Speaker Network Impact Report 2019/20

Inspiring talks bring our work to life
Across the UK, we rely on our Speaker volunteers to:
- Educate audiences about water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Break down stigmas and talk about taboo subjects like periods.
- Inspire people to take action and get involved supporting WaterAid.

Because of this, we want to highlight the amazing lengths our Speakers go to reaching communities with vital messages and including them in our transformative work.

A huge thank you to all our Speakers of 2019/20!

Clean water. Decent toilets. Good hygiene. Three things that change everything – but talking about them is the start.

Since 1981, our Speakers have delivered over 10,000 talks and workshops across the UK

The Speaker Network in numbers for 2019/20
- Speakers delivered 260 talks
- Speakers delivered 213 workshops
- 35 newly trained Speakers
- 10 new Speaker mentors
- Speakers volunteered 358 hours delivering talks and workshops to a diverse range of audiences including: Scouts, Rotaries, universities, women’s groups, Brownies, Soroptimists, businesses, schools and many more.

We are aware that many Speakers deliver their own self-initiated talks and workshops, so these figures may even be higher!

In the past year, 122 Speakers have delivered 473 talks and workshops, reaching over 28,000 people across the UK.

We use it to show people the power of clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene, and why everyone, everywhere needs them. It makes change happen, whether we are speaking to groups in the UK, or people in the countries where we work.

For an inspiring group of students in rural Uganda, raising their voices has changed everything.

Children at St Mary's School in Karamoja used to go to the toilet in the bush. Girls often skipped lessons when on their period. Learning was hard. But this was all normal, because the school had no clean water or toilet facilities.

We improved school life by building a clean water source and a toilet block. And just as importantly, we taught students about good hygiene, like handwashing, safely managing periods, and how to make reusable sanitary pads.

By sharing this knowledge, the students learned new ways to protect their own health and education.

But they didn't stop there. Now the students are sharing this knowledge with adults through their water, sanitation and hygiene collective – or WASH Club, for short.

Using drama, music and games, they are changing their community for good. By speaking out, the students are smashing taboos and improving people's health while helping themselves stay in school. By speaking out, they’ve changed normal for everyone in Karamoja.

Talking hygiene

“...it is good for boys to know about periods too, so they can teach their sisters. In my songs I sing about menstruation and other things. Spreading my message about hygiene through songs is good. Here, many people defecate out in the open; if they hear my message, they may dig toilets at home.”

Dennis

14-year-old Dennis ready to rap during a performance for residents of Namalu town, Karamoja Region, Uganda.
“There is nothing like having clean drinking water and good hygiene. I learned this the hard way, growing up in the Volta region of Ghana. I witnessed community members fall ill from cholera as a result of poor sanitation. I always wanted to help. Being a Speaker has equipped me to educate people, especially women and children, on the need to practice good hygiene.”

Mariam, Ghana

“I wanted to become part of the Speaker Network to share the fantastic work that WaterAid does across the world. I know from personal experience that there is nothing more inspiring than hearing an individual speak with passion. I believe I fall into this group. I work for Anglian Water, who have strong links to WaterAid, and they are very supportive of my work as a Speaker.”

Rose, UK

“I’ve volunteered as a Speaker for over 30 years. I used to work for Thames Water, so speaking for WaterAid was a natural extension of my profession – it’s all about clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene. A highlight was celebrating World Menstrual Hygiene Day in May 2018 with a talk to 300 girls at a school in Epsom. Daunting – but for me no subject is taboo!”

Phil, UK

Join the brand new WaterAid Speaker Network Facebook group and get chatting with Speakers like Mariam, Rose and Phil.

Together we make a bigger difference – and we simply couldn’t do it without our Speakers. We are incredibly lucky to have so many voices in our Speaker Network volunteering their time, energy and passion. We’re proud to introduce you to three of them: Mariam, Rose and Phil.

All of our Speakers do a fantastic job, but don’t just take our word for it. Here’s just some of the excited feedback our volunteers received this year:

About Glynn:
“I was impressed with the workshops, interactivity, politeness and dealing with children. Great Speaker!”

About Deirdre:
“It was very interactive and pitched perfectly which meant the children were really engaged throughout. Thank you!”

About Elizabeth:
“I loved the interaction with the pupils and the adapted talk to the audience’s age. All the pupils and teachers loved it and are looking to bring Elizabeth back for another talk and a full day of workshops. Dealing with Elizabeth has been very pleasant and easy to schedule. Please keep up the good work and the availability of Speakers.”

Spotlight on Speakers

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With coronavirus affecting all of our lives, I hope you and your loved ones have been keeping safe and well at home during this difficult time.

As Speakers you have so often been at the forefront of our hygiene messaging, reaching deep into the heart of communities across the UK.

For the first time ever, we have temporarily closed the Speaker Network for face-to-face visits. But we are still working remotely, and we hope your voices will be amplified when we restart, sharing 39 years of vital experience and knowledge of water, toilets and hygiene.

While we are currently focused on responding to the crisis with increased hygiene work across our country programmes, do please remember that all your talks and workshops have helped make this work possible.

We continue to be incredibly grateful to have such committed and passionate volunteer Speakers.

Tim Wainwright,
WaterAid Chief Executive

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that making clean water and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere has never been more important. So we're not going to stop talking about it!

The Speaker Network has adapted to physical distancing by going digital. Speakers can now deliver online talks and workshops to audiences across the UK. And thanks to our online training course, we are still recruiting new Speakers every day.

If you are an existing Speaker, you can take part in our online refresher training course, and stay in touch via the new Speaker Network Facebook Group. We hope to have more volunteer Speakers than ever spreading our important messages, now and in the future – so get involved!

To find out more, simply email us at speakers@wateraid.org

“I was a little nervous about doing an online talk for the first time - but it worked really well! I kept it simple and split up the presentation with a little game, so that the children stayed interested. It was a great experience and I am really keen to do more at this crucial time.”

Penelope