



The Ripple Effect

Volume 8



**Water is a
frontline health
worker**

WaterAid / Dennis Lupenga



Clean water: The heart of healthcare

Nearly half of healthcare facilities in low-income countries have no clean water and a third have no access to handwashing. Without these essentials, sick patients, newborns, new moms and frontline staff are at great risk of infection and disease.

Jacob, a healthcare provider in Tanzania (read his story on page 3), couldn't wash his hands between patients. He told WaterAid: "The working conditions were so bad, I felt like resigning."

This issue of The Ripple Effect highlights the importance of water, sanitation and hygiene in healthcare. We know that the entire health sector must function properly to make changes sustainable. That's why we take a holistic approach, working with governments, frontline health workers and communities to drive progress at every level.

Thanks to your generous support, WaterAid has been working in healthcare centers for 40 years. We bring clean water to frontline staff so they can treat patients safely and ensure communities the most basic tenets of care. We teach the importance of proper hygiene and sanitation and empower health workers to educate their patients. Then, we support regional and national governments to use our work as a blueprint and scale progress nationwide.

Our new strategy will help us reach 400 million more people over the coming decade.



WaterAid/ Dennis Lupenga

WaterAid has launched an ambitious ten-year plan that brings a significant shift in our approach to achieving access to clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene for everyone, everywhere. We will work in concentrated geographic areas to bring change to scale, which will help us to impact wider changes at the national level.

We won't stop until every physician and midwife can turn on a tap to wash their hands. Until every janitor has water and soap to clean. Until new mothers can bathe with dignity, no matter where they live. Until everyone, everywhere has the same access to water when seeking care.

Together, we can make that happen.

With gratitude,



L. Kelly Parsons

Kelly Parsons
CEO, WaterAid America

Without water, there is no healthcare

Without clean water and soap, staff can't deliver quality care, putting their lives—and the lives of patients—at risk.

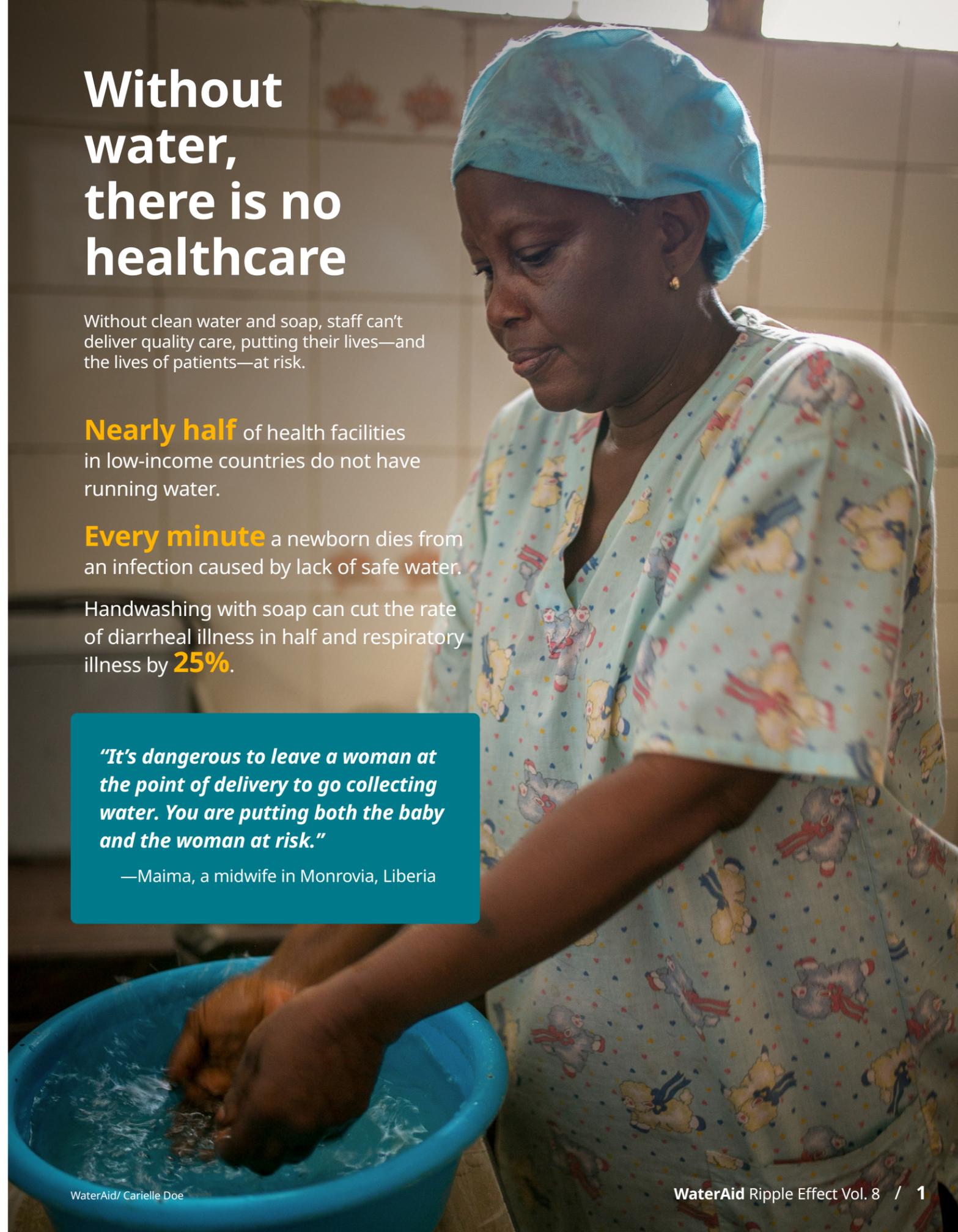
Nearly half of health facilities in low-income countries do not have running water.

