Speaker Network Impact Report

Conversations inspiring action

2023/24
A staggering 703 million people without clean water. And 1.5 billion without a decent toilet of their own. This injustice must change.

And change starts with conversation. From peer educators sharing hygiene messages with their community, to water advocates engaging with ministers, to our amazing network of volunteer Speakers raising awareness, we all have a role to play.

This year, our Speaker Network volunteers have started vital conversations by delivering talks and workshops, creating social media recordings, meeting local MPs, and running interactive sessions at festivals and events.

Speakers have shared important messages about water and hygiene. And they have lifted the lid on taboo subjects like periods and toilets to challenge stigma and make way for change. These conversations have led to action – donations, changes in policy, corporate support, petition signings and, importantly, more conversations.

Our inspiring volunteer Speakers have engaged audiences in the UK and all over the world, bringing us closer to our shared vision – clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene for everyone, everywhere.
## The Speaker Network’s achievements

### Since we launched in 1981:
WaterAid Speakers have delivered more than **12,000** online, face-to-face and international talks and workshops.

### From April 2023 to March 2024:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>84 volunteer Speakers</strong></th>
<th><strong>667 talks and workshops delivered</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1,321 views of YouTube Speaker talks</strong></td>
<td><strong>29,493 audience members</strong></td>
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<td><strong>538 hours of talks and workshops delivered</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,457 hours of individual audience engagement</strong></td>
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Our top three busiest Speakers were Chris, Bob and Deirdre, collectively delivering **200 talks and workshops** to reach **8,533 people**.

The busiest time for giving talks was World Water Day on 22 March, with **109 talks and workshops** delivered that month reaching more than **3,816 people**.

The **667 sessions** were unique and personalised for each audience, carefully tailored by the Speaker using their knowledge of our work.

Planning each session requires time and dedication, and we are so grateful that many of our Speakers go above and beyond by organising their own talks and workshops, reaching even more people.

Every talk and workshop delivered, every conversation started, creates a ripple of change that goes on and on after the session ends. Audiences leave informed, engaged and inspired to take action in their communities.
Khadija, 24, is a mother and works as the Hygiene Apa in her community. As she roams around the streets of the slum using her megaphone, people from all ages, especially women and girls, reach out to her for help and information. November 2021.

Khadija lives in the Sattar Molla slum in Pallabi, Bangladesh. She is on a mission to share messages about hygiene and break stigma in her community. She uses songs to teach women and girls about menstrual health.

WaterAid Speakers are part of a global network of volunteers like Khadija spreading the message about clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene. Together, they are giving people the knowledge and motivation to change lives for good.

“Girls used to shy away from the conversation before. As I kept trying to break the stigma and inform them how menstrual hygiene is crucial to their wellbeing, they started to understand the importance of it. After a few sessions on menstrual hygiene and the introduction of affordable sanitary pads, women and girls displayed a significant change in their behaviour. Now they would come to me for pads without hesitation.” Khadija
Engaging diverse audiences

Every conversation makes a difference

This year, our Speakers educated and inspired audiences of all sizes, ages and interests, through talks and workshops here in the UK and globally.

Our most popular Speaker sessions were for introductory and educational WaterAid talks and workshops for 7 to 11-year-olds, with 80% of our sessions delivered to schools, youth groups and universities.

New Speaker Phil delivered a well-received talk to children at Harbottle C of E school, one of the smallest schools in the UK with just 14 pupils, whereas our largest audience reached this year included more than 700 pupils at Salford City Academy, thanks to Speaker Elizabeth.

Our Speakers talked to some unique audiences this year, including at a hair salon, a book launch, a children’s awards show, the Department for Education, and in many more unusual places.

With a willingness to talk taps and toilets wherever we are invited, there really is no audience our Speakers won’t spread our messages to, ensuring more and more people are engaged and inspired.
The children loved it. It was the right balance of being true to the difficulties in other countries and being positive as well. Many of our pupils have already come to see me to talk about what they want to do to help raise money for WaterAid.”

