Speaker Network Impact Report 2020/21

Inspiring talks bring our work to life
Thank you to WaterAid Speaker Network volunteers for your incredible support through an unprecedented year.

As always, our dedicated Speakers have been:

- Educating audiences about water, sanitation and hygiene
- Breaking down stigmas and talking about taboo subjects like periods and toilets.
- Inspiring people to take action and get involved by supporting us.

With all face-to-face Speaker visits on hold this year, the network quickly adapted to new restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Speakers upskilled to deliver talks and workshops virtually, ensuring our vital water, sanitation and hygiene messages could still reach into the heart of communities across the UK.

In May 2020, the Speaker Network delivered its first virtual talk, and went on to provide:

- 137 virtual talks and workshops
- 800 views of our Speaker talks on YouTube
- Upskilling for 65 volunteers to become virtual Speakers
- 30 newly trained Speakers

Clean water. Decent toilets. Good hygiene.

Three things that change lives – but talking about them is the start.
With COVID-19 affecting the whole world, using our 40 years of experience has never been more critical.

Over the past year, we delivered a global emergency response, including:

- Installing handwashing facilities and distributing soap, hand sanitiser and disinfectant in healthcare centres, densely populated and hard-to-reach areas.
- Supporting governments to coordinate their COVID-19 responses, identify groups most at risk and strengthening systems that provide lasting and inclusive services.
- Helping service providers ensure no one loses access to water, sanitation and hygiene during the pandemic.
- Campaigning for donors and governments to prioritise services for everyone.
- Launching mass public hygiene campaigns, reaching more than 99 million people.

Our Speakers joined a virtual global network advocating the importance of clean water, toilets and hygiene during a pandemic. They gave updates about our COVID-19 responses, educated audiences about taboo subjects like toilets and hygiene, and engaged vital new supporters in our work.

Thank you Speakers for amplifying our mission during a historic crisis. Together we are making progress.
The Speaker Network has a range of diverse voices spreading our messages, with everyone kindly volunteering their time, energy and passion.

This year, we are so grateful to welcome new Speakers who are teachers, NHS workers, students and more. All Speakers are unified in understanding the importance of our work and spreading messages about clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene during the pandemic.

We're proud to introduce you to Donal and Gurcharan, two of our newly trained Speakers, and Deirdre, a long-time volunteer who upskilled as a virtual Speaker this year.

““When Speakers were asked to give talks online, my initial reaction was that I would never be able to master the technology needed. However, it quickly became clear to me that the COVID-19 pandemic meant the role of Speakers had become even more important to help spread WaterAid’s message.

I was determined to master the skills needed and I have delivered my first talks. I am looking forward to doing more in the future.””

Deirdre, retired teacher

Deirdre was upskilled by another new Speaker, Ben, who used his professional experience as an IT trainer to support new virtual Speakers. Thank you, Ben, from all of us!

“I signed up to become a Speaker to help spread awareness about the amazing work WaterAid does internationally. I have thoroughly enjoyed being a Speaker, and it has helped me educate people from all walks of life about how they can get involved.”

Gurcharan, graduate

““Speaking about how WaterAid works with communities and organisations around the world to make clean water, decent toilets, and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere continues to inspire and motivate me.

The Speaker Network and our varied audiences demonstrate an inspiring amount of good will from young and old.””

Donal, doctor
Some of our Speakers were unable to volunteer virtually, but still found ways to support us. They included WaterAid President Award Winner, Dave Padfield, who made Speaker films and supported local schools and a fellow WaterAider who took on our Walk for Water fundraiser. Thank you as always, Dave!

We also say goodbye to some long-standing Speakers this year, who have chosen to take a step back after many years of support. A heartfelt thank you to Andrew, Roger, Tom, Elke, Elizabeth, Chris, Barrie, Pete and others for being such dedicated volunteers for so long. Speakers make all our talks possible. Thank you for your dedication to a world where clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene are normal for everyone, everywhere.

40 years of WaterAid

We have been incredibly fortunate to have committed and passionate volunteers dedicated to spreading the word about clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene and our international work since 1981.

Two of our time-honoured speakers, Dave and Roger, reflected on the last four decades.

“I can’t believe it’s WaterAid’s 40th anniversary this year! I remember the charity being launched, being inspired to volunteer as a Speaker in those very early days, and taking part in various fundraising events over the years. Unfortunately, I haven’t kept a record of how many talks and workshops I’ve delivered over those 40 years – but it must be quite a few!”

Dave, retired manager, United Utilities

“When I first learnt about WaterAid in the early 80s, I was convinced it was a worthwhile cause and decided to support it as much as I could. Clean water for all is a fundamental right, and helping in even a small way to raise funds has been gratifying. I have met many generous and interesting people in the thirty-plus years I have supported, and it has been a privilege. One the most amazing aspects of my long-term involvement is how WaterAid has evolved into an internationally recognised organisation doing such valuable life-saving work, with high profile involvement with the UN and representatives across the globe. I am involved with other charities – but WaterAid will always be closest to my heart!”

Roger, retired Water Quality Manager, Environment Agency

▲ Dave Padfield (left) helping train a new generation of Speakers during the Speaker Network training day in London, February 2020.
What our audiences have been saying

Lockdown audiences have really appreciated Speakers’ new virtual talks and workshops. Here are just some of the lovely messages we have received in response:

“Rose made the organisation and delivery of the talk really easy. She pitched the session perfectly for our Year 11 students, spoke really clearly... despite the remoteness of the talk the session was engaging, informative and interactive.”

“Andrew was very well organised! Great communication before the online workshop. The pupils really enjoyed it! Particularly liked the interactivity and getting the pupils involved with the learning.”

“Very good, very interesting slide show. Inspired the whole group, who were extremely impressed. Penelope gave an inspiring talk that encouraged us to help.”

“Very good and informative, interactive for the children, related to them and their lives. Engaging, clear and concise information. They really liked the toilet part and the charades. It was a fantastic talk... I would definitely book another Speaker and request her again, she was fab! Thank you so much Gurcharan!”

“Glynn was very enthusiastic and great with the Cubs. It was pitched at the right level for the kids. The information was delivered in a fun and engaging way. It couldn’t have gone better!”
With COVID-19 continuing to affect all our lives, I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and staying well.

We are so appreciative of our Speakers during such a challenging year. You have adapted to a global pandemic, yet still found the time to virtually volunteer, reaching into the heart of communities throughout lockdown and beyond.

This year, we are reflecting on WaterAid’s beginnings in 1981, and the pandemic has shown how our work around the world is more vital than ever.

As we look to reopen the Speaker Network for face-to-face and virtual visits, we hope all our Speaker voices will continue to be amplified. You have played such an important part in our 40 years of experience in clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene.

We continue to be incredibly grateful to our Speakers. Thank you again for your unswerving support and commitment to spreading our message during the most challenging of times.

Tim Wainwright, WaterAid Chief Executive

Introducing wheelchair users to a new accessible handwashing facility in Monze, Zambia as part of our emergency COVID-19 response.
WaterAid is an international not-for-profit, determined to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere within a generation. Only by tackling these three essentials in ways that last can people change their lives for good.