



PUTTING **CLEAN HANDS**
TOGETHER

Changing children's lives around the world
by working with faith schools to improve
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



Acknowledgements

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- Editors: Victoria Finlay & Susie Weldon

For more information about this publication, contact Susie Weldon, susie.weldon@faithinwater.org, or visit www.faithinwater.org

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WASH:
Water, Sanitation
and Hygiene

WHO:
World Health
Organization

NGO:
Non-
Governmental
Organization

Sources and resources can
be found on page 26-27.

THE CRISIS



INTRODUCTION

"Faiths are the oldest institutions in the world and possess wisdom about how to live and how to keep hope alive... so it is very natural for us to work with religious institutions and leaders. The engagement from all sides is one charged with potential and also energized by differences. These are ideas and possibilities that may well be new to many in the world of development and economics but, as I know from personal experience, they do work."

– James D. Wolfensohn, then World Bank President, Faith in Conservation (World Bank, 2003)¹¹

"Long before there was a UNICEF, faith communities were among the greatest advocates for the world's neediest children, providing guidance, aid and comfort to millions of disadvantaged families." This is how Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, introduced the landmark 2012 UNICEF publication, Partnering with Religious Communities for Children.¹²

"Today," he continued, "faith communities continue to be an indispensable partner in UNICEF's work to advance children's rights and enhance their wellbeing. Such partnerships are especially important in our renewed focus on reaching the poorest, most vulnerable and hardest-to-reach children and families."

One of the most powerful ways of reducing poverty is to increase levels of education. However, where there is no clean water, safe sanitation or adequate hygiene, children's education suffers, as does their wellbeing. Diseases related to dirty water and inadequate sanitation cause 20% of deaths and years of illness among children aged under 14.¹³ And globally children miss a combined 272 million days of school per year due to diarrhoea.¹⁴

This situation not only causes great suffering to individuals and families, but also stunts children's growth and prevents them from achieving their full potential. It also has a serious impact on a country's development and economy. That is why addressing water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is critical to the development of healthy,

sustainable societies – and why schools in particular have a vital role. Many organisations have been working to improve WASH and millions of children and adults have benefited. But more remains to be done.

The purpose of this publication, which is sponsored by UNICEF, is to extend this work further by encouraging religious leaders, faith-based schools and secular groups to collaborate on WASH initiatives. Globally more than 80% of people belong to a faith and faith groups are involved in at least 50% of schools worldwide¹⁵ – more in some countries. Faith-based schools offer real opportunities to increase the effectiveness and reach of WASH initiatives, and to create lasting societal impact.

All major faiths include water, sanitation and cleanliness in their texts. Ensuring their schools are models of good practice on WASH offers them the opportunity to be faith-consistent to their teachings while helping their communities in a practical way.

This publication demonstrates how faith principles relate to WASH practices and offers practical advice to help secular organisations and faith groups work better together. Focusing on some of the key faiths involved in education worldwide, it gives inspiring examples of how children's lives are improved when faith principles are aligned with WASH practices in schools. And it shows how working with faith schools can have a bigger impact on the wider community.

ACTION POINT ONE

For faiths: Decide to prioritise WASH activities in your schools. Do you know the water, sanitation and hygiene needs of your schools? If not, find out. Identify the groups working in WASH in your area. Welcome the opportunity to learn from them and their experience. Approach government ministries for advice. Invite relevant organisations to discuss how you can work together.

For secular agencies: Decide to work with faith leadership. Identify the key faith groups in your area, particularly those with schools. Contact faith headquarters to find out what is already happening, aiming to come in as an ally, respecting the contribution of faiths. Invite all relevant organisations to discuss how you can work together.

why WASH?



Because every child in the world has the right to be in a school that provides safe water, adequate toilets, and proper education on hygiene.

ACTION POINT TWO

For faiths: 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 and your community? When approached by a secular partner, help them understand how your education structure works and what your faith has to teach about the role of water, sanitation and hygiene.

For secular agencies: Identify the national or regional heads of education in the faith groups in your area. Understand what they are trying to do to address issues of WASH. Recognise that faith groups are not the same as secular agencies – they have other priorities and often work to different timescales – and so will require a different approach. Suggest an assessment of needs in their schools to work out how you can collaborate.

WASH in Schools means:

- Making sure there's enough safe water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and washing hands.
- Making sure there are enough clean, well-maintained toilets and hand washing facilities with soap.
- Making sure that 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 that cleaning materials are always available.
- Teaching children about hygiene in engaging ways so that they bring the lessons home.

Faith WASH in Schools means:

- Faiths knowing the state of WASH in their schools and colleges.
- Faiths working to transform their schools into models of good practice on WASH (including all of the above).
- 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.

WHY SHOULD FAITHS WORK WITH WASH in schools?



Clean water, safe sanitation and good hygiene are essential for people's health and quality of life. For children, they are also key to their future life chances.

Diseases caused by contaminated water, poor sanitation and inadequate hygiene kill more children than AIDS, malaria and measles combined,¹⁶ and cause children to lose millions of days of schooling due to illness every year.¹⁷ This lack of educational opportunity, combined with the toll of repeated illness, has a big impact on their future life.

And yet where clean water is provided and good hygiene practised, children's opportunities for education dramatically improve. For instance, in schools in Kenya where water is treated and hygiene promoted, classes have a 58% lower absenteeism among girls.¹⁸

Studies show good hand washing with soap can make an enormous difference; it can reduce diarrhoea in schools by more than 30% and respiratory infections by 16%.¹⁹

This means schools have a crucial role to play on WASH issues. WASH in Schools improves children's health, boosts attendance and achievement, and promotes girls' education.