The talk was exactly what we needed to get the children excited. Our school are having a non-uniform day to raise money for WaterAid. The children are writing factual tours about the journey of water and sharing this with the rest of the school to raise awareness. Thank you.”

The effect that WaterAid is having is truly inspirational and has been very motivating to our children to go home and discuss fundraising and awareness with their families.”

I have never seen this level of joy, excitement, interest and absolute pleasure towards any presentation from the Rotarians. We will regularly fund WaterAid directly.”

Often, a talk or workshop delivered by a Speaker is the start of a journey. Inspired by what they hear, audience members go on to take action – fundraising, campaigning or volunteering – to help more people have clean water, toilets and hygiene.

We know this because of the feedback we receive about groups being inspired and motivated to support WaterAid after a visit from a Speaker.
Children and young people are often in the audience to hear our Speaker talks and workshops. But junior school pupils got in touch with a unique invitation – to give a talk to us, about WaterAid.

This original presentation was part of their fundraising Global Village event, at which the class served up international food and drink, a raffle, a magician, a cake sale, a joke teller, and a dance routine. The event finished with two pupils who gave a WaterAid talk that was passionate, well prepared and delivered with much enthusiasm.

We were very impressed and inspired by these future generation of WaterAid Speakers.

Their teacher told us:

“Thanks so much to WaterAid for the recognition of the efforts my class made. The total is £1,100, which is unprecedented and amazing. Shows the passion for the cause that was generated. Thanks for your support – it has meant a lot to my class.”

With the help of our volunteer Speakers and a new upcoming public speaking resource for children, we hope to see more children and young people learning about water, toilets and hygiene and developing their public speaking skills while delivering WaterAid talks to their classmates.

91% of audience feedback stated more interest in supporting WaterAid following the Speaker visit.
Celebrating our Speakers

Audiences really value hearing from our Speakers. Here are just some of the many messages we received this year from appreciative audiences.

“The talk was not only extremely well informed but very moving and inspirational. Judy was very skilled in her delivery, kept everyone’s attention, and could answer all questions without hesitation. We were impressed.”

“Bob was fantastic. Very friendly and informative and the talk fitted in perfectly with our learning on climate change. It was really interesting to see how the water crisis and climate crisis are so intertwined. I’ll definitely be recommending to other colleagues.”

“It was interesting, visual and Chris pitched right for the ages and languages. The children were buzzing afterwards, telling me all about wells. They now want to build a tippy tap at school.”

“Sue delivered the talk in a calm and friendly manner. She had a good balance between explanations and questions and was very sensitive to the age of the children and answered their questions appropriate. I know the children learned a lot as did the adults. Thank you.”

“Extremely interactive, pitched perfectly for our students. It was fantastic how Glynn made time to get to know our students, refer to their hobbies and achievements, and make links with what they are learning in lessons. Without question, the best guest Speaker we have had. We hope he will return.”

Our dedicated Speakers do such a great job of bringing our work to life.

This feedback shows just how much they educate, engage and inspire our audiences when they so generously volunteer their time.
WaterAid are fortunate to have many people join our Speaker Network after retiring from long and successful careers, bringing a wealth of life experiences and public speaking skills to this volunteering role.

After retiring from a 40-year career as a French teacher, Dave decided to put his experience to use becoming a volunteer Speaker in 2012. Since then, he has given more than 260 talks and workshops for WaterAid.

During this time, Dave has travelled extensively across Wales, where he lives, and far beyond, to give talks. He has driven and slept in his campervan to reach remote locations ahead of early morning assemblies, nipped off to deliver a talk during a caravan holiday, given a talk at a school in Jerusalem, and even talked taps and toilets in French.

As if this weren’t enough, over the years, Dave has also taken on extreme cycling challenges to raise much needed funds for WaterAid.

He says,

“As Speakers, there are so many ways to engage audiences; the important thing is to raise awareness and promote WaterAid’s mission and values. The enjoyment and fulfillment I experience when I give talks is, without doubt, common to all other Speakers. Long may it be so.”

