WATER FACTS

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Clean Water Saves Lives

Every day in the United States, most people walk a few feet to a clean and private bathroom, and turn on the tap: a flow of fresh, clean drinking water gushes out. At the same time, there are women and girls all around the globe who are not as fortunate. Women and girls are often responsible for collecting water for their families, a task that takes hours each day and can limit time for other things, such as school. Instead of turning on the tap, they have to make a dangerous trek of more than three and a half miles, on average, to gather water for their families. The water they collect, while desperately needed, is not always clean or safe for human consumption. When they need to use the bathroom, they often retreat to the forest or bush because there is no toilet available, which then contaminates the very water they are drinking.

For the nearly 1 billion people without it, safe water is the world's most pressing problem. Lack of safe drinking water and sanitation is the single largest cause of illness in the world, contributing to the death of 2 million people a year; most of those preventable deaths are children.[1] The solutions to this global public health crisis are cost-effective and within reach, yet still approximately 900 million people are without clean drinking water and 2.6 billion lack a safe, hygienic place to go to the bathroom.[2]

Recognizing the urgency of the crisis, in 2005 the United States passed landmark legislation, the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act*, to address the need for affordable and equitable access to safe water and sanitation. But Congress and the U.S. administration failed to fully implement the bill, and six years later the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has not released the comprehensive water strategy required by the law. Since passage of the bill, Congress has moved to increase funding for clean water and sanitation. In 2010, USAID provided access to clean water for over 1.3 million people, and more than 2 million gained access to sanitation in Africa. While this is a critical contribution to ending the water and sanitation crises, U.S. funding is not fully targeted to the people who need it most, and the true leveraging power of clean water and safe sanitation investments has not yet been realized.

This year, NRDC, Care, and WaterAid are calling on the U.S. government to fully implement the *Water for the Poor Act*. This Report Card is our fourth annual response to the government's own analysis of its efforts to increase access to safe water and sanitation as required by the law. Despite progress, much work remains to be done.

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U.S. Implementation of the Water for the Poor Act: Tracking Insufficient Progress on Clean Water and Safe Sanitation

RECOMMENDATIONS	GRADES
Last year we recommended the U.S. government make changes to deliver clean water and sanitation services more efficiently and to the people who need it most.	**These grades indicate the level of success the U.S. government had implementing our recommendations last year to improve water and sanitation delivery.**
DEVELOPING A WATER STRATEGY The administration should announce and deliver a multi-year U.S. water strategy, couched within a wider water strategy, which incorporates indicators, benchmarks, and a timetable. This strategy should be developed in consultation with U.S. and indigenous civil society as stipulated in the Water for the Poor Act, ideally by posting it online for a comment period.	GRADE **INCOMPLETE** More than six years after the passage of the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act* the water strategy remains uncompleted. The lack of a strategy hampers the ability of the U.S. government to fully realize the goals of the Act. Moreover, the U.S. State Department and USAID have conducted only limited consultations with civil society to inform the strategy.
TAKING A COMPREHENSIVE VIEW ON WATER The executive branch should take a comprehensive view of water, sanitation, and hygiene, by integrating planning and budgeting meaningfully with a wider water strategy, including water productivity and water resources management. The broader development agenda, including presidential initiatives on food security, health, and climate change, should be considered.	GRADE **B** There seems to be a genuine desire to articulate overlap between a wider water strategy and presidential initiatives—food security, global health, and climate change. However, big gaps remain. For example, more funding from Feed the Future and the Global Health Initiative should be flowing to water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions in order to meet nutritional and child survival goals. Political will for comprehensive integration still needs to be demonstrated in a formal water strategy and project implementation.
GLOBAL PROGRESS THROUGH U.S. LEADERSHIP The State Department and USAID should each establish senior water advisors within their highest offices in order to increase coordination across U.S. agencies and champion U.S. leadership in international water, sanitation, and hygiene issues, within the U.S. government and among international stakeholders. USAID should continue to train personnel to generate long-term expertise and demand within USAID missions.	GRADE **B-** The administration made significant progress toward establishing critical leadership for clean water and sanitation by establishing a senior water coordinator position at the USAID, which has also conducted more water, sanitation, and hygiene technical trainings to build expertise. The State Department has established a senior position overseeing diplomatic freshwater issues, but this has not been institutionalized and could change under a new administration. Expertise and capacity at the mission level remains lackluster and inconsistent.
DELIVERING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST Working alongside Congress, the administration should take the level of need explicitly into account when targeting its water, sanitation, and hygiene funding. International calls for good donor practice in the sector recommend that 70 percent of these investments should go to low-income countries.	GRADE **C** Increased priority must be given to communities with the greatest need for water, sanitation, and hygiene as they are the three building blocks for all other development goals. Unfortunately, USAID funding to low-income communities for water, sanitation, and hygiene represented only 33 percent, or less than 50 percent of the levels required for good donor practice.

[1] World Health Organization, Water Sanitation and Health. http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/diseases/diarrhoea/en/. August 2011.

[2] World Health Organization, Progress on Sanitation and Drinking-water: 2010 Update. IWHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation.

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