Faith-based schools have a particularly important role in promoting WASH because religions are involved in millions of schools around the world, either because they founded or funded them or because they are actively involved in managing them.

Many religions also have spiritual teachings about the importance of water and cleanliness. Promoting good practice on WASH in their schools is particularly important because it is part of being faith-consistent.

The influence of faith groups goes far beyond the classroom. Working with the local church, mosque or temple, faith schools can promote good water, sanitation and hygiene practices in the wider community for the benefit of all.

In doing so, faiths not only fulfil their spiritual teachings on the importance of water and cleanliness but also provide practical help to improve their people's lives.

As faiths work to improve conditions in their schools, it is important also to consider places of worship. What message does it send their followers if churches, mosques and temples have inadequate toilets or no facilities for washing hands?

However, not all faith schools have the experience or expertise to know how to deal with WASH issues in their schools. This is where partnering with secular groups working in WASH is so beneficial.

Many have years of experience backed up by technical knowhow. They can offer advice and guidance on best practice and behaviour change and also have other expertise, such as monitoring and evaluation. They can also link faith schools to national or regional WASH initiatives to create a powerful movement for change.

FAITH COMMUNITY STATISTICS



Over **84%** of people in the world say they belong to a faith.²¹



Over **50%** of the world's schools are affiliated with a faith.²²

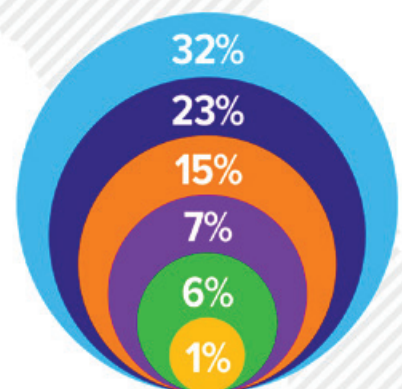


30-40% of the health facilities in Africa are associated with faiths.²³



Over **70%** of people in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, get their basic healthcare from faith-run facilities.²⁴

More than **84%** (5.8 billion) of the 2010 world population of 6.9 billion belongs to a faith.²⁵ This includes:



- **32%** (2.2 billion) **Christians**
- **23%** (1.6 billion) **Muslims**
- **15%** (1 billion) **Hindus**
- **7%** (500 million) **Buddhists**
- **6%** (400 million) belonging to **folk/traditional** religions
- **1%** (500 million) belonging to **other faiths** (e.g. Baha'is, Daoists, Jains, Jews, Shinto, Sikhs)

Collectively, faith-related institutions:



• Own almost **8%** of total habitable land surface including some **5%** of the forests.²⁶



• Constitute the world's third largest category of financial investors.²⁷



• Are trusted as a leading source of wisdom, information and authority in many parts of the world.



• Are involved in their communities for the long-term. They think in terms of generational results rather than in short-term project goals.



• Can bring about real, pragmatic changes and sustain action and projects for the long term.

why work with in **SCHOOLS?** **FAITH IN WASH**



Religion is central to people's lives throughout the world. In many communities, religious leaders are the most trusted individuals. According to a Gallup Poll commissioned by the BBC World Service in 2005, some 74% of people in Africa²⁸ identify religious leaders as the group they trust most.

These leaders influence how people think and behave. They often have links to some of the most disadvantaged people in the community as well as access to senior politicians, other policy makers and thought leaders.

Faiths are involved in more than 50% of all schools worldwide²⁹ (and even more in some countries). In many parts of the world religions are also heavily involved in health, volunteer and charity networks. Religious organisations are often the first to respond to emergencies and the last to leave conflict areas.

Every faith includes water in its teachings and traditions: most have texts about sharing water, drinking it, washing in it, saving it, and enjoying the beauty and sound of it.

All the major faiths value cleanliness and purity. Cleansing oneself (internally as well as externally) is often key to preparing for worship, which is why ritual washing is part of daily practice in some faiths. Disseminating education and information about proper sanitation through faith networks offers one of the most extensive outreach potentials in civil society and calls upon core cultural and faith values in every tradition.

Sermons or teaching sessions are used in many faith traditions to pass on wisdom and information. Religious

groups operate many youth groups, Sunday schools, madrasahs, maktabas or equivalents where water and cleanliness can be discussed and celebrated. For example, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has six million young people in Sunday schools.

Many faiths also have significant media outreach through faith newspapers, magazines and radio stations.

In addition to the power of religious networks, faith and spirituality are personally important to the lives of billions of children. The first time many children interact with people beyond their neighbours, family and age group is when they go to the mosque, church, temple, gurdwara, or synagogue.

There, they learn about religion and also important lessons about their responsibilities as human beings – including sharing resources.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)³⁰ recognizes that every child has spiritual as well as physical, emotional and social needs (along with a right to dignity) which should be respected.

This was acknowledged by UNICEF's Partnering with Religious Communities, 2012.³¹

It said: "Whether or not they are members of established religious communities, all children have a sense of awe and wonder that can lead them to connect with and derive meaning from the world around them, including the natural environment... Religion often influences them through the social and cultural institutions in which they participate."

what do **FAITHS** say about...

WATER?

Nothing in the world is softer than water – but we know it can wear away the hardest of things. The supple overcomes the hard, and the so-called weak, the strong.

– Dao De Jing, Chapter 78 (Daoism)

Water has great significance for faiths because it is recognised as a life-giving force that is essential for all. Water also has another precious quality: it washes away impurities.

