and expertise is available at USAID and State Department headquarters **and in country-level missions** to guide strategic implementation of effective and sustainable WASH programs;
- **Enhance criteria for choosing high-priority countries** to ensure that limited funds are directed to the countries and communities most in need of access to safe water and sanitation, recognizing **evidence that the poorest people benefit most from receiving WASH services;**
- **Advance best practices of effective aid**, such as improved monitoring and evaluation and a focus on **leveraging non-Federal partnerships and funds;** and
- **Improve the strategic approach** to international safe water, sanitation and hygiene, by providing smart guidance that builds off that provided in the *Water for the Poor Act*, such as requiring **integration of a comprehensive water strategy with other related strategies**, including those focused on health, education, food security, environment, and women's empowerment.

### Why do water, sanitation and hygiene matter to U.S. foreign policy?

The benefits to our broader foreign policy, national security, and economic growth objectives include:

#### ***Global Economic Growth and Breaking the Cycle of Household Poverty:***

- **Alleviating household poverty** by allowing women to work and girls to go to school.
- Advancing **education**. Meeting the water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals would yield **272 million additional school days** worldwide,<sup>3</sup> advancing gender equality and helping to break the cycle of poverty.

- Improving the ability to excel at school. Emerging evidence links **stunting and cognitive delays** to under-nutrition often caused by diarrheal disease. These challenges make it difficult for children to concentrate and learn, so **WASH can improve school attendance and success**.
- **Mitigating the estimated 5% annual loss to Gross Domestic Product in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia** that arises from the absence of safe drinking water and improved sanitation.<sup>4</sup> In 2009, this 5% **lost GDP in sub-Saharan Africa was greater than total aid delivered to the region** (\$47.7 billion lost in GDP<sup>5</sup> versus \$47.6 billion in aid to sub-Saharan Africa in 2009<sup>6</sup>). Reversing this lost GDP would **support the growth of national and regional economies**, bringing greater strength and stability to global markets.

### **U.S. National Security:**

- **Mitigating potential future conflicts over water** resources and other poverty-related challenges that impact regional stability.
- Responding to critical concerns raised by the **National Intelligence Estimate**, which illustrates that, in the next decade, **countries of strategic interest** to the U.S. will experience water problems—from a lack of clean drinking water to irrigation shortages—that can result in **instability, increase cross-border tensions**, and interrupt existing efforts and partnerships with the U.S.

### **Increasing the Impact of U.S. Foreign Assistance:**

- **Improving the capacity** of the U.S. government, partner-country governments, and indigenous civil society to design, implement, and budget for WASH programs that meet the needs of the people who will use the services.
- Addressing critical challenges to the **sustainability** of WASH programs to **ensure the best use of U.S. taxpayer dollars** and safeguard the lasting benefit of services being delivered.
- **Preventing and reducing the leading causes of child death**—diarrhea, malnutrition and pneumonia, which together account for 30% of child mortality—by providing safe drinking water and teaching simple hand-washing to prevent the spread of disease. **Integrating WASH and child survival programs reduces the number of childhood deaths caused by diarrheal disease by 65%**<sup>7</sup> and can prevent 860,000 child deaths caused by malnutrition each year.<sup>8</sup>
- **Addressing hunger worldwide**, by improving water resource management and agricultural productivity, and eliminating diarrheal disease caused by unsafe water and sanitation, thereby increasing the nutrients retained by the body. This helps the **nearly one billion people suffering chronic hunger** and enhances other investments that require good nutrition for their full benefit to be realized, such as **U.S. investments in antiretroviral therapy to treat HIV/AIDS**.

<sup>1</sup> WHO and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program for Water and Sanitation. *Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-Water: 2010 Update*. Available at [http://www.wssinfo.org/download.php?id\\_document=1289](http://www.wssinfo.org/download.php?id_document=1289)

<sup>2</sup> Bartram, Jamie; Lawrence Haller; Guy Hutton. *Economic and Health Effects of Increasing Low-Cost Water and Sanitation Interventions* (Geneva: World Health Organization: 2006) at 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Human Development Report 2006, *Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*" United Nations Development Programme, November 2006, [hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR06-complete.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR06-complete.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid at 6

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, *African Development Indicators 2011*, June 2011, at 8, [http://data.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/adi\\_2011-web.pdf](http://data.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/adi_2011-web.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> OECD, *Development Aid at a Glance, Statistics by Region - 2. Africa*, 2011 edition, July 2011, at 2, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/40/27/42139250.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> WHO as stated at: [http://www.wateraid.org/international/what\\_we\\_do/statistics/default.asp](http://www.wateraid.org/international/what_we_do/statistics/default.asp).

<sup>8</sup> WHO, *Safer Water, Better Health: Costs, Benefits and Sustainability to Interventions to Protect and Promote Health*, 2008.