

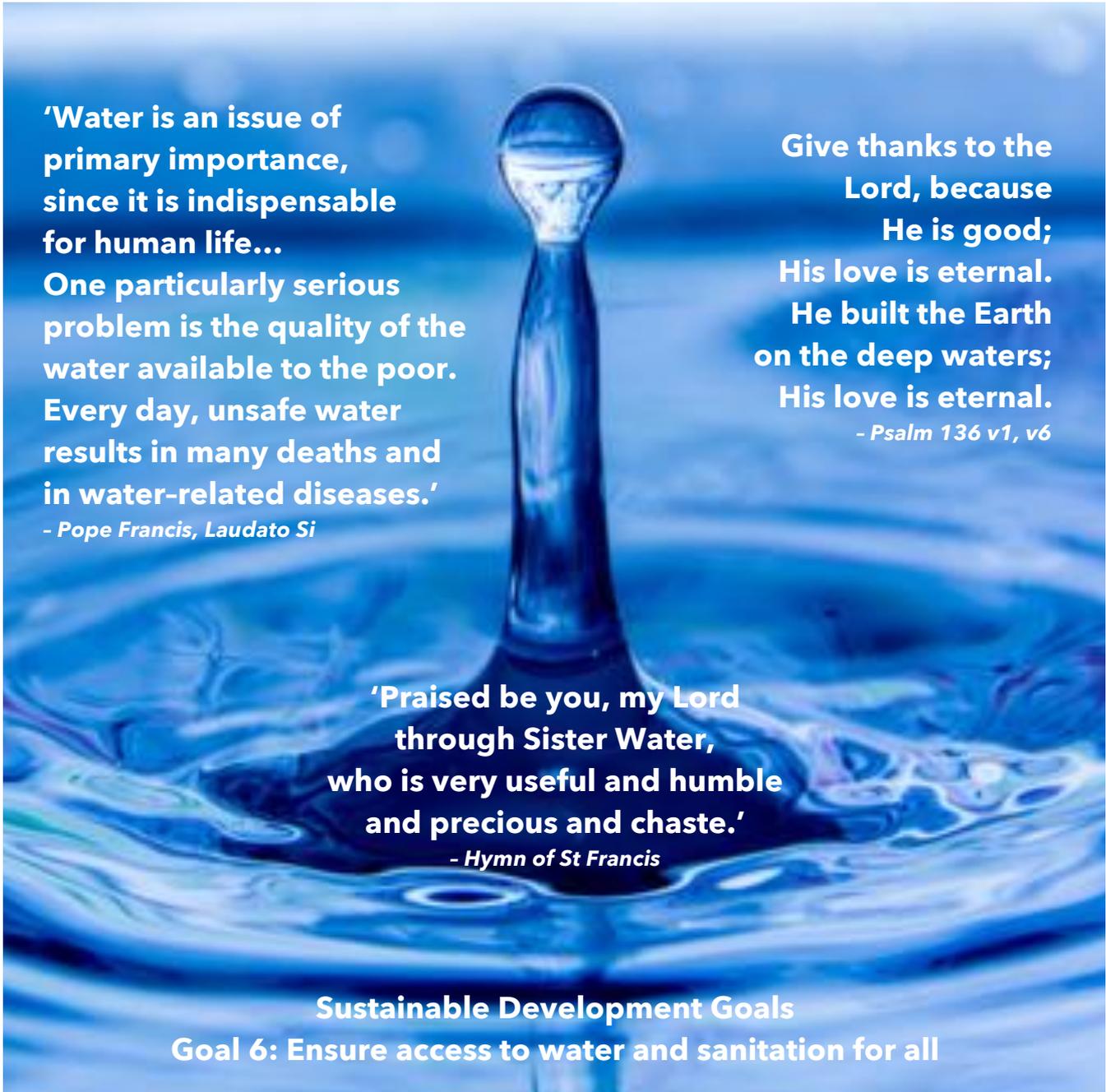


Photograph: USAID

Faith-based Education on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

A toolkit for Christian schools and communities in Indonesia





'Water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life...

One particularly serious problem is the quality of the water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and in water-related diseases.'

- Pope Francis, Laudato Si

Give thanks to the Lord, because He is good; His love is eternal. He built the Earth on the deep waters; His love is eternal.

- Psalm 136 v1, v6

'Praised be you, my Lord through Sister Water, who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.'

- Hymn of St Francis

**Sustainable Development Goals
Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all**

This toolkit has been created by Faith in Water, a UK-based charity that works with faith communities around the world on water, sanitation and hygiene. It has been produced with the support of Global One 2015, a UK-based NGO that is part of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, GIWA.



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What is WASH?

WASH stands for **water, sanitation and hygiene**. Clean water, basic toilets and good hygiene practices are essential for the survival and development of children. Around 842,000 deaths¹ are caused every year because of diseases caused by inadequate drinking water and sanitation, and poor hygiene. This includes more than 340,000 children aged under five: Every day around 1,000 children die from these preventable diseases².

Water is life and sanitation is dignity. Today, around 663 million people do not have access to improved water sources and 2.4 billion people do not use improved sanitation³.

For children aged under five, diseases related to water and sanitation are one of the leading causes of death. Poor sanitation and hygiene practices and unsafe water contribute to 88 per cent of deaths from diarrhoea among young children worldwide⁴.

Even among older children, more than 20% of deaths of under-14-year-olds are due to unsafe water and sanitation or inadequate hygiene⁵. In those who survive, frequent diarrhoea episodes can lead to malnutrition, which prevents the child from reaching his or her full potential. This has serious implications for the nation's future development and prosperity.

Investing in WASH is one of the most effective and efficient choices we can make for child health, education, empowerment of women and the long-term future of a country.

