# WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

*Safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are essential for global health, economic development, and food security. Currently, 2.1 billion people live without access to safe drinking water and 4.5 billion people are without access to adequate sanitation.[155] Every day 1,300 children under 5 die from preventable diarrheal diseases, including cholera, caused by contaminated water and poor sanitation.[156] Meeting these challenges would significantly decrease morbidity and mortality, improve economic productivity, and prevent instability and conflict. Without investments in water and sanitation services, governance, and capacity building, countries will not succeed in their journey to self-reliance. Effective U.S. Government WASH programming provides greater access to safe water and sanitation, reduces water-related disease, decreases food insecurity, and combats transboundary conflict – saving and improving the lives of millions.[157]*

## Why the United States Government Invests in WASH:

- **WASH saves lives.** As many as 842,000 deaths from diarrheal diseases each year could be prevented by improved water, sanitation, and hygiene.[158]

- **WASH supports quality health care.** Fewer than 10% of health care facilities in developing countries have basic WASH services. Without basic WASH services, health care workers are particularly at risk for outbreaks of Ebola and many other infectious diseases.[159]

- **Water security empowers women and girls.** Globally, the burden of inadequate water access falls on women and girls who already spend 200 million hours every day collecting water. In Asia and Africa, women walk an average of 3.7 miles per day to collect water.[160]

- **U.S. leadership has helped make the world more water-secure.** Between 2008 and 2016, U.S. foreign aid programs helped to extend improved drinking water services to 37 million people and improved sanitation services to 24 million people.[161]

## Examples of Current U.S. Programs Addressing WASH:

**USAID'S STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS IN SANITATION[162]**
Sanitation continues to be a top priority for USAID, as reflected in the Water and Development Plan in support of the 2017 U.S. Global Water Strategy. Sanitation directly affects water quality and hygiene practices, which is why larger WASH programs integrate many sanitation-focused activities. For example, USAID, through its partnership with Save the Children, is providing latrines in schools that include menstrual hygiene management facilities and are accessible for students with disabilities.

## Key Legislation or Government Policies

**Senator Paul Simon Water for The World Act of 2014[163]**
*Enacted 2014*
In 2005, the Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act was signed into law, making WASH a U.S. foreign policy priority. The Water for the World Act of 2014 builds on the Water for the Poor Act of 2005, prioritizing countries with the greatest need and opportunity and creates improved coordination between U.S. government agencies to address WASH challenges. Through the creation of a U.S. Government Global Water Strategy, it increases integration of water with other key development interventions for maternal and child health, economic development, food security, and nutrition and improves long-term monitoring and evaluation and encourages increased leveraging of nonfederal partnerships and funding.

**The U.S. Government Global Water Strategy (2017-2027)[164]**
The interagency strategy envisions a water-secure world, where people and nations have the water they need to be healthy, prosperous, and resilient. The strategy aims to provide sustainable safe drinking water to 15 million additional people and sustainable sanitation to 8 million more people. To advance the Strategy, the U.S. government is working with partner countries and key stakeholders to achieve four interrelated objectives:

- Increase access to sustainable safe drinking water and sanitation services and promote key hygiene behaviors;
- Protect freshwater resources;
- Promote cooperation on shared waters; and
- Strengthen water governance and financing.