For these reasons, water is regarded as a gift of the Divine, and providing water for others is an important charity. For example, Muslims believe providing water for public benefit is one of seven acts of virtue that accrue blessings.³²

For Hindus and Sikhs, water sacred and manifests God's presence. That's why the Hindu god Krishna says, "I am the taste in water"³³ and Sikh scriptures say: "Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all."³⁴

For Christians, water is used in baptism to symbolise being born into a new, spiritual life. 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.'" Jesus also described himself as "living water": "...the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."³⁵

For Buddhists, water represents 'the sweet nectar' of the Buddha's teachings that quench spiritual thirst.

SANITATION?

Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement.

– Deuteronomy 23:12 (Hebrew Bible, Christianity) or D'varim 23:13 (Torah, Judaism)

All major faiths set great emphasis on cleanliness, with physical cleanliness linked to a spiritual state of being.

Not every faith specifically discusses sanitation in its sacred texts but several have codes of conduct aimed at preventing pollution or unsanitary behaviour. For some, this is linked to good health; for others, maintaining a clean environment is part of caring for God's creation.

Many regard pollution as a form of corruption, and corruption as contrary to spiritual practice. The Qur'an warns: "Do not spread corruption on the Earth after it has been so well ordered."³⁶

Some of the earliest writings on sanitation and hygiene are found in Hindu texts. For example, the Hindu treatise, Vishnu Purana, set out precise rules for sanitation.

It said: "One should not cause excrement in ploughed fields, land having crops, dwelling places of cows, public paths, sacred places like rivers, water, on the banks of a pond or in a graveyard."³⁷

SANITATION STUDY

Research in the Democratic Republic of Congo found that people who follow Christianity, Islam or other established faiths were less likely to practise open defecation than other groups.

– Progress on Drinking Water and Sanitation, 2014 Update, published by UNICEF and WHO, pg36



HYGIENE?

The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, 'The key to Paradise is prayer – and the key to prayer is cleanliness.'

– Sunan At-Tirmidhi 4 (Islam)

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; these rules play a major part in their rituals. For example, morning cleansing with water is a spiritual obligation for Hindus.

The Hadith (teaching) quoted above is explicit about the link between cleanliness, prayer and faith for Muslims, and this sentiment is echoed in the Christian saying that emerged in 17th century Europe: "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

World Health Organisation (WHO) studies suggest that cultural and religious factors strongly influence attitudes to community hand washing. According to the WHO Task Force on Religious and Cultural Aspects of Hand Hygiene,³⁸ how we wash our hands in our first 10 years is pretty much how we will wash them for the rest of our lives. Those taught to wash their hands ritually from an early age will not forget the lessons.

ACTION POINT **THREE**

For faith and secular agencies: 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.

THE SOLUTION



WASH empowers girls



Educating girls helps to break the cycle of poverty. Educated girls are less likely to marry early or die in childbirth. They are more likely to send their own children to school. And they earn more as adults. Evidence shows that an extra year of secondary education for girls correlates to a 25% increase in wages later in life.⁵¹

But despite much progress in recent years, girls still suffer many disadvantages. Studies show that only 89 girls for 100 boys finish primary school, and even fewer girls complete secondary school.⁵²

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 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 in Ethiopia

reported over 50% of girls missed between one and four days of school per month due to their menstruation.⁵³

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.⁵⁴

Traditional religious taboos differ from culture to culture, often reflecting very ancient fears of menstruation.⁵⁵ An important aspect of working with faiths is helping them to explore and challenge the fears that lie behind these ancient traditions.

Secular groups need to approach this issue with sensitivity and with a willingness to help faith groups to distinguish between ancient cultural practices and modern understanding of the natural process of transition to puberty.

In reality, most faiths that have been engaged in educating girls as a faith principle will have already begun to address this. They will welcome educational tools that enable faith leaders and teachers in faith schools to help their communities to make the transition from ancient taboos to proper understanding and respect for the sanitary needs of girls.

ROLE OF FAITH SCHOOLS

No matter which faith they follow, 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 ensuring girls are educated about their menstruation and how to manage it. Teaching girls – and boys – to have a proper understanding of this natural process will dispel ignorance, rumours and fear.

BUDDHISM AND WASH

Before I became enlightened, I chopped wood and carried water. After I became enlightened, I chopped wood and carried water.

– Zen saying

Think not lightly of good, saying, ‘It will not come to me.’ Drop by drop is the water pot filled. Likewise, the wise man, gathering it little by little, fills himself with good.

– The Dhammapada IX:122

The Buddha urged his followers not to waste water or pollute it. In the Self-training Disciplines he warned monks against urinating, defecating, or spitting into water.

The Buddha taught that we are all part of the complex web of life. The belief in reincarnation extends the notion of our interconnectedness across time, through time, across generations and links us to every form of life on the planet and beyond.

Our actions determine what our place will be within this web of life and Karma, as the consequence of our actions is known in Buddhism, reminds us to act with thought, compassion, and care in everything that we do and to every living creature that we meet. This manifests itself through the Buddhist teaching of right living and right practice.

Hand washing is part of Buddhist practice and tradition. At various key festivals and symbolic events Buddhists use water and washing as a ritual representation of how clean water gives life. For example, at New Year, Buddhist young people sometimes pour water over the hands of their elders to wish them good health.

Hand gestures are important in Buddhism as a means of teaching about compassion and, according to WHO studies⁵⁷, groups working with Buddhists on WASH issues

Around **500 million** people are Buddhists, comprising **7%** of the world’s population.⁵⁶



ACTION POINT **FOUR**

For faiths: Focus on the next faith festival where you could celebrate nature, especially 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.