What do we mean by 'improved water source' and 'improved sanitation facility'?

Both these phrases are widely used by governments and NGOs working in water, sanitation and hygiene.

- An **improved water source** is one that, by the way it is built, protects the water source from outside contamination, such as human faeces or animal/bird droppings.
- An **improved sanitation facility** is one that hygienically separates human waste from human contact.

What is WASH in Schools?

Every child has the right to a safe and healthy learning environment, including safe water and adequate sanitation and hygiene. Diseases caused by poor WASH conditions are estimated to result in children losing millions of days of schooling globally due to illness every year⁶.

However, more than half of all primary schools in developing countries do not have adequate water facilities and nearly two thirds lack adequate sanitation⁷. Even where facilities exist, they are often in poor condition.

WASH in Schools helps ensure quality education, because children who are healthy and well nourished can fully participate in schooling. Quality education, in turn, leads to better health and nutrition outcomes for all children but especially for girls. For example, schools in Kenya where water is treated and hygiene promoted show a 58% lower absenteeism rate among girls.⁸

WASH in Schools encourages children's pride in their schools and communities by providing dignity and privacy. It enables children to become ambassadors for improving water, sanitation and hygiene practices in their families and communities.

WASH in Schools is also about investing in schoolchildren and the health of future generations because it creates a cycle of opportunity. It helps children realise their full potential now and prepares them for healthy living as adults. It is an investment in the economic health of the country.





Photograph: World Bank - Sheryl Silverman

WASH in Schools is about looking after children's **HEALTH, ATTENDANCE, PRIVACY** and **DIGNITY**.

WASH in Schools means

- Making sure there's enough safe water for drinking, washing hands, cooking and cleaning.
- Making sure there are enough clean, well-maintained toilets and hand washing facilities with soap.
- Making sure girls can manage their menstrual hygiene by having separate, safe and private toilets.
- Making sure that disabled and less able children have toilets they can use with dignity.
- Having a fair plan for cleaning the toilets and ensuring cleaning materials are always available.
- Teaching children about hygiene in engaging ways so they take the lessons home to their families.

WASH in Faith Schools means

All of the points on the left PLUS

- Faiths knowing the state of WASH in their schools and colleges.
- Faiths working to transform their schools into models of good practice on WASH.
- Faiths making sure there is water for ablutions or prayer, as well as for drinking and washing.
- Faiths working with secular groups, NGOs and governments to support WASH initiatives in their area.
- Faiths taking WASH messages into the community through sermons, celebrations, youth groups, etc.
- Faiths using their influence to advocate for improved WASH facilities throughout their region.

What is a WASH-friendly School?

A WASH-friendly School is a school where everyone practices the **three key hygiene practices:**

- Use of improved toilets or latrines
- Washing hands with soap at critical times (eg, after using toilets, before eating)
- Drinking safe water that has been treated and stored properly.

A WASH Friendly School is a school that:

- is clean and safe
- has adequate, well maintained toilets or latrines for girls and boys and for teachers
- has a place to wash hands with soap/ash and running water after using the toilets
- has enough treated, safely stored drinking water for the school community.

A WASH Friendly School is a school where:

- teachers give lessons on good hygiene practices in the classroom
- students participate actively in making and keeping their school WASH friendly
- school and community work together to promote good hygiene and carry out community and household activities to ensure that there are facilities and conditions for practicing improved hygiene.

Suggested components of a WASH-friendly school

- Latrines for girls and boys, with washable slabs, doors or curtains for privacy
- Hand washing stations near the latrines
- Soap always available or soap substitute such as ash (parents can help with this)
- School rules for latrine use and maintenance and hand washing with soap after use
- Clean drinking water in adequate supply for school community
- School plan for operations and maintenance for drinking water facility
- Teachers trained in WASH basics
- WASH curricular materials and promotional material for the **three key hygiene practices** available
- WASH and **three key hygiene practices** integrated into the school curriculum
- WASH activities linking school and community.

Possible WASH Activities linking school and community

- Meet with principals, faith leaders and school committees.
- Facilitate school environmental health clubs and non-health clubs to:
 - Integrate key messages into youth clubs or organise clubs if there are none.
 - Organise fairs with WASH-themed booths and demonstrations
 - Hold performances by students for the community on WASH themes (musical, theatrical, other traditions).
- Strengthen existing parent associations.
 - Encourage building and maintenance of hand washing stations, safe water management.
- Explore partnerships or funding for latrine construction and water treatment.

Water facts and figures

Water is the central component of the Earth's ecosystem and it is central to our survival. Without water, plant and animal life would be impossible. Life is possible on Earth due to the presence of water. Nearly three-fourths of the Earth's surface is covered with water.

Earth is the only planet in our solar system where water is found in all three states: solid, liquid and gas. In particular it is the only planet where water is found in a liquid state. Water is also found below the Earth's surface. It is present in air in the form of water vapour.

Water is life

Water is critical to all living things; even the human adult body is made up of around 60% water. According to H.H. Mitchell, writing in the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, the brain and heart are composed of 73% water, and the lungs are about 83% water. The muscles and kidneys are 79%, and even the bones are 31% water.

Water is a vital nutrient to the life of every cell. It regulates our internal body temperature through sweating and breathing and lubricates our joints. Water is used to transport nutrients digested as food through the bloodstream. Water helps to flush waste out of the body, mainly through urination.

We all need to consume water every day to survive. The amounts needed vary but generally speaking, an adult male needs about 2 litres per day while an adult female needs about 1.6 litres per day.⁹ Some of this water is consumed in food.

Just as our bodies need water to function so do other creations of God. Water is used to water animals and irrigate crops from which we get food.