97% of audience feedback rated their Speaker as ‘very good’ or ‘good’.
For the past few years, our Speakers have successfully delivered sessions online and the requests keep coming, from all over the world.

This year, Speakers have delivered online talks and workshops to international audiences in the Netherlands, USA, Slovakia and Italy.

As Speaker Chris explains:

“Modern technology has done wonders for the Speaker Network. The world is out there and asking for talks. I’ve spoken to everyone from Girl Guides in Adelaide to international schools, all from my laptop. It’s such an honour to be able to tell the world about the wonderful work of WaterAid.”

With access to clean water, toilets and hygiene a global issue, we look forward to our Speakers delivering even more international talks and spreading the word far and wide.
Speakers out and about

In addition to talks and workshops, our Speakers have been representing WaterAid in new and creative ways at festivals and other events.

Speakers have engaged audiences everywhere from interactive climate change activities at the Great North Swim, to educational workshops at Green Man Festival, and a children’s stall at St Paul’s Cathedral.

Speaker Perminder told us:

“I represented the Speaker Network at the Green Man Festival in Wales, where I engaged a wide array of individuals and groups. The presentation and workshop highlighted the plight of millions around the world who don’t have clean water. Combining our vital work with the power and joy of music is definitely a win-win.”

Speaker Bob told us:

“I presented WaterAid’s interactive ‘climate change explainer’ to crowds at the Great North Swim in Windermere. Audience members represented sunshine and carbon dioxide molecules (made from hard hats, cardboard and balloons) to demonstrate how increases in CO₂ are impacting our climate. So much fun.”

Speakers Charlotte and Ben ran a WaterAid stall at the St Paul’s Cathedral Messy Day. Charlotte told us:

“At this successful event we had lots of visitors to the stand and gave out leaflets, badges and stickers.”

By creatively representing WaterAid at festivals and unique events across the country and throughout the year, our volunteer Speakers are engaging even more people in new, fun and memorable ways that go on to inspire action.
Speaking truth to power

We know that the biggest reason so many people still don’t have access to clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene isn’t technological – it’s political. Along with delivering talks and workshops, our Speakers use the power of their voices to influence their local decision makers and advocate on behalf of WaterAid.

Longtime Speaker Geoff has regularly used his voice for WaterAid. He has approached his local MPs many times over the years to ask them to support improved access to water, hygiene and sanitation.

Geoff told us:

“I know our Green parliamentary candidate very well and have spoken to her about the importance of clean water. She has also been very generous to our local group fundraising.”

Through conversations like this our Speakers continue to help push water, sanitation and hygiene higher up the political agenda.

Speakers and social media conversations

Social media provides a platform for Speakers to have many more conversations about our work and spark engagement around the world.

This year, volunteers like Celine created original social media content about clean water, toilets and hygiene, which was shared on WaterAid’s global social media channels.

By spreading the word about our work online, our Speakers are reaching new audiences who may not otherwise engage with in-person talks and workshops, allowing many more people to get involved.

To make the most of this exciting online opportunity, we will be empowering more Speakers to understand and use the potential of social media to spread our messages even further.
Welcoming new Speakers

Every year, we are delighted to welcome new volunteers to our Speaker Network. Over the past 12 months, we have been joined by passionate and hardworking volunteers from all over the UK and all walks of life.

Elvis joined us this year and has already delivered several school sessions which have received excellent feedback. He told us:

“WaterAid has inspired me to get involved, speak about water, sanitation and hygiene issues, and influence people to support change.”

Varinder has been a busy new Speaker, delivering an impressive 16 talks, all around World Water Day. He says:

“For me, being a WaterAid Speaker is more than spreading the charity’s message; it’s self-discovery. The work of WaterAid goes well beyond water, sanitation and hygiene to tackle broader inequalities.”

Welcome and thank you to Elvis, Varinder and all our new Speakers.

A Speaker Network for all

Being inclusive is key to our approach in making clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene accessible to everyone, everywhere. The Speaker Network is no exception.