For secular agencies: Celebrations are central to how faiths pass on their core teachings: explore how the next WASH-related festival (e.g. Global Hand Washing Day) could be a launch-point for your collaboration.

have been more effective when they use gestures and visual hand signals. Since it is auspicious to walk around relics and statues in a clockwise way, WHO recommends using clockwise gestures in pictorial images intended to remind Buddhist children to wash their hands.

CASE STUDY: Buddhists using gravity and creating community in Sri Lanka

Keliwatte is a village in the tea planting area of Nuwara Eliya district, in the Sri Lankan hills. For years, the 82 families at Keliwatte had to get their water from an untreated open stream; the children often had skin infections and diarrhoea, and in the dry season the stream dried up altogether.

However, in 2013 a Buddhist initiative⁵⁸ installed a gravity water supply scheme with filtration, tank and piping to central points all around the village.

“Most village water projects fail because they’re done by contractors without community involvement,” said Dr Vinya Ariyaratne, General Secretary of Sarvodaya Shramadana, which brings Buddhist principles to development needs around Sri Lanka.

“We want everyone to be involved because that gives a project the best chance of succeeding. It is Buddhist and yet it cuts across all ethnicity, serving Buddhists and non-Buddhists equally.”

The Buddhist principles include Karuna, meaning translating thought into action, and Equanimity, meaning you will face problems and you will not be discouraged. “And the most important principle for getting clean water into Keliwatte is Sharing,” he said.

Many people volunteered their labour, digging the channels and installing the taps in places that the whole community agreed would be the best.

Now 82 families have clean water and children are healthier. Women have more time and teenage girls, meeting by the taps, have safer places to socialise. A village committee has been set up, eager to address other needs such as housing, nutrition and a preschool.

For the opening ceremony, children learned village dances, restoring old traditions. Sarvodaya Shradamana staff reported a wonderful energy: “It felt like the community was taking over.”

CHRISTIANITY AND WASH

*Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and
cleanse me from my sin.*

– Psalm 51:78

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

– Matthew 25:35

Jesus grew up in the Middle East, among people who knew about deserts and drought, and who loved the sight and sound of moving, living water. They saw running water as a blessing from God and as a symbol of life. It was not taken for granted.

In the Old Testament sanitary practices were specified to preserve the health of communities, as in Deuteronomy 23:12-13: “You are to have a place outside the camp where you can go when you need to relieve yourselves.”

In Christianity, water signifies purity. St Paul urges people to “come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water.”⁶⁰

In one famous story, Jesus washed the feet of each of his disciples, performing the most menial task to show his humility and respect. He made the subject of cleansing important. Many early churches

were built around water and natural springs. It was traditional for early and medieval Christians to wash before prayer, partly as a reference to baptism, a ritual purification in many traditions to symbolise people becoming Christian.

CASE STUDY: Shadrack Kimalel Primary School, Nairobi, Kenya

Shadrack Kimalel Christian Primary⁶¹ is one of Nairobi’s most popular schools; many of its graduates get scholarships to top schools and there’s a waiting list for the 1,800 places.

But a few years ago, the school had big problems. Not only was it in Nairobi’s biggest slum, there was just one water tap for the whole school. There were almost no functioning toilets; water tanks from well-meaning donors lay unused all around. The older girls had no sanitary supplies and so skipped school regularly.

In 2009 Shadrack Kimalel was twinned with the New Psalmist

Baptist Church in Baltimore, USA. They realised that many of the problems stemmed from the water and sanitation issues. They began by providing toilets, water tanks and taps, and made sanitary kits for girls. The school started believing in itself, improved its classrooms and built a library.

The difference between this and all the other initiatives that did not work is that it started from a faith vision of empowerment.

CASE STUDY: Kanyore Primary School, Kenya

Until 2012 all the latrines at Kanyore Catholic Primary School⁶² were unsafe, and most of the wash-points were broken. Children were falling ill from worms from unclean water, and the pupils and teachers were losing thousands of school hours every year.

Then head teacher Peter Kariba attended a faith and environmental education workshop run by

the Kenya Organisation for Environmental Education. He realised that he didn’t have to wait for funds or outside help. The school had enough land to grow vegetables which could be sold to support a water and hygiene project.

Teachers, parents and friends formed an eco-committee and made a long-term plan. First they built a new block of six latrines and a hand-washing point. Then everyone started getting more creative, and set up wildlife and gardening clubs that planted vegetables and trees. “It’s made our teachers and students very responsible because they live together with the trees in a very friendly way... even the smallest children,” said Mr Kariba.

Today, income from the school garden is used for school trips and building maintenance – and the latrines are clean. A great side benefit is that people in the community have developed a strong, friendly relationship with the school,

and even raised matching funds to build more wash-points.

Kanyore Primary was nominated as a model WASH demonstration school for the Catholic Church. The important idea that so many other Catholic schools are learning is that making improvements in WASH is not something they have to wait for others to do: it is something they can do themselves.

CASE STUDY: Catholics in El Salvador get clean water after agricultural chemicals have poisoned the ground

El Salvador’s Lower Lempa region⁶³ has plenty of water but most of it is not drinkable because of chemicals that have been used on all the fields. The whole water table was contaminated. And whenever it rained, the poison spread further. The government refused to help, wanting the people to abandon the land. Two major earthquakes almost made it impossible to stay.

However, things started to change when members of the community initiated a project through the Catholic Church in which volunteers laid piping to allow clean water to be delivered to local schools and homes.

“For some people it seemed like a lot of work for water, but they were the ones who didn’t believe that the water was poisoning them,” said Hernan Gaitan of United Communities in El Salvador.

“Today most communities in the Lower Lempa have direct access to water, although those people who drank the contaminated water for a long time are today 45% more likely to suffer kidney problems.”