Uses of water

Water is used in all kinds of ways. Here are some examples:

- Domestic use (eg, drinking, washing, cleaning, cooking)
- Irrigating crops and watering livestock
- Industrial use
- Tourism activities / recreation (eg, swimming)
- Fishing
- Transport / navigation
- Generating electricity
- Religious uses (eg, baptisms, ritual cleansing)

Sources of water

Rainwater, oceans, rivers, lakes, streams, ponds and springs are natural sources of water. Dams, wells, boreholes and canals are manmade sources of water.

Rainwater:

Rainwater collects on the Earth in the form of surface water and underground water.

Surface Water:

Water present on the surface of the Earth in the form of oceans, rivers, lakes, ponds and streams is called surface water. The water in rivers and lakes comes from rain and melting of snow on mountains. Rivers flow into the sea.

Underground Water:

Some of the rainwater seeps through the soil on to the non-porous rocks below. This is underground water. Sometimes due to high pressure, this water sprouts out in the form of springs. It can be obtained by digging or sinking wells.

Water shortages:

Water shortages may be caused by climate change (such as altered weather patterns including droughts or floods), increased pollution, and increased human demand and overuse of water. A water crisis is a situation where the available unpolluted drinking water within a region is not enough to meet demands.

Water scarcity

This is the lack of sufficient available water resources to meet water needs. It affects every continent around the world at least one month out of every year. The UN says that around 1.2 billion people in the world live without adequate amounts of water.¹⁰ Recent projections indicate that by 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will be living in severe water stress conditions¹¹ with significant negative effects on individuals, communities, economies, and ecosystems around the world.

Water and pollution

The main sources of water pollution are from human settlements and industrial and agricultural activities.

- 80% of sewage in developing countries is discharged untreated into water sources.¹²
- 1 in 8 people worldwide practice open defecation¹³ - where people defecate outside and not in a toilet or latrine - which increases risk of water sources being contaminated with germs.
- Releasing untreated sewage into rivers, lakes or streams makes the water unsafe for consumption due to the presence of disease-causing organisms. This leads to outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid.
- Industry dumps an estimated 300-400 million tonnes of polluted waste into waters every year.¹⁴
- Discharging industrial wastes into water bodies affects the quality of water, making it unsafe for drinking and other uses.

- Chemicals present in the wastes can kill the organisms that live in water. This interferes with food chains and food webs in water.
- Nitrate from agriculture is the most common chemical contaminant in the world's groundwater aquifers.¹⁵
- Leakages from pit latrines and rubbish dumps can contaminate underground water, making it unsuitable for various uses.
- Oil spills into water sources also interferes with the quality of water.
- Uncontrolled diversion of rivers into farms for irrigation upstream reduces the availability for people downstream.
- The biodiversity of freshwater ecosystems has been degraded more than any other ecosystem.¹⁶



WASH fast facts

Water fast facts

- One in nine people (around 663 million people) worldwide do not have access to clean water.¹⁷
- 159 million people use untreated water from lakes and rivers, the most unsafe water source there is.¹⁸
- 8 out of 10 people without access to clean water live in rural areas.¹⁹
- Since 1990, 2.6 billion people have gained access to improved drinking water and today, 91% of the world's population drink clean water.²⁰

Sanitation fast facts

- 1 in 3 people (around 2.4 billion) worldwide don't use improved sanitation.²¹
- 1 in 7 people practice open defecation.²²
- Five countries - India, **Indonesia**, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Pakistan - account for 75% of open defecation.²³
- Since 1990, 2.6 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation.²⁴

WASH and disease fast facts

- Diarrhoea caused by dirty water and poor sanitation and hygiene is one of the leading causes of death among children under five.²⁵
- Among children aged under 14, more than 20% of deaths are due to dirty water and poor sanitation and hygiene.²⁶
- More than 40% of diarrhoea cases in school children are caused by infection at school rather than at home.²⁷
- Washing hands at critical times - eg, after going to the toilet and before eating - can reduce cases of diarrhoea by up to 35%.²⁸

The **THREE KEY HYGIENE PRACTICES** are:

- Use of improved toilets or latrines
- Washing hands with soap at critical times (eg, after using toilets, before eating)
- Drinking safe water that has been treated and stored properly



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Sustainable Development Goals

In September 2015, world leaders adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intended to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030.²⁹ The SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were eight anti-poverty targets adopted by world leaders between 2000 and 2015. Enormous progress was made on the MDGs but there is still much work to do, which is why the SDGs were adopted.

The main one for water and sanitation is:

Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all



Other SDGs of relevance to WASH in Schools include:



Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all



Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all



Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Indonesia and WASH

With 255 million people, Indonesia is the fourth most populated country in the world and hosts Southeast Asia's biggest economy. Indonesia has made significant progress in increasing access to safe water and sanitation. However, many Indonesians still experience big problems with accessing clean water and safe sanitation.

In 2015, Indonesia achieved the Millennium Development Goal target of 88% of the population having access to an improved drinking water source. However, Indonesia missed the MDG target for sanitation. Only 61% of people have access to hygienic toilet facilities, far less than the MDG target of 77%.³⁰

This means 100 million Indonesians do not have access to decent toilets or latrines. And more than 30 million people do not have safe water.

Rural versus urban

There are big differences in conditions affecting people living in towns and cities and those living in the countryside. According to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme, which measures progress towards Millennium Development Goals, 72% of urban use an improved toilet or latrine but only 47% of rural people. In addition, 21% of rural people use risky sources for their drinking water such as unimproved wells, springs, rivers and surface water, compared to 7% of urban people.

