



Strategy for Sustainable Safe Water Access

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Program Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Access to safe water, in conjunction with adequate sanitation and hygiene services, can improve overall well-being of the world's most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Women and girls bear the brunt of fetching water, and benefit the most when safe water is provided. This strategy outlines how the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation will work with a wide range of partners to support and enable sustainable and scalable access to safe water, improving the health, education and livelihoods of the ultra poor.

The Challenge

Lack of access to safe water and sanitation remains a major challenge for developing countries and multiplies devastation in impoverished communities. Nearly 900 million people (14% of the world population) do not have access to adequate clean water. In addition, more than 2.5 billion people (38% of the world population) live without basic sanitation. These conditions perpetuate disease, and they limit education and productivity—keeping communities in poverty. More than 5,000 children die every day from contaminated drinking water, poor sanitation and poor hygiene practices.

Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has the greatest percentage of people in need of improved drinking water sources (328 million, 42% of SSA's population). Without safe water sources, people resort to drawing water from polluted dug out well, rivers and lakes.

The Hilton Foundation's Historical Role

The Hilton Foundation has a long history of increasing access to clean water in poor, water-stressed regions of Africa, Mexico and India. The Foundation has supported water programs that target impoverished, and semi-arid and geographically remote areas with low water access and sanitation coverage, high incidence of water-related diseases such as diarrhea, trachoma and Guinea worm. Initially, water access funding was focused on drilling wells and on improving water quality through partnerships with international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Desired health outcomes cannot be achieved by providing clean water alone—sanitation and hygiene behaviors are essential complements to water access. Acknowledging this, the Foundation began to broaden its areas of funding to utilize additional water technologies and to foster greater sanitation and hygiene within the communities served. Over the last two decades, the Foundation has made more than \$80 million in grants and enabling access to water for an estimated 2 million people. Long-term

commitments and leveraging resources have been core tenets of the Hilton Foundation grantmaking.

The Foundation's Strategy

The Foundation plans to focus its support on the safe water access component of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) programs for the ultra poor in targeted countries. The following are defining parameters of the strategy:

- ***Focus on safe water access programs within the WASH+ continuum.*** The Foundation's deep expertise, grantee relationships and long history of work in this area will allow it to play an important role in solving the problem. While it will primarily support water-access programs, the Foundation also recognizes the importance of improving sanitation, hygiene and livelihoods. It will therefore join with partners who are supporting the sanitation, hygiene promotion and livelihood aspects of a comprehensive "WASH+" (Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Livelihood) strategy.
- ***Retain the geographic focus on the Hilton Foundation's current target regions in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali and Niger and water-stressed regions of India and Mexico, with an emphasis on rural areas, peri-urban settings and small towns.*** All of the five target sub-Saharan African countries have rural water coverages below the average coverage for developing countries, and some of countries are not on track to meet their MDG targets relating to water access. In addition, the Foundation will support initiatives in water-stressed areas of India and Mexico, where innovative approaches being developed may inform solutions applicable to Africa.
- ***Prioritize the poorest and hardest-to-reach populations.*** The poor are often excluded from water-access solutions, and when they have access to water, they often pay more for it than others do. The Foundation therefore seeks to identify a variety of appropriate interventions aimed at improving the lives of the impoverished.

Program Initiatives

Pursuing this strategy, the Foundation aims to contribute to improving the well-being of rural communities and small towns in target countries. It seeks to support sustainable and scalable access to safe water, strengthen in-country capacity, and catalyze the development and dissemination of relevant knowledge to the field.

1. Support sustainable and scalable safe water access interventions.

- Ensure that water systems are fully functional, upgraded and sustainable (through development of market-based or subsidized systems for repair and maintenance of existing water systems).
- Support appropriate technologies for safe water access
- Develop local capacity to ensure safe water quality at water sources and in households.

2. ***Strengthen the enabling environment for WASH interventions in target countries.***
 - Support national and local capacity building, and participate in coordination, networking and advocacy in the sector.
 - Develop the regulatory and institutional context for micro finance for WASH in target countries.
 - Support in-country leadership to prioritize and deliver WASH interventions.

3. ***Promote the development, dissemination and adoption of relevant sector-wide knowledge.***
 - Provide cross-cutting support for research, evaluation and data systems that enhance the field's ability to maximize the effectiveness of WASH interventions.
 - Systematically map the geological, technical, financial and institutional conditions in each target country in order to design locally appropriate solutions.
 - Catalyze the development and implementation of a standardized international WASH index to enhance global measures and reporting systems.

Goal and Results

The overall goal of the Foundation's programs is to contribute toward reaching the Millennium Development Goal targets for safe water access in the five Sub-Saharan African Countries. With the anticipated levels of strategic grants from the Foundation, we expect the following results in five years:

- Sustainable safe water access (at the water source and point-of-use) for at least **1 million people** through scalable, appropriate and incentive-based approaches
- Increased percentage of functioning water systems to at least **90%** in the Foundation program areas
- Increased funding to the WASH sector in the target countries through **advocacy** to significantly **reduce the MDG funding target gap**
- Wide acceptance of a common **WASH Index** to better monitor impact
- Adoption of **coordination and harmonization** practices in the WASH Sector by all actors
- **National capacity** to develop and maintain effective **information systems** for guiding WASH interventions