Without the church’s support, people would not have had the confidence to address the situation, and would almost certainly have lost the land to government and corporations.

HINDUISM AND WASH

Radiance of character, forgiveness, patience, cleanness, freedom from hate, absence of conceit – these qualities are the wealth of a divinely inclined person, O Descendant of Bharata.
– Bhagavad Gita, 16:1-3

In Hinduism, water is sacred. Its value is beyond calculation. No amount of gold could be more valuable than a glass of water to a person dying of thirst. Yet water is free (or should be) and that, Hindus believe, is due to divine generosity.

Many of the important Hindu scriptures, including the Bhagavad Gita, mention cleanliness as a cardinal virtue. Outer cleanliness is a metaphor for inner cleanliness. Water is also vital for life.

Hindus believe that all life arises from the great cosmic ocean of the universe. Without water there can be no life but the power of water is also respected. For example, the river Ganges is believed to descend from Heaven as a gift from Lord Vishnu and also returns to Heaven, which is why the ashes of the dead are scattered in it.

Legend says that this river is so powerful that when it first fell from heaven, it ran the risk of destroying the earth. Lord Shiva spread his hair out to break the flow as it descended which is why the Ganges has so many tributaries.

Giving villagers wells or water tanks close to home was considered one of the greatest acts of charity because it meant people did not have to carry water for long distances. So Hindu temples created and maintained them. Most Hindu temples today still have clean water tanks so visitors can wash.

Traditionally, Hindus did not use soap because it contains animal fat and many Hindus are vegetarian. Instead, they rubbed their hands with ash or mud and then rinsed with water. Studies⁶⁴ show that in terms of faecal coliform counts (measures of sewage contamination), this is almost as efficient.

Hail, Water, ye bring health and bliss: ye help us to energy. That we may look on great delight!
– The Samaveda, 9:2:10

CASE STUDY: Finding water in Vrindavan

It is said that when the Hindu deity Lord Krishna left the land of Braj in India, the cowherd girls cried so much that their tears mixed with the water. And this salty water has been present ever since.

More recently the water situation has reached crisis point, with industries dumping toxic waste into the holy Yamuna river, polluting huge areas.

Food for Life Vrindavan⁶⁵ is a Hindu programme that has been working in the area since 1990, financing wells, pumps and tanks at 11 villages, as well as in the main town of Vrindavan. In Javat village, for example, women had to walk nearly 3km to fetch water from a muddy water source. Girls often missed school because they were collecting water, and people were regularly fell ill.

The Food for Life team consulted with the village panchayat, or governing board. They located sweet water (fresh water) near the village, constructed a pump-house with generator, and laid pipes to three water taps in the village itself. Every household pays a small monthly pump maintenance fee to keep the project sustainable.

The Hindu charity founded the Sandipani Muni school in Vrindavan, providing fully funded education for the poorest children. It is run on Hindu principles, with an emphasis on clean water. Rainwater is collected from the roof and treated with a reverse osmosis water filtration plant. Wastewater is used for flushing toilets and cleaning.

“When we started our school, we saw the incredible potential: a thousand children who do not litter, who close taps and are careful not to waste water,” said director Rupa Ragunath Das.

There are approximately **one billion** Hindus, around **15%** of the world’s population.⁶⁶



A STUDENT’S VOICE

My name is Chabi Baskota, and I am a Hindu student.

To Hindus all water is sacred, especially rivers, and there are seven sacred rivers, namely the Ganges, Yamuna, Godavari, Sarasvati, Narmada, Sindhu and Kaveri.

Every day people wash in order to purify themselves. It is believed that water has spiritually cleansing powers. The water brings life as trees and flowers bloom and crops grow. Water is also used as cleaning vessels used for puja (prayer). Also it is used for bathing Hindu deities. Water is also used to make abhisheka, or holy water, for festival days.

ACTION POINT FIVE

For faith and secular agencies: Create a working group between agency specialist staff, those involved in education within the faith group (this usually doesn’t mean religious leaders) and other relevant people and organisations. Create an action plan based on the faith’s annual cycle of worship: major festivals, periods of fasting, retreats, etc. Seek the blessing of the appropriate religious leaders and senior agency staff, and implement it.

ISLAM AND WASH

1.6 billion people are Muslim, nearly a quarter of the world's population.⁶⁷

O you who believe! When you prepare for prayer, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, and wipe your heads and wash your feet up to the ankles.
– Qur'an 5:6

In Islam humanity has the role of Khalifa, which means governor, or steward, of Allah's creation. This sense of responsibility to Allah for all His creation lies at the heart of the Islamic way of life. For example, Islam has strict codes about washing and sanitation.

As a desert religion, it also has many stories about the importance of saving water. One of the most famous tells of how, one day, the Prophet saw one of his companions performing his ritual washing before prayers and noticed the man was using a lot of water. "What is this waste?" the Prophet asked.

In reply, the man asked whether it was possible to waste water during ritual washing. Yes, the Prophet said. "Even if you are doing your ablutions in a running river you must still not waste water."⁶⁸

The Prophet was also very clear about not going to the toilet where it will be unhygienic: "Be on your guard against three things which provoke cursing: relieving yourself in the watering places, and on the thoroughfares, and in the shade (of trees)."

And We send down pure water from the sky, that with it We may give life to a dead land, and slake the thirst of things We have created...
– Qur'an 25:48-49

The Qur'an offers a list of when and how people should wash. This includes: five times a day before prayers; before and after meals; after using the toilet; after touching a dog, shoes or a dead person; and after handling anything dirty. Washing must be done in free running water, and must involve washing hands, face, forearms, ears, nose, mouth, and feet, three times each, while hair is dampened with water. This is observed throughout the Muslim world.