This year, we worked in collaboration with disability organisation Leonard Cheshire to make sure the Speaker Network is accessible for everyone. This work included changes to the recruitment and training of new Speakers and updates to our presentations, films and other resources.

We also introduced new disability guidance for Speakers to help ensure everyone can fully take part in our talks and workshops.

Long-term Speaker Chris, who lives with a disability, told us:

“There are some great hints and tips in the guidance, so I encourage all Speakers to read it.”

We hope this new guidance has been a useful tool for all our Speakers. We look forward to continuing to make every part of our Speaker Network as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Inclusive Speaker resources.
Empowering Speaker resources

We are always here to support our Speakers with the training and resources to deliver their very best talks and workshops.

We regularly update our ready-made WaterAid presentations, Speaker handbooks and guidance. And we offer ways for Speakers to stay connected to our work and each other through webinars, the Speaker Network Facebook group, regular email updates, and personal support by phone and email.

This year, we've also provided campaigning presentation slides and toolkits, three new schools films – including films for World Water Day and World Toilet Day, and started sending out interactive educational demonstration kits including tippy taps, hygiene stations and water filters.

Thanking our Speakers

This year, we were delighted to hold two thank you events for volunteers at our office.

Both were well attended and a wonderful opportunity for Speakers to learn more about WaterAid from both UK and international programme staff who shared inspirational stories from our work. It was a privilege to welcome new volunteers in person, have a cuppa together, and gratefully reflect on the past year.

Long-term Speaker Sue said, “Many thanks for arranging such a lovely event. The most helpful aspects were the chance to ask questions, to see the current resources, and to chat to other Speakers.”
launching the Speaker Network strategy, developed with input from Speakers, to highlight our approach, partnerships and ambitions.

sharing new representation guidance around our use of language, with updates to our presentations, films and other resources.

developing new educational resources to empower young supporters to become Speakers and deliver peer-to-peer talks.

working to support more Speaker requests and recruit new Speakers.

developing and sharing new campaigning resources and activities.

working with companies such as Hogan Lovell to provide public speaking training and educational WaterAid resources for their employee volunteering.

supporting Speakers to use social media to engage audiences online.

The Speaker Network will continue evolving in 2024/25. There are lots of new projects in the pipeline, including:
Anjali, who has a visual disability, washing her hands with soap and water at her school's handwashing facility. Lahan, Nepal. July 2022.
A message from our CEO

“It has been another brilliant year for the Speaker Network. This amazing group of volunteers plays such an important role in our organisation.

By volunteering their time to deliver talks and run workshops, Speakers are raising awareness and inspiring their audiences to take action.

Whether it’s taking our messages to festivals and events, broadcasting on social media, or delivering talks virtually around the world, the Speaker Network is constantly evolving and innovating.

Reaching new audiences in this way is crucial if we are to achieve our goal of making clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene normal for everyone, everywhere.

Thank you to every single one of our Speakers for being part of this work.”

Tim Wainwright
Chief Executive
WaterAid UK

Since 1981, across 28 countries, we’ve reached...

- **28.5 million** people with clean water
- **29 million** people with decent toilets
- **27.8 million** people with good hygiene
The Speaker Network is a vital part of WaterAid, enabling us to educate and inspire audiences across the UK and globally.

Thank you to every volunteer Speaker who has given their time and energy to support WaterAid with such passion and dedication this year.

We have achieved so much together.

Interested in volunteering as a Speaker or booking a talk?
Find out more at wateraid.org/speaker-network

Front cover photo:

Known locally as the ‘hygiene promoter’, Khadija roams the streets of the Sattar Molla slum in Pallabi, Mirpur, with her megaphone, sharing songs about hygiene and spreading vital information about the importance of handwashing. The 24-year-old teaches women and girls about menstrual health and hygiene, signposting them to affordable sanitary pads and educating them in the proper way to wash, dry and sanitise reusable cloths. Sattar Mollah Slum, Dhaka, Bangladesh. November 2021.