Every minute a newborn dies from an infection caused by lack of safe water.

Handwashing with soap can cut the rate of diarrheal illness in half and respiratory illness by **25%**.

"It's dangerous to leave a woman at the point of delivery to go collecting water. You are putting both the baby and the woman at risk."

—Maima, a midwife in Monrovia, Liberia



WaterAid/ Carielle Doe

Tanzania: A Story of Life

In the district of Geita, northwestern Tanzania, some healthcare facilities that don't have water ask pregnant women to bring it with them when they give birth.

If the nearest water source to the hospital is unsafe, or patients are unable to bring water with them, they must buy it from commercial vendors at inflated prices. The water is sold in 20 liter buckets and can cost up to 500 Tanzanian shillings (US \$0.22) each – a cost which many can't afford.

Kalunde Rashid gave birth to her second child at Chikobe Health Center in Tanzania. "Mum is here taking care of me. She is old and could not go to collect water down the valley, so we had to buy two buckets," says Kalunde.

During delivery, Kalunde bled so much that all the water was used for cleaning the delivery room. There was no water left for bathing.

In training, nurses and midwives are told that the minimum amount of water they should use during childbirth is 100 liters. At Chikobe Health Center, because of acute water shortages, staff can only use 40 liters.

"Bacterial infections and sepsis are common in babies and mothers," says Dolgan Joseph, a nurse who has worked at Chikobe for six years. "If we can get water and electricity here, my work will be easy. Once the hospital environment is clean, it minimizes the rates of infection."

"I'll never forget the day a pregnant woman came here at night ready to deliver but there was no water. I had to run home to collect water. If I did not have water at home, what would I have done?"

—Nyaganga, nurse, Geita district Tanzania



WaterAid/James Kiyimba

Globally, 1.8 billion people are at risk of infectious diseases because they use or work in a health facility that doesn't have water.

Such infections can lead to prolonged hospital stays, long-term disability and spiraling healthcare costs. High infection rates and poor water, sanitation and hygiene can damage trust in health systems and make patients less likely to seek care when they are sick.

Thanks to supporters like you, WaterAid brought clean water and infection control measures to hospitals throughout Geita district. Today, the number of women choosing to give birth at health centers has doubled. Zero cases of maternal sepsis were reported after these interventions, compared to 19 cases before the arrival of clean water.



WaterAid/ Sam Vox

• **Before, health centers in Tanzania's Geita district burned medical waste in an open pit. WaterAid works to install incinerators that safely dispose of contaminated waste.**

"The working conditions were so bad, I felt like resigning," says Jacob Busumba, clinical officer in charge at Kakora Dispensary in Tanzania.

The clinic had sinks, but no water supply, so the staff had to depend on unprotected sources or buy water from vendors, which then had to be purified with chlorine.

