

WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE (WASH)



Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) is essential for global health, economic development, gender equality, food security and nutrition, climate resilience, and conflict prevention. While significant progress has been made, one in three people—or **2 billion** people globally—still live without access to safe drinking water. Further, **1.9 billion** people do not have a toilet and **2.3 billion** cannot wash their hands inside their homes.

WASH is the first line of defense in slowing the spread of most disease outbreaks, such as the flu, diarrhea, cholera, and Ebola. Development efforts are made more effective and sustainable over the long term when they address WASH, as it is key to improving maternal and child health, preventing neglected tropical diseases, and addressing food and nutrition security. Yet, over **480 million** children lack access to any handwashing facilities in their schools and only **32%** of healthcare facilities in the least developed countries have basic hygiene service.

As early as 2025, half the world's population will live in water-stressed areas. Limited access to safe drinking water worsens humanitarian emergencies: children living in conflict areas are **almost three times** more likely to die from diarrheal diseases caused by a lack of safe WASH than by direct violence. More resilient and sustainable WASH solutions are needed to support ongoing development programs and reach high-risk communities, leading to healthier populations worldwide.

FAST FACTS

- ▶ **2 billion** people lack access to safe drinking water and over **3.6 billion** people do not have access to safely managed sanitation services.
- ▶ In the least developed countries, only **53%** of health care facilities have basic water service
- ▶ From F.Y. 2008 through F.Y. 2020 **WASH programming at USAID** has led to:
 - 59.5 million people gaining access to a sustainable drinking water source.

- 44.6 million people gaining access to a sustainable sanitation service.
- ▶ Access to WASH can reduce diarrheal disease, preventing the deaths of **297,000** children under 5 each year.
- ▶ Appropriate hand hygiene prevents up to **50%** of avoidable infections acquired during healthcare delivery, including those affecting the health workforce.

KEY U.S. LEGISLATION, STRATEGIES & PROGRAMS

- ▶ **Legislation:**
 - [The Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005](#)
 - [The Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014](#)
- ▶ **Strategies:**
 - [U.S. Global Water Strategy](#)
 - [White House Action Plan on Global Water Security](#)
- ▶ **Programs:**
 - [USAID's Water and Sanitation program](#)
 - [CDC's Global Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene program](#)
 - [MCC's Water, Sanitation, and Irrigation program](#)

InterAction's **WASH Working Group** seeks to improve U.S. government policies related to WASH issues to increase sustainable access to these basic services in LMICs, improve the integration of WASH across development sectors, and prioritize service access to communities most in need.