CASE STUDY: Muslim schools in Cameroon promote WASH through an ancient story

An innovative WASH programme⁶⁹, in six Islamic schools in Bui Department in Cameroon, West Africa, has had huge success largely because the outreach is explicitly grounded in Islam. Children are taught the story of Hajjar (see below) in teaching on the need to conserve water. Pupils have reduced water waste during ablutions and other activities such as brushing teeth or washing motorbikes. They have also learned not to ignore water leaks. Many students still write Zamzam on their water bottles.



THE STORY OF HAJJAR⁷⁰

Long ago, before the sacred mosque was built, the prophet Ibrahim brought his wife Hajjar and son Ismail to the dry desert land of Makkah. Allah had commanded him to leave his family in the desert as a test of faith. So they set up camp under a tree with only a bag of dates and a little water and it wasn't long before that had finished. Baby Ismail grew thirstier and thirstier and his mother could no longer bear it. Desperate for water, Hajjar left her son under the protection of Allah and climbed the mountain of Al-Safa. When she reached the top she saw no one and nothing. But Hajjar knew Allah would provide for them, so she ran back to Al-Safa and repeated her search seven times. Then, to her surprise, she saw an angel standing before her eyes. The angel began digging until the waters of Zamzam flowed from that spot. Allah had provided for her in ways she couldn't imagine. And that's why Muslims walk between Al Safa and Al-Marwah seven times during their Hajj pilgrimage to Makkah: so they may remember Hajjar's struggle.

A STUDENT'S VOICE

In Islam, it is very important to have good hygiene. We have to make sure to bathe, dress in our best clean clothes, and clip our nails every Friday.

People living in poverty often have to use dirty, badly polluted water. This creates many diseases like cholera, dysentery and hepatitis A. Some people have to walk miles and miles to get water to feed their family.

In Islam, it is mandatory to do wudu (ablutions) before praying so you are clean in front of God. In wudu, you wash your mouth, nose, face, arms, feet, and neck. Muslims living in poverty must sometimes do all these things with unsafe water.

CASE STUDY: Islamic schools in Indonesia

Darul Ulum Lido is an Islamic boarding school near Bogor, an hour's drive from the Indonesian capital of Jakarta.⁷¹ As part of their water education, students have created a 'harim zone', or Islamic conservation area, in the school grounds.

Such areas have existed since the time of the Prophet. Within the zone, human activity is limited so it serves as an area of protected water resources. This water, by Islamic law, must be available to birds, animals, insects and plants as well as human beings. And no hunting or trapping is allowed.

"We had three goals," explained KH Ahmad Yani, the school's spiritual teacher. "It is an educational area to learn about the environment, biology, water etc. It acts as the 'lungs' of the school. And, third, we want to offer a demonstration that Islam provides a good conceptual framework for protecting nature."

There are thousands of residential religious schools (pondok pesentren) in Indonesia, and they have a history of ecological action. When logging and mining companies began polluting the Batang Gadis river basin on Sumatra, the 13,000 pesantren students were among the most vociferous protestors, because they didn't have clean water for ablutions. This intense lobbying, led by Muslim leaders and secular agencies working together, led to the creation of a new National Park.



SIKHISM AND



There are nearly **30 million** Sikhs around the world.⁷²

After taking a cleansing bath, meditate on the Lord Almighty, and your mind and body shall be free of disease.
– Guru Granth Sahib, Raag Sorath, pg 611

Every morning, even before he became the first Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Nanak would bathe in the Kali Bein River. He would then sit by the bank, meditating and praying under the shade of a tree he had planted himself.

And it was into this river, Sikh scriptures tell, that Guru Nanak mysteriously disappeared for three days, reemerging from the water and speaking of the extraordinary things he had seen and learned. He said that everyone was equal – every person and every faith – in their path towards God.

Ever since, water has been at the centre of faith and life in Sikh communities. Most gurdwaras (Sikh temples) are specially designed to integrate water; they have a water tank or are near running water. The tanks in the gurdwaras are considered a vital community resource.

In Sikhism, hand sanitation is a holy act, and is an essential part of daily, and religious, life. When people enter a gurdwara, they first wash their hands, then their feet.

The Sikh holy city of Amritsar was built around Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple, which is surrounded by a large pool of water, the Amrit Sarovar, or “pool

of nectar”. All visitors must walk through the pool to wash their feet before entering the Golden Temple.

In a broader sense, Sikhs value water for its intrinsic nature in a harsh environment. Not only is it a much-needed element for the community, but water also provides sustenance for everyone’s physical and spiritual self.

CASE STUDY: Sikh religious processions promote water conservation among young people

Groundwater in northern India is reducing at an alarming rate. It is likely that in the near future there won’t be enough water for human and animal use.

“This is no longer a political issue. It is a survival of the land – which is the major food source for India,” said Dr Rajwant Singh, president of EcoSikh, the new Sikh environmental movement.⁷³

The Punjab is the bread basket of India and the Sikhs are the main farmers of the Punjab. As such, they are very conscious of the threats to the supply of water and its cleanliness. For many years their greatest activists have instigated campaigns to clean and conserve water courses.

Air is the Guru, Water the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all.
– Japji Sahib

In recent years EcoSikh has taken this core principle and applied it to religious festivals. EcoSikh’s Punjab team teaches adults and children about how and why they should conserve water.

Its programme to green Nagar Kirtans – the religious processions which are such a feature of Sikh communities – is proving particularly effective and young people are joining in with enthusiasm.

In 2014, EcoSikh worked with schools and colleges to make four major Nagar Kirtans greener. Vendors were encouraged to use steel cups to serve clean water during the processions, which drastically reduced the amount of plastic bottles left behind.