Once, the clinic endured three months without a working toilet when their latrine became full, and nobody came to empty it.

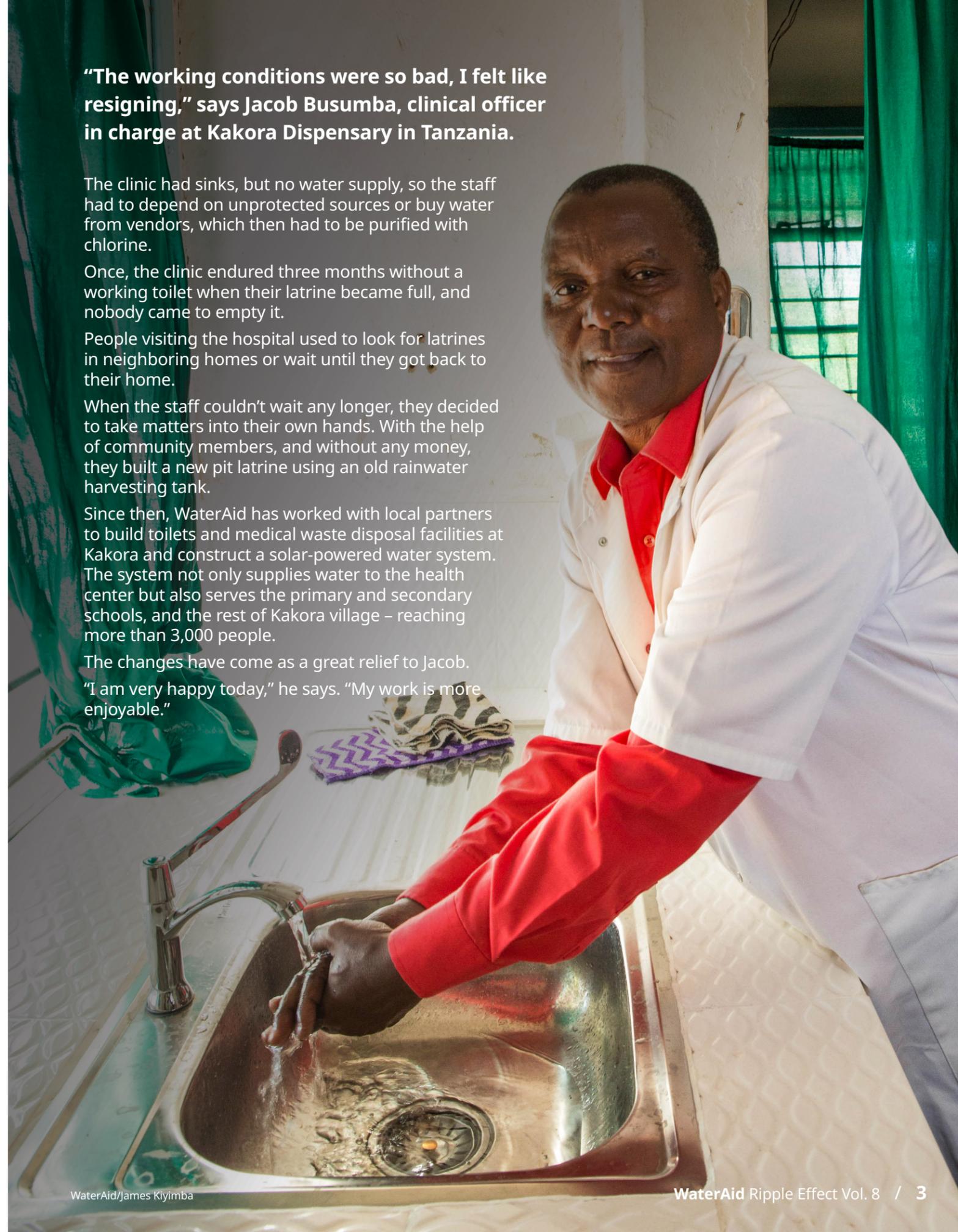
People visiting the hospital used to look for latrines in neighboring homes or wait until they got back to their home.

When the staff couldn't wait any longer, they decided to take matters into their own hands. With the help of community members, and without any money, they built a new pit latrine using an old rainwater harvesting tank.

