

February 13, 2012

Dear Senator:

We are writing in support of S.641, the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2011*, as a broad-ranging coalition of organizations working to advance international development, global health, and humanitarian crisis response. S.641 has strong bipartisan support, does not seek new funds, and passed the Senate unanimously in 2010. This is the year to ensure that the bill becomes law.

By improving U.S. programming to provide safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene education (WASH), S.641 applies lessons learned to ensure the most effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars and the greatest benefit for the people we seek to help. It responds to the most basic needs of nearly **1 billion people currently living without access to safe drinking water** and **2.6 billion living without sanitation facilities**.

WASH underlies many of our foreign policy objectives. It is a critical component of the first 1,000 days of life; childhood under-nutrition; educational access and success; economic empowerment; and gender equality. **Diarrheal disease arising from unsafe drinking water is the leading killer of children under age five** in sub-Saharan Africa—an entirely preventable cause of suffering and death. WASH is a critical component of emergency and humanitarian response, and lack of access to it can undermine efforts at recovery, as with the cholera outbreak in Haiti. Lack of access to water or private latrines close to home can lead to injury and sexual violence. Sustainable water resource management is essential to food security, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions.

In short, WASH and the objectives of the *Water for the World Act* are critical to our success, and to that of USAID and the Department of State.

Water for the World makes strategic reforms to existing WASH programs, including:

- **Increasing integration of WASH** with other programs, to address safe drinking water, sanitation, water resource management, and the linkages highlighted above, and ensure the greatest impact with existing funds;
- **Improving targeting of WASH funding**, recognizing that the poorest people stand to benefit most from receiving access to these services;
- **Enhancing USAID and Department of State capacity** at headquarters and mission levels to improve partnerships and technical capacity of in-country implementers and national governments, so that country leadership in planning, implementing and evaluating WASH programs can be prioritized;
- **Supporting research and regional partnerships** to continue our learning and support innovative and effective solutions; and
- **Sharing the financial burden** with private foundations, research institutions, and other non-federal sources so the US can leverage more change for the same investment.

WASH is among the most efficient investments we can make in reducing poverty around the world: **for every \$1 invested, \$8 are returned** in saved health care costs and increased economic productivity. Studies show that a lack of WASH access in sub-Saharan Africa **costs the region 5% of its GDP, or \$47.7 billion in 2009 alone—more than all international aid delivered to the region**. Because it builds on the *Senator Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act of 2005*, the *Water for the*

World Act of 2012 is a **cost-free approach** to benefiting families, communities, and even the global economy.

We urge you to contact Chris Homan in Senator Durbin's office or Stacie Oliver in Senator Corker's office today to **join S.641 as a co-sponsor**. *Water for the World* is something on which we can all agree: it meets the most basic of human needs, benefits the economy, enhances health and reduces poverty—without spending a dime in new money.

Thank you very much for your support.

Sincerely,