Sanitation	Urban	Rural	Total
Improved toilet facility	72%	47%	61%
Shared facilities	10%	12%	11%
Other unimproved facility	5%	12%	8%
Open defecation	13%	29%	20%

Water source	Urban	Rural	Total
Piped water	33%	9%	22%
Other improved source	61%	70%	65%
Other unimproved source	6%	18%	11%
Surface water	1%	3%	2%

A major health problem

Using unimproved wells, springs and rivers is a major health problem. Lakes, springs and rivers are the most unsafe water source there is, while water from wells risks being polluted, especially when wells, sewers, and septic tanks are crammed in confined spaces.

Also, some of the improved water supplies are difficult to access, which means poor households, particularly women and children, spend too much time fetching water. This has serious consequences for people's health and the country's economic wellbeing.

Indonesian health statistics

- Two of the four most important causes of deaths among children under five in Indonesia are directly linked to inadequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene issues. They are diarrhoea and typhoid.³¹
- Diarrhoea rates are **34% higher** among children whose families use an open well for drinking water, compared to those who use piped water.³²
- Diarrhoea rates are **66% higher** among children whose families practice open defecation in rivers or streams, compared to those who have a private or septic tank.³³
- Indonesia loses US\$6.3 billion or Rp56 trillion per year due to poor sanitation and hygiene. This is equivalent to 2.3% of GDP.³⁴
- The health costs per year due to poor sanitation reached Rp139.000 per person or Rp31 trillion nationally.³⁵

Government action

The government's environmental health interventions focus on basic sanitation. Access to sanitation in rural areas has not increased significantly over the past 30 years, and open defecation (where people defecate outside and not in a toilet or latrine) is a serious problem.

The latest figures show that 29% of the rural population and 13% of the urban population practice open defecation. As a result, they face higher health risks.

In 2014, the Government issued regulations to strengthen efforts for clean and healthy behaviours. It has adopted Community Based Total Sanitation Management (STBM) as its national strategy for sanitation. This approach puts people in charge of efforts to solve sanitation and hygiene problems.

Clean water is water that meets national health requirements, i.e., it should be colourless, tasteless, odourless, and should not contain substances and germs that interfere with an individual's health. According to the definition outlined by the Ministry of Health, clean water is water used for daily necessities whose quality meets health requirements of health and can be consumed after being boiled.

Five Pillars of STBM

1. **Stop open defecation:** Everyone in the community stops open defecation to prevent the spread of disease.
2. **Hand-washing with soap and water**
3. **Managing drinking water and food:** To ensure clean drinking water as well as good hygiene while preparing food.
4. **Securely disposing of household waste:** This promotes reduce, reuse, and recycle.
5. **Securely disposing of domestic wastewater:** To break the chain of disease.

Urban challenges

Rural Indonesians face the biggest challenges when it comes to clean water and decent sanitation. But cities also face challenges. The Ministry of Health has identified 226 high priority cities with problems managing sewage and wastewater, 240 with problems managing waste and 100 with problems with drainage.³⁶

UNICEF says the situation of the urban poor requires urgent attention. In urban slum areas, inadequate sanitation, poor hygiene practices, overcrowding and contaminated water create very unhealthy conditions.

This leads to a range of diseases such as dysentery, cholera, typhoid and intestinal parasitic infections. Poorer families who are less educated tend to have poor hygiene practices.



Polluted canal. Photograph by: Farhana Asnap

Soil and water in urban areas is frequently contaminated by faeces, due to overcrowding, dirty toilets and release of raw sewage into the open without treatment. Many urban households use a pump, well or spring that is 10 metres or less from a septic tank or toilet discharge.³⁷

In Jakarta, the Jakarta Environmental Agency (BPLHD) reports that 41% of dug wells are less than 10 metres from a septic tank. Septic tanks are seldom pumped out and leak sewage into the surrounding soil and groundwater.³⁸



Photograph by: World Bank

Hygiene awareness

Communities need to improve their hygiene awareness and practices.

According to a survey of six provinces, by the University of Indonesia for USAID in 2005, **less than 15%** of mothers wash their hands with soap:

- After defecation
- Before preparing food
- Before feeding their child
- Before eating
- Before cleaning the child's

bottom.³⁹

Washing hands saves lives

How can we save a million lives a year? Simple: we could all wash our hands properly, with soap, at critical times. Studies show proper washing with soap can dramatically reduce the number of children who get sick, especially with diarrhoea and pneumonia – potentially saving a million lives a year.⁴⁰

The critical times for washing hands are:

- **AFTER** contact with faeces, eg, after using the toilet or cleaning a child
- **BEFORE** contact with food, such as preparing food, eating, feeding a child

Handwashing is also recommended if you've been:

- touching a sick person or animals
- coughing or sneezing
- your hands are dirty.

Proper handwashing requires soap and running water. This doesn't have to be a tap; it could be water poured from a container or a tippy tap, a device that pours water out when it is tipped. You should aim to scrub your wet, soapy hands for about 20 seconds. If you sing 'Happy Birthday' twice, that is about 20 seconds long.

Shocking facts about hand-washing

Here are some interesting (and shocking) facts about hand washing so you can see why practicing proper hand hygiene is so vitally important.

- **80%** of communicable diseases are transferred by touch: This is mainly the touching of food, or the touching of your own mouth, eyes, and nose.⁴¹
- Only **20%** of people wash their hands before preparing food.⁴²
- Less than **75%** of women and less than **50%** of men wash their hands after going to the toilet.⁴³
- Most bacteria on our hands is on the fingertips and under the nails.⁴⁴
- Damp hands are **1,000 times** more likely to spread bacteria than dry hands.⁴⁵
- At least **1.8 billion people** use a drinking-water source that is contaminated with faecal matter.⁴⁶

October 15 is Global Handwashing Day

In its guide to planning this annual celebration of clean hands, the World Health Organisation asks religious leaders to be partners in passing on the message that hand-washing with soap could save a million lives every year.