Since then, WaterAid has worked with local partners to build toilets and medical waste disposal facilities at Kakora and construct a solar-powered water system. The system not only supplies water to the health center but also serves the primary and secondary schools, and the rest of Kakora village – reaching more than 3,000 people.

The changes have come as a great relief to Jacob.

"I am very happy today," he says. "My work is more enjoyable."



WaterAid/James Kiyimba

Our technology

To work reliably in any setting, however remote, technology needs to be affordable, adaptable and sustainable.

In Ghana, the local authorities disconnected water systems from some health centers that were unable to afford the monthly tariffs. WaterAid implemented solar-powered and gravity systems for piped water supply in these areas, because of their lower running costs.

● A water tank with solar panels at Kamsonga Health Center in Ntchisi, Malawi.



WaterAid/ Dennis Lupenga

Zambia

Clean, safe facilities – developed by everyone, for everyone

When WaterAid began work in five rural districts, most healthcare centers had neither safe water nor adequate toilets, threatening the safety and dignity of patients and staff. A WaterAid survey found that nationally, 95% of clinics and hospitals did not have basic hygiene facilities. The impact is devastating, contributing to preventable infection-related deaths every year or causing long-term disability.

Working in 40 health centers across three provinces, we helped develop a model for inclusive services that could be scaled nationally. Local communities were closely involved in the entire design and construction process of each new facility, helping ensure optimum proximity, safety and privacy for patients. This community

input proved crucial: in Njola Mwanza Rural Health Center in Monze, locals prevented a contractor from wrongly installing a well near a contaminated source.

Since we began our work on the ground and advocacy at the national level, the Government of Zambia has set new targets to provide 90% of healthcare facilities with basic water and sanitation and 80% with waste management and handwashing facilities by the end of 2022.

Ghana

Reaching remote communities

In Ghana, over 2 million people are now benefiting from WaterAid's efforts to provide clean water, toilets and waste management facilities at health centers in some of the hardest to reach communities.

These include clinics for mothers, babies and children. Facilities are gender-sensitive and disability inclusive, with delivery rooms and separate toilets for staff and clients and for male and female patients.

Infection prevention and control has improved significantly, with the first two districts we worked in reporting zero maternal deaths that year.

Almost every dollar invested in water and sanitation services yields a return of \$5 due to reduced healthcare costs for individuals and society, and greater productivity.

● A nurse stands in front of Sinde Rural Health Center in Zambia.

"We learned that cultural sensitivity to the lack of privacy at healthcare facilities is another main reason why women avoid going – this is a key issue that we address when designing facilities."

—Pamela Chisanga, Country Director, Zambia



WaterAid/ Chileshe Chanda

Raising our voices

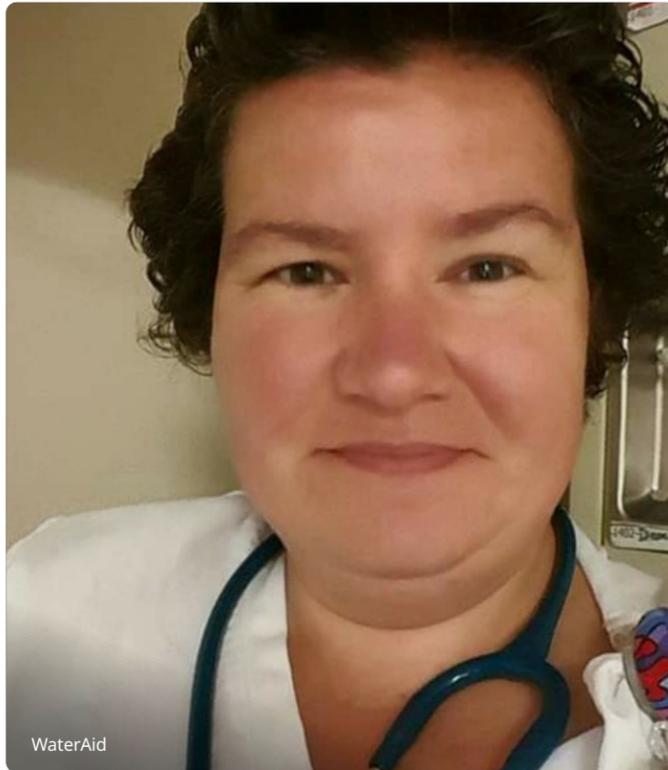
Why I give: Q&A with a WaterAid supporter

My name is Jamie Mathews Heustess. I work as a neonatal intensive care nurse at a large trauma center in Savannah, Georgia. This is a quick snapshot of me during a shift. Here's why I support WaterAid and why you should, too.

