

Pester power



When WaterAid’s partner worked with Mithu’s village in Bangladesh to stop open defecation and build hygienic latrines, the whole community got involved. Mithu, 10, and his classmates were taught to spread good hygiene messages and stop people going to the toilet in the open by walking through the village chanting. He says, “I have learnt to shout so loud from my teacher. I saw that people were getting diseases but I have learnt that it’s easy to stop it, and now we have! I had to persuade my father to get a latrine, and now we have one. We have new toilets at school too. Now, if I saw a friend going to the toilet in the bushes I’d tell him not to, I’d say ‘If you don’t have a latrine, use my one!’”

Empowered communities



Mamona from Awapura Slum, Gwalior, India, is the head of a Self Help Group that is bringing changes to the whole community. She says, “We can loan money to other people for community development like constructing latrines, livelihood opportunities, opening shops and for critical times like weddings. We have links with the Commissioner and we can demand things from him directly. This is because we are so empowered now and we know we have an organisation behind us. Now we are clean, alert and strengthened and we are demanding our rights with support from all of the community. We have become so strong that our children are also becoming empowered. They are seeing us doing this work and we hope they will take this forward.”

Water for all



Shabani Misake is the secretary of Mzalendo water user group in Mandewa village, Tanzania. The group look after the village pump and collect membership fees and contributions for collecting water which pay for the upkeep of the pump. “During the construction of the borehole we participated in gravel and sand collection. We helped decide where the pump should go. The pump is looked after by two attendants who received training in maintaining it. Each member of the water users group pays five Shillings for each bucket of water they collect. The non-members have to pay 10 Shillings per bucket. We let all the old and disabled people have water for free – we know who is poor because they are unable to work due to old age or disability. We’ve all agreed they can have free water.”

# Community participation



From planning through to building and managing, communities are involved in all aspects of WaterAid’s water, hygiene and sanitation projects.

In working with communities to develop solutions that meet their real needs, we aim to give them a deeper understanding of why safe water, improved hygiene and effective sanitation are important. Being involved in our projects also helps people feel a sense of ownership over their projects and build new skills, which can ensure that the benefits of new facilities are felt far into the future.



WaterAid transforms lives by improving access to safe water, hygiene and sanitation in the world’s poorest communities.



WaterAid, 47-49 Durham Street  
London, SE11 5JD  
T: + 44 (0)20 7793 4594  
E: [wateraid@wateraid.org](mailto:wateraid@wateraid.org)  
[www.wateraid.org](http://www.wateraid.org)

Registered charity numbers 288701 (England and Wales)  
and SC039479 (Scotland)



A local woman adds to her community's map in Akkelpur village, Bangladesh.

## Getting started

While community participation is vital in all stages of WaterAid's projects, it is especially crucial during planning and decision-making when communities and our partner staff learn from each other.

Initial discussions and meetings are designed to encourage communities to identify their own needs in terms of water supply, sanitation and hygiene, and share their knowledge of the local environment and resources. We hold smaller household or individual meetings to make it easier for women and other marginalised community members to contribute.

Our partners then put forward the range and cost of technical solutions possible in their community's area. At this stage local people may visit similar projects and learn

from the experiences of other communities. This information then enables them to make informed choices about their own water and sanitation facilities.

A community will then decide on the type of project it needs, where it should be based and how much they can afford to spend. Communities will share the cost of setting up and running the project by giving time, labour or money. How much each family or individual contributes depends on what they can afford. To help calculate fair contributions some projects rank community members according to indicators like home size, livestock, possessions and schooling. People who are disabled, elderly or simply unable to contribute are subsidised by those who are better off.

## Constructing and running the projects

Local people help with the building of wells and latrines by undertaking tasks like digging, collecting or providing materials, and putting up fences around water points to keep animals away.

Once water and sanitation facilities are completed our partners train people to carry out specific management and maintenance roles, often as part of a water committee. This enables communities to be responsible for the management, regular maintenance and servicing of their facilities.



Dhurba Khadaka is paid a monthly salary by his community in Bijanbari, Nepal, to maintain their safe water source.

Local volunteers are also trained to teach good hygiene messages. They decide which messages are important for their community and how these should be passed on.

Trained local people check the progress of the project and evaluate its success. Seeing the difference they have made to their own environment often inspires people to plan other local developments such as a new school or medical clinic.

## Who is involved?

Men, women, children and people with different levels of wealth and of different castes, religions and ages – WaterAid ensures that all community members are involved in our projects so that everyone benefits equally.

As the main collectors of water women are key participants in our projects. They usually know where the nearest, cleanest water sources are and at which time of year they might dry out. WaterAid and our partner staff ensure that women are consulted about where new facilities should be and what type of technology they would prefer.

By involving women in our projects and giving them respected roles, such as hygiene

educator, we also aim to have a positive impact on their position in the community.

Children are taught hygiene messages in school and encouraged to pass these on to their families, friends and neighbours. We involve children in our projects as they are often more open to learning about hygiene messages and changing their behaviour than adults whose habits have been ingrained over a lifetime.

WaterAid attempts to help break barriers imposed by caste systems, particularly in India and Nepal, by ensuring that people within the lower castes, who are normally discriminated against, have an equal standing within projects as those of a higher caste.



Evagelina Nduvane collects money at the water point in Bairro FPLM, Maputo, Mozambique. She was chosen for this job by her community and received training from our partner.



The women's group in Tondani village, Malawi, spread hygiene messages through song.

## Community-led total sanitation

Community-led total sanitation is a method used in some WaterAid projects to get whole communities working together to achieve 100% sanitation coverage.

Communities are helped to map their local area (see top left), marking on open defecation sights, latrines and water points. From this map people can see how easily poor sanitation spreads disease. WaterAid's partners then support local people in building latrines and encouraging fellow community members to do the same.

Once everyone in the community has access to a latrine, the village is granted 'open defecation free' status and the success and improved health of the community encourages neighbouring villages to adopt the scheme too. Find out more at [www.wateraid.org/clts](http://www.wateraid.org/clts).