If every faith leader preached a sermon on water and cleanliness in October, and every faith school taught children how to wash their hands properly, what a difference this would make.

WASH empowers girls

Educating girls helps to break the cycle of poverty. Educated girls are less likely to marry early or die in childbirth, and are more likely to send their own children to school. And they earn more as adults; studies show an extra year of secondary education for girls results in a 25% increase in wages later in life.⁴⁷

But despite much progress in recent years, girls still suffer many disadvantages. One of the challenges facing girls at school is lack of adequate toilet and washing facilities. This problem grows particularly acute when girls begin menstruating.

Studies show that lack of separate toilets/latrines from boys, lack of privacy (having no doors), toilets not being clean and not having water or somewhere private to clean themselves are all factors deterring girls from school. This can have a big impact on girls' education. One study found over 50% of girls in Ethiopia missed between one and four days of school per month due to their menstruation.⁴⁸

Ending fear and ignorance

Menstruation is a natural, biological process yet many social, cultural and religious taboos mean girls can't talk about it. This, in turn, leads to ignorance and misunderstanding. For example, one study in India, found 71% of girls had no idea what was happening to them when their period started; many thought they had a disease.⁴⁹

Christians believe that menstruation is a normal, bodily function created by God as part of a healthy reproductive system. Girls and women who are menstruating do not have a disease and are not impure or unclean.

Role of faith schools

Girls need to be able to manage their menstruation safely, hygienically and with dignity. Faith schools can help them to do this by providing the WASH facilities they need. Schools also have an important role to play in teaching girls - and boys - to have a proper understanding of this natural process and dispel ignorance, rumours and fear.

Girls and WASH fast facts

- Girls and women are disproportionately affected by inadequate WASH because in many countries they are responsible for collecting water.
- Globally, women and children spend around 200 million hours every day, collecting water.⁵⁰
- Time spent collecting water means girls and women have less time available for school, work, childcare or relaxation.
- If school toilet and washing facilities are inadequate, many girls stay away from school during their periods, resulting in absenteeism 10-20% of the time.⁵¹

Why is WASH an issue for faith groups?

Jesus answered, 'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

– John 4:13-14

Water is life

Every major faith includes water in its teachings and traditions. All faiths recognise that water has always been part of God's creation from the beginning, a life-giving resource for humans and all of God's creation. Water is a life-giving force that is essential for all. For this reason, water has spiritual significance in all major religions and is seen as God's gift to us: water is life. Giving water to people in need is seen as an important act of charity in all faiths.

For Christians, water has both a direct real importance and a deep spiritual significance. Water is a very significant image in the Bible; God provides his creation with an abundance of life-sustaining waters. Water is also a metaphor for the new spiritual life promised by Jesus. Jesus described himself as 'living water' and said '...the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life' (John 4:14). In John 3:5: 'Jesus answered, 'Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit'.

Today, water is used in baptism to symbolise being born into a new, spiritual life. The Gospel tells us that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan.

The importance of cleanliness

Water also has another precious quality: it washes away impurities, and all major faiths set great emphasis on cleanliness; in many religions, physical cleanliness symbolises a spiritual state of being.

In many villages around the world, religious communities provide clean water for people to drink and wash in; often cleanliness is an essential part of worship, both as preparation for prayer and in rituals. Many faiths have precise rules for washing hands in their holy texts.

For Christians, physical cleanliness is a symbol of spiritual purity, which is why, in 17th century Europe there was a saying: 'Cleanliness is next to godliness.' Psalm 51:78 asks God to: 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin'. In Hebrews 10:22, we are advised: 'Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with clean water.'

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.

– Matthew 25:35

What do Christian churches say about water?

Catholic Church

Water – and the issue of water justice for the poor – is a big theme in the encyclical, *Laudato Si*, which Pope Francis issued in 2015. Pope Francis reminds us: ‘Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance, since it is indispensable for human life and for supporting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.’

He adds: ‘Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights.’

Pope Francis is particularly concerned about the position of the poor: ‘One particularly serious problem is the quality of water available to the poor. Every day, unsafe water results in many deaths and the spread of water-related disease... Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.’

European Christian Environmental Network

In June 2016, the European Christian Environmental Network said: ‘Both the natural sciences and the Bible testify that water is the source of all life. Christians believe that God works in numerous ways through water...’

‘Jesus reminds us in many ways of the importance of water for life. He asked John to baptise him in the river of Jordan (Matthew 3:13). He asked the Samaritan woman at the well: “Will you give me a drink?” (John 1:7). At the end on the cross he said: “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28). If our Lord had to ask for water several times, then it is no wonder that the access to water is also so crucial for us.’

‘In the eyes of God water and justice are meant to flow like a stream – continually available to enhance abundant life for all. We therefore encourage individuals and our churches to take action especially by:

- Re-emphasising the sacredness and wonder of water, and its role in sustaining life and ecosystems through the whole earthly creation as it reveals the glory of God.
- Exploring hopeful responses to the water challenges we face through our worship, liturgy and action.
- Raising awareness of the value we attach to water and its use in everyday life and reminding ourselves that water is a gift for life.’

World Council of Churches

In 2011, the World Council of Churches issued a statement on the right to water and sanitation.

It said: ‘As churches we are called to serve and be examples in the way we use and share water. We are called to stand with the most vulnerable as they defend their rights to life, health, and livelihoods in situations marked by scarcity, conflict, occupation and

discrimination (Isaiah 1.17: *'Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow'*; Amos 5.24: *'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!'*).