Everyone needs clean, accessible water. Everyone. No one is excluded from that.

Whether you are two years old or 100, poverty stricken or a multibillionaire, the need for clean water transcends race, sex, socioeconomic status, or religious affiliation. If I can help one family or one village to have fresh water access, I consider that lives saved. It is that simple.

Read my Q&A with WaterAid to learn more about how I use clean water at work to protect my patients, myself and my family.



"Clean water saves lives. It's that simple."

—Neonatal nurse and WaterAid supporter
Jamie Mathews Heustess

How often do you use water in your day-to-day work?

Water is very important! I am always washing my hands to keep my smallest charges healthy and safe. I scrub in before my care begins, then again before and after each patient interaction. For 12 hours a day, handwashing is the first line of defense to keep them safe.

Can you imagine doing your job without clean water?

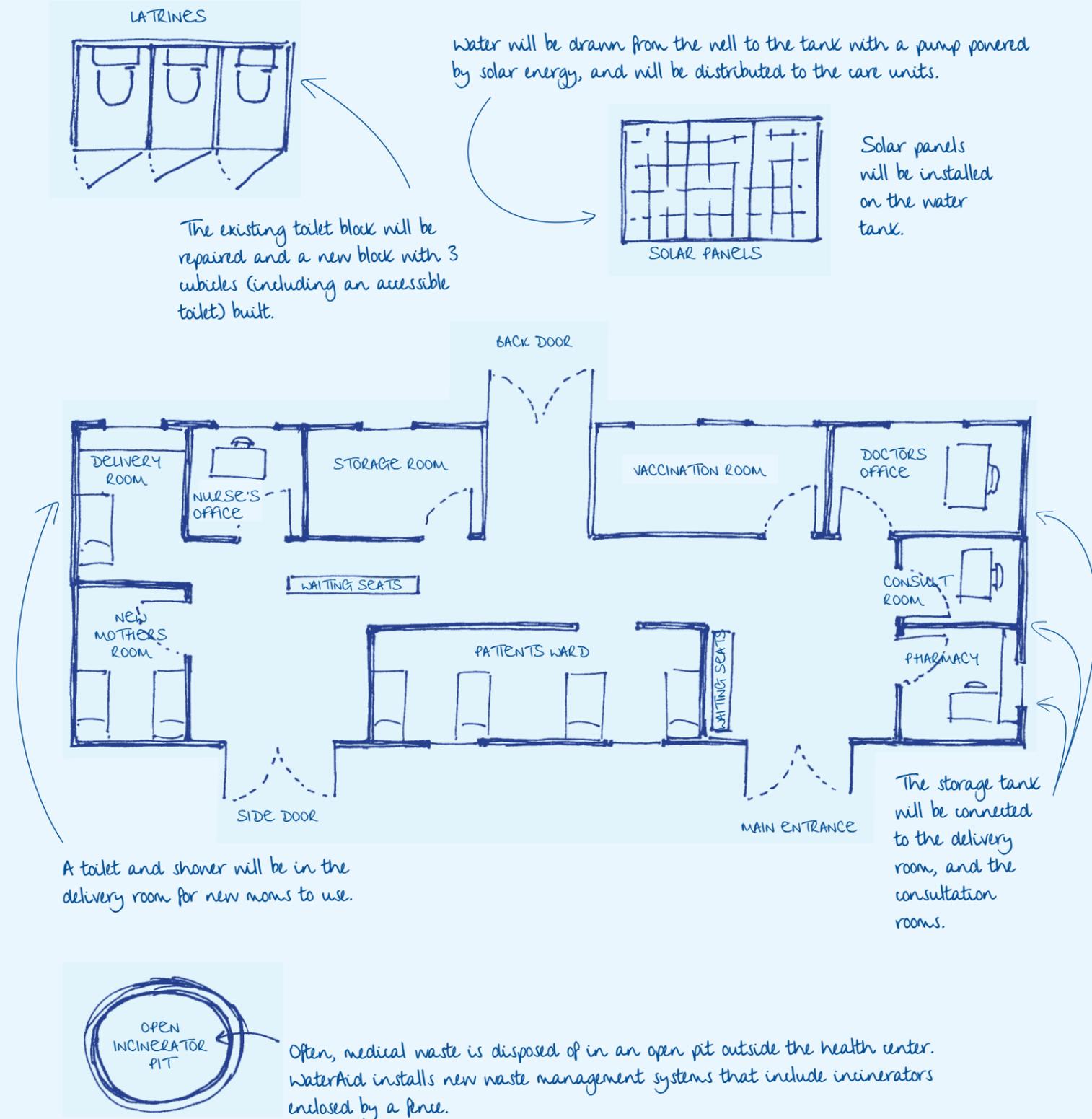
Absolutely not! Besides using clean water for handwashing, if we did not have clean water to bathe newborns, the infection risk would skyrocket.