Young people responded energetically, many leaving the processions to help clear up. The charity has been inundated with requests to green other Nagar Kirtans throughout India.

An excellent foundation has been established for WASH programmes to be introduced to the voluntary schools at Sikh temples, building on the wider Sikh community’s engagement with conservation and protection of water.



ACTION POINT SIX

For faiths: Plan for monitoring and evaluating your WASH in Schools projects. Take into account your faith’s teachings and practice but also ask about standards of transparency and the evaluation tools used by secular partners to help you. Don’t forget to collect stories of your impact.

For secular agencies: Plan for monitoring and evaluation with your faith-based partners, building on your own criteria and those of the faith group. Be aware that not all faith groups will be familiar with your methods of monitoring and evaluation. Be prepared to assist them while staying sensitive to their way of doing things. Faith-based partners can be helpful in using the findings of your monitoring and evaluation studies to reach back to communities to raise awareness on WASH issues.

Success STORIES



of secular agencies working
with faiths on **WASH**

UNICEF joins with US church to map WASH in Schools' successes

In 2011, the huge New Psalmist Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, began working with UNICEF and the WASH in Schools network to gather experiences about WASH in schools around the world.⁷⁴

The New Psalmist team worked with UNICEF, WASH partners, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and Emory University to oversee the data and experience compilation.

Questionnaires went out to all UNICEF country offices and partners and, as the information began to come in, NPBC recruited a team and a web designer from the church.

In 2012, the team launched the WASH in Schools mapping website (www.washinschoolsmapping.com) recording WASH experiences in more than 50 countries. It is inspiring to learn about the successes and the obstacles in all these diverse places.

While many faith organisations undertake dynamic work on local WASH projects, this mapping project allowed a faith community to collaborate at a global level to make life better for children around the world. It also provides a central repository for access to WASH in Schools experiences across the globe.

USAID partners with churches to promote WASH in Madagascar

During times of political flux, religious institutions can be the most stable development partners on the ground.

When a coup destabilised Madagascar in 2009, the US government stopped providing direct foreign assistance to the Madagascar government.

Instead its development agency, USAID, partnered with churches to promote WASH by educating parishioners, the Mother's Union, scouts, and Sunday school teachers.⁷⁵

"Prior to this, people didn't have the habit of washing their hands after going to the toilet," said pastor-in-training Mr Haja.

"Now everyone washes their hands."

UNICEF works with Buddhist schools on WASH in Bhutan

In Bhutan a UNICEF project⁷⁶ worked to improve the health and hygiene conditions in Buddhist religious schools, and was complemented by the training of

religious health workers who were able to see that the facilities were properly maintained.

The success of this initiative was confirmed in a Religion and Health Project evaluation in 2009.

Using Catholic principles to emphasise hand washing

The Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation teamed with Catholic Relief Services to tackle water issues in Bolivia.⁷⁷

The two organisations used religious values around water and cleanliness to drive home the message of washing hands properly and prioritising clean water.

Linking with local Catholic and secular partners, CRS installed potable water pumps and increased awareness of hygiene practices.

In the highlands, for example, where water is scarce, students need to learn how to wash their hands without wasting water.

A key technique is using a large soda container filled with water. The cap has a very small hole, so when the bottle is turned upside down, a thin stream of water flows.

The soda containers are not just a portable way to bring the hand-washing demonstration into the classroom. They also serve as eco-taps for washing hands after using the toilet.

ACTION POINT SEVEN

With your working group, develop a faith-based community outreach programme that operates through the school (to parents) and through the place of worship.

For faiths: 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.

For secular agencies: Work with your faith partners on imaginative ways to engage people and remember that faiths like to celebrate.

ACTION POINTS in summary

ACTION POINT ONE

For faiths: Decide to prioritise WASH activities in your schools. Do you know the water, sanitation and hygiene needs of your schools? If not, find out. Identify the groups working in WASH in your area. Be open to learn from them and their experience. Approach government ministries for advice. Invite relevant organisations to discuss how you can work together.

For secular agencies: Decide to work with faith leadership. Identify the key faith groups in your area, particularly those with schools. Contact faith headquarters to find out what is already happening, aiming to come in as an ally, respecting the contribution of faiths. Invite all relevant organisations to discuss how you can work together.

ACTION POINT TWO

For faiths: 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.

For secular agencies: Identify the national or regional heads of education in the faith groups in your area. Understand what they are trying to do to address issues of WASH. Recognise that faith groups are not the same as secular agencies – they often work to different timescales – and so will require a different approach. Help them understand what you are doing on WASH so that they can prioritise WASH in their outreach.

ACTION POINT THREE

For faith and secular agencies: 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

For faiths: Focus on the next faith festival where you could celebrate nature, especially 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.

For secular agencies: Celebrations are central to how faiths pass on their core teachings: explore how the next WASH-related festival (e.g. Global Hand Washing Day) could be a launch-point for your collaboration.

ACTION POINT FIVE

For faiths and secular agencies: Create a working group between specialist agency staff, those involved in education within the faith group (this usually doesn't mean religious leaders) and other relevant people and organisations. Create an action plan based on the faith's annual cycle of worship: major festivals, periods of fasting, retreats, etc. Seek the blessing of the appropriate religious leaders and agency senior staff – and implement it.

ACTION POINT SIX

For faiths: Plan for monitoring and evaluating your WASH in Schools projects. Take into account your faith's teachings and practice but also ask about standards of transparency and the evaluation tools used by secular partners to help you. Don't forget to collect stories of your impact.