'We must remember that water is a blessing to be treasured, to be shared with all people and creation, to be protected for future generations.'

Putting faith values into practice

How can people of faith address issues of water, sanitation and hygiene? A starting point is to consider our faith values.

Faith (conviction in God)	Wisdom (wise use of resources)
Respect (care for God's creation)	Justice (fairness in use of resources)
Stewardship (care/custodianship of environment)	Caring for the needy (care for the poorest and most vulnerable)
Accountability (responsibility for answering for our actions)	Peace (living in peace)
Harmony (living in harmony with nature)	Honesty (doing what we say)

All of these values can guide us in working to improve water, sanitation and hygiene, both in order to protect human beings and in order to safeguard the Earth's environment and biodiversity. In both cases we are protecting His creation, which is a responsibility that has been given to us as a sacred trust by God.

Questions for Christian communities

- How might we deepen our appreciation for the gift of water?
- How might we deepen our appreciation for the importance of cleanliness?
- How is water integral to our sacramental way of life?
- In what ways do we unconsciously waste or pollute water?
- How do dirty water and poor sanitation and hygiene affect people in our community?
- How can we express a deeper appreciation of water in our own life and in our communal lives?
- How well have we provided clean water, safe sanitation and good hygiene in our places of worship, our schools, our hospitals and our clinics?
- How will we share this message with others?

What can we do?

As a doe pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.'

– Psalms 42:1-2

Water is a gift from God for all life. It is the responsibility of all Christians to be good stewards of natural resources. Here are some ways in which we can care for water:

1. Avoid making water dirty or muddy, for instance, through careless farming or allowing domestic or farm animals to wade through water used for drinking. God is unhappy when we destroy resources used by others because this can make them sick. In Ezekiel 34:18, God laments, **'Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?'** Since every human being is dependent upon water for life, it is important that everyone has access to safe drinking water.
2. Do not throw rubbish around water sources and avoid open defecation, as otherwise human waste will be carried into rivers and other drinking water sources.
3. Store drinking water in clean pots and keep the containers you use to carry drinking water separate from those used to carry water for other purposes.
4. Do not leave taps running while brushing your teeth or applying soap while bathing. This reduces wastage of water. Consider this: if one litre of water flows down the drain while you are brushing your teeth, in a family of five, five litres is wasted in the morning and five in the evening, totalling 10 litres. In an estate with 100 houses, 1,000 litres is lost every day. This water would be enough to supply 50 families in a slum area every day.

What churches can do

- Water is both a blessing and a right. Churches should take a leadership role in protecting local water sources.
- Church leaders should speak to government representatives at all levels - local, regional and national - about people's right to clean water and decent sanitation.
- Preach sermons to highlight the links between spiritual teachings, environmental stewardship practices and basic human rights.
- Teach the importance of clean water, safe sanitation and hand washing to your congregations and communities.
- Look at the toilet/latrine and water facilities that you provide in your places of worship, schools, orphanages, hospitals and clinics. Do they meet the standards they should? If not, make a plan to improve them.
- Begin discussions with your congregations and communities about the wells, streams and rivers in your area? How safe is the water? What can you do to protect it?
- Visit nearby wells, streams and rivers with your congregations and communities to examine and bless water.
- Implement water conservation, such as water harvesting, and waste management strategies in your church or other places of worship.

Prayer

Let us pray for the whole Earth, the ocean, rivers and streams. May our lives be so balanced that greed makes way for need and the tendency to waste makes way for the commitment to save. We pray for all organisations involved in the preservation of water, and with it, your gift of life. Help, guide and sustain them in their endeavours.

Lord, we pray for all communities involved in issues of water justice. Give us compassion to walk with those who lack the water of life. Help us to empty ourselves of prejudice and fill us with a vision of solidarity and fellowship so that we can work together to conserve the gift of water.

Lord, we pray for the universal church and its mission and vision. Inspire us to work towards water justice. Transform our lives so that we may be channels of justice - not just in what we preach but in our daily practice.

Let your churches be role models within our communities in conserving water and preserving life in all its fullness. Bring churches together to work in unity so that justice will prevail and water will be available for our generation and future generations.

- from Water Justice, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, 2013

Water in the Bible

Here are some ideas of scripture that can be used when discussing the importance of water.

God provides for his creation:

God provides us with the foundations of survival and cares for us in our sickness: 'Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away disease from among you' - Exodus 23:25

God cares for us, He is the provider of all of our needs: 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.' - Matthew 25:35

God provides all creation with the life-giving gift of water:

'He makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.
They give water to all the beasts of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.
He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.
- Psalm 104:10-17

The power of God in creation:

The Spirit of God moves over the waters:

'Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.' - Genesis 1:2

God parts the Red Sea:

'Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.' - Exodus 14:21-22

Jesus calming the waves on the Red Sea of Galilee:

'A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'
- Mark 4:37:40

Water as the gift of life

Water is a metaphor for a new spiritual life:

'Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.' - Revelation 22:17

'On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' - John 7:37-8

Water is a precious gift:

'Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.' - Mark 9:41

Bodily and spiritual cleanliness:

God cleanses our hearts so that we are free of negative emotions and provides us with clean water so that we may cleanse ourselves:

'Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.' - Hebrews 10:22

To build a sincere and wholesome relationship with God we should approach Him with a clean body and heart:

'Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts.' - James 4:8

Living water prayers

These prayers were developed by CAFOD (The Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) as reflections on water during Lent. They are intended to be part of a series of services for Lent, but they could also be adapted for use at other times in water-related services.

Week One

Water and Environment

Reader: Your spirit hovered over the waters at the dawn of all creation.