As a medical worker, what steps do you take to protect yourself?

Any place where you deal with germs increases your risk to bring it home. It may sound funny, but I don't wear my work shoes into my house. When I get home, my scrubs are taken off in the garage and placed directly into a sanitizing load of laundry immediately. I take a shower and then I can participate in family time. I wear a mask whenever I am out running errands, my son who has autism does the same, even with his sensory issues! I protect my family and my premature infants in every way I can.

A blueprint for change: How clean water comes to a health center

↑ 200m north of the hospital water will be stored in a 2600-gallon tank on a raised tower. The water will be chlorinated to prevent contamination.



An impossible task

● Tirunesh hauls 10 gallons of water to the health center each day.

Nestled in the hills of Jabi Tehnan in rural Ethiopia, the Yiraber Health Center is home to hard-working staff who want the best for their patients. But they struggle daily to find water.

Tirunesh works for the hospital. She's paid a modest fee to collect 10 gallons of water every day. Twice a day, she makes the back-breaking journey on foot to a spring. Half of the water Tirunesh collects is used for handwashing. The other half is for cleaning. And still, it's not enough.

Ideally, every room should be mopped. But Yehasab, the hospital cleaner, has to choose which rooms to mop and which to just sweep, even though sweeping won't properly clean the surface and minimize the risk of infection.

Without clean water, patients are exposed to infectious diseases like scabies or diarrhea. Trachoma (a contagious infection of the eye, which can lead to blindness) is common, because people can't use clean water to wash their faces.

Even though Yehasab has had training in infection prevention, she can't apply it here. Like other staff members, she doesn't have enough water to wash her hands when she needs to.



WaterAid/ Genaye Eshetu

"I really want to clean the health center well, but I can't because of the lack of water," she says. "And that affects the patients, because people can easily get infections, when the health center is not clean."

Yaye, a clinical nurse at Yiraber, has to reuse water for patients daily—even for cleaning equipment. Often, he has to wait until he goes home to wash his hands.

Staff at Yiraber try to teach the community about good hygiene and disease prevention, but without water, they're barely able to practice it themselves.

"It is a sorrowful experience working here," says Yaye. "I feel sad that, instead of healing patients, I might expose them to other diseases."

"People can easily get infections, when the health center is not clean."

—Yehasab, hospital cleaner, Yiraber Health Center



WaterAid/ Genaye Eshetu

● A broken sink at Yiraber Health Centre. Buckets of water to wash medical equipment are often reused for several days.

"We are now able to wash our hands when treating the patients. For this reason, the hospital has seen a decrease in sepsis cases"

—Beatrice Lana, Malawi

But the journey is not over

We've made great strides together, but more progress is needed to ensure that reliable clean water, toilets and hygiene facilities are a reality throughout hospitals in Ghana, Zambia, Malawi and worldwide.

We must urgently invest in services, infrastructure, supplies and training – and advocate for the use of tools including assessments, procurement, design and quality standards.



● A woman mops the floors at a health center in Malawi.

WaterAid/ Dennis Lupenga



● Grace, a nurse, speaking to Majeshi, a mason, fixing the water pipes for a raised water tank reservoir at Kakora Dispensary, Nyanghwale District, Tanzania.

About WaterAid

WaterAid is working to make clean water, decent toilets and good hygiene a reality for everyone, everywhere within a generation. WaterAid works in more than 30 countries to change the lives of the poorest and most marginalized people. Since 1981, WaterAid has reached 28 million people with clean water, 28 million people with decent toilets and 26 million people with good hygiene.

WaterAid

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