

# “I THIRST”

**Each day water-related diseases kill 3,900 of the world's children.**

**A**cross the world, 1.1 billion people have no access to clean drinking water. More than 2.6 billion people lack basic sanitation.

The combination proves deadly. Each year, diseases related to inadequate water and sanitation kill between 2 and 5 million people and cause an estimated 80 percent of all sicknesses in the developing world. Safe drinking water is a precondition for health and the fight against child mortality, gender inequality, and poverty. Consider these facts:

- “The average distance that women in Africa and Asia walk to collect water is 6 kilometers.” (Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council)
- “Only 58 percent of children in sub-Saharan Africa are drinking safe water, and only 37 percent of children in South Asia have access to even a basic toilet.” (UNICEF)
- “Each year in India alone, 73 million working days are lost to water-borne diseases.” (United Nations Development Programme)

Every month around the globe, preventable diseases related to sanitation and drinking water take roughly as many lives as were lost during the recent South Asian tsunami disaster.

This is the 21st century, but water and sanitation remain mired in the Middle Ages for one-third of the world.

For too long, this casualty toll from lack of clean drinking water and basic sanitation has remained invisible.



Collecting drinking water at a traditional water source in Ethiopia.

WaterPartners International/Gary White

**T**he U.S. and 190 other nations have pledged as a Millennium Development Goal “to halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.”

**March 22, 2005**, marks not only World Water Day but the launch of a new U.N. Water Decade designed to help achieve this goal within the next ten years.

**It will not be easy, but it can be done.**

Nations and local communities across Africa, Latin America, and Asia will themselves provide the bulk of the money. But a significant funding shortfall exists. Additional help is needed for efficient projects with strong community involvement and hygiene training.

Public and private aid from donor countries is currently only a fraction of what's required.

There is no shortage of good opportunities for Americans, who now use an average of more than 100 gallons of water per person daily, to work with some of the 1.1 billion people across the world who lack even 5 gallons of clean



Clean water arriving in a rural village in Panama.

Waterlines/P. Jose Lain

water per day (the World Health Organization-recognized minimum needed for basic health).

**Here are three ways you can help:**

**1) Write Congress**

Current U.S. foreign aid for drinking water and sanitation budgets only one dollar per year per American citizen. Few members of Congress have ever received a letter from constituents about clean drinking water abroad, despite its pivotal role in public health and global instability.

**2) Sponsor a project with a faith-based or civic organization**

Many U.S. religious and civic groups already sponsor water and sanitation projects, working with partner organizations abroad. Simply put, a single project by a U.S. congregation or a civic club can make safe water a reality for thousands of people.

**3) Support nonprofit water organizations**

Numerous U.S.-based nonprofits work skillfully abroad in well-designed, community-led projects on behalf of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene. Like the sample of non-profits noted on this page to the right, some organizations are large, others small-scale, some operate worldwide, others are dedicated to certain locales in Africa, Asia, or Latin America. Support them generously.

Listed below are a few of the U.S.-based nonprofit organizations working on behalf of the world's drinking water and sanitation.

**Water for People:**

[www.waterforpeople.org](http://www.waterforpeople.org) | 303-734-3490

**WaterPartners International:**

[www.water.org](http://www.water.org) | 913-312-8600

**CARE:**

[www.care.org](http://www.care.org) | 800-521-CARE

**Millennium Water Alliance:**

[www.mwawater.org](http://www.mwawater.org) | 713-625-8527

**WaterAid America:**

[www.wateraid.org](http://www.wateraid.org) | 646-344-7201

**Water Missions International:**

[www.watermissions.org](http://www.watermissions.org) | 843-769-7395

**Lifewater International:**

[www.lifewater.org](http://www.lifewater.org) | 805-541-6634

**Living Water International:**

[www.water.cc](http://www.water.cc) | 281-261-7984

**El Porvenir:**

[www.elporvenir.org](http://www.elporvenir.org)

**U.S. Fund for UNICEF:**

[www.unicefusa.org](http://www.unicefusa.org)

**For further information on water and sanitation and Millennium Development Goals, see:**

[www.unicef.org/wes/mdgreport](http://www.unicef.org/wes/mdgreport)  
[www.unesco.org/water](http://www.unesco.org/water)  
[www.millenniumcampaign.org](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org)

**For further information on water resources worldwide, see:**

Pacific Institute: [www.pacinst.org](http://www.pacinst.org)  
The World's Water: [www.worldwater.org](http://www.worldwater.org)