May the Spirit now inspire us to change: to respect and protect the world.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: Your people face new challenges as the climate changes around them. May they find the strength to adapt; to seek water and new ways of living.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: We long for your life-giving water and pledge to wash away injustice. May we recall the covenant with you so all your people may flourish.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Week Two

Water and Hope

Reader: Your people yearn for clean water and lush green crops. May their thirst be quenched and their joy refreshed.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: Your people thirst for water and long for change in our world. May they have their fill to drink and time for all their daily tasks.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: We long for your life-giving water and pledge to wash away injustice. May your people be filled with hope and have the chance to flourish.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Week Three

Water and simplicity

Reader: Your people long for clean water to drink, wash in and grow crops. May they receive their fair share of this gift you give for all.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: Some thirst for change in our world and others seek only possession. May we begin to understand the beauty of simplicity.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: We long for your life-giving water and pledge to wash away injustice. May we be moved to share what we have and enable all people to flourish.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Week Four

Water and solidarity

Reader: Your people yearn for clean water and the possibilities it brings. May their fears be wiped away and their hope restored.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: Your people thirst for clean water and dream of a better life. May we be moved to join with them to make this dream a reality.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: We long for your life-giving water and pledge to wash away injustice. May we stand in solidarity with others so all your people may flourish.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Week Five

Water and dignity

Reader: Your people yearn for running water, fresh, invigorating and clean. May we give generously of ourselves to bring about change in the world.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: All people are made in your image and are valued and loved by you. May their dignity be reflected in the chance to live life to the full.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: We long for your life-giving water and pledge to wash away injustice. May we uphold the dignity of all and enable your people to flourish.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Week Six

Water and discipleship

Reader: Your people yearn for clean water but their chances are crushed by poverty. May their thirst be quenched and their lives transformed.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: Your people demand water, given by you to be shared by all. May we listen to their voices and ensure they are heard.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Reader: We long for your life-giving water and pledge to wash away injustice. May we be faithful disciples of Christ and enable others to flourish.

All: God of Life, let waters flow and wash away injustice.

Week Seven

Living Water

Final prayer: God of life, in this Holy Week, as we look forward with hope to the resurrection, may we be inspired to continue our work to transform our lives and reach out to others, in the spirit of humility and service that Christ showed to his disciples. Amen.

Sample sermon

Here is a sample sermon on water from the World Council of Churches that you could adapt for your own use.



Photograph by: CIFOR Indonesia

God's great and wonderful gift of water is so necessary for both our bodies and our souls. Without water there is no life. Nothing can survive, grow and flourish without water.

It is not surprising, then, that water is a very significant image in the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, we learn that God provides his creation and us human beings with an abundance of waters. As a matter of fact, the Earth could be called the 'Water Planet' since it consists of so much water. Even our own bodies consist of 70% water. The river from Eden flowed abundantly and supplied the garden with plenty of fresh water.

The Psalms and the Proverbs and other books in the Bible also tell us about this wonderful abundance. Isaiah speaks about its life-giving abundance to sustain agriculture and food for the whole creation. It is clear that God provides us with enough water - even in a desert situation of Biblical lands. We human beings must recognise God as the giver of all water. If we stop doing that, it will have serious effects. We will suffer the consequence of our own ignorance, with polluted water and an environment that we can't live in.

For Christians, water has both a direct real importance and a deep spiritual significance. Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan woman (John 4:6-15) deals with both these aspects of water. Jesus and the woman met at a deep well in Sychar. It was not a water tank or

other device for gathering water. It was the ancient well of the city, respected by all, since all the inhabitants of the city were totally dependent on it. Out of this well came fresh and living water, gushing forth out of the depths.

The conversation in this gospel text moves from ordinary water to the thirst for depth within us, for ultimate meaning and satisfaction. All our thirst is a thirst within a greater one – for God! As he tells the woman at the well: “Those who drink the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I give them will become a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” (John 4:14)

What a beautiful image! The simple gift of water on earth becomes the sacred gift of God from heaven – to cleanse, heal and transform both our bodies and our souls.

Why is it that Christians today have so much trouble making the connection between the physical and spiritual aspects of water? How can we read all these things about water in the Bible and not see any relation to the alarming state of water all around us in the world?

Despite the abundance of water on the Earth, we humans have done a poor job of taking care of it. We abuse it for other purposes. We divert rivers and streams unnecessarily, we poison it, and waste it. Today 663 million people in the world do not have access to clean safe drinking water, and 2.4 billion do not have adequate sanitation.

The World Council of Churches says 80% of all disease in poor countries is related to poor drinking water and poor sanitation. This water crisis kills more children than malaria, AIDS, and tuberculosis combined every year.

Jesus came that all human beings might have life and have it abundantly. He clearly showed throughout his life that he cares both about our spiritual and physical well-being. Abundant life is a combined spiritual and physical reality. The one who is touched by his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, the fountain of living water, cannot close their eyes to the physical water situation of the world. ‘Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters’, says Isaiah 55:1.

What could we do to make this become a reality in the full sense of ‘abundant life for all?’

- We need to repent of our uncaring ways and attitudes towards creation and the natural environment, and in particular towards God’s wonderful gift of water.
- We, all of us, need to look carefully at how we treat water in our daily lives: do we waste it needlessly or pollute it carelessly?
- Do we maintain the highest standards of hygiene in our homes and behaviour?
- No child should ever die for lack of clean water and a toilet or latrine. We need to make WASH – water, sanitation and hygiene – a household word in our congregations and our communities.

Source: World Council of Churches

Next steps: How can this be shared with your community?



