

# Water is a women's issue

Worldwide, nearly 800 million people lack access to safe water, while 2.5 billion live without adequate sanitation. The lack of these essential services has a huge impact on the lives of millions of women and girls around the world.

## **Walking for water**

Women and girls spend hours walking for water, an exhausting task that consumes 26% of women's time in rural Africa.

## **Water-related diseases**

The water they work so hard to collect is often dirty and contaminated with deadly diseases. Water-related diseases are the third biggest killer of children in Africa. It is usually women who undertake the bulk of care for those who are sick. And mothers feel the heartbreak acutely when another child is lost.

## **Lack of dignity**

Women in particular feel the indignity of the lack of somewhere private to go to the bathroom. In many cultures women have to wait until it is dark to relieve themselves, causing discomfort and sometimes illness. It can also expose women to the risk of sexual harassment and animal attacks.

## **Trapped in poverty**

Lack of clean water and toilets costs sub-Saharan Africa around 5% of its Gross Domestic Product every year. The hours spent collecting water reduce the time women can spend earning money, growing food or caring for their families.



Many women and girls spend hours each day collecting water in containers that can weigh up to 40 pounds when full – the weight of a four-year-old American child.



**Zeinabu Kayisi, Malawi**

"Being able to maintain the pump myself makes me feel independent and strong!"

## Impact on education

Girls often miss school because they are collecting water or are sick with water-related diseases. Many teenage girls drop out altogether if there are not separate facilities for boys and girls and their hygiene needs are not met.

A total of

# 40 billion

working hours are lost to water collection worldwide

# every year

## Involving women in water and sanitation programs

WaterAid works hard to ensure women are fully involved in all stages of our water and sanitation programs, including planning, construction and decision-making. This ensures the programs meet their needs, and helps equip women with the skills and confidence they need to tackle other challenges.

## Improving the status of women

WaterAid helps to elevate women's status in society by giving them positions of responsibility, such as chairing the water committees established to manage the new water supplies, or being employed as hygiene educators.

## Transforming lives

Ensuring access to clean water and sanitation transforms the lives of women and girls. It gets girls back into school, women into employment, and improves their health, wellbeing, dignity and independence.

Go to [wateraidamerica.org](http://wateraidamerica.org)



Aubrey Wade/WaterAid/Panos

Unsafe water leads to the spread of deadly water-related diseases like cholera and typhoid.



WaterAid/Zute Lightfoot

## Nadia, Rwanda

"The water has made a big difference. Before, the little children would always fall sick. I was lucky that the water came in time for my baby."



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Printed on 100% recycled paper

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