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With your working group, develop a faith-based community outreach programme that operates through the school (to parents) and through the place of worship.

For faiths: 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.

For secular agencies: Work with your faith partners on imaginative ways to engage people and remember that faiths like to celebrate.

ACTION POINT EIGHT

For faiths and secular agencies: This is just the start: after you see the successes of the initial action plan, you can think about creating a long-term plan to get clean water, safe sanitation and hygiene education into all faith-based schools in your area. And remember, celebrate the successes and make best use of media networks – both faith and secular – to spread the good news of your achievements.

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.⁷⁸

So when are the critical times for washing hands? They are:

- **after** contact with faeces, for example, 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, or if your hands are dirty.

Proper handwashing requires soap and 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 (shown right). 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.

GLOBAL HANDWASHING DAY #IWashMyHands

October 15 is Global Handwashing Day. In its guide to planning this annual celebration of clean hands, WHO urges contacting religious leaders to be partners in passing on the message that handwashing with soap could save a million lives every year. If every faith leader preached a sermon on water, cleanliness and washing hands in October, and every faith school taught children how to wash their hands properly, what a difference this would make.

DEFINITIONS

An **improved drinking water source** is one that, by the way it is constructed, protects the source from outside contamination, particularly human faeces or animal/bird droppings.

An **improved sanitation facility** is one that hygienically separates human waste from human contact.



ACTION POINT EIGHT

For faith and secular agencies: This is just the start: after you see the successes of the initial action plan, you can think about creating a long-term plan to get clean water, safe sanitation and hygiene education into all faith-based schools in your area. And remember, celebrate the successes and make best use of media networks – both faith and secular – to spread the good news of your achievements.

ONLINE RESOURCES

“It is surprising that Islamic teachings are not being used more widely to promote water conservation as they offer a basis for teaching people about conservation and a motivation for them to stick with it.”
– Water Conservation Training Manual, 2012, Global One 2015

On faith and WASH issues

Faith, Water and Development, USAID, 2013
http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/508_SEPT13_single.pdf

Faith-based Education for Sustainable Development Toolkit, ARC, 2013
<http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC-Faith-based-ESD-toolkit.pdf>

Faith in Water, new charity engaging the faiths in action in WASH
<http://www.faithinwater.org>

WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care, Section 17: Religious and cultural aspects of hand hygiene. WHO, Geneva, 2009.
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK143998/>

Two Muslim animations for children on why conserving water is so important
<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=667>

General about WASH in schools

WASH in Schools website – full of practical information
<http://www.washinschools.info>

UNICEF WASH page – invaluable resource
<http://www.unicef.org/wash/>

Global Handwashing Day (October 15) – excellent source on how to celebrate this day
<http://globalhandwashing.org/ghw-day>

Menstrual Hygiene Day – information and tools to help girls manage their menstrual hygiene
<http://menstrualhygieneday.org>

World Health Organisation (WHO) programme on water, sanitation and health
http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/en/

Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology (CAWST) – downloadable WASH education resources
<http://resources.cawst.org>

WASH in Schools Mapping – documenting action on WASH in schools around the world
Washinschoolsmapping.com

FOOTNOTES

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⁶¹ Shadrack Kimalel case study from interview Rev Al Bailey New Psalmist Baptist Church, Sept 2014

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⁶⁷ Pew Forum (2012), The Global Religious Landscape, op cit.

⁶⁸ Sunan ibn Majah 425

⁶⁹ Muslim schools in Cameroon case study from ARC field staff, Dec 2014.

⁷⁰ The story of Hajjar from the YouTube script by Global One 2015 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2tDhldp2fw>

⁷¹ Indonesian pesantrens case study from ARC field staff, Dec 2014.

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⁷³ Sikh case study: from interview with EcoSikh, Dec 2014, www.ecosikh.org

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⁷⁴ www.washinschoolsmapping.com

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⁷⁷ Eco-friendly latrines in Bolivia CRS website: <http://www.crs.org/bolivia/eco-friendly-latrines-in-bolivia-highlands/>

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Sustainable Development GOALS

A set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been developed to build on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals, which expired in 2015. The 17 SDGs will guide the actions that governments take over the next 15 years to improve people’s lives.



Water, sanitation and hygiene feature in Goal 6: **Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.**

There are eight targets for Goal 6 including:

- By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations.

Water is also included in four other goals, including Goal 3, which focuses on health (**Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**) and has these targets:

- Combat water-borne diseases;
- Reduce deaths/illness from water pollution and contamination.

Other relevant SDGs include: Goal 4: **Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**

And Goal 5: **Ensure gender equality and empower all women and girls.**

Targets for these goals include:

- By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

testimonials



“Access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival... 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. This debt can be paid partly by an increase in funding to provide clean water and sanitary services among the poor.”

– Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* (Care of our common home), June 2015.

“When I’m asked what marks out a faith-based approach to the water crisis, I make one observation. The usual approach is to tell everyone how bad things are, in the hope they will be shocked into action. But the faith-based approach is to start by giving thanks for such a wonderfully beautiful world that the Creator has given us, and then from a position of gratitude we turn to confront the crises we have created within this God-given world.”

– Martin Palmer, Secretary General, Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)

“It is surprising that Islamic teachings are not being used more widely to promote water conservation as they offer a basis for teaching people about conservation and a motivation for them to stick with it.”

– Water Conservation Training Manual, 2012, Global One 2015

“I really realised, just coming this morning, that we could be more successful, we could be more relevant to the needs and aspirations of the continent, we could have more impact in all African countries if we can work with you [the faiths] hand in hand.”

– UNEP Mounkaila Goumandakoye, Director and Regional Representative for Africa, Nairobi, September 2012