Photograph by: IFPRI

Water

Encourage members of your congregation or community to promote proper use of water and protection of water sources. Work with your groups such as the Mothers' Union, youth groups, Sunday Schools, women's associations to discuss these issues and make a plan of action. Ideas include:

- Hold a Bible study or group discussion on proper use of water and explore the social, economic and environmental benefits from a Biblical perspective.
- Implement rainwater harvesting projects on church property and encourage members to do the same in their homes
- Take action to protect springs and water catchment areas
- Hold a river clean-up and campaign against dumping rubbish in water sources
- Hold a special Sunday service to raise awareness of the importance of water.
- Invite the youth group or Sunday School to create posters for the church or put on a performance on water, sanitation and hygiene for church members.

Prayer for water

Thank you, Almighty God, for creating all the water sources.
Grant us the knowledge and courage to take care of the water sources and use water wisely.
Give us the understanding and wisdom to be responsible as we use the water sources, and enable us to share the water sources fairly to create harmony among ourselves. Through Jesus Christ, that we may enjoy the blessings of your creation,
Amen.

Sanitation

Encourage members of your congregation or community to promote health, hygiene and sanitation. Ideas include:

- Hold a Bible study or discussion on the importance of sanitation and health from a Biblical perspective
- Construct adequate toilets/latrines in places of worship
- Setting up hand washing areas in places of worship
- Commit to ensure that water and soap are always available
- Hold a demonstration of proper handwashing
- Hold a special Handwashing Sunday to create awareness on the link between hygiene and health
- Invite the youth group or Sunday School to create posters for the church or put on a performance on water, sanitation and hygiene for church members.

Prayer for sanitation and health

Almighty God we thank you for creating all that is in heaven and on Earth. You created humans in your own likeness and image. We thank you for our health, which is a gift from you. Give us the knowledge and courage to take care of our health and that of those around us. Grant us the understanding and wisdom to put in practice personal hygiene, good health and sanitation. Help us to be more responsible in our actions that we may not defile our bodies. Help us to appreciate our bodies as your temple. Through Jesus Christ, that we may enjoy the blessings of good health, Amen.

Suggested follow-up activities

It is important that worshippers put the teachings into practice in order to use water wisely, conserve water sources and practice good hygiene.

- Use pastoral teams to observe whether members are incorporating the teachings from the sermons in their activities at home/community
- Establish pastoral care missions to guide members on implementing micro-projects
- Give a person the responsibility of promoting and supervising the projects
- Find out through pastoral visits whether the planned micro-projects (eg, rainwater harvesting, proper rubbish disposal etc) have been established
- Have the members share their experiences in church
- Provide incentives for people who have embraced the concept, such as field visits to see the good practices related to their micro-projects
- Recognise church members who show commitment to hygiene and sanitation

(Taken from Promoting Sustainable Development Through Faith-Based Values, developed by the Kenya Organisation for Environmental Education)

Developing an action plan and partnerships



Having looked at what the Bible says about water and cleanliness, and also the link between WASH and health, what does this mean for our practice as Christians? Can we close our eyes to the water and sanitation problems we see around us? Surely not. Here are some ideas for developing a plan of action for your own faith community and for developing partnerships with other organisations such as government ministries and NGOs working in WASH.

ACTION POINT ONE

Decide to prioritise WASH activities in your schools. Do you know the water, sanitation and hygiene needs of your schools? If not, find out. Ask government ministries for advice. Invite NGOs and other groups working in WASH locally to discuss how you can work together.

ACTION POINT TWO

Have you explored the spiritual significance of water and cleanliness in your faith? How can your teachings improve water, sanitation and hygiene practices in your schools? When approached by a secular partner, help them understand how your education structure works and what your faith has to teach about WASH.

ACTION POINT THREE

Because cleanliness is considered so important in all the major faiths, and because water flows through their texts, beliefs and practices, there are many opportunities to link faith teachings to good WASH practice. Find out to what extent these beliefs and teachings are already part of the existing curriculum and if not encourage their inclusion.

ACTION POINT FOUR

Focus on the next faith festival where you could celebrate the gift of water and the importance of cleanliness. Involve the whole faith community, not just the school. Invite all

sectors of the local community, including NGOs, government and educational bodies. Use the opportunity to teach and preach about water, sanitation and hygiene.

ACTION POINT FIVE

If you have developed a relationship with a WASH NGO, create a working group between NGO staff, those involved in education within your church and other relevant organisations. Create an action plan based on your annual cycle of worship: major festivals, periods of fasting, retreats, etc. Seek the blessing of your religious leaders – and implement it.

ACTION POINT SIX

Plan for monitoring and evaluation with your working group. Take into account your faith's teachings and practice but also ask for ideas about standards of transparency and evaluation to assist you. Understand that your secular partners will have certain requirements for reporting back on a project, particularly if any funding is involved.

ACTION POINT SEVEN

With your working group, develop a faith community outreach programme that operates through the school (to parents) and through the place of worship. As well as preaching, use tools such as storytelling, music and poetry. Work with your secular partners to tell everyone what you have achieved through media outlets, especially faith media.

ACTION POINT EIGHT

This is just the start: after you see the successes of the initial action plan, you can think about expanding your activities further. Remember to make best use of media networks – both faith and secular – to spread the good news of your achievements.

International days to celebrate

World Water Day - March 22: Raising awareness of the importance of conservation and protection of water resources.

World Health Day - April 7: Celebrated by the World Health Organisation since 1950 and focusing on global health issues.

Menstrual Hygiene Day - May 28: Raising awareness about good menstrual health.

World Coastal Clean up Day - September 20: This includes inland lakes, rivers, streams and underwater sites, and focuses on raising awareness of water pollution.

World Hand Washing Day - October 15: Publicising hand washing with soap to prevent the spread of disease.

World Toilet Day - November 19: Raising awareness of the 2.4 billion people who don't have decent toilets or latrines.

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