STATISTICS

- 1.5 million
  The number of deaths of children each year, accounted for by water-borne diseases (UN)

- 272 million
  The number of school days lost by children each year due to diarrhoea (UNICEF)

- 15%
  The percentage reduction in water-related infectious diseases resulting from improving sanitation, water and hygiene facilities

- 200,000
  The number of schools run by the Catholic Church throughout the world

- 50%
  The percentage of schools run by, managed by or connected with faiths worldwide

Collecting water in Kenya. By Gary White, Water.org, above. Top photograph by Brad Ruggles

Clean water in Baraka, Sudan. By Julien Hameis

EMF

ALLIANCE OF RELIGIONS AND CONSERVATION
launched in 1993 by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh KG KT

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Faith schools promoting clean water and good sanitation and delivering excellent hygiene education
WHAT IS WATER SCHOOLS?

The Water Schools project works with the faiths, secular bodies and innovators to promote water and education issues such as WASH – water, sanitation and hygiene education – in faith schools, particularly in developing countries. It was launched in 2010 following the success of the first Faith & Water Workshop in the UK one year earlier. This unique event, jointly organised by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, the Ecological Management Foundation (EMF) and the International Water & Sanitation Centre, brought together key faith school networks, innovators and secular bodies to discuss issues of water and sanitation in faith schools.

ONLINE MAPPING TOOL

ARC is working with UNICEF and the New Psalmist Baptist Church, Baltimore, USA, to expand WASH initiatives in faith schools. As a first step, an online mapping tool was launched in January 2012 to gather information about WASH in countries around the world – http://www.washinschoolsmapping.com.

WHY WORK WITH THE FAITHS?

Faiths are involved in half of schools worldwide, so it makes sense to work closely with them. And not only do most faiths have strong social outreach programmes, and a great deal of influence, but water is celebrated as sacred in many religions through rituals and ceremonies, representing new beginnings and rebirth. So they have a deep understanding of the significance of water.

WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We encourage new partnerships between faiths and secular groups to work together to find sustainable water and sanitation solutions. Cleaner water means an immediate reduction of water-related school absences and better performance in class. Longer term, children who develop good hygiene practices at school take what they’ve learned home and create positive change within their communities.

WHY IS THE PROJECT NEEDED?

Dirty water and lack of sufficient water affect billions of people globally and schools are places where these issues become pressing. In some countries many school hours are lost through children having to take time out to face lengthy queues to collect water.

Millions of girls in poor areas are often unable to attend school for the one week in four that they are menstruating because sanitation facilities are inadequate. This has huge implications for their education and future life opportunities.

Children who are unable to wash regularly or have to sit in classrooms that are not cleaned due to water restrictions can develop illnesses and low self-esteem, affecting their lives into adulthood.

ARE THERE ANY GOOD EXAMPLES?

In the late 1990s, the Batang Gadis river in Sumatra, Indonesia, was becoming increasingly polluted. The Muslim schools became involved when they realised the river – the source of the water used by the students for ablutions before prayers – was too dirty to fulfil its sacred role. So they lobbied and negotiated, and in 2003 thousands of Muslim students were among those celebrating the declaration of the Batang